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THREE PEOPLE

BY

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HIS LAMP," "ESTER RIED," "FOUR GIRLS AT CHAUTAUQUA,"
"CHAUTAUQUA GIRLS AT HOME," ETC.



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☞ PANSY ☞

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THREE PEOPLE.



"Are you a total
abstainer?"—[Page 60.](#)

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THREE PEOPLE

CHAPTER I.

SOME BABIES.



IE the sash a very little looser, nurse, and give the loops a more graceful fall; there—*so*. Now he's a beauty! every inch of him." And Mrs. Hastings moved backward a few steps in order to get the full effect.

A beauty he was, certainly; others beside his mother would have admitted that. What baby fresh from a bath, and robed in the daintiest and most perfect of baby toilets, with tightly curling rings of brown hair covering the handsome head; with great sparkling, dancing blue eyes, and laughing rosebud mouth; with hands and feet and body strung on invisible wires, and quivering with life and glee, was ever other than a beauty? [6]

The whole house was in commotion in honor of the fact that Master Pliny L. Hastings, only son and heir of the great Pliny Hastings, Senior, of Hastings' Hall, had "laughed and cried, and nodded and winked," through the entire space of three hundred and sixty-five days and nights, and actually reached the first anniversary of his birthday.

A remarkable boy was Pliny Hastings. He didn't know yet that his father was a millionaire, but he must have surmised it, for, as far back as he could remember, his bits of sleeves had been looped with real pearls; rosewood and lace and silk and down had united to make his tiny bed; he had bitten his first tooth through on a sphere of solid gold—and all the wonderful and improbable contrivances for royal babyhood that could be bought or imagined, met together in that grand house on the Avenue for this treasured bit of humanity.

On this particular day baby was out in all his glory; he had made the circuit of the great parlors, stopping on his way to be tossed toward the ceiling, in the arms of first one uncle and then another. He had been kissed and cuddled by all the aunties and cousins, until his cheeks were rosy with triumph; and, finally, he had been carried, shouting with glee, high up on his father's shoulder, down to the dining-room, and occupied the seat of honor at the long table, where he crowed, and laughed, and clapped his hands over every plum that found its way into his dainty mouth. This conduct was interspersed, however, by sundry dives and screams after the coffee urn and the ice pitcher, and various unattainable things—for there were unattainable things, even for Pliny Hastings. Oh, the times and times in his young life that he had cried for the beautiful round moon, and got it not! And even gaslight and firelight had hitherto eluded his eager grasp; but he had learned no lessons from his failures, and still pitched and dived after impossibilities in the most insane fashion. To-day he looked with indifference on the gold-lined silver cup bearing his name and age, and wanted the great carving fork instead. He cared not a whit that the sparkling wine was poured, and glasses were touched, and toasts drank on his account; but a touch of wisdom must have come over his baby brain, for he made a sudden dash at his father's glass, sending the red wine right and left, and shivering the frail glass to fragments; he did more than that, he promptly seized on one of the sharpest bits, and thereby cut a long crooked gash in the sweet chubby finger, and was finally borne, shrieking and struggling, from the room, his little heart filled with mingled feelings of terror and rage. So much for Baby Hastings and his birthday. [7] [8]

In a neat white house, no more than a mile away from this great mansion, there was another baby. It was just when Pliny Hastings was hurried away to the nursery that this baby's mother folded away papers, and otherwise tidied up her bit of a nursery, then pushed a little sewing chair in front of her work table, and paused ere she sat down to give another careful tuck to the blanketed bundle, which was cuddled in the great rocking chair, fast asleep. Then she gathered the doubled up fist into her hand, and caressed it softly, while she murmured: "Bless his precious little heart! he takes a splendid nap for his birthday, so he does."

"Ben," this to the gentleman who was lounging in another rocker, reading the paper, "does it seem possible that Bennie is a year old to-day? I declare, Ben, we ought to have got him a present for his birthday."

The father looked up from his paper with a good-natured laugh. "Seems to me he's rather youthful to begin on that tack, isn't he?" [9]

"Oh, Ben, no! I want every one of his birthdays to be so nice and pleasant. Do, papa, come here and see how nice he looks, with his hair all in a curl."

Thus appealed to, Mr. Phillips came over to the arm-chair, and together they stood looking down on the treasured bit of flesh and blood.

"Our eldest born," the mother said, softly.

"And youngest, too, for the matter of that," answered Mr. Phillips, gaily.

His wife laughed. "Ben, there isn't the least bit of sentiment in you, is there? Now they are having a wonderful time to-day in the grand corner house on the Avenue, the Hastings' house, you know, and it's all because their baby is a year old to-day, and he isn't a bit nicer than ours."

"Their baby's father is worth a million."

"I don't care if he is worth a billion, that don't make their baby any sweeter. Say, Ben, I just wish, for the fun of it, we had some little cunning thing for his birthday present."

Mr. Phillips seemed to be very much amused. "Well," he said, still laughing, "Which shall it be, a razor or a jack-knife?"

His wife actually shuddered. "Ben!" she said, with a reproachful face, "how *can* you say such dreadful things? What if he should grow up and commit suicide?"

"What if I had a boy, and he should grow to be a man, and another man should tread on his toes, and he should knock the other man down, and the other man should die, and they should hang my boy," rattled off Mr. Phillips in anything but a grave tone. [10]

"Little woman, that's what I should call looking into the future, isn't it?"

A knock at the door interrupted them, and Roxie, the tidy little maid of all work, who had been out for an afternoon, appeared to them, talking rapidly.

"If you please, ma'am, I'm a quarter late, and could you please to excuse me; the clock around the corner doesn't go, and Kate she didn't know the time; and Mrs. Meeker said would you please accept her love and these grapes in a basket. She says they're the finest of the lot, and you needn't mind sending of it home, 'cause she'll let little Susie step around after it."

This mixture set Mr. Phillips off into another of his hearty laughs; but when they were alone again, he seized one of the great purple clusters, and flinging himself on the floor in front of the baby, exclaimed:

"I'll tell you what we'll do, little wife: we'll present one of these to the boy, and then you and I will eat it in honor of his birthday, unless, indeed, there may be some bad omen in this, even. You know the juice of the grape may, under certain circumstances, become a dangerous article?" [11]

Mrs. Phillips laughed carelessly as she nestled in the little sewing chair, and prepared to enjoy the grapes. "No," she said, gaily; "grapes are very harmless omens to me. I'm not the least afraid that Baby Benny will ever be a drunkard."

There used to be in Albany, not many years ago, a miniature "Five Points," and one didn't have to go very far up what is now Rensselaer Street to find it, either. There were tenement houses, which from attic to basement swarmed with filthy, ragged, repulsive human life.

In one of the lowest and meanest of these many cellars, on the very day, and at the identical hour, in which Master Pliny Hastings held high carnival at his father's table, and Baby Benny Phillips nestled and dreamed among the soft pillows of his mother's easy chair, a little brother of theirs, clad in dirt and rags, crawled over the reeking floor, and occupied himself in devouring eagerly every bit of potato skin or apple paring that came in his way. Was there ever a more forlorn looking specimen of a baby! It was its birthday, too—there are more babies in the world than we think for whose birthdays might be celebrated on the same day. But this one knew nothing about it—dear me! neither did his mother. I doubt if it had once occurred to her that this poor bit of scrawny, dirty, terrible baby had been through one whole year of life. And yet, perhaps, she loved her boy a little—her face looked sullen rather than wicked. On the whole, I think she did, for as she was about to ascend the stairs, with the sullen look deepening or changing into a sort of gloomy apprehension, she hesitated, glanced behind her, and finally, with a muttered "Plague take the young one," turned back, and, catching him by the arm of his tattered dress, landed him on the topmost step, in a mud-puddle! but she did it because she remembered that he would be very likely to climb into the tub of soapsuds that stood at the foot of the bed, and so get drowned. [12]

Mrs. Ryan came up her cellar stairs at the same time, and looked over at her neighbor, then from her to her forlorn child, who, however, enjoyed the mud-puddle, and finally commenced a conversation.

"How old is that young one of yours?"

"Pretty near a year—why, let me see—what day is it?—why, I'll be bound if he ain't *just* a year old this very day."

"Birthday, eh? You ought to celebrate." [13]

"Humph," said the mother, with a darkening face, "we shall likely; we do most generally. His loving father will get drunk, and if he don't pitch Tode head over heels out here on the stones, in honor of his birthday, I'll be thankful. Tode Mall, you stop crawling out to that gutter, or I'll shake you within an inch of your life!"

This last, in a louder and most threatening tone, to the ambitious baby. But poor Tode didn't understand, or forgot, or something, for while his mother talked with her companion, out he traveled toward the inviting gutter again, and tumbled into it, from whence he was carried, dripping and screaming, by his angry mother, who bestowed the promised shake, and added a vigorous slapping, whereat Tode kicked and yelled in a manner that proved him to be without doubt a near relative of Master Pliny Hastings himself. Three brothers they were, Messrs. Pliny,

Bennie and Tode, opening their wondrous eyes on the world on precisely the same day of time, though under such different circumstances, and amid such different surroundings, that I doubt if it looked equally round to them all. Besides, they hadn't the least idea each of the existence of the other; but no matter for that, they were brothers, linked together in many a way.

Perhaps you wouldn't have had an idea that their fathers were each occupied in the same business; but such was the case. Pliny L. Hastings, the millionaire, owned and kept in motion two of the hotels in a western city where the bar-rooms were supplied with marble counters, and the customers were served from cut-glass goblets, resting on silver salvers. Besides he was a wholesale liquor dealer, and kept great warehouses constantly supplied with the precious stuff. Bennie Phillips' good-natured father was a grocer, on a modest and unpretending scale; but he had a back room in his store where he kept a few barrels of liquor for medicinal purposes, and a clerk in attendance. Tode Mall's father kept an unmitigated grog-shop, or rum hole, or whatever name you are pleased to call it, without any cut glass or medicinal purposes about it, and sold vile whisky at so much a drink to whoever had sunk low enough to buy it. So now you know all about how these three baby brothers commenced their lives.

[14]

[15]



CHAPTER II.

JOHN BIRGE'S OPPORTUNITY.

ONE day it rained—oh, terribly. Albany is not a pleasant city when it rains, and Rensselaer Street is not a pleasant street. That was what John Birge thought as he held his umbrella low to avoid the slanting drops, and hurried himself down the muddy road, hurried until he came to a cellar stairs, and then he stopped short in the midst of rain and wind, such a pitiable sight met his eye, the figure of a human being, fallen down on that lowest stair in all the abandonment of drunkenness.

"This is awful!" muttered John Birge to himself. "I wonder if the poor wretch lives here, and if I can't get him in."

Wondering which, he hurried down the stairs, made his way carefully past the "poor wretch" and knocked at the door. No answer. He knocked louder, and this time a low "come in" rewarded him, and he promptly obeyed it. A woman was bending over a pile of straw and rags, and an object lying on top of them; and a squalid child, curled in one corner, with a wild, frightened look in his eyes. The woman turned as the door opened, and John Birge recognized her as his mother's washerwoman.

[16]

"Oh, Mr. Birge," she said, eagerly, "I'm too thankful for anything at seeing you. This woman is going so fast, she is; and what to do I don't know."

Mr. Birge set down his umbrella and shook himself free of what drops he could before he approached the straw and rags; then he saw that a woman lay on them, and on her face the purple shadows of death were gathering.

"What is it?" he asked, awe-struck. "What is the matter?"

"Clear case of murder, I call it. Her man is a drunkard, and a fiend, too, leastways when he's drunk he is—and he's pitched her down them there stairs once too often, I reckon. I was goin' to my work early this morning, and I heard her groaning, so I come in, and I just staid on ever since. Feelings is feelings, if a body does have to lose a day's work to pay for 'em. She lies like that for a spell, and then she rouses up and has an awful turn."

"Turn of what? Is she in pain?"

[17]

"No, I reckon not; it's her mind. She knows she's going, and it makes her wild, like. Maybe you can talk to her some, and do her good—there, she sees you!"

A pair of stony, rather than wild, eyes were suddenly fixed on Mr. Birge's face. He bent over her and spoke gently.

"My poor woman, what can I do for you?"

"Nothing at all," she said, stolidly. "My heart's broke, and that's the end of it. It don't make no difference what comes next, I'm done with it."

"But, my poor friend, are you ready for what is coming to you?"

"You mean I'm dying, I s'pose. Yes, I know that, and it makes no kind of difference. I've had enough of living, the land knows. Things can't be worse with me than they are here."

And now John spoke eagerly.

"But don't you know that they can be better, that there is a home and rest and peace waiting for you, and that the Lord Jesus Christ wants you?"

"I don't know anything about them things. I might, I s'pose, if I'd been a mind to. It's too late now, and I don't care about that, either. Things *can't* be worse, I tell you."

"It's *not* too late; don't ruin yourself with that folly. The Lord is all powerful. He can do *anything*. He doesn't need *time* as men do. He can save you *now* just as well as he could last year. All you have to do is to ask him; he will in no wise cast out; he 'is able to save to the *uttermost*.' Believe on him, and the work is all done." [18]

It is impossible to tell the eager energy with which these words were poured forth by the man who saw that the purple shadows were creeping and the time was short; but the same stony look still settled on the listener's face, and she repeated with the indifference of despair—

"It's no use—my time is gone—it don't matter. My heart's broke, I tell you, and I don't care."

