

THE WINSTALLS A TALE OF LOVE AND MONEY

OF
NEW YORK

BY
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CHAPTER XVI., Continued.

When he gained the street he began to question whether he was not allowing himself to be controlled by impulse rather than by reason. What his intentions were towards Miss Winstall he had not as yet clearly defined; yet had he not almost committed himself? Still he felt an unusual happiness and elation of spirits; and this feeling was not mitigated when he reflected that Miss Winstall did not seem by any means offended by the liberty he had taken. So he walked all the way home, though it was a long way, absorbed in his own pleasant thoughts, and if the whole truth were told, building some very fine castles in the air.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MUCH NEEDED REFORM.

On the following evening the whole of the Winstall family, together with Miss Pearce, had been invited to dine with Mr. and Mrs. Erwin. Mr. Stuart had also been invited, as also two young friends of the Erwin's, a Mr. Rivers and his sister. The event was intended to do honor to Miss Pearce who was to leave the city two days later.

The company duly arrived. The two friends proved a pleasant addition to the party. The dinner was an unpretentious affair, but it was comfortable, and seasoned with friendship and goodwill. Mr. and Mrs. Erwin cared little for mere display.

After dinner, on retiring to the drawing room, Mr. Erwin gravely lifted a Bible, and prepared to read. What an expressive and solemn hush it is that sometimes, as we have seen it, falls on a company, when the simple lifting of the Book gives the signal for family devotion.

Mr. Erwin read that inimitable Psalm the twenty-third—the Psalm of the child and of the patriarch—that has been read and sung so often through ages past, but that ever keeps as fresh as its own green pastures. After the reading Mr. Erwin asked Miss Grace to lead the company in a verse or two of the evening hymn—

"Abide with me; fast falls the eventide." Then Mr. Erwin prayed. The spirit and tone of the prayer, together with Mr. Erwin's expressive and sympathetic manner of dearing confirmed Mr. Stuart in the conviction that this man might have been, and might yet be, a rare power in the ministry. He longed to hear how he had fared with the bishop, but he must wait for a more private opportunity. Meantime Mr. Erwin seemed to have grown in serenity and strength, and to be unconsciously adapting himself to the sacred duties to which he had so earnestly devoted himself.

The company now drifted into little groups, and the three gentlemen being thrown together, Mr. Erwin started a topic which he said had been occupying his mind for some days past.

"I have been more interested in certain social topics," he said, "since that evening when Mr. Stuart discussed the claims of the Golden Rule. The rule seems to have many applications which I had not thought of before. In speaking with a friend the other day along this line he pointed out to me

what he called the gross inequalities in the emoluments of our clergy. Now it may strike you as a very strange thing, but the fact is I had hardly given that matter a thought, and I found myself unable to answer my friend's tirade. Nor do I see my way yet to answer it. I suppose there ought to be inequalities in the emoluments, as there are inequalities in position, in talent, in influence; but I fear my friend has too much ground for his onslaught. He spoke, of course, only of the clergy of the Episcopal Church."

"I would take it very much as a matter of course," said Mr. Winstall, "that there should be as great differences in the emoluments of the clergy as in other professions. We find as much difference of ability and character there as anywhere, and why shouldn't there be as much difference in the emoluments?" "I am afraid," said Mr. Stuart, "that Mr. Erwin has touched a sore spot in all our denominations. And we of the Presbyterian Church have less excuse, and are more inconsistent in the matter, than you of the Episcopal Church. For you recognize different orders of clergy, and naturally favor different degrees of remuneration. But we believe in what we call the parity of the ministry, and have less excuse for the disparity of remuneration that prevails."

"But surely," said Mr. Winstall, "you would not advocate anything like parity or equality of remuneration of our ministers. Parity of office is all right, no doubt; but that is a theory that does not much harm or good to anybody. When you come down to actual practice, we don't want parity. Wouldn't it be a gross injustice?"

