

"And I tell you, you will not," said I "I know all about you. "You plain with any one? Nonsense, nonsense!"

"I plainly tell you, Mr. Sampson," he went on with a manner almost composed, "that I understand your object. You want to save your funds, and escape from your liabilities; these are old tricks of trade with you Office-gentlemen. But you will not do it, sir; you will not succeed. You have not an easy adversary to play against when you play against me. We shall have to enquire, in due time, when and how Mr. Beckwith fell into his present habits. With that remark, sir, I put this poor creature and his incoherent wanderings of speech aside, and wish you a good morning and a better case next time."

While he was saying this Beckwith had filled a half-pint glass with brandy. At this moment he threw the brandy at his face, and threw the glass after it. Slinkton put his hands up, half blinded by the spirit, and cut with the glass across the forehead. At the sound of the breakage a fourth person came into the room, closed the door, and stood at it; he was a very quiet but very keen-looking man, with iron grey hair, and slightly lame.

Slinkton pulled out his handkerchief, assuaged the pain in his smarting eyes, and dabbed the blood on his forehead. He was a long time about it, and I saw that, in the doing of it, a tremendous change came over him, occasioned by the change of Beckwith, who ceased to pant and tremble, sat upright, and never took his eyes off him. I never in my life saw a face in which abhorrence and determination were so forcibly painted as in Beckwith's then.

"Look at me, you villain!" said Beckwith, and see me as I really am. I took these rooms to make them a trap for you. I came into them as a drunkard, to bait the trap for you. You fell into the trap, and you will never leave it alive. On the morning when you last went to Mr. Sampson's office I had seen him first. Your plot has been known to both of us all along, and you have been counterplotted all along. What? Having been cajoled into putting that prize of two thousand pound in your power, I was to be done to death with brandy, and brandy not proving quick enough, something quicker? Have I never seen you, when you thought my senses gone, pouring from your bottle into my glass? Why, you murderer and forger, alone here with you in the dead of night, as I have so often been, I have had my hand upon the trigger of a pistol twenty times to blow your brains out!"

This sudden starting up of the thing that he had supposed to be his imbecile victim into a determined man, with a settled resolution to hunt him down and be the death of him, mercilessly expressed from head to foot, was, in the first shock, too much for him. Without any figure of speech he staggered under it. But there is no greater mistake than to suppose that a man who is a calculating criminal is, in any phase of his guilt, otherwise than true to himself and perfectly consistent with his own character. Such a man commits murder, and murder is the natural culmination of his course; such a man has to outface murder and will do it with hardihood and effrontery. It is a sort of fashion to express surprise that any notorious criminal, having such crime upon his conscience, can so brave it out. Do you think that he had it upon his conscience at all, or had a conscience to have it upon, he would ever have committed the crime?

Perfectly consistent with himself, as I believe all such monsters to be, this Slinkton recovered himself, and showed a defiance that was sufficiently cold and quiet. He was white, he was haggard, he was changed; but only as a sharper who had played for a great stake and had been outwitted and lost the game.

"Listen to me, you villain," said Beckwith, "and let every word you hear me say be a sear in your wicked heart! When I took these rooms, to throw myself in your way and lead you on to the scheme that I knew my appearance and supposed character and habits would suggest to such a devil, how did I know that? Because you were no stranger to me. I knew you well. And I knew you to be the cruel wretch who, for so much money, had killed one innocent girl while she trusted him implicitly, and who was, by inches, killing another."

Slinkton took out a snuff-box, took a pinch of snuff, and laughed.

"But see here," said Beckwith, never looking away, never raising his voice, never relaxing his face, never unclenching his hand. "See what a dull wolf you have been, after all! The infatuated drunkard who never drank a fiftieth part of the liquor you plied him with, but poured it away, here, there, everywhere—almost before your eyes; who bought over the fellow you set to watch and to ply him, by outbidding you in his bribe, before he had been at his work three days—with whom you have observed no caution, yet who was so bent on ridding the earth of you as a wild beast that he would have defeated you if you had been ever so prudent—that drunkard whom you have many a time left on the floor of his room, and who has even let you go out of it, alive and undecieved, when you have turned him over with you foot—has, almost as often, on the same night, within an hour, within a few minutes, watched you awake, had his hand on your pillow while you were asleep, turned over your papers, taken samples from your bottles and packets of powders, changed their contents, and rifled every secret of your life."

He had another pinch of snuff in his hand, but had gradually let it drop from between his fingers to the floor, where he now smoothed it out with his foot, looking down at it awhile.