"He *will* save you if you will let him; he wants to. I can't tell you how much he has promised to hear the very faintest, latest call. Say 'Lord Jesus forgive me' with all your heart, and the work is done."

A sudden change swept over the sick stolid face, a gleam of interest in the dreary eyes, and she spoke with eagerness.

"Do you say he can do everything?"

"*Everything*. 'Whatever ye ask in my name, *believing*, ye shall receive.' These are his own words."

"Does he believe in rum?"

"No!" promptly replied the startled, but strongly temperate John Birge. [19]

"Then I'll pray," was the quick response. "I never prayed in my life, but I will now; like enough I can save him yet. You folks think he can hear everything that's said, don't you?"

Strangely moved as well as startled, her visitor answered her only by a bow. The shaking hands were clasped, and in a clear firm voice the sick woman spoke:

"O Lord, don't let Tode ever drink a drop of rum!"

Then the little boy crouching in the corner, rose up and came quickly over to his mother.

"Keep away, Tode," said the woman at the foot of the bed, speaking in an awe-stricken voice. "Keep away, don't touch her; she ain't talking to you."

Not so much as a glance did the mother bestow upon her boy, but repeated over and over again the sentence, "O Lord, don't let Tode ever touch a drop of rum."

"Is that the way?" she asked, suddenly turning her sharp bright eyes full on Mr. Birge.

"Is that the way they pray? are them the right kind of words to use?"

"My poor friend," began he, but she interrupted him impatiently.

"Just tell me if that's the name you call him by when you pray?" [20]

"Yes," he said. "Only won't you add to them, 'And forgive and save *me* for Jesus' sake.'"

"Never mind me," she answered, promptly. "'Tain't of no consequence about me, never has been; and I haven't no time to waste on myself. I want to save him. 'O Lord, don't let Tode ever touch a drop of rum.'"

"He doesn't need time," pleaded her visitor. "He can hear both prayers at once. He can save both you and Tode in a second of time; and he loves you and is waiting."

This was her answer:

"O Lord, don't let Tode ever touch a drop of rum."

All that woman's soul was swallowed up in the one great longing. Unable longer to endure the scene in silence, John Birge dropped on his knees and said:

"Lord Jesus, hear this prayer for her boy, and save this poor woman who will not pray for herself."

The words seemed to arrest her attention.

"What do *you* care?" she added, at length.

"The Lord Jesus cares. He died to save you."

Then John Birge repeated his prayer, adding a few simple words.

The little silence that followed was broken by the repetition of the poor woman's one solemn sentence: [21]

"O Lord, don't let Tode ever touch a drop of rum."

"And save me," added John Birge.

"And save me"—her lips took up the sentence—"for Jesus' sake."

"For Jesus' sake."

The next time she added these words of her own accord; and again and again was the solemn cry repeated, until there came a sudden changing of the purple shadows into solemn ashy gray, and with one half-murmured effort, "not a drop of rum" and "for Jesus' sake," the voice was forever hushed.

The neighbor watcher was the first to break the stillness.

"Well, I never in all my life!" she ejaculated, speaking solemnly. "For the land's sake! I wish every rum-seller in the world could a heard her. Well, her troubles is over, Mr. Birge. Now, what's to be done next?"

"Is she anything to you, Mary, except an acquaintance?"

"I'm thankful to say she ain't. If she had been I'd expect to die of shame for letting her die in this hole. She's a neighbor of mine, at least I live around the corner; but I don't know much about her, only that her man comes home drunk about every night, and tears around like a wild beast." [22]

Which last recalled to John's remembrance the reason of his being in that room.

"Is that her husband lying out there?" he asked, nodding toward the door.

"Yes, it is. Been there long enough to know something by this time, I should think, too."

"It seems to me the first thing to be done is to get him in here; it isn't decent to leave him in this storm."

"It's decenter than he deserves, in my opinion, enough sight," Mary muttered.

Nevertheless they went toward the door, and with infinite pains and much fearful swearing from the partially roused man, they succeeded in pushing and pulling and dragging him inside the cellar on the floor, when he immediately sank back into heavy sleep.

"Isn't he a picture of a man, now?" said the sturdy Mary, with a face and gesture of intense disgust.

"I would rather be he than the man who sold him the rum," her companion answered, solemnly. "Well, Mary, have you time to stay here awhile, or must you go at once?"

"I'll *take* time, sir. Feelings is feelings, if I be poor; and I can't leave the boy and all, like this."

"Very well. You shall not suffer for your kind act. I'll go at once to notify the Coroner and the proper authorities, and meantime my mother will probably step around. Shall I have this fellow taken to the station?" [23]

"No," said Mary, with another disgusted look at the drunken man. "Let the beast sleep it out; he's beyond hurting anybody, and *she* wouldn't want him sent to the station."

"It was the most solemnly awful sight I ever saw," said John Birge, telling it all over to his friend McElroy. "I never shall forget that woman's prayer. It was the most tremendous temperance lecture I ever heard."

"Is the woman buried?"

"Yes, this afternoon. They hurry such matters abominably, McElroy. Mother saw, though, that things were decent, and did what she could. We mean to keep an eye on the boy. He has great wild eyes, and a head that suggests great possibilities of good or evil, as the case may be. We would like to get him into one of the Children's Homes, and look after him. I meant to go around there this very evening and see what I could do. What do you say to going with me now?"

"Easy enough thing to accomplish, I should think. I presume his father will be glad to get rid of him; but it's storming tremendously, is it not?" [24]

"Pretty hard. It does four-fifths of the time in Albany, you know. Wouldn't you venture?"

"Why, it strikes me not, unless it were a case of life and death, or something of that sort. I should like to assist in rescuing the waif, but won't it do to-morrow?"

"I presume so. We'll go to-morrow after class, then. Well, take the rocking chair and an apple, and make yourself comfortable. I say, McElroy, when I get into my profession I'll preach temperance, shall not you?"

Rain and wind and storm were over by the next afternoon; the sun shone out brilliantly, trying to glorify even the upper end of Rensselaer Street through which the two young men were sauntering, in search of the waif on whom John Birge meant to keep an eye.

"I'm strangely interested in the boy," Birge was saying. "That prayer was something so strange, so fearfully solemn, and the circumstances connected with my stumbling upon them at all were so sad. I was sorry after I left that I had not tried to impress upon the little fellow's mind the solemn meaning of his mother's last words. I half went back to have a little talk with him, but then I thought there would be sufficient opportunity for that in the future. Here, this is the cellar. Be careful how you tread, these steps are abominable. Hallo! Why, what on earth!"

[25]

They descended the stairs; they knocked at the door, but they received no answer; they tried the door, it was locked; they looked in at the rickety window, the miserable stove, the rags, even the straw, were gone—no trace of human residence was to be seen.

It does not take long to move away from Rensselaer Street. Tode and his father were gone; and neither then nor afterward for many a day, though John Birge and his companion made earnest search, were they to be found. The "sufficient opportunity" was gone, too, and young Birge kept no eye on the boy; but there was an All-seeing eye looking down on poor Tode all the while.



[26]

CHAPTER III.

WOLFIE.



R. HASTINGS started on a journey. It was midwinter, so he muffled himself in overcoat and furs, and carried his great fur-lined traveling cloak, all nicely rolled and strapped, ready for extra occasions.

He was not in the very best humor when the night express reached Albany, and he had finally changed his quarters from the Central to the Hudson River Railroad. His arrangements had not been made for spending the night on the train at all; his plan was to be fairly settled under the blankets in a New York hotel by this time, but there had been detention after detention all along his route. So the great man settled himself with what grace he could, and unstrapped the fur-lined cloak, and made other preparations for passing a night in the cars, his face, meanwhile, wearing an ominous frown.

[27]

It was not so much the sitting-up all night that troubled him, for Mr. Hastings was in excellent health, and an excellent traveler, and really did not so much mind the fatigue; but he was a man accustomed to carrying out his plans and intentions to the very letter, and it jarred upon him to have even snow and ice audacious enough to interfere.

There were other travelers that night who had no fur-lined cloaks. One in particular, who sat near the stove, and made such good use of the dampers that Mr. Hastings had no use for his cloak, even after unstrapping it, but flung it into a great furry heap on the nearest seat behind him, and knew not then, nor ever, that the insignificant little act was one of the tiny links in the chain of circumstances that were molding Tode Mall's life.

Tode Mall started on a journey that very evening. He didn't pack his valise, nor take his overcoat, nor ride to the depot in a carriage. In fact, his father kicked him out of the cellar like a foot-ball, and bade him good-by in these words:

"There! get out. And don't let me ever see a sight of your face again."

Tode rolled over once in the snow, then got up and shook himself, and made prompt answer:

"All right! I'm agreed."

He then stuffed his hands into the ragged pockets of his ragged jacket, and marched off up town, and because he happened to roll over and come up with his face turned in the direction of the depot, is the only known reason why he walked *up* town instead of *down*.

[28]

Apparently he didn't take his father's late treatment very much to heart.

"He's drunk," he said, philosophically. "That's what's the matter with him. In about two hours he'll be over this part of the carouse and be snoring, then I'll slip back all right, if I don't freeze beforehand. Ain't it cold, though. I must travel faster than this."

On he went aimlessly, reached the depot presently, and followed the crowd who crossed the river, for no better reason than that a great many people seemed to be going that way. Following a portion of this same crowd brought him at last to a platform of the departing train, just as the steam-horse was giving a premonitory snort, and the official called out for the second time:

"All aboard!"

"No, we ain't exactly," said Tode. "But it wouldn't take long to get aboard if that is what you want, particularly if you've got a fire in there."

And he peered curiously in at the drowsy passengers. It was just at this point that Mr. Hastings threw his furry cloak away from him, and settled among his other wraps for a night's rest. The action caught Tode's eye. [29]

"My! ain't that fellow comfortable?" chuckled he to himself. "Got a wolf there that he don't appear to need. If he'd lend it to me I wouldn't mind keeping him company for a spell. S'pose I try it?"

And suiting the action to the word he pushed open the door, and walked boldly forward among the sleepy people, halted at the stove, and while the delicious sense of warmth crept slowly over him he kept one eye on Mr. Hastings until he felt sure, just as the train got fairly into motion, that the gentleman had fairly commenced his nap, then he slid himself into the empty seat, and used his hands and his wits in so disposing of the "wolf" that it would cover his cuddled up body completely, and at the same time look like nothing but an innocent cloak thrown carelessly on the seat; and he chuckled as distinctly as he dared when he heard the conductor's voice calling "tickets" to the sleepy people, and presently the door opened, and shut with a slam, and the silence that followed showed that he considered his business with that car finished.

"He didn't ask Wolfie for his ticket," giggled Tode. "I reckon he don't know he's alive, no more don't the man that thinks he owns him. I say now, what if he gets a cold streak, and wants to borrow Wolfie for himself after a spell? Poh!" he added after a minute, "it's easy enough to get out the way I came in; but it will be time enough to do it when I *have* to. I ain't going to keep doing it all night. I vote for *one* good warm nap, I do—so here goes." [30]

And Tode went straightway to the land of dreams. The night wore on, the restless traveler near the stove dozed and wakened and attended to the dampers, thereby all unknowingly contributing his mite to Tode's warm journey. The train halted now and again at a station, and a few sleepy people stumbled off, and a few wide-awake ones came on, but still seats were comparatively plenty and no one disturbed the fur cloak. In the course of time Tode's sleep grew less sound; he twisted around as much as his limits would allow, and punched an imaginary bed-fellow with his elbow, muttering meanwhile:

"Keep still now. Which of you is joggling?"

The joggling continued, and at last the boy twisted and punched himself awake and into a sitting posture, and finally the look of unmixed astonishment with which he took in his surroundings, gave way to one of unmistakable fun.

"Here's a go!" he at last informed himself. "I've come a journey and no mistake; made a night of it sure as I live. Lucky I waked up first of this crowd. If somebody had sat down on Wolfie now by mistake, there might have been trouble. Guess I'll look about me." [31]

He shook himself free from the cloak and sauntered out on the platform. The gray dawn was just glimmering over the frozen earth, the world looked snowy and icy and desolate. On swept the train, and not a familiar object met his eye. Did Tode feel dreary and homesick, lost in the whizzing strangeness, sorry he had come? Did he want to shrink away from sight and sound? Did he feel that he would give anything in the world to be landed at that moment somewhere near Broadway in Albany? Not a bit of it! Nothing of the sort entered his brain. *He* feel homesick! Why his home was anywhere and nowhere. Since that day, years ago, when his mother died, he had had less of a home than even before. Sometimes he slept on the cellar floor with his father, but oftener in the street, in a stable, or curled in a barrel when he had the good fortune to find one—*anywhere*; but never in all his life had he spent such a comfortable night as this last had been. But his father? Oh dear, you don't know what fathers can become to their children, if you think he missed him. Please remember his last act had been to kick his son out of a cellar into the snow; but Tode bore him no ill-will for this or any other attention. Oh no, nor good-will either. [32] Why, his father was simply less than nothing to him. So this morning, without an idea as to what he was going to do next, he stood and watched himself being whirled into New York, with no feeling save one of extreme satisfaction at the success of his last night's plan, and alert only to keep out of the reach of the conductor. The car door slammed behind him, and he turned quickly, as two gentlemen came out. One of them eyed him closely, and finally addressed him.

