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## The Man and the Demon.

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### PART FIRST—THE MAN.

The air is soft and laden with fragrance from the newly-mown fields; amid the leafy branches of old trees are nesting the weary birds, the valleys lie in deepening shadows, though gilded sunlight lingers yet upon the hill-tops. It is the closing hour of a lovely day in June.

Hark! a manly voice has broken the prevailing stillness.

"Mid pleasure and palace tho' we may roam,  
Be it ever so humble, there is no place like home."

How the fine tones swell upwards! how in every modulation is perceived some varied expression of the sentiment conveyed in the words. The man is singing from heart-fulness. Home is to him the dearest spot on earth; the loveliest place in all the wide, wide world, humble though it be. Listen!

"An exile from home pleasures dazzle in vain,  
O, give me my lowly thatched cottage again."

There he comes, just emerging from that little grove of cedars, where the road winds by the pleasant brook-side. How erect his form! how elastic his step! What a light is thrown back from his bare and ample forehead!

Yonder, where the valley seems to close, but in reality only beads around a mountain spur, to open in new and varied beauty, stands a neat cottage, its doors and windows vine-wreathed and flower-gemmed. Above this home of love and peace are spread the leafy branches of a century old elm. In summer, this guardian tree receives into its ample bosom the fierce sun-rays, and tempers them with coolness. In winter, though shorn of its verdure, it breaks the fury of the strong northwest, so that it falls not too rudely upon the nestling cottage beneath.

In this sweet and sheltered spot are the household treasures of Henry Erskine. He has gathered them here, because his love seeks for them all external blessings his hand can give. Years ago, this cottage was the home of his gentle wife. Here he had wooed her, and here won her trusting heart. Time wore on—death and misfortune scattered the old household, and the pleasant homestead passed into the hands of strangers. On the day it was sold, Erskine, coming suddenly upon his young wife, found her in tears. He pressed to know the cause. Half was revealed, and half but guessed. Love prompted the resolution that was instantly formed. Three years afterwards Erskine, through untiring labor and self-denial, had saved enough to purchase back the cottage, into which, with a newer and higher sense of enjoyment, he gathered his fruitful vine, and the olive branches already bending above and around him.

The best husband, the kindest father, the truest man in all that pleasant valley, was Henry Erskine. He had been absent a few days on business, and was now returning to his home-treasures. It was from the fulness of his heart that he sang—

"Home, home—sweet, sweet home!  
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."

And, as he sung on, and strode forward, quick, eagerly listening ears caught the music of his well-known voice, and ere he had reached, by many hundred yards, the little white gate that opened from the road to his dwelling, tiny arms were tightly clasping his neck, and soft lips pressing his cheek and forehead.

Oh! what gushing gladness was in his heart! How large it seemed in his bosom! How full of good desires and bounteous wishes for the loved ones who made his home a paradise!

"Dear Anna!" How many times he said this, as with both hands laid upon the fair temples of his happy wife, he smoothed back her raven hair, and gazed into the loving depths of her dark bright eyes.

The sunniest day in the whole calendar of their lives was this. As Erskine sat amid his children, with their gentle-hearted mother at his side, he felt that the cup of his happiness was full to overflowing.

And yet—ah! why are we forced to write it—ere the evening of that glad re-union closed, a faint shadow had fallen on the heart of Mrs. Erskine. She had been aware of an unusual degree of elation on the part of her husband in rejoicing them after his brief absence, but thought of it only as an excess of gladness at getting home again. Two or three neighbors called in later in the evening, when, in agreement with a very bad custom then prevailing, something to drink was brought forth, and before the neighbors retired, the undue elevation of spirits noticed by the wife of Mr. Erskine had increased to a degree that left her in no doubt as to its source.

"How sober you look, Anna dear," said Mr. Erskine, with his usual tenderness of manner, on the next morning. "Are you not well?"

"Oh, yes. But what a strange and terrible dream I had. I can't shake off the effects—and yet I know it was only a dream."

"A dream!—Is that all?" said Erskine, with a smile. "But what was it, dear? It must have been something terrible, indeed, to have a shadow upon your spirit."

"A very strange dream, Henry. I thought we were sitting at the table just as we were sitting last evening, with our pleasant neighbors around us. You had just taken a glass from your lips, after drinking my health, as you did then. You placed it near me, so that I could see into it to the bottom, where still remained a small portion of liquor. Something fixed my gaze, and pre-