"That drunkard," said Beckwith, "who had free access to your rooms at all times, that he might drink the strong drinks that you left in his way and be the sooner ended, holding no more terms with you than he would hold with a tiger, has had his master-key for all your locks, his test for all your poisons, his clue to your cipher-writing. He can tell you as well as you can tell him, how long it took to complete that deed, what doses there were, what intervals, what signs of gradual decay of mind and body; and what distempered fancies were produced, and what observable changes, what physical pain. He can tell you as well as you can tell him, that all this was recorded day by day as a lesson of experience for future service. He can tell you, better than you can tell him, where that journal is at this moment."

Slinkton stopped the action of his foot, and looked at Beckwith.

"No," said the latter, as if answering a question from him. "Not in the drawer of the writing-desk that opens with a spring; it is not there, and it will never be there again."

"Then you are a thief!" said Slinkton. Without any change whatever in the inflexible purpose which it was quite terrific even to me to contemplate, and from the power of which I had always felt convinced it was impossible for this wretch to escape, Beckwith returned:

"And I am your niece's shadow, too."

With an imprecation, Slinkton put his hand to his head, tore out some hair, and flung it to the ground. It was the end of the smooth walk; he destroyed it in the action, and it will soon be seen that his use for it was past.

Beckwith went on: "Whenever you left here, I left here. Although I understood that you found it necessary to pause in the completion of that purpose to avert suspicion, still I watched you close with the poor confiding girl. When I had the diary, and could read it word by word—it was only about your last visit to Scarborough; you remember the night! you slept with a small flat vial tied to your wrist—I sent to Mr. Sampson, who was kept out of view. This is Mr. Sampson's trusty servant standing by the door. We three saved your niece among us."

Slinkton looked at us all, took an uncertain step or two from the place where he had stood, returned to it, and glanced about him in a very curious way—as one of the meaner reptiles might, looking for a hole to hide in. I noticed at the same time that a singular change took place in the figure of the man—as if it collapsed within his clothes, and they consequently became ill-shaped and ill-fitting.

"You shall know," said Beckwith, "for I hope the knowledge will be bitter and terrible to you, why you have been pursued by one man, and why, when the whole interest that Mr. Sampson represents would have expended any money in hunting you down, you have been tracked to death at a single individual's charge. I hear you have had the name of Meltham on your lips sometimes?"

I saw, in addition to those other changes, a sudden stoppage come upon his breathing.

"When you sent the sweet girl whom you murdered (you know with what artfully-made-out surroundings and probabilities you sent her) to Meltham's office, before taking her abroad to originate the transaction that doomed her to the grave, it fell to Meltham's lot to see and to speak with her. It did not fall to his lot to save her, though I know he would freely give his own to have done it. He admired her; I would say he loved her deeply, if I thought it is possible that you could understand the word. When she was sacrificed he was thoroughly assured of your guilt. Having lost her he had but one object left in life, and that was, to avenge her and destroy you."

I saw the villain's nostrils rise and fall convulsively; but I saw no moving at his mouth.

"That man, Meltham," Beckwith steadily pursued, "was as absolutely certain that you could never elude him in this world, if he devoted himself to your destruction with its utmost fidelity and earnestness, and if he divided the sacred duty with no other duty in life, as he was certain that in achieving it he would be a poor instrument in the hands of Providence, and would do well before Heaven in striking you out from among living men. I am that man, and I thank God that I have done my work!"

If Slinkton had been running for his life from swift-footed savages a dozen miles he could not have shown more emphatic signs of being oppressed at heart and laboring for breath than he showed now, when he looked at the pursuer who had so relentlessly hunted him down.

"You never saw me, under my right name before; you see me under my right name now. You shall see me once again in the body when you are tired of your life. You shall see me once again in the spirit when the cord is round your neck, and the crowd are crying against you!"

When Meltham had spoken these last words, the miscreant suddenly turned away his face, and seemed to strike his mouth with his open hand. Then the room was filled with a new and powerful odor, and almost at the same instant, he broke into a crooked run, leap, start—I have no name for the spasm—and fell, with a dull weight that shook the heavy old doors and windows in their frames.

That was the fitting end of him.

When we saw that he was dead we drew away from the room, and Meltham, giving me his hand, said, with a weary air:

"I have no more work on earth, my friend. But I shall see her again elsewhere."

It was in vain that I tried to rally him. He might have saved her, he said; he had not saved her, and he reproached himself; he had lost her, and he was broken-hearted.

"The purpose that sustained me is over, Sampson, and there is nothing now to hold me to life. I am not fit for life; I am weak and spiritless; I have no hope and no object; my day is done."

In truth, I could hardly have believed that the broken man who then spoke to me was the man who had so strongly and so differently impressed me when his purpose was before him. I used such entreaties with him as I could; but he still said, and always said, in a patient, undemonstrative way, nothing could avail—he was broken-hearted.

He died early in the next spring. He was buried by the side of the poor young lady for whom he had cherished those tender and unhappy regrets, and he left all he had to his sister. She lived to be a happy wife and mother; she married my sister's son, who succeeded poor Meltham; she is living now, and her children ride about the garden on my walking-stick when I go to see her.