"Who are you with, my lad?"

Tode chuckled inwardly at this question, but added promptly enough,

"A man in there," nodding his head toward the car which contained Mr. Hastings.

"Humph! the man must be crazy to let his servant travel in such a suit as that in this bitter weather."

This remark was addressed to his companion as the two passed into the next car. Tode chuckled outright this time; he had a new idea.

"That's the talk," he informed himself. "I'm his servant; just it prezackly—much obliged. I hadn't thought of that arrangement before, but I like the plan first rate. Maybe Wolfie and I will get another night or so together by the means." [33]

So now he had two items of business on hand, dodging the conductor and keeping an eye on his traveling companion. The first he managed to accomplish by dint of always passing out at one end of the car just as that official was entering at the other, aided in his scheme by the fact that it was not yet light, and also that they were fairly in the city. But the last was an extremely difficult matter. A dozen times, as he breathlessly pushed and elbowed his way through the hurrying crowd, did he think that he had hopelessly lost sight of his guide, and as often did he catch another glimpse of him and push on. At last a car, not too full for Mr. Hastings to crowd himself into, rewarded his signal, and Tode plunged after him as far as the platform. There he halted. There were many passengers and much fare to collect, so our young scamp had enjoyed quite a ride before his turn came.

"Fare," said the conductor at last, briefly and sharply, right at his elbow.

"Yes, sir," answered Tode as promptly. "Only it's pretty cold and windy."

"Pay your fare," shouted the conductor.

"Oh bless me—yes, to be sure."

And Tode fumbled in both pockets, drawing out bits of strings and balls of paper and ends of candles, everything but pennies; then looked up with an innocent face. [34]

"Why, as true as you live, I haven't got a cent."

"Then what are you doing here?"

"Why riding, to be sure. It's enough sight nicer than walking this windy day. Your driver stopped for everybody that held up his hand. I saw him, so when I was invited kind of, how did I know I'd have to pay?"

The demure, innocent, childlike air with which Tode rattled off this story can not be described. The conductor laughed.

"You're either *very* green or *very* old," he said at last. "And I'm not sure which. Where do you want to go?"

"Oh I ain't a bit particular. You needn't go out of your way on my account. I'll ride right along with you, and look at the sights."

Which accommodating spirit seemed greatly to amuse the other platform riders; and as the car stopped at that moment for passengers, the conductor turned away with a laugh, and left Tode to enjoy his ride in peace.

On they went, and in spite of driving snow and sleet, Tode managed to make the acquaintance of the driver, and get considerable amusement out of his trip, when he suddenly broke off in the midst of a sentence, and cleared the steps with a bound. Mr. Hastings had left the car and crossed the street. Then commenced another chase, around the corner, down one block, up another, on and on, until Tode, panting and breathless, brought up at last before a grand hotel, inside which Mr. Hastings vanished. Tode pushed boldly forward, shied behind a fat gentleman who ran against them in the hall, and remained hidden long enough to overhear the following conversation: [35]

"Why, Mr. Hastings! How do you do? When did you arrive?"

"By the morning train, sir. All full here?"

"Well, comfortably so. Make room for you without a doubt. Stop here?"

"Yes, sir. Always do."

"Remain long?"

"No, return on Friday. Waiter, this way, sir."

Tode drew a long breath of relief, and dodged out.

"Well," said he, with a satisfied air, "I'm thankful to say I've got that man landed at last where he'll be likely to stay for some time. He's Mr. Hastings, is he? It's convenient to know who one belongs to. Now I must trudge off and do a little business on my own account, seeing we 'return on Friday.' First let's take a look at the name of this place where I've decided to leave him, and this street is—yes, I see. *Now* I'm all right—trust me for finding my way here again. Don't you be one mite worried, Brother Hastings, I'll be around in time." [36]

And Tode disappeared around a corner, whistling merrily.



BRAIN-WORK.



HAT Tode *didn't* do during those three days' tarry in New York could be told almost better than what he did. No country novice visiting the great city for the first time could have begun to crowd in the sights and scenes that revealed themselves to Tode's eager, wide-open eyes, in the same space of time.

The boy had the advantage of most such, in that he had not much to eat, and nowhere to eat it; also that he was in the habit of sleeping nowhere in particular, consequently these matters took up very little of his time. However he fared well, better than usual. He carried a package for an over-loaded man for a short distance, thereby earning ten cents, which he immediately expended in peanuts, and became peanut merchant for the time being. So by dint of changing his business ten or a dozen times, and being always on the alert, and understanding pretty thoroughly the art of economy, he managed his lodging and three meals a day, and was richer by twenty-five cents on the morning when he prepared to take his departure than he was when he arrived in the city, a fact of which few people who have been spending several days in New York can boast. [38]

Tode's fancy for attaching himself to Mr. Hastings still continued in full force, and brought him bright and early on Friday morning around to the hotel, where he had last seen him. Not one minute too early, however, and but for Mr. Hastings' own tardiness too late. He had just missed a car, and no other was in sight. Tode took in the situation at a glance, and hopped across the street.

"Carry your baggage, sir?"

Mr. Hastings had a valise, a package, a cane, an umbrella, and the great fur-lined cloak. He appreciated Tode's assistance.

"Yes," he said. "Take this, and this."

Away they went down town to head off another car, which was presently signaled.

"Jump in, boy, and be ready to help me at the other end, if you're a mind to," said Mr. Hastings, graciously, noticing the wistful look on the boy's face, and thinking he wanted a ride. [39]

Tode obeyed in great glee; he considered this a streak of luck. He sat beside Mr. Hastings and watched with great satisfaction while that gentleman counted out double fare. For the first time, Tode thought they had assumed proper positions toward each other. Of course Mr. Hastings ought to pay his fare since he belonged to him.

Arrived at the depot, and Mr. Hastings' baggage properly disposed of, himself paid, and supposed to be dismissed, Tode was in a quandary. Here was the train, and on it he meant to travel; but how to manage it was another question. It was broad daylight; sleep and Wolfie couldn't serve him now. He stuffed his hands into his pocket, and studied ways and means; eyes bent on the ground, and the ground helped him, rather a bit of pasteboard did. He picked it up, and read, first in bewilderment then in delight: "New York to Castleton." A ticket! all properly stamped, and paid for, undoubtedly. Did Tode hesitate, have great qualms of conscience, consider what he ought to do, how to set about to find the owner? He never once thought of any thing. Poor Tode hardly knew so much as that there were such articles as consciences, much less that he had anything to do with them. Somebody had lost his ticket, and *he* had found it, and it was precisely what he wanted. Once at Castleton, it would be an easy matter to get to Albany. He thrust the precious card into his pocket, swung himself on the train, and selected his seat at leisure. Tode had never been to Sabbath-school, had never in his life knelt at the family altar and been prayed for. There are boys, I fear me, who having been shielded by both these things, placed in like position would have followed his example. [40]

The seat he selected was as far as possible removed from the one which Mr. Hastings occupied. It was no part of Tode's plan to be discovered by that gentleman just at present. On the whole, this part of his journey was voted "tame." He had to sit up in his seat, and show his ticket like any one else; and it required no skill at all to forget to jump off at Castleton, and so of necessity be carried on. He sauntered over in Mr. Hastings' vicinity once, and heard an important conversation.

"Can you tell me, sir," inquired that gentleman of his next neighbor, "whether by taking the midnight train at Albany I shall reach Buffalo in time to connect with a train on the Lake Shore Road?"

"You will, sir; but it is a slow train. By keeping right on now you can connect with the Lake Shore Express." [41]

"I know; but I have business that will detain me in Albany."

"So have I," muttered Tode, well pleased with the arrangement, and went back to his seat.

"Halloo, Tode! where you been?" called out a sixteen-year old comrade from a cellar grocery window, as Tode turned out of Broadway that same evening.

"Been traveling for my health. Say, Jerry, seen anything of father lately?"

"He's gone off on a frolic. Went night before last—bag and baggage."

"Where did he go?"

Jerry shook his head.

"More than I know. Doubt if he knew himself about the time he started; but he'll bring up all right after a spell, likely."

Landed in Albany, the only home he knew, Tode had his first touch of loneliness and depression. The cellar was closed, his father gone, no one knew where nor for how long an absence, nor even if he meant to return at all. Tode was cold and dreary. Up to this time he had followed out his whim of belonging to the owner of the fur cloak, merely *as a whim*, with no definite purpose at all; but now, queerly enough, parted with the man with whom he had journeyed, and over whom he kept so close a watch during these four days, he had a feeling of loneliness as if he had lost something—he begun to wish he did belong to him in very truth. Suppose he did, worked for him say, and earned a warm place to sleep in of nights—this was the height of his present ambition. The warm place to sleep suggested to him the good night's rest under the cloak, and also the fact that there was another bitter night shutting down rapidly over the earth, and that he had no spot for shelter.

[42]

"I'll push on," he said at last, in a decisive tone. "I'd as lief go to Buffalo as anywhere else—the thing is to get there; but then I can get *on* the cars, and get *off* at Buffalo if I can, and before if I *have* to."

This matter settled, his spirits began to rise at once; and by the time Mr. Hastings and he crowded their way through the midnight train, the cars contained no such gleeful spirit as Tode Mall's.

More skill was needed than on the preceding journey, for the fur-lined cloak was thrown over the back of the seat fronting him this time, and Mr. Hastings sat erect and wide awake, and looked extremely cross.

"I have the most extraordinary luck," he was telling a man, as Tode entered. "Nothing but delay and confusion since I left home. Never had such an experience before."

[43]

But the car was warm and the air was heavy, and Mr. Hastings' erect head began to nod in a suspicious manner. Tode watched and waited, and was finally rewarded. The gentleman made deliberate preparations for a nap, and was soon taking it.

Now for the young scamp's trial of skill! He slipped into the vacant seat—he curled himself into a ball—he pulled and twitched softly and dextrously at the fur cloak, to make it come down and lie over him in such a manner that it would look like pure accident; and at last he was settled for the night. He felt the soft, delicious, furry warmth once more, and he hugged his friend and fairly shook with delight and triumph.

"Oh, ho! Ha! Hum!" he chuckled. "How *are* you, Wolfie? How've you been? You and me is friends, we is. We're travelers, we are. Now, we'll have a tall sleep. Ain't this just the jolliest thing, though?"

Then Tode went to sleep. By and by he felt a jerking. He roused up, the car lamps were burning dim. Mr. Hastings was pulling at his cloak and eyed *him* severely, but Tode innocently and earnestly helped him to right it, and treated its tumble over on to *him* as a very natural accident. The train was at a stand-still. Tode thought best to find out his whereabouts. He went out to the platform.

[44]

"What station is this?" he inquired of a boy who, like himself, was peering into the darkness.

"Oh, this is a way-station. We'll be in Syracuse in about half an hour. We've got to change cars there."

"We don't if we're going to Buffalo," answered Tode, in a business-like tone. He knew nothing whatever about the matter.

"Yes we do, too. Got to wait an hour. I just asked the conductor."

Tode walked in and took his seat; he saw his way clear. Presently came the conductor, and halted before him. Tode's hand sought his pocket.

"How much to Syracuse?" he questioned; and being naturally told the rate of fare from their last stopping place to Syracuse, he counted it out and sat back at his leisure.

At Syracuse Mr. Hastings went into the hotel to get his breakfast. Tode walked the piazza and whistled for his; besides he had something to do. He didn't see his way clear, but the more difficult the way grew the more delightful it looked to Tode, and the more determined was he to tread it. The hour sped on. Mr. Hastings' breakfast was concluded. He was in the depot now talking with an acquaintance. Tode was just behind him thinking still.

"All aboard!" shouted the official. "Passengers for Buffalo this way!"

[45]

And Mr. Hastings caught up valise, bundle, umbrella, cane, and vanished—all those, but the

fur-lined cloak lay innocently cuddled in a warm heap on the seat. Tode seized upon it in an instant and hugged it close.

"Oh, Wolfie, Wolfie!" he chuckled, "You're the best friend I got in the world. You went and got left on my account, didn't you?"

It was but the work of a moment to hustle himself and his prize into the train—*not* into the car that Mr. Hastings had taken—and once more they were off.

When they were fairly under way he presented himself before the astonished eyes of Mr. Hastings with this brief sentence:

"Here he is, sir, safe and sound."

"Here who is?"

"Wolfie, sir. You left him lying on a seat in Syracuse, and I got him and jumped on."

"Why, is it possible I left my cloak? Why, bless me! I never did such a careless thing before in my life; and so you jumped on, and have got carried off by the means. Well, sir, you're an honest boy; and now what shall I give you to make it all right?"

"I want to get to Buffalo like sixty," answered Tode, meekly. "And I haven't a cent to my name."

"You do, eh? And you would like to have me pay your fare? Well, that's not an unreasonable demand, seeing this is a very valuable cloak." [46]

And Mr. Hastings counted out the fare to Buffalo and a few pennies over; and Tode thankfully received it, and went out and sat down in a corner and whistled.

