

verpay Gretton a farthing of the "compound interest."

A Holiday.

Nature's vast frame—*The web of human things, birth and the grave.*"

Stanley Gretton stood high in the first class lawyers in the City. His father, an affluent merchant, failed just as his son was completing his education, and, in the beginning of his career, Gretton had to struggle with privations and embarrassments; but he brought talents, industry, and a manly spirit to the contest, and conquered. He was now, at perhaps the happiest period of human life, verging on forty, with an established reputation, and a rapidly growing, and *well earned* fortune, with the strong consciousness of matured powers, and with no premonition of decay.

His wife, whose health had been fatally injured by the loss, early in her married life, of two girls, one after the other, had recently, after a long interval, given birth to a third, who, with one son, a charming boy of nine years, added to the brim their cup of domestic happiness.

Mrs. Gretton's confinement absolved her husband from his social dues, and he spent New Year's day, one of his few holidays, in her room. "Declarations," "conveyancings," "injunctions," "ejectments," all were forgotten in the pleasure of dandling "the little pillam between life and death." Never had Gretton felt a pleasure, at fixing the attention of judge and jury, to be named with that of catching the eye of this baby of three weeks. He might have comforted Ross to have looked and seen that the holiest joys of the rich and the poor were of the same nature, on the same level.

"This is the happiest New-Year's day of my life, Mary," said Mr. Gretton to his wife. "Our health promises to be better than it has been for many a day. Our sad losses are in a measure made up to us in this dear little girl. Stanley is not a boy to be ashamed of," exchanging glances with the bright boy who stood at the bed-side caressing the baby; "the clouds have blown away, and the future looks very bright to me." Mrs. Gretton had not the cheerful disposition of her husband; sorrow and ill health had dimmed those bright tints from her horizon, that promise happy days to come. She sighed, and said the future did not look so bright to her. "I don't know why," she added, "perhaps it is because whenever

happiness is but spoken of, I feel the void left by my dead children; but, besides, my dear husband, I am afraid you are working too hard. The gray hairs, Stanley, are stealing in among the black, and it seems to me the lines in your face are every day deepening."

Mrs. Gretton thus gave her husband an opening, which he had been for some time seeking, for a communication that he rather dreaded to make. There always seemed to her a great preponderance of danger in risk of every kind, and she was nervously susceptible on anything approaching to what is called speculation in the trafficking world. After a little preliminary hemming, Mr. Gretton began:—"To tell you the truth, Mary, I do feel my office business to be wearing on me, and I mean soon to give myself a long holiday. I am not going to be a slave to business much longer. I am taking a cross-cut to Dame Fortune's temple; you look alarmed—now for your old bug-bear, Mary—your horror of speculation."

"Rather a reasonable horror, since both our fathers were ruined by it. I have always told you that I can content myself with the most humble fortune. I do not desire wealth for myself, nor for my children. We have been happy—we *are* happy without it; in truth we have more of it than we need; then what temptation is there to adventure on an uncertain, troubled sea."

"The sea is of your own creation, Mary, and all its dangers of your own imagining. My voyage is to be a short and a very safe one, and if I am disappointed in the end of it, no dishonour can ensue. I am but where I began—I have enough to pay all the debts I have contracted. My profession will be left to me, and thank Heaven, that yields me enough to content any man."

"Then why not be contented?"

"I say so, too, father," echoed his boy; "I am sure we have everything in the world to make us contented."

Mr. Gretton was silenced for a moment; he looked at his wife and children; wherever he turned his eye he saw the signs of comfort and affluence; he felt that the incense of contentment should rise from his domestic altar; and a stern voice within his breast told him he had been indulging unreasonable and sordid desires. But self-love is full of subtlety; it wraps itself in its own vaporious exhalations, and winding about its tortuous path, escapes the direct pursuit of conscience. "We have enough in our worldly condition for contentment, certainly," resumed Mr. Gretton, "for content-