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Poet's Corner.

THE TWO STREAMS.

BY OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

Behold the rocky wall
That down its sloping sides
Pours the swift rain drops, blending as they fall
In rushing river tides!

You stream, whose sources run
Turned by a pebble's edge,
Athabasca, rolling toward the sun
Through the cleft mountain ledge.

The slender rill had strayed
But for the slanting stone,
To evening's ocean, with the tangled braid
Of foam-flecked Oregon.

So from the heights of Will
Life's parting stream descends,
And, as a moment turns its slender rill,
Each widening torrent bends,—

From the same cradle's side—
From the same mother's knee,—
One to long darkness and the frozen tide,
One to the Peaceful Sea!

THE WIFE'S MISTAKE.

The carriage stopped at the door, and, in a few minutes, Margaret Hale entered the apartment where her husband sat, wholly absorbed in poring over day-books and ledgers.

"Those tiresome accounts still," she exclaimed. "Will you never find time for anything but business, Ralph? Have you no taste for anything beyond figures?"

"Margaret," but the sadness in the tone was unheeded, as she continued:

"We had such a charming evening at Mrs. C's. Captain Hill related many interesting incidents of his residence in Egypt, and Mr. Warren, the famous young poet, read 'Maud,' and some of the most beautiful passages in 'Aurora Leigh.' I must read to you some of Romney's 'Great Thoughts on Duty.'"

She went hastily to her chamber for the volume. When she returned, her quiet entrance was unheard by her husband, whose pen was rapidly moving over the almost interminable columns of figures. With an expression of impatience, almost of scorn, resting on her face, she hastily turned away.

"And this is the end of all my dreams of marriage," said she, as she reached her room. "He has a taste for drudgery.—His pursuits and tastes are all commonplace, and I must go from home to find the sympathy I need, to find those who will appreciate, with me, the books of love, and the beautiful in art, for which he has neither eye nor ear. Why did he not marry a woman who had neither heart nor mind to be continually unsatisfied?"

In the room she had left, Ralph Hale sat hour after hour, till his brain was

weary and eyelids drooped. Then, laying aside his books, he remained a long time in deep thought.

"God bless my Margaret," he prayed, "and give me strength to bear all things. Give me power to make her happy."

Putting away all thoughts of her husband's real nobleness of character, jealously preserving the memory of every slight difference in their tastes and pursuits, Margaret cherished the spirit of discontent, till it embittered every hour of her life, and sent suffering, she had never dreamed of, to the heart of her husband, who would gladly have sacrificed every earthly good for her happiness.

A sudden and severe illness came to her while Ralph was in a distant city. One day during her slow recovery, the aged minister, who had baptized her in infancy, was sitting by her side.

"Margaret," he said, after steadfastly watching her troubled face, "you are unhappy. I have seen it a long time. I should not recognize in you my once cheerful, happy child. May I not know what great sorrow has come to you?"

Then, with sobs and tears, she told him all her unhappiness.

After a short silence, the old man spoke again, and there was sadness, almost sternness, in his voice. "Years ago, Margaret, a wealthy New York merchant became involved in a speculation, whose failure suddenly took from him the accumulated wealth of his years of commercial enterprise. There were a few years of weary, vain struggling to regain what he had lost; then deep despondency, a lingering disease and death. His wife and four children were left penniless. The eldest child, a boy of sixteen, had finished his preparatory studies, and was about to enter college. By this stroke, he found his prospects for the future clouded; but, with a noble self-forgetfulness, he turned cheerfully into the way marked out for him, and walked resolutely in it.

"He obtained a situation with a merchant, who had known his father, where his faithfulness and untiring devotion to his duties, won the confidence of all who knew him. During the first years of her widowhood, his mother had taught a private school for the young; and it was the boy's highest ambition to relieve her of this necessity, and give her the rest her feeble health required. I cannot tell you all his privations, his willing sacrifice of every recreation, his continued self-denial that he might lighten the burdens of the dear to him.

"Year after year, success crowned his efforts. In the village where his mother had passed the years of her childhood and the first years of her married life, he purchased a pleasant residence for her, and then, a lucrative business being opened to him in the West, he came here.

"At the time of his removal here, a accident revealed to him the fact that the

widow and invalid daughter of one whose fortune was, by his father's advice, risked in that unfortunate speculation which had so changed his own life, were living in extreme poverty. To him they are indebted for the pleasant home that now shelters them, and for the delicate, thoughtful ministrations to their daily comfort.

"Now, when the commercial world is clouded, and disasters crowd thick and fast upon him, as upon others, his anxious thoughts turn to the mother, and suffering sister, in the little village home, whose comforts depend upon him, to the other lonely fireside, to which his constant thoughtfulness imparts its only light, and to his own home, and the young wife whose happiness is dearer to him than life. For this, Margaret, Ralph Hale gives his days to incessant toil, and willingly sacrifices the social pleasures he is so eminently fitted to enjoy.

"I have been in these three homes.—With a love that is almost reverence, his mother and sister speak his name, and, with full hearts, thank God for his life—that life so filled with the beauty of self-renunciation. The widow and daughter whose hearts he has made glad, tell of his numberless acts of kindness, of his delicate, and unceasing watchfulness, and daily they ask God's blessing on him whose life is a blessing to others.

"In his own home, the wife whose love should bless him, whose gentle ministry should comfort and strengthen him, turns coldly from him, because he prefers the happiness of others to his own gratification, because the pressing duties of life claim all his waking hours, leaving him little leisure for the claims of society, or for the high intellectual culture which few attain whose lives are not wholly devoted to it!"

"Oh, Ralph, I have never known you! I have so cruelly misjudged you," said the weeping wife.

The old man continued:—"Some men talk poetry, some write it in words, and some write it in their lives. The true heroism which poets have sung, the beauty of self-abnegation and of ceaseless devotion to duty, which have been their inspiration, Ralph Hale has lived. The woman who has won the deepest love of such a heart should reverently and gratefully cherish it as the richest blessing of her life."

In the twilight of that day, Margaret was awaiting her husband's return.—Amid the bitter self-reproachings that darkened the hour, gleamed a new and holy light. Higher purposes were aroused within her. In the future, she would make divinely real in her life the beautiful ideals which had filled her heart with unsatisfied longings. She, too, would live for others, and first of all for him whom she had so misunderstood.

A hurried step in the entrance hall,