Imagine Mr. Hastings' astonishment when, soon after he had made his last change of cars and was speeding homeward on the Lake Shore Road, Tode appeared to him.

"Well!" was his exclamation, "what are you doing here? This isn't Buffalo."

"No, sir; but a fellow sometimes has to get to Buffalo before he can get to Cleveland, you know."

"Oh, you're bound for Cleveland, are you? And who pays your way this time?"

"Well, sir," said Tode, gravely, "I'm traveling with you."

"What?"

"I *am*. I've been from Albany to New York with you, and I left you at the hotel, and I came after you on Friday, and carried your valise and things to the cars, and came up to Albany with you, and waited for you until the midnight train, and came on to Syracuse with you, and waited while you got your breakfast—and here I am."

Unbounded amazement kept Mr. Hastings silent. Presently he asked, incredulously: [47]

"Who paid your fare all this time?"

"Wolfie, principally."

"Who?"

"Wolfie," pointing to the cloak. "I hid under him, and cuddled up, and he made it all right with the conductor."

Mr. Hastings' face was a study—astonishment, indignation and fun each struggling for the mastery. At last his face broadened, and his eyes twinkled, and he leaned back in his seat and indulged in a long, loud, hearty laugh. Tode's eyes twinkled, but he waited decorously for the laugh to subside.

"This is the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of in my life," began the gentleman when he could speak.

"So you're traveling with *me*, are you? And what do you propose to do when you get to Cleveland?"

"Mean to work for you, sir."

"Upon my word! How do you know I shall need your help?"

"You've needed it several times on this journey," said Tode, significantly.

Whereupon Mr. Hastings laughed again.

"You'll do," he said at length. "I don't see that you need any help from me. I should say that you are thoroughly capable of taking care of yourself." [48]

Tode shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm a stranger on this road," he answered, gravely. "Just as you was on the Central and them roads, I suppose."

"And you think inasmuch as you took care of me during the time I spent on *your* roads, I ought to return the favor now we are on *mine*." This with a strong emphasis on that word "*mine*."

"Well, sir, I don't know that I ever did so foolish a thing in my life, but then you must be considered as a remarkable specimen. Conductor, could you do me the favor to pass this youngster through to Cleveland?"

Mr. Hastings spoke with easy assurance. Tode didn't know how nearly he had touched the truth when he hinted at the great man's power on *that* road.

"Certainly, sir," answered the obliging conductor, "if it will be a favor to you."

"All right, sir. Now, young man, help yourself to a seat, and I shall expect to be most thoroughly cared for during the rest of this journey."


Tode obeyed with great alacrity, and gave himself a great many little commendatory nods and pats for the successful way in which he had managed the whole of this delicate and difficult business.



[49]

CHAPTER V.

TODE'S AMBITION.

 R. HASTINGS' elegant carriage was drawn up at a safe distance from the puffing iron animal who had just screeched his way into the depot. The coachman on the box managed with dextrous hand the two black horses who seemed disposed to resent the coming of their puffing rival, while with his hand resting on the knob of the carriage door, looking right and left for somebody, and finally springing forward to welcome his father, was Master Pliny Hastings, older by fourteen years than when that dinner party was given in honor of his birthday.

"Tumble up there with the driver," was Mr. Hastings' direction to Tode, who stood and looked with open-eyed delight on carriage, horses, driver, *everything*, while father and son exchanged greeting.

[50]

Pliny *did* wait until the carriage door was closed before he burst forth with:

"Father, where on earth did you pick up that bundle of rags, and what did you bring him home for?"

"He brought me, I believe," answered Mr. Hastings, laughing at the droll remembrance. "At least I think you'll find that's his version of the matter."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"More than I know. I'm entirely at his disposal."

"Father, how queer you are. What's his name?"

"Upon my word I don't know. I never thought to inquire. You may question him to your heart's content when you get home. There is a funny story connected with him, which I will tell you sometime. Meantime let me rest and tell me the news."

"He is a very smart specimen, Augusta," explained Mr. Hastings to his wife that evening, when she looked aghast at the idea of harboring Tode for the night.

"A remarkable boy in some respects, and I fancy he may really become a prize in the way of a waiter at one of the hotels. These fellows who have brought themselves up on the street do sometimes develop a surprising aptitude for business, and I am greatly mistaken if this one is not of that stamp. I'll take him off your hands in the morning, Augusta, and he can't demoralize Pliny in one evening. Besides," he added as a lofty afterthought, "if my son can be injured by coming in contact with evil in any shape, I am ashamed of him."

[51]

In very much the same style was Tode introduced at one of the grand hotels the next morning.

"The boy is sharp enough for *anything*," explained Mr. Hastings to the landlord. "I don't believe you will find his match in the city. Suppose you take him in, and see what you can do for him?"

The landlord eyed the very ragged, and very roguish, and very doubtful looking personage thus introduced with a not particularly hopeful face; but Mr. Hastings was a person to be pleased first and foremost under all circumstances, so the answer was prompt.

"Well, sir, if you wish it we will give him a trial, of course; but what can we set him at in that plight?"

"Um," remarked Mr. Hastings, thoughtfully, "I hadn't thought of that. Oh well, he means to

earn some better clothes at once. Isn't that so, my lad?"

Tode nodded. He hadn't thought of such a thing—his aim was still only a warm place to sleep in; but he immediately set down better clothes as another hight to be attained.

[52]

"Meantime, Mr. Roberts, hasn't Tom some old clothes that he has outgrown? This fellow is shorter than Tom, I should think. He'll work for his board and clothes, of course, for the present. Can you make it go, Mr. Roberts?"

Mr. Roberts thought he could, and as Mr. Hastings drew on his gloves he remarked to that gentleman aside:

"I've taken a most unaccountable interest in the young scamp. He's a *scamp*, no mistake about that, and he'll have to be looked after very closely. But then he's sharp, sharp as steel; just the sort to develop into a business man with the right kind of training, such as he will receive here. The way in which he wheedled me into bringing him home with me was a most astonishing proceeding. I shall have to tell you all about it when we are more at leisure. Good-morning, sir."

And Mr. Hastings bowed himself out.

By noon Tode was fairly launched upon his new life, and made such good use of his eyes and ears that in some respects he knew more about the business than did the new errand boy who had been there for a week. For the first time in his life he was going to earn his living.

[53]

Mr. Hastings was correct in his opinion. Tode was sharp; yet he was after all, not unlike a piece of soft putty, ready to be molded into almost any shape, ready to take an impression from anything that he chanced to touch. If the people who dined at that great hotel on the Avenue during those following weeks could have known how the chance words which they let drop, and in dropping forgot, were gathered up by that round-eyed boy, how startled they would have been! There was one memory which stood out sharply in Tode's life—it was of his mother's death. The boy had never in his fifteen years of life heard but one prayer, that was his mother's, it was for him: "O Lord, don't let Tode ever drink a drop of rum." He had very vague ideas in regard to prayer, very bewildering notions concerning the Being to whom this prayer was addressed; but he knew what rum was—he had excellent reason to know; and he knew that these words of his mother's had been terribly earnest ones—they had burned themselves into his brain. He remembered his mother as one who had given him what little care and kindness he had ever received. Finally he had a sturdy, positive, emphatic will of his own, which is not a bad thing to have if one takes proper care of it. So without any sort of idea as to the right or wrong of the matter, with perfect indifference as to whether this thing came under either head, he had sturdily resolved that he would never, no never, so long as he lived, drink a drop of rum. In this resolution he had been strengthened by the constant jeers and gibes and offerings of his father not only but of his boon companions.

[54]

There are natures which grow stronger by opposition. Tode had one of these; so the very forces which would have met to ruin nine boys out of ten, came and rallied around him to strengthen his purpose. So Tode, having been brought up, or rather having come up, thus far in one of the lowest of low grog-shops, had steadily and defiantly adhered to his determination. It was seven years since his mother's prayer had gone up to God; Tode, only seven at that time, but older by almost a dozen years than are those boys of seven who have been tenderly and carefully reared in happy homes, had taken in the full force of that one oft-repeated sentence and had lived it ever since.

Behold him now, the caterpillar transformed into the butterfly. He had shuffled off the grog-shop, and fluttered into one of the brightest of Cleveland hotels. The bright-winged moth sings itself in the brilliant gaslight sometimes where the caterpillar never comes.

Queer thoughts came into Tode's head with that suit of new clothes with which he presently arrayed himself. Not particularly new, either. Tom Roberts was in college, and they were his cast-off attire, worn before he, too, in his way became a butterfly; and he would not have been seen in them—no, nor have had it enter into the mind of one of his college mates that he ever *had* been seen in them, for a considerable sum even of spending money.

[55]

Different eyes have such different ways of looking at the same thing. Tode will never forget how that suit of clothes looked to *his* eyes, nor how, when arrayed in them, he stood before his bit of glass, and took a calm, full, deliberate survey of himself. To be sure, Tom being a chunk and Tode being long limbed, notwithstanding Mr. Hastings' supposition to the contrary, pants and jacket sleeves were somewhat lacking in length; moreover there was a patch on each knee, and you have no idea how nice those patches looked to Tode. Why, bless you! he was used to seeing great jagged, unseemly holes where these same neat patches now were. Also he had on a shirt! A real, honest white shirt; and so persistently does one improvement urge upon us the necessity of another in this world, that Tode had already been obliged to doff his shirt once in order to bring his face and hair into something like propriety, that the contrast might not be too sharp.

[56]

There was a stirring of new emotions in his heart. Perhaps he then and there resolved to be a genius, to be the president, or at least the governor; perhaps he did, but he only gave his thoughts utterance after this fashion:

"Jemima Jane! Do you tell the truth, you young upstart in the glass there? Be you Tode Mall, no mistake? Well now, for the land's sake, a fellow *does* look better in a shirt, that's as true as

whistling. I mean to have a shirt of my own, I do now. S'pose these are mine after I earn 'em. Oh, ho; *me* earn a shirt for myself. Ain't that rich now? What you s'pose Jerry would think of that, hey, old fellow in the glass? Well, why not? Like enough I'll earn a pair of boots some day. I will now, true's you live; it's real jolly. I wonder a fellow never thought of it before. Oh I'll be some; I'll have a yellow bow one of these days for a cravat, see if I don't!"

And this was the hight and end and aim of Tode's ambition.



[57]

CHAPTER VI.

NEW IDEAS.

"**OME,**" said Pliny Hastings, halting before the hotel, and addressing his companion, "father said if it snowed hard when school was out to come in here to dinner."

"Well, go ahead, then," answered his friend, gaily. "Father didn't tell me so, and I suppose I must go home."

"Oh bother—come on and get some dinner with me; then when the pelting storm is over we'll go up together."

So the two came into the great dining-room, and Tode came briskly forward to help them. Tode had been in his new sphere for more than three weeks, and already began to pride himself on being the briskest "fellow in the lot."

Pliny Hastings ordered dinner for two with an ease and promptness that proved him to be quite accustomed to the proceeding; and Tode dodged hither and thither, and finally hovered near, and looked on with admiring eyes as the two ate and drank, and talked and laughed. Thus far in his life Tode had been, without being aware of it, a believer in "blood descent," distinct spheres in life, and all that sort of nonsense. He was a boy to be sure, but it had never so much as occurred to him that he could be even remotely connected with such specimens of boyhood as were before him now. Not that they were any better than he. Oh no, Tode never harbored such a thought for a moment; but then they were different, that he saw, and like many another unthinking mortal, he never gave a thought to the difference that home, and culture, and Christianity must necessarily make. But what nonsense am I talking! Tode didn't know there *were* any such words, but then there *are* people who *do*, and who reason no better than did he.

[58]

While he looked and enjoyed, Pliny was seized with a new want, and leaned back in his chair with the query:

"Where's Tompkins? Oh, Mr. Tompkins, here you are. Can you make Ben and me something warm and nice this cold day?"

Mr. Tompkins paused in his rush through the room.

"In a very few minutes, Master Hastings, I will be at your service. Let me see—could you wait five minutes?"

[59]

Pliny nodded.

"Very well then. Tode, you may come below in five minutes, and I shall be ready."

Tode went and came with alacrity, and stood waiting and enjoying while the two drained their glasses.

There was a little wet sugar left in the bottom of Pliny's glass, and he, catching a glance from Tode's watchful eye, suddenly held it forth, and spoke in kindly tone:

"Want that, Todie?"

Tode, a little taken aback, shook his head in silence.

"You don't like leavings, eh? Get enough of the real article, I presume. How do they make this? I dare say you know, now you are at headquarters?"

Tode shook his head again.

"Belongs to the trade," he answered, with an air of wisdom.

"Oh it does. Well how much of it do you drink in a day?"

"Not a drop."

"Bah!"

Tode didn't resent this incredulous tone. He was used to being doubted; moreover he knew better than did any one else that there was no special reason for trusting him, so now he only laughed.

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"Come, tell us, just for curiosity's sake, I'd like to know how much your queer brain will bear. I won't tell of you."

"You won't believe me," answered Tode coolly, "so what's the use of telling you."

"I will, too, if you'll tell me just exactly. This time I'll believe every word."

"Well then, not a drop."

"Why not?" queried Pliny, still incredulous. "Don't you like it?"