"Well," said Mr. Stuart, "I could not just say how far I would go towards absolute equality of remuneration. But I feel certain we ought to get much nearer to it than we are at present. If our principle of parity is right it ought to be worked out in practice. But apart from that, there is one great principle that no one will gainsay, and that is, that the strong should help the weak. Now in our church the strong do help the weak. If it were not so we could not occupy or hold any of the vast domain to the west of us in our own country, and of course we could undertake no mission work abroad. So the strong help the weak. But we do this, I am convinced, in far too limited a degree. And there is far too much disparity in the incomes of our ministers."

"Yes," said Mr. Erwin, "but in your church the people call their own ministers, and the people pay them. Now as long as there are rich congregations and poor ones, won't there be great differences in salaries? The people hold the key of the situation; and can you ever get the people to subscribe to the support of other ministers as they subscribe to the support of their own?"

"Now you've struck it, friend Erwin," said Mr. Winstall. "That's the point. If people like their own minister, and are able to pay him, won't they pay him as liberally as they please? Will you get them to take the money from him and give it to other duffers who are not worthy of it, and who have no claim upon them? Do you think,

now, Erwin, you could persuade us to pay our minister the half less, and give that half away indiscriminately to other less worthy men?"

"Oh, I think that would be a rather tough experiment to try on you," said Mr. Erwin. "Still, if Mr. Stuart made it very plain to you that he wished you to do that, wouldn't you do it? And if all the well paid ministers were of the same mind, wouldn't all the people fall in with the plan? I think, as Mr. Stuart says, that if the principle is right, there is some way of working it out. And it seems to me that if any such idea can be worked out, the first thing is to get the ministers, especially the well paid ones, to be in favor of it. Then the people might gradually adopt the plan, and the thing in time might be done. But I have no right to suggest ways and means to you, since far worse abuses prevail in my own church."

"Well, but you are not responsible for those abuses," said Mr. Stuart. "There are abuses, I presume, in all churches. If this particular abuse is not so gross in our body, isn't that a very good reason why the reform should begin with us, where it might have a better chance to succeed? I think Mr. Erwin strikes the point exactly when he says that our ministers have first to be educated up to the principle. Then the people will soon be imbued with it. Some of them are already ahead of the ministers in this matter. But I know a few ministers, highly paid ones too, who are quite ripe for this movement. A great many things can be said, which if fairly presented to the people might bring them to the point more quickly than you think."

The discussion was becoming animated, so much so that other persons in the room began to be attracted to this centre of heat and light, as planets are attracted to the sun. Mrs. Erwin, but for her duties as hostess, would have cast in her lot with the triumvirate of reformers, and perhaps might have thrown as much light on the problem as any of them. She called to mind, however, how Milton makes Eve so well pleased to remain in the back ground while the Angel talked with Adam, that she might have the greater pleasure of hearing Adam retail the whole matter privately. To most women of this age such a proceeding must appear ridiculous; the woman is the proper person now to talk to the angel; and if the angel missed any point she could supply it. Whatever Mrs. Erwin may have thought about that, she was glad that Mr. Erwin could give her privately the points of the discussion she had missed. In different positions and at different angles, most of the company had gathered near enough to follow the discussion, and all seemed highly interested.

When Mr. Stuart spoke of the claims of the movement, and how strongly the case might be presented to the people, Mr. Erwin asked—

"What would be the main point now, in a few words, that you would like to present?"

"Well," said Mr. Stuart, "I think the parity of the ministry would count for something in certain cases. If parity is to be recognized at all, why ought there not be something like parity of income? But Mr. Winstall thinks parity is only a theory, so we may let that point go. Then there is the Golden Rule. If all ministers lived up to that rule, they could not endure that any of their brethren should be kept all their days on the ragged edge of poverty, while others roll in luxury. That certainly does seem contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel."

"Well, in that case," interposed Mr.