IS THE EARTH THE ONLY INHABITED WORLD.

The idea that in other worlds life may exist in conditions widely different from those prevailing on this world in which we live, however plausible at first, becomes highly improbable when tested by the light shed on this subject by the accumulated knowledge of modern research in the fields of astronomy, geology, spectroscopy, and chemistry, especially that branch of the latter science pertaining to organic compounds. Thus it has been suggested that—granted even that when the temperature of the moon, and other satellites of planets has been cooled to such a degree as to freeze all water—living creatures may exist there, having a liquid in their arteries, glycerine, alcohol, etc.; or, inversely—granted that the planet Jupiter is red hot, and the sun much hotter—living beings may exist, consisting of fireproof materials, and of such an organization as to feel happy and comfortable in an atmosphere of superheated steam, as in Jupiter, or even while swimming on a surface of melted lava, surrounded by an atmosphere of white hot iron vapor as would be the case in the sun.

Astronomy, now so powerfully aided by the modern tools of the scientist, having proved that the terrestrial elements exist throughout the whole universe, only differently distributed, and chemistry having studied the behavior of these elements under extremes of temperature, we know now that the possibilities of the existence of organic life are comparatively within very narrow limits and confined to a range not much beyond 100° among the 6000° or 8000° to which our investigations have extended. We have learned that the wonderful properties of that common but most marvelous substance, carbon, aided by liquid water, at a temperature below 100°, are the absolute and essential conditions which make the development and continuation of life a possibility. Without these, no life can exist.

It may be objected that in other worlds there may be another substance, as effective in its function as carbon in our regions, and that therefore we cannot make any conclusion as to the necessity of carbon for the existence of life. In order to meet this argument, let us consider the properties of carbon, which, by modern scientists, has rightly been called the great organizer.

A substance, in order to take the place of carbon in the economy of organized existence, must be able to combine in different proportions with itself, to form a complex molecule, in order to enter again into complex combinations. It must exist as a solid, but also easily pass into the atmospheric condition by combination with another substance, equivalent to oxygen, so that all vegetation may be surrounded by an atmosphere containing carbon in such a state that the plant may obtain it, and complete, with this substance as a solid basis, its organic tissues. We may go on and sum up other conditions which this supposed substitute of carbon would have to fulfill, in order to take its place; but then we should in the end be driven to the conclusion that a substance which possesses all the properties of carbon would be carbon itself. But now comes the spectroscope and teaches us that even the comets consist chiefly of carbon dust, and that their purpose may be to supply the planetary atmospheres from time to time with some of this necessary element, when sweeping close along them, as is often the case.

As the latest investigations prove the identity of the elementary matter in our

whole planetary system (and this even extends to a great number of the fixed stars), we can come to no other conclusion than to accept a unity of chemical operations, of crystallization, cell building, organic growth, and organic life in general, of course greatly modified in accordance with the conditions of gravitation, atmospheric pressure, distribution of elementary matter on surface, and especially of temperature. If now we look carefully on all the conditions required to make life possible on the surface of a planet, we see that these conditions are very complex, that not only the elementary matter, possessing the different required qualities must be present, but also in the exact relative quantities, in order not to annual the results of this distribution. Let us, for an example, only consider the amount of hydrogen present on our earth's surface. We know that nearly all of this element is combined with oxygen, forming the extensive oceans, rivers, lakes, clouds and moisture in general; in fact, the only source from which we can obtain this element is by decomposing water. This compound is indeed burnt up hydrogen, and this burning up, of course, took place at an early geological period of our earth's history. Therefore all the hydrogen has thus been burned up, consuming an equivalent amount of oxygen; and the latter now forms eighty-eight per cent of all the terrestrial water. But suppose that there had been some more hydrogen, just enough to combine with the small portion of oxygen (21 per cent) contained in the atmosphere; the result of the combustion would then have been some more water in the ocean, raising its surface only a few feet, while no oxygen would have been left in the atmosphere. In this case, life would have been simply impossible, and the earth would now be desolate. It would be easy to adduce other instances proving how complex the conditions of life are, and how improbable it is that all these conditions are fulfilled everywhere at once.

We conclude, then, that our earth is a highly distinguished planet, at present favored above hundreds and perhaps above thousands with conditions which have not alone rendered the existence of vegetable and animal life possible, but developed it to the highest stage of organic existence; namely, civilized and enlightened human races, able to investigate and discuss the highest problems in the universe, which are the laws of its creation, progress and ultimate purposes.—*Scientific American*.

BOYS, READ AND HEED THIS!