"Can't say. Never tasted it."

"Weren't you ever where there was any liquor before?"

"Slightly!" chuckled Tode over the remembrance of his cellar life, and knowing by a sort of instinct that these two had never been inside of such a place in their lives.

Pliny continued his examination:

"Don't you like the smell of it?"

"First-rate."

"Then why don't you take it?"

"Ain't a going to."

"But *why?*"

And then for the first time his companion spoke:

"Are you a total abstainer?"

"What's them?"

Both boys stopped to laugh ere they made answer.

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"Why people who think it wicked to 'touch, taste or handle,' you know. Say, Pliny, did you know there's quite an excitement on the subject up our way? Old Mousey is round trying to get all the folks to promise not to sell Joe any more brandy."

"Stuff and nonsense!" oracularly pronounced Pliny, quoting the unanswerable argument of his elders.

"Fact. And folks say Joe has been drunk more times in a week since than he ever was before."

"Of course, that's the way it always works, trying to *make* folks do what they won't do. Joe ought to be hung, though. What does a fellow want to be a fool for and go and get drunk? But say, Todie, why don't you drink a drop?"

"I ain't a going to," was Tode's only answer.

The two friends looked at each other curiously.

"You're green," said Pliny, at last.

"Yes," said Tode, promptly, "maybe; so's the moon."

Whereat the two laughed and strolled away.

"Isn't he a queer chap?" they said to each other as they went out into the snow.

Meantime Tode looked after them for a moment before he began briskly to gather up the remains of the feast. Tode had some new ideas. He had formerly lived a stratum below the temperance movement; it had scarce troubled his father's cellar; so he had to-day discovered that there were others besides his mother who prayed their sons not to drink a drop of rum. Also that a young man who went and got drunk was considered a fool by elegant young men, such as he had just been serving. Also, and sharpest, these two evidently thought him "green." If they had said a thief or scamp Tode would have laughed, but "green!" that touched.

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"I'll show them a thing or to, maybe," he said, defiantly, as he seized a pile of plates and vanished.

Now our three babies, nurtured severally in the lace-canopied crib, in the plump-cushioned rocking-chair, in the reeking cellar corner, had come together from their several "spheres" and held their first conversation. Other hungry people came for their dinner and Tode served them, and was very attentive to their wants and their words. A busy life the boy led during these days—a brisk, bustling life, which kept him in a state of perpetual delight. There was something in his nature which answered to all this rush and systematic confusion of business, and rejoiced in it. He liked the air of method and system which even the simplest thing wore; he liked the stated hours for certain duties; the set programme of employment laid out for each; the set places for

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every thing that was to be handled; the very bells, as with their different tongues they called him hither and thither to different duties, were all so much music to him. He did not know why he chuckled so much over his work; why, at the sound of one of his bells, he gave that quick spring which was so rapidly earning him a reputation for remarkable promptness; but in truth there was that in the boy which met and responded to all these things. Every bit of the clock-work machinery filled him with a kind of glee.

There was another reason why Tode enjoyed his hotel life. He had discovered himself to be an epicure, and an amazing quantity of the good things of this life fell to his share—no, hardly that—but disappeared mysteriously from shelf and jar and box, and only grave, innocent-looking Tode could have told whither they went. Mince-pies, and cranberry-pies, and lemon-pies, and the whole long catalogue of pies, were equal favorites of his, and huge pieces of them had a way of not being found. Poor Tode, his training-school had been a sad one; the very first principle of honesty was left out of his street education, and the only rule he recognized was one which would assist him in not being discovered. So he eluded sharp eyes and hoodwinked sharp people; he commended himself for being a cute, and, withal, a lucky fellow. On the whole, although Tode was certainly clad in decent garments, and slept in a comfortable bed, and was to all outward appearances earning a respectable living, I can not say that I think he was really improving. There were ways and means of leading astray in that hotel, to which even his street life had not given him access; and if anybody's brain ever appeared ripe for mischief of any sort, it was certainly Tode Mall's. Any earthly friend, if he had possessed one, would have watched his course just now with trembling terror, and made predictions of his certain downfall. But Tode had no friend in all that great city; not one who ever gave him a second thought. Christian men came there often, and were faithfully served by the boy whose soul was very precious in their Master's eyes, but his servants never thought to speak a word to the soul for the Master. Why should they?—it was a hotel, and they had come in to get their dinner; that duty accomplished and they would go forth to attend the missionary meeting, or the Bible meeting, or the tract meeting, or some other good meeting; but those and the hotel dinner were distinct and separate matters, and the little Bibleless heathen, who served them to oysters and coffee, went on his way, and they went theirs. But God looked down upon them all. As the days passed, the three boys, whose lives had been cast in such different molds, met often. Pliny Hastings liked exceedingly to come to the hotel for his dinner, and, loitering around wherever best suited his fancy, await his father's carriage. This was very much pleasanter than the long walk alone; and he liked to bring Ben Phillips with him—first, because he was in some respects a generous-hearted boy, and liked to bestow upon Ben the handsome dinners which he knew how to order; and secondly, because he was a pompous boy, and liked to show off his grandeur to his simple friend. Was there another reason never owned even to each other, why these two boys loved to come to that place rather than to their pleasant homes? Did it lie in the bottom of those bright glasses filled with "something nice and warm," which Pliny never forgot to order? Sometimes little Mrs. Phillips worried, and good-natured Mr. Phillips laughed and "poohed" at her fancies. Sometimes Mr. Hastings sharply forbade his son's visits to his favorite hotel, and the next windy day sent him thither to dine. Sometimes his fond mother thought his face singularly flushed, and wondered why he suffered so much from headache; but only Tode who had come up in the atmosphere, and knew all about it, cool, indifferent Tode, looked with wise eyes upon the two boys, and remarked philosophically to himself:

"Them two fellows will get drunk some day, fore they know what they're up to."



CHAPTER VII.

TWO T'S.

VII days had fallen upon Tode. He stood before the window with an unmistakable frown on his face. The demon "Ambition" had taken possession of him, and metamorphosed him so that he didn't know himself. The Hastings' carriage passed in its elegant beauty, and as Tode gazed his frown deepened. Not that he wanted to be seated among the velvet cushions with Mrs. Hastings and Miss Dora. Oh no, he still belonged to that other sphere; but he did long with a burning, absorbing passion to be seated on the box, not with the driver, but alone, himself *the* driver, above all others. Oh to be able to grasp those reins, to guide and direct those two proud-stepping horses, to wind in and out of the crowded street, to drive where no other dared to go, to extricate the wheels very skillfully from among the bewildering confusion, to be a prince among drivers! He could do it, he *knew* he could, if only he had the chance; but how was that to be had? Poked up here, carrying plates and cups, and cleaning knives, wouldn't help him to that longed-for place, Tode said, and drummed crossly on the window pane. Already he was changed in the short space of six weeks. The clothes clean, and whole, the clean warm bed, the plentiful supply of food, had become every-day affairs to him, and were now just nothing at all in comparison with those prancing horses, and his desire to get dominion over them. Sad results had come of this new desire; all his list of duties had dropped suddenly into entire insignificance, and he had taken

to leaving black stains on the knives, and rivers of water on the plates, and being just exactly as long as he chose to be in doing everything. Mr. Roberts was getting out of sorts with him, and things were looking very much as though he would soon be discharged, and permitted to gaze after the black horses with no troublesome interruptions such as came to him at this present moment.

"Bother the coffee and the old fellow who wants it. I hope it will be hot enough to scald him. I'll drink it half up on the way in, anyhow," muttered Tode, as he turned slowly and reluctantly from the window, whence he could see Jonas just getting into a delightful snarl among the wheels. Jonas was Mr. Hastings' coachman. Three gentlemen were waiting for coffee and oysters; two friends talking and laughing while they ate; one, sitting apart from the others, eating with haste and with a preoccupied air. Tode having served them, fell into his accustomed habit of hovering near, ready for service, and making use of his ears. Curious yet respectful glances were cast now and again at the preoccupied stranger; and when he paid his bill and departed in haste, the two broke into a conversation concerning him.

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"Richest man in this city," remarked one of them, swallowing an immense oyster. "Made it all in ten years, too. Came here a youngster twenty-five years ago; had exactly twenty-five cents in the world."

"How did he make his money?" queried his friend.

Whereat Tode drew nearer and listened more sharply. He was immensely interested. He was certainly a youngster, and twenty-five cents was the exact amount of money he possessed.

"I heard a man ask him just that question once, and he answered, book-fashion. He's a precise sort of a fellow, and it makes me think of Ben Franklin, or some of those fellows who ate and drank and slept by rule.

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"Well, sir," he said, drawing himself up in a proud way that he has. "Well, sir, the method is very simple. I made it a point to live up to three maxims: Do everything exactly in its time. Do everything as well as possible. Learn everything I possibly can about everything that can be learned."

The two laughed immensely over these directions, then swallowed their last drops of coffee and departed, leaving Tode in an ecstasy of glee. He had learned how to secure the management of those horses; they were not beyond his reach after all. If so great things were attainable merely from the following out of those simple rules, why then the position of coachman was attainable to him.

"Easy enough thing to do," he said, as he freshened the tables for new comers. "It's just going straight ahead, pitching into what you've got to do, and doing it first-rate, and finding out about everything under the sun as fast as you can. I can do all *that*."

And having reduced the synopsis of all success to language that best suited his style, Tode straightened the cloths and brought fresh napkins, and gave an extra touch to the glittering silver, and managed to throw so much practice from his newly acquired stock in trade into his movements, that Mr. Roberts, passing through the room, said within himself: "That queer scamp is improving again. I believe I'll hold on to him a while longer." So sunshine came back to Tode. Not that he gave up the horses—not he, it was not his way to give up; but he had bright visions in the dim distant future of himself seated grandly on a stylish coach box, and he whistled for joy and pushed ahead.

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The very next afternoon Tode was sent on an errand to the Hastings mansion. It wasn't often he got out in the daytime, so he made the most of his walk; and the voice was fresh and cheery which floated up to Pliny Hastings as he tossed wearily among the pillows in his mother's room.

"Is that Tode? Yes, it is, I hear his voice. Dora, ring the bell, I want to have him come up here."

"My son—" began Mrs. Hastings.

"Oh now, mother, do let a fellow breathe. I've staid poked up here until I'm ready to fly, and he's just as cute as he can be. Ring the bell, Dora."

Dora obeyed, and in a very few minutes thereafter Tode was ushered into the elegance of Mrs. Hastings' sitting-room.

"*You sick*," he said, pausing in his work of gazing eagerly about him to bestow a pitying glance on Pliny's pale face. "Jolly! that's awful stupid work, ain't it? What's the matter?"

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"I should think it was," Pliny answered, laughing a little though at Tode's tone. "I've a confounded sick headache, that's what's the matter."

"Pliny!" Mrs. Hastings said, rebukingly.

"Oh bother, mother! Excruciating headache then, if that suits you better. Tode, have you seen Ben to-day?"

"Not a sign of him. Couldn't think what had become of you two. You're as thick as hops, ain't you?"

Pliny glanced uneasily at his mother, but a summons to the parlor relieved him, and the three

were left alone. Dora returned to her writing, and her small fingers glided swiftly over the page. Tode watched her with wondering and admiring eyes.

"Be you writing?" he exclaimed at last.

"Why, yes," said Dora. "Don't you see I am?"

"How old be you?"

"I'm eleven years old. You never studied grammar, did you?"

"And you know how to write?"

"Why, yes," said Dora again, this time laughing merrily. "I've known how more than a year."

Tode's answer was grave and thoughtful:

"I'm fifteen."

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"Are you, though?" said Pliny. "That's just my age."

"And can't *you* write?" questioned Dora.

"Me?" said Tode, growing gleeful over the thought. "I shouldn't think I could."

"Aren't you ever going to learn?"

"Never thought of it. Is it fun? No, I don't suppose I'll ever learn. Yes, I will, too. You learn me, will you?"

"How could I? Do you mean it? Do you truly want to learn? Dear me! I never could teach you; mamma wouldn't allow it."

For an answer Tode stepped boldly forward, deterred by no feeling of impropriety, and looked over the little lady's shoulder at the round fair letters.

"What's that?" he asked, pointing to the first letter of a sentence.

"That is T; capital T. Why, that's the very first letter of your name."

"I don't see anything capital about it; it twists around like a snake. What do you curl it all up like that for?"

"Why, that's the way to make it. Mamma says I make a very pretty letter T, and it's a capital because—because—Oh, Pliny, why is it a capital?"

"Because it is," answered Pliny, promptly.

"Oh yes," said Tode, quickly. "Course that's the reason. Queer we didn't think of it." Then to Dora. "Let's see you snarl that thing around."

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Dora quickly and skillfully obeyed.

"Do it again, and don't go so like lightning. How can a fellow tell what you're about?"

So more slowly, and again and again was the feat repeated until at last Tode seized hold of the pen as he said:

"Let me have a dab at the fellow; see if I can draw him."

"Why, you do it real well. Really and truly he does, Pliny," said the delighted Dora.

"But do you know there are two t's?" she added, turning again to her pupil. "One has a cross to it, just so. You make a straight mark with a little crook to it; then you cross it, *so*."

Pliny from his sofa chuckled and exclaimed over this explanation: "A straight mark with a little crook to it. Oh, ho!" But the others were absorbed, and bent eagerly over their paper, and thus the horrified Mrs. Hastings found them on her return from the parlor, the offshoot from a cellar rum hole bending his curly head close beside *her daughter's!*

She exclaimed in indignant astonishment:

"Dora Hastings!"

And eager, innocent Dora hastened to make answer:

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"Mamma, he can make the two t's; the capital and the other, you know; and he has them both on this piece of paper. Just see, mamma."

"Say, now," interrupted Tode, "I've decided to do them all. You learn me, will you? I'm to come up here every night after this with the seven o'clock mail. Just you make a letter on a paper for me, the big fellow, and the little one, you know, and I'll work at it off and on the next day, and have it ready for you at night. Will you do it? Come now."

Pliny raised himself on one elbow, his face full of interest:

"Take a figure, Tode, with your letters; figures are a great deal sharper than letters. I'll make

one a night for you."

"All right," said Tode. "I don't mind working in a figure now and then. A fellow might need to use 'em."

"Mamma," said Dora, "may I? I should so love to; it would be real teaching, you know. He is fifteen years old, and he don't know how to write, and it won't take one little minute of my time. Oh please yes, mamma."


What *could* the elegant Mrs. Hastings say? What was there to say to so simple, original, yet so absurd a request? Still she was annoyed, and looked it, but she did not speak it, and Tode was not sensitive to looks, or words either, for that matter, and moved with a brisker, more business-like step back to the hotel, and someway felt an inch taller, for was he not to have a new letter and a figure every evening, and did he not know how to make two t's? [76]



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CHAPTER VIII.

WHICH SHALL PROSPER, THIS OR THAT?

 HE Rev. John Birge stood before the window in his cosy little study, and drummed disconsolately and dismally on the pane. Without there was a genuine carnival among the elements, a mingling of snow and rain, which became ice almost as it fell, and about which a regular northeast wind was blustering. The Rev. John looked, and drummed, and knitted his brows, and finally turned abruptly to little Mrs. John, who sat in the smallest rocking-chair, toasting her feet on the hearth.

"Now, Emma, isn't it strange that of all the evenings in the week Thursday should be the one so constantly stormy? This is the third one in succession that has been so unpleasant that very few could get out."

This sentence was delivered in a half-impatient, half-desponding tone; and Mrs. John took time to consider before she answered, soothingly: [78]

"Well, you will have the satisfaction of feeling that those who come out this evening love the prayer-meeting enough to brave even such a storm as this, and of remembering that there are many others who would brave it if they dared."

But the minister was not to be beguiled into comfort; he gave an impatient kick to an envelope that lay at his feet, and continued his story.

"I haven't a *thing* prepared suitable for such an evening as this. My intention was to have a short, practical, personal talk, addressed almost entirely to the unconverted; and I shall have Deacon Toles and Deacon Fanning, and a few other gray-haired saints, who don't need a word of it, to listen to me. I had in mind just the persons that I hoped to reach by this evening's service, and that makes it all the more discouraging to feel almost absolutely certain that not one of them will be out to-night. I certainly do not see why it is that the one evening of the week, which as Christians we try to give to God, should be so often given up to storm."

Mrs. John could not see her husband's face this time, it had been turned again to the window pane; but there was that in the tone of his voice which made her change her tactics.

"It *is* a pity and a shame," she said, in demure gravity, "that Thursday evening of all others should prove stormy. Do you think it can be possible that our Heavenly Father knows that so many of his people have made it an evening of prayer? Or if he does, can't he possibly send some poor little sinner to meeting, if it be his will to do so, as well as those saints you spoke of?" [79]

The minister did not reply for a little. Presently he turned slowly from the window and met his wife's gaze; then he laughed, a low, half-amused, half-ashamed laugh. He could afford to do so, for be it known this was a new order of things in the minister's household. Truth to tell, it was the little wife who became out of sorts with the weather, with the walking, with the people, and had to be reasoned, or coaxed, or petted into calm by the grave, earnest, faithful, patient minister; and his rebellious spirit had been slain to-night by the use of some of his own weapons, hurled at him indeed in a pretty, graceful, feminine way, but he recognized them at once, and could afford to laugh. Afterward when he had buckled his overshoes and buttoned his overcoat, and prepared to brave the storm in answer to the tolling bell, he came over to the little rocking-chair.

"My dear," he said, "we will kneel down and have a word of prayer, that our Father will have this meeting in his care, and bring good out of seeming ill." [80]

And as they knelt together they had changed places again, and the minister's wife looked up with a kind of wistful reverence to the calm, earnest face of her husband.

"It storms like the mischief," Mr. Roberts said on this same evening, as he closed the door with

a bang, and a shrug of his shoulders. "Very few people will venture out this evening. Tode, if you want an hour or two for a frolic, now is your time to take it. After you have been up with the mail you can go where you like until the train is due."

Here was fun for Tode. This would give him two full hours, and he had at least two dozen schemes for filling up the time; but it chanced that wind and sleet and cold were too much even for him.

"Jolly!" he said. "What a regular old stunner *that was*," as a gust of wind nearly blew him away; and he clapped both hands to his head to see if his cap had withstood the shock.

"This ain't just the charmingest kind of an evening that ever I was out. I'd tramp back to our hotel quicker, only a fellow don't like to spend his evening just exactly where he does all the others when it's a holiday. I wonder what's in here? They're singing like fun, whatever 'tis. I mean to peek in—might *go* in; no harm done in taking a look. 'Tain't anyways likely that it blows in there as it does out here. Tode and me will just take a look, we will."

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And he pushed open the door and slipped into the nearest seat by the fire just as the singing was concluded, and the Rev. John Birge began to read; and the words he read were about that strange old story of the great company and the lack of food, and the lad with the five barley loaves and two small fishes, and the multitude that were fed, and the twelve baskets of fragments that remained—story familiar in all its details to every Sabbath-school scholar in the land, but utterly new to Tode, falling on his ear for the first time, bearing all the charm of a fairy tale to him. There was just one thing that struck this ignorant boy as very strange, that a company of men and women, some of them gray-headed, should spend their time in coming together that stormy evening, and reading over and talking about so utterly improbable a tale. He listened eagerly to see what might be the clew to this mystery.

"We are wont to say," began Mr. Birge, "that the age of miracles is past; yet if we knew in just what mysterious, unknown paths God leads the children of this day to himself, I think some of their experiences would seem to us no less miraculous than is this story which we are considering to-night."

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No clew here to the mystery; only a number of words which Tode did not understand, and something about God, which he could not see had anything to do with the fairy story. I wonder if we Christian people ever fully realize how utterly ignorant the neglected poor are of Bible truth. One more ignorant in the matter than was Tode can hardly be imagined. He knew, to be sure, that there was a day called Sunday, and that stores and shops as a general rule were closed on that day, just why he would have found very difficult to explain. He knew that there were such buildings as churches, and that these were opened on these same Sundays, and that well-dressed people went into them, but they had nothing whatever to do with *him*. Oh no, neither had Sunday nor churches. He knew in a vague general way that there was a Being called God, who created all things, and that the aforesaid well-dressed people were in some way connected with him; but it chanced, oh, bitter chance, that there had never come to him the slightest intimation that God in Christ was busy looking up the homeless, the friendless, the forsaken ones of earth, and bidding them find home and friend and joy in him. The meeting continued with but one other interruption. Midway in the services the door opened somewhat noisily, and with many a rustle and flutter Mrs. Hastings and Miss Dora made their way from out the storm and found shelter in the quiet chapel. This was just as Deacon Fanning asked a question.

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"Mr. Birge, don't you think this little story is to teach us, among other things, that God can take the very few, weak, almost worthless materials that we bring him, and do great things with them?"

"I think we may learn that precious truth from the story," answered Mr. Birge. "And I never feel saddened and discouraged with the thought that I have nothing with which to feed the multitudes, that this story does not bring me comfort. God doesn't need even our five barley loaves, but stoops to use them that we may feel ourselves workers together with him."

What queer talk it was! Tode had never heard anything like it in his life.

Then Deacon Toles had something to say.

"Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, just expresses our feelings, I think, sometimes. 'There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?' Andrew was gloomy and troubled even while talking face to face with Jesus. Not disposed to think that the Master could do anything with so little food as that, it's just the way I feel every now and then. 'Lord, here we are, a handful of people, and we have fragments of the bread of life in our hearts: but what are we among so many?'"

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"Yet the Lord fed the five thousand despite Andrew's doubts," chimed in the pastor. "May we not hope and pray that he will deal thus graciously with us?"

Tode could make nothing of it all, and was half inclined to slip out and go on his way; but the same dear Savior who had so long ago fed the five thousand had his All-seeing Eye bent on this one poor boy, and had prepared a crumb for him.

There arose from the seat near the door an old gray-haired man. His dress was very plain and poor, his manner was uncultured, his language was ungrammatical. There were those who were disposed to think that so illiterate a man as old Mr. Snyder ought not to take up the valuable

time. However old Mr. Snyder prayed, and Tode listened.

"O, dear Jesus," he said, "the same who was on the earth so many years ago, and fed the hungry people, feed us to-night. We are poor, we want to be rich; take us for thy children; help us to come to thee just as the people used to do when thou didst walk this very earth, and ask for what we want. We need a friend just like Jesus for our own—a friend who will love us always, who will take care of us always, who will give us everything we need, and heaven by and by. We know none are too poor or too bad for thee to take and wash in thy blood, and feed with thy love which lasts forever. Give us faith to trust thee always, to work for thee here, and to keep looking ahead to that home in heaven, which thou hast got all ready for us when we die. Amen."

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There were those present who did not quite see the connection of this prayer with the topic of the evening. There were those who thought it very commonplace and rather childish in language. But how can we tell what strange, bewildering thoughts it raised in the heart of our poor Tode?

Was there really such a somebody somewhere as that man talked about, who would make people rich, or anyhow give them all they needed; who would take care of them, no matter how poor or how bad; who would even take care of them in that awful time when they had to die, and all this just for the asking? If there were any truth in it why didn't folks ask, and have it all? But then if there wasn't, what did these folks all mean?

"They don't look like fools; now that's a fact," said Tode, meditatively, and was in great bewilderment.

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The meeting closed. Mrs. Hastings rustled up to the minister.

"So sorry to have intruded upon you, Mr. Birge, but the gale was so unusually severe. Dora and I were making our way to the carriage, which was but a very short distance away, and just as we reached your door there came a fearful gust of wind and we were obliged to desist."

While Mr. Birge was explaining that to come to prayer-meeting was not considered an intrusion, Dora turned to Tode. Now Tode had in mind all day a burning desire to tell Dora that he had made all the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, just twenty-six times on twenty-six old envelopes that he had gathered together from various waste-baskets, and could "make every one of 'em to a dot." But instead of all this he said:

"Say, do you believe all this queer talk?"

"What do you mean, Tode?"

"Why this about the youngster, and his fishes and bread, and such lots of folks eating 'em, and more left when they got done than there was when they begun. Likely story, ain't it?"

Dora's eyes were large and grave.

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"Why, Tode, it's in the Bible," she said, reverently.

Tode knew nothing about reverence, and next to nothing about the Bible.

"What of that?" he said, defiantly. "It's queer stuff all the same; and what did that old man mean about his friend, and taking care of folks, everybody, good or bad, and feeding 'em, and all that?"

"It's about Jesus, Tode. Don't you know; he died, you see, for us, and if we love him he'll take care of us, and take us to heaven. Sometimes do you think that you'll belong to him, Tode? I do once in a while."

"I don't know anything what you're talking about," was Tode's answer, more truthful than grammatical.

"Why, give your heart to him, you know, and love him, and pray, and all that. But, Tode, won't you run around to Martyn's and order the carriage for us? John was to wait there until we came, and I guess he'll think we are never coming."

Mrs. Hastings repeated the direction, and Tode vanished, brushing by in his exit the very man who had prayed at his dying mother's bedside years before, and who had intended to keep an eye on him. As he slid along the icy pavements the boy ruminated on what he had heard, and especially on that last explanation, "Why, give your heart to him, you know, and love him, and pray, and all that." To whom, and how, and where, and when? What a perfectly bewildering confusion it all was to Tode.

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"I'll be hanged if I can make head or tail to any of it," he said aloud.

Then he whistled, but after a moment his whistle broke off into a great heavy sigh. Someway there was in Tode's heart a dull ache, a longing aroused that night, and which nothing but the All-seeing, All-pitying Love could ever soothe.

"There were fourteen people in prayer-meeting," the Rev. John informed his wife. "The two deacons of whom I spoke, and several other good men. I couldn't make use of my lecture at all, for there were none present but professing Christians, save and except Mrs. Pliny Hastings, who apologized for *intruding!*"

And then the husband and wife laughed, a half-amused, half-sorrowful laugh.

After a moment Mr. Birge added:


"There *was* a rather rough-looking boy there; strayed in from the storm, I presume. I meant to speak with him, but Mrs. Hastings annoyed me so much that it escaped my mind until he brushed past me and vanished."



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CHAPTER IX.

"TAKE IT AWAY!"