Many people seem to forget that character grows; that it is not something to put on, ready made, with womanhood or manhood; but, day by day, here a little and there a little, grows with the growth and strengthens with the strength, until, good or bad, it becomes almost a coat of mail. Look at a man of business—prompt, reliable, conscientious, yet clear-headed and energetic. When do you suppose he developed all these admirable qualities? When he was a boy? Let us see the way in which a boy of ten years got up in the morning, works, plays, studies, and we will tell you just what kind of man he will make. The boy that is late at breakfast, and late at school, stands a poor chance to be a prompt man. The boy who neglects his duties, be they ever so small, and then excuses himself by saying, "I forgot. I didn't think!" will never be a reliable man. And the boy who finds pleasure in the suffering of weaker things will never be a noble, generous, kindly man—a gentleman.

FOR THE LAST TIME.

There is a touch of pathos about doing even the simplest thing for "the last time." It is not alone kissing the lips of the dead that gives this strange pain. You feel it when you look your last upon scene that you have loved—when you stand in some quiet city street where you know you will never stand again. The actor playing his part for the last time, the singer whose voice is cracked hopelessly, and who, after this once, will never stand again before the sea of upturned faces, disputing the plaudits with fresher voices and fairer forms; the minister who has preached his last sermon—these all know the bitterness of the two words "never again." How they come to us on birth-days, as we grow older. Never, never again young—always nearer and nearer to the very last—the end which is universal, the "last thing" which shall follow all last things, and turn them, we hope, from pains to joys. We put away our boyish toys with an odd headache. We are too old to walk any longer on our stilts—too tall to play marbles on the sidewalk; yet played with our merry thought for the last time, and life's serious

upgrown work was before us. Now we do not want the lost toys back. Life has other and larger playthings before us. May it not be that these, too, shall seem in the light of some far off day as the boyish games seem to manhood, and we shall learn that death is but the opening of a gate into a new land of promise?

WASTED HOURS.

Oh, how many of these upon the record of our past! How many hours wasted, worse than wasted, in frivolous conversation, useless employment; hours of which we can give no account, and in which we benefited neither ourselves or others. There are no such hours in the busiest lives, but they make up the whole sum of the lives of many. Many lives without accomplishing any good; squander away their time in petty, trifling things, as if the only object in life were to kill time, as if the earth were not a place for probation, but our abiding residence. We do not value time as we should, but let many golden hours pass by unimproved. We loiter during the day; time of life, and ere we know it, the night draws near "when no man can work." Oh, hours misspent and wasted! How we wish we could live them over again. God will require from us an account of the manner in which we spent our years, and He will judge us so differently from our own judgment. The years that we spent in promoting our selfish motives, ignoring our soul's salvation, these all in his sight will be wasted. Let us be prudent then in the employment of our time, that when the Great Judge investigates the works of each one. He will not say that we have lived wholly in vain.

YOUNG MAN, DEPEND ON YOUR OWN EFFORTS.

Fight your own battles. Hoe your own row. Ask no favors of any one, and you will succeed a thousand times better than those who are always beseeching some one's patronage. No one will ever help you as you can help yourself, because no one will be so heartily interested in your affairs. The first step will not be such a long one, perhaps; but, carving your own way up the mountain, you make each one lead to another, and stand firm in that while you chop out still another. Men who have made their fortunes are not those who had five thousand dollars given them to start with, but started fair with a well-earned dollar or two. Men who have by their own exertions acquired fame have not been thrust into popularity by puffs, begged or paid for, or given in friendly spirit. They have outstretched their hands and touched the public heart. Men who win love do their own wooing, and I never knew a man to fail so signally as one who had induced his affectionate grandmother to speak a good word for him. Whether you work for fame, for love, for money, or for anything else, work with your hands, heart and brain. Say "I will!" and some day you will conquer. Too many friends hurt a man more than none at all.—*Grace Greenwood*.

Grains of Gold.

A life full of constant employment is the only safe and happy one.

The philosopher Frazer says, that though a man without money is poor, a man with nothing but money is still poorer.

Value the friendship of him who stands by you in the storms; swarms of insects will surround you in the sunshine.

The secret of one's success or failure in nearly every enterprise, is usually contained in the answer to the question: How earnest is he?

The man who is obliged to earn the necessities of life and supports his family, knows not the unhappiness he prays for when he desires wealth and idleness. To be constantly busy is always to be happy.

Peace is better than joy. Joy is an uneasy guest, and always on tiptoe to depart. It tires and wears us out, and yet keeps us ever fearing that the next moment it will be gone. Peace is not so—it comes more quietly, it stays more contentedly and it never exhausts our strength, nor gives us one anxious fascinating thought. Therefore, let us pray for peace.

At best, life is not very long. A few more miles, a few more tears, some pleasure, much pain, sunshine and song, clouds and darkness, hasty greetings, abrupt farewells—then our little joys will close, and injurer and injured will pass away. It is worth while to love each other?

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