 ODE rang the bell at Mr. Hastings', and waited in some anxiety as to whether he should get a glimpse of Miss Dora. He had some momentous questions to ask her. Fortune, or, in other words, Providence, favored him. While he waited for orders, Dora danced down the hall with a message.

"Tode, papa says you are to come in the dining-room and wait; he wants to send a note by you."

"All right," said Tode, following her into the brightly lighted room, and plunging at once into his subject.

"Look here, what did you mean the other night about hearts, and things?"

"About what?"

"Why, don't you know? Down there to the meeting."

"Oh! Why I meant *that*; just what I said. That's the way they always talk at a prayer-meeting about Jesus, and loving him, and all that." [90]

"Was that a prayer-meeting where we was t'other night?"

"Why yes, of course. Tode, have you got the letters and figures all made?"

"Do you go every time?"

"What, to prayer-meeting? What a funny idea. No, of course not. It stormed, you know, and we had to go in somewhere. Wasn't it an awful night?"

"Who is Jesus, anyhow?"

"Why, he is God. Tode, how queer you act. Why don't you ask Mr. Birge, or somebody, if you want to know such things. Mamma says he is awful."

"Awful!"

"Yes, awful good, you know. He's the minister down there at that chapel. Wasn't it a funny looking church? Ours don't look a bit like that. Tode, where do you go to church?"

"My!" said Tode, with his old merry chuckle. "That's a queer one. *I* don't go to church nowhere; never did."

"You ought to," answered Miss Dora, with a sudden assumption of dignity. "It isn't nice not to go to church and to Sunday-school. *I* go. Pliny doesn't, because he has the headache so much. Shall I show you my card?" [91]

And she produced from her pocket a dainty bit of pasteboard, and held it up.

"There, that's our verse. The whole school learn it for next Sunday. Then we shall have a speech about it."

A sudden shiver ran through Tode's frame as he read the words printed on that card:

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

He knew very little about that All-seeing Eye, but it came upon him like a great shock, the picture of the eye of God reaching everywhere, beholding the *evil*. He felt afraid, and alone, and desolate. He did not know what was the matter with him, he had felt so strangely troubled and unhappy since that evening of the meeting. Almost the tears came into his eyes as he stood there beside Dora, looking down at that terrible verse.

"Take it away," he said, suddenly, turning from the bit of pasteboard. "I don't want his eyes looking at me."

"You can't help it," Dora answered, with great emphasis. "There are more just such verses, 'Thou God seest me;' and oh, plenty of them. And he certainly *does* see you all the time, whether you want him to or not."

"Well stop!" said Tode, with a sudden gruffness that Dora had never seen in him before. "I don't want to hear another bit about it, nor your verse, nor anything—not a word. I wish you had let me alone. I don't believe it, anyhow, nor I won't, nor I ain't a going to—so."

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At that moment Mr. Hastings' note came, and miserable Tode went on his way. *How* miserable he was; the glimmering lamps along the gloomy streets seemed to him eyes of fire burning into his thoughts; the very walls of his darkened room, when he had reached that retreat, seemed to glow on every side with great terrible, all-seeing eyes. Over and over again was that fearful sentence repeated: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil." Just then he stopped. He had suddenly grown so vile in his own eyes that it seemed to him that there was nothing good left to behold; he tumbled and tossed on his narrow bed; he covered himself, eyes, head, all, in the bed-clothes; but it was of no use, that piercing Eye saw into the darkness and through all the covering—and oh, Tode was afraid!

He was a brave, fearless boy; no darkness had ever before held any terrors for him. I am not sure that he would not have whistled contemptuously over a whole legion of supposed ghosts. He was entirely familiar with, and quite indifferent to, that most frightful of all human sights, a reeling, swearing drunkard; but this was quite another matter, this great solemn eye of God, which he felt to-night for the first time, looking steadily down upon him, never forgetting him for a moment, never by any chance turning away and giving him time to go to sleep. Tode didn't know why he felt this terrible new feeling; he didn't know that the loving, pitying Savior had his tender eyes bent on him, and was calling him, that God had used that powerful thrust from the Spirit to wound his sinful heart; he knew nothing about it, save that he was afraid, and desolate and very miserable. Suddenly he sprung up, a little of his ordinary determination coming back to him.

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"What's the use," he muttered, "of a fellow lying shivering here; if I can't sleep, I might as well give it up first as last I'll go down to the parlor, and whistle 'Yankee Doodle,' or something else until train time."

But his hand trembled so in his attempt to strike a light, that he failed again and again. Finally he was dressed, and went out into the hall. Mr. Roberts opened his own door at that moment, and seeing the boy gave him what he thought would be a happy message:

"Tode, you can sleep over to-night. Jim is on hand, and you may be ready for the five o'clock train."

No excuse now for going down stairs, and the wretched boy crept back to his room; *utterly* wretched he felt, and he had no human friend to help him, no human heart to comfort him. He wrapped a quilt about him and sat down on the edge of his bed to calculate how long his bit of candle would probably burn, and what he *should* do when he was left once more in that awful darkness. On his table lay a half-burnt lamp lighter. He mechanically untwisted it, and twisted it up again, busy still with that fearful sentence: "The eyes of the Lord are in *every* place." The lighter was made of a bit of printed paper, and Tode could read. The letters caught his eye, and he bent forward to decipher them; and of all precious words that can be found in our language, came these home to that troubled youth: "Look unto me and be ye saved, all—" Just there the paper was burned. No matter, be ye *saved*, that was what he wanted. He felt in his inmost soul that he needed to be saved, from himself, and from some dreadful evil that *seemed* near at hand. Now how to do it? The smoke-edged bit of paper said, "Look unto me." Who was that blessed *Me*, and where was he, and how could Tode look to him?

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Quick as lightning the boy's memory went back to that evening in the chapel, and the wonderful story of one Jesus, and the gray-haired man in the corner, who stood up and shut his eyes, and spoke to Jesus just as if he had been in the room. Perhaps, oh, *perhaps*, the All-seeing Eye belonged to him? No, that could not be, for that card said, "The eyes of the Lord," and Tode knew that meant God, but you see he knew nothing about that blessed Trinity, the three in One. Then he remembered his question to Dora: "Who is Jesus, anyhow?" and her answer: "Why, he is God." What if it should in some strange way all mean God? Couldn't he try? Suppose he should stand up in the corner like that old man, and shut his eyes and speak to Jesus? What harm could it do? A great resolution came over him to try it at once. He went over to the corner at the foot of his bed with the first touch of reverence in his face that perhaps it had ever felt. He closed his eyes and said aloud: "O Jesus, save me." Over and over again were the words repeated, solemnly and slowly, and in wonderful earnestness: "O Jesus, save me." Gradually something of the terror died out of his tones, and there came instead a yearning, longing sound to his voice, while again and yet again came the simple words: "O Jesus, save me."

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After a little Tode came quietly out of his corner, deliberately blew out his light and went to bed, not at all unmindful of the All-seeing Eye; but somehow it had ceased to burn. He felt very grave and solemn, but not exactly afraid, and a new strange feeling of some loving presence in his room possessed his heart, and the thought of that name Jesus brought tears into his eyes, he didn't know why. He didn't know that there was such a thing as being a Christian; he didn't know that he had anything to do with Christ; he didn't know that he was in the least different from the Tode who lay there but an hour before only. Yes, that solemn Eye did not make him afraid now; and with an earnest repeat of his one prayer, which he did not know *was* prayer, "O Jesus, save me," Tode went to sleep.

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But I think that the recording angel up in heaven opened his book that night and wrote a new name on its pages, and that the ever-listening Savior said, "*I* have called him by his name; he is

mine."

In the gray glimmering dawn of the early morning Tode stood out on the steps, and waited for the rush of travelers from the train. They came rushing in, cold and cross, many of them unreasonable, too, as cold and hungry travelers so often are; but on each and all the boy waited, flying hither and thither, doing his utmost to help make them comfortable; being apparently not one whit different from the bustling important boy who flew about there every morning intent upon the same duties, and yet he had that very morning fallen heir to a glorious inheritance. True, he did not know it yet, but no matter for that, his title was sure.

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The days went round, and Sunday morning came. Now Sunday was a very busy day at the hotel. Aside from the dreadful Sunday trains that came tearing into town desecrating the day, the whole country seemed to disgorge itself, and pleasure-seekers came in cliques of twos and fours for a ride and a warm dinner on this gala day. Tode had wont to be busy and blithe on these days, but on this eventful Sabbath morning it was different. Gradually he was becoming aware that some strange new feelings possessed his heart. He had continued the repeal of the one prayer, "O Jesus, save me;" going always to the corner at the foot of his bed, and closing his eyes to repeat it. And now he was conscious of the fact that he had little thrills of delight all over him when he said these words, and a new, strange, sweet sense of protection and friendship stole over him from some unknown source. Now a longing possessed him to know something more about Jesus. He had heard of him at only one place, that chapel. Naturally his thoughts turned toward it. He knew it would be open on that day, and "Who knows," said ignorant Tode to himself, "but they might happen to say something about him to-day." In short, Tode, knowing nothing about "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," never having so much as heard that there *was* a fourth commandment, wanted to go to church. And wanting this very much, knew at the same time that it was an extremely doubtful case, utterly unlikely that he should be allowed to go.

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He brushed his hair before his bit of glass, and buttoned on his clean collar, all the time in deep thought. A sudden resolution came to him, that old man had said Jesus would give us everything we wanted or needed or something like that.

"I'll try it," said Tode, aloud and positively. "'Tain't no harm if it don't do no good, and 'tain't nobody's business, anyhow."

And with these strangely original thoughts on the subject of prayer, he went into his corner, but once there the reverent look with which he nowadays pronounced that sacred name spread over his face as he said, "O Jesus, I want to go to that church, and I s'pose I can't." This was everything Tode was conscious of wanting just at present, so this was all he said, only repeating it again and again.

Then when he went down stairs he marched directly to headquarters, and made known his desires.

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"Mr. Roberts, I want this forenoon to myself. Can I have it?"

"You do," answered Mr. Roberts, eyeing him thoughtfully. "Well, as such requests are rare from you, and as Jim's brother is here to help, I think I may say yes."

"A queer, bright, capable boy," Mr. Roberts thought, looking after Tode as he dashed off down town. "Going to make just the man for our business. I must begin to promote him soon."

As for Tode he was in high glee.

"What brought that Jim's brother over to help to-day?" he asked himself. "I'd like to know *that* now. I believe I do, as sure as I'm alive, that *he* heard every word, and has been and fixed it all out. I most know he has, 'cause things didn't ever happen around like this for me before."

The pronoun "he" did not refer to Jim's brother, and was spoken with that touch of awe and reverence which had so lately come to Tode. And I think that the words were recorded up in heaven, as having a meaning not unlike the acknowledgment of those less ignorant disciples, "Lord, I believe."



[100]

CHAPTER X.

HABAKKUK.



HE church toward which Tode bent his eager steps was quite filled when he reached it, but the sexton made a way for him, and he settled into a seat with a queer, awkward sense of having slipped into a spot that was not intended for such as he; but the organ tones took up his attention, and then in a moment a burst of music from the congregation, among the words of which he could catch ever and anon that magic name Jesus. So at least they were going

to sing about him. Yes, and talk to him also, for Mr. Birge's prayer, though couched in language quite beyond Tode's reaching, yet closed with the to him wonderful sentence, "We ask in the name and for the sake of Jesus our Redeemer." When he opened the great book which Tode knew was the Bible, the boy was all attention; something more from the Bible he was anxious to hear. He got out his bit of pencil and a crumpled twist of paper, and when Mr. Birge announced that he would read the fourth Psalm, Tode bent forward and carefully and laboriously made a figure four and the letters S A M in his very best style, and believed that he had it just right. Then he listened to the reading as sometimes those do not who can glibly spell the words. Yet you can hardly conceive how like a strange language it sounded to him, so utterly unfamiliar was he with the style, so utterly ignorant of its meaning. Only over the last verse he had almost laughed.

[101]

"I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

Didn't he know about that? The awful night, those dreadful eyes, and the peace in which he laid down and slept at last.

"Oh, ho," he said to himself, "some other fellow has had a time of it, too, I guess, and put it in the Bible. I'm glad I've found out about it just as I did."

Tode didn't mean to be irreverent. You must continually bear in mind the fact that he didn't know the meaning of the word; that he knew nothing about the Bible, nor dreamed that the words which so delighted him were those of inspiration, sounding down through the ages for the peace and comfort of such as he.

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Presently Mr. Birge announced his text, reading it from that same great book, and Tode's heart fluttered with delighted expectation as he heard the words, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." The *very* name! and of all news this, that he passes by. Oh, Tode *wanted* so to see him, to hear about him. He sat erect, and his dark cheek flushed with excitement as he listened eagerly to every word. And the Spirit of the Master had surely helped to indite that sermon, for it told in its opening sentences the simple story, entirely new to Tode.

"A little more than eighteen hundred years ago, very near a certain city, might have been seen a large concourse of people, differently circumstanced in life, many of them such as had been healed of the various diseases with which they had long been afflicted. This throng were following a person upon whose words they hung, and by whose power many of them had been healed. As they passed by the roadside sat a blind man begging. He, hearing the crowd, asks what it is. They answer, 'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.'"

Thus, through the beautiful and touching story, he dwelt on each detail, giving it vivid coloring, bringing it almost before the very eyes of the eager boy, who drank in every word.

The truth grew plain to his mind, that this Jesus of Nazareth once on earth had now gone back to heaven, and yet, oh beautiful mystery, still was here; and he heard for the first time that old, old story of the scoffed and spit upon, and bleeding and dying Savior; heard of his prayer even in dying for the cruel ones who took his life. So simply and so tenderly was the story told, that when the minister exclaimed: "Oh what a loving, sympathizing, forgiving Savior is ours!" Tode, with his eyes blinded by tears, repeated the words in his heart, and felt "amen."

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Then came the explanation of his passing by us now, daily, hourly, calling us in a hundred ways, and then—a few sentences written, it would seem, expressly for Tode's own need:

"Sometimes," said the minister, "he passes by, speaking to the soul with some passage from the Word. Did you never wonder that some portion, some little sentence from the Bible, should so forcibly impress your mind, and so cling to you? Perhaps you tried to drive it away so much did it trouble you, but still it hovered around, and seemed to keep repeating itself over and over to your heart. Be not deceived. This was Jesus of Nazareth passing by, waiting for you to say, 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.'"

Was ever anything so wonderful! How could Mr. Birge have found out about it—that dreadful night—and the one verse saying itself over and over again! Then to think that it was Jesus himself calling and waiting. Could it be possible—was he really calling *him*? And the tears which had been gathering in Tode's eyes dropped one by one on his hand.

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Presently, as he listened, the minister's tones grew very solemn.

"There are none before me to-day who can say, 'He never came to me.' Sinner, he is near you now, near enough to hear your voice, near enough to answer your call. Will you call upon him? Will you let him help you? Will you take him for your Savior? Will you serve him while you live on earth that you may live in heaven to serve him forever?"

From Tode's inmost soul there came answers to these solemn questions: "I will, I will, I will."

And there went out from the church that Sabbath day one young heart who felt himself cured of his blindness by that same Jesus of Nazareth; who felt himself given up utterly to Jesus, body and soul and life; and without a great insight as to what that solemn consecration meant, he yet took in enough of it to feel a great peace in his heart.

"There goes a Christian man, if ever there was one." This said a gentleman to his companion, speaking of another who had passed them.

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Tode overheard it, and stood still on the street.

"A Christian," said he to himself, quoting from a sentence in Mr. Birge's sermon. "A Christian is one who loves and serves the Lord Jesus Christ with his whole heart." Then aloud. "I wonder, I do wonder now, if I am a Christian? Oh, what if I was!" A moment of earnest thought, then Tode held up his head and walked firmly on. "I *mean* to be," he said, with a ring in his voice that meant decision.

Tode was dusting and putting in order a lately vacated room one morning. He was whistling, too; he whistled a great deal these days, and felt very bright and happy. He picked up three leaves which had evidently been torn from an old book; reading matter was rather scarce with him, and he stopped the dusting to discover what new treasure might be awaiting him here. He spelled out, slowly and carefully, the name at the top: "H-a-b-a-k-k-u-k."

"Queerest name for a book ever I heard of," he muttered. "Words must have been scarce, I reckon. Let's see what it reads about. School book, like enough; if 'tis I'll get it all by heart."

And Tode sat down upon the edge of a chair to investigate. The story, if story it were, commenced abruptly to him. [106]

"Scorn unto them," being the first words on the page. He read on: "They shall deride every stronghold; for they shall heap dust and take it."

"My! what curious talk," said Tode. "What ever is it coming at? I can't make nothing out of it."

Nevertheless he read on; only a few lines more and then this sentence: "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One?"

A sudden look of intelligence and delight flushed over Tode's face; and springing up he rushed into the hall and down the stairs, nearly tumbling over Mr. Ryan in his haste.

Mr. Ryan was a good-natured boarder, and on very friendly terms with Tode.

"Oh, Mr. Ryan!" burst forth Tode. "What is this reading on these leaves?"

"Why, Tode, what's up now; forgot how to read?"

"Oh bother, no; but I mean where did it come from. It's tore out of a book, don't you see?"

"Piece of a Bible," answered Mr. Ryan, giving the leaves a careless and the boy a searching glance. "What is there so interesting about it?" [107]

"What's it got such a queer name for? What does H-a-b-a-k-k-u-k spell, and what does it mean?"

"That's a man's name, I believe."

"Who was he, and what about him?"

"More than I know, my boy. Never heard of him before that I know of. What do you care?"

It was Tode's turn to bestow a searching glance.

"Got a Bible of your own?" he asked at last.

"Oh yes, I own one, I believe."

"And never read it! Bah, what good does it do you to have books if you don't read 'em? Now I'm going to find out about this 'H-a-b-a-k-k-u-k,' and then I shall know more than you do."

Mr. Ryan laughed a little, but withal seemed somewhat embarrassed. Tode left him and sped back to his dusting.

"Queer chap that," muttered Mr. Ryan. "I don't know what to make of him."

And a little sense of what might be termed shamefacedness stole over him at the thought that this ignorant boy prized more highly his three leaves of a Bible, picked out of the waste-basket, and possibly was going to know more about it than he, Edgar Ryan, had gleaned from his own handsomely bound copy, wherein his Christian mother had written years ago his own loved name. Mr. Ryan, the cultivated young lawyer, took down his handsome Bible from the shelf of unused books as soon as he had reached his office, dusted it carefully, and turned over the leaves to discover something about Habakkuk. [108]

As for Tode, he literally poured over his three leaves. Very little of the language did he understand—the great and terrible figures were utterly beyond his knowledge; yet as he read them once, and again and again, something of the grandeur and sublimity stole into his heart, helped him without his knowledge, and now and then a word came home, and he caught a vague glimpse of its meaning. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil." That was plain; that must mean the great All-seeing Eyes, for Tode knew enough of human nature to have much doubt as to whether any human eyes were pure. But then those unsleeping eyes *did* behold evil—saw. Oh, Tode could conceive better than many a Sabbath-school scholar can just how much evil there was to behold. How was that? Ah! Tode's brain didn't know, couldn't tell; but into his heart had come the knowledge that between all the evil men and women in this evil world, and those pure eyes of an angry God, there stood the blood-red cross of Christ. [109]

There were many guests to be waited on; the tables were filling rapidly. Tode was springing about with eager steps, handling deftly coffee, oysters, wine, anything that was called for—

bright, busy, brisk as usual. As he set a cup of steaming coffee beside Mr. Ryan's plate, that gentleman glanced up good-humoredly and addressed him.

"Well, Tode, how is Habakkuk?"

"First-rate, sir, only there's some queer things in it."

"I should think there was!" laughed Mr. Ryan, spilling his coffee in his mirth. "Rather beyond you, isn't it?"

"Well, *some* of it," said Tode, hesitatingly. "But it all means *something*, likely, and I'm learning it, so I'll have it on hand to find out about one of these days, when I find a lawyer or somebody who can explain it, you know."

This last with a twinkle of the eye, and a certain almost noiseless chuckle, that said it was intended to hit.

"You're learning it!" exclaimed Mr. Ryan, undisguised astonishment mingling with his amusement.

"Yes, sir. Learn a figure a day. It's all marked off into figures, you know, sir."

"Well, of all queer chaps, you're the queerest!"

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And Mr. Ryan went off into another laugh as Tode sped away to a new corner. By the time he was ready for a second cup of coffee, Mr. Ryan was also ready with more questions.

"Well, sir, what's to-day's figure?"

"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," repeated Tode, promptly and glibly.

"Indeed! and what do you make out of that?"

"It makes itself; and that's something that's going to be one of these days."

"Oh, and what does the 'glory of the Lord' mean, Tode?"

"I don't know; expect *he* does, though," answered Tode, simply and significantly.

Mr. Ryan didn't seem inclined to continue that line of questioning.

"Well," he said, presently, "let's turn to an easier chapter. What's to-morrow's figure?"

"Don't know. I might look though, if you wanted to hear." And Tode drew his precious three leaves from his vest pocket.

"Oh, you carry Habakkuk about with you, do you? Well, let's have the figure by all means, only pass me that bottle of wine first."

But Tode's face paled and his limbs actually shook.

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"I can't do it," he said at last.

"You can't! Why, what's up?"

"Just look for yourself, sir. It's the figure 15." And he thrust the bit of leaf before the gay young lawyer, and pointed with his finger to the spot.

Of all words that could have come before his eyes just then, it seemed strange indeed that these should be the ones:

"Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink!"

"Pshaw!" said Mr. Ryan at last, with a little nervous laugh. "Don't be a goose, Tode. Take your paper away and pass me the wine."

"I can't, sir," answered Tode, earnestly. "I promised him to-day, I did, that I was going to do it all just as fast as I found it out."

"Promised who? What are you talking about?"

"Promised the Lord Jesus Christ, sir. I told him this very day."

"Fiddlesticks. You don't understand. This refers to drunkards."

"It don't say so," answered Tode, simply.

"Yes, it does. Don't it say, 'and makes him drunk?'"

"It says and makes him drunk *also*," Tode said, with a sharp, searching look.

Mr. Ryan laughed that short nervous laugh again.

[112]


"You ought to study law, Tode," was all *he* said. Then after a moment. "I advise you to attend to business, and let Habakkuk look after himself. Jim, pass that wine bottle this way."

This to another attendant who was near at hand, and Tode moved away to attend to other



CHAPTER XI.

BUSINESS AND BOTTLES.

 E was still thinking when the busy work of the day was done—thinking anxiously about the same thing.

"It's *there*, plain as day," he said, in a perplexed tone, sitting down on the corner of the bed, and running his fingers distractedly through his hair. "'Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him.' That's it, word for word, and that's the Bible, and I do it, why fifty times a day; and I've got to if I stay here. That's a fact, no getting around it. 'Tain't my bottle, though, it's Mr. Roberts', and back of him it's Mr. Hastings'. I do declare!" And Tode paused, overwhelmed with this new thought.

"Whatever do them two men mean now, I'd like to know?" he continued, after a moment. "Don't make no kind of difference, though; that's *their* lookout, I reckon. It's *me* that puts the bottle to the neighbors' lips, time and time again. No gettin' around that. They ain't my neighbors, though. I ain't got no neighbors, them are folks that lives next door to you. Well, even then, there's Mr. Ryan, he's next door to mine, and there's young Holden and that peanut man, they're next door on t'other side, and there's Mr. Pierson, he's next door below. Why, now, I've got neighbors thick as hops, nearer than most folks have, and I put the bottle to their lips every day of my life, every single one of 'em."

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Silence for a little, and then another phase of the question.

"Well, now, where's the use? If *I* didn't hand the bottle to 'em, why Jim *would*; and they'd get it all the same, so where's the difference? That's none of my business," Tode answered himself sharply, and with a touch of the feeling which means, "Get thee behind me, Satan." "It don't say 'woe to Jim,' and I ain't got nothing to do with him; it don't say that if it's got to be done anyhow, I may as well do it as any other fellow. It just says '*woe*' right out, sharp and plain; and I know about it, and I do it, that's the point. Stick to that point, Tode Mall, you blockhead, you. If you're arguing a thing, why don't you *argue*, and not slip and slide all over creation."

[115]

Ah, Tode, if only wiser heads than yours would remember that important item.

"Well," said this young logician, rising at last from the edge of his bed, and heaving a bit of a sigh as he did so, "the long and short of it is, it can't be done—never, any more; and then there comes a thing that has got to be done right straight, and I've got to go and do it, and that's the worst of it, and I don't know what to do next, that's a fact; but that's neither here nor there."

With this extremely lucid explanation of his decision and his intentions, Tode put on his hat and went to the post-office.

Thus it happened that when Mr. Hastings mail had been delivered as usual, the boy hesitated, and finally asked with an unusual falter in his voice:

"Can I see Mr. Hastings a minute?"

"Well, sir," said that gentleman, whirling around from his table, and putting himself in a lounging attitude. "Well, sir, what can I do for you this evening? Anything in the line of business?"

This he said with the serio-comic air which he seemed unable to avoid assuming whenever he talked with this traveling companion of his.

Tode plunged at once into the pith of the matter.

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"Yes, sir, I've come to talk about business. I've got to leave your hotel, and I thought I'd better come and let you know."

"Indeed! Have you decided to change your occupation? Going to study law or medicine, Tode?"

"I haven't made up my mind," said Tode. "I've just got to the leaving part."

"Bad policy, my boy. Never leave one good foothold until you see just where to put your foot when you spring."

"Ho!" said Tode, "I have stepped in a bog and sunk in; now I've got to spring, and trust to luck for getting on a stone."

Mr. Hastings leaned back in his chair and laughed.

"You'll do," he said at length. "But seriously, my boy, what has happened at the hotel? I heard good accounts of you, and I thought you were getting on finely. Does Jim leave all the boots for

you to black, or what is the matter? You musn't quarrel with a good business for trifles."

"It's not Jim nor boots, sir, it's bottles."

"Bottles!"

"Yes, sir, bottles. I'm not going to put 'em to my neighbors any more; and I don't see what any of you mean by it. Like enough, though, you never noticed that figure?"

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"Are you sure you know what you are talking about, Tode?" inquired Mr. Hastings, with a curious mixture of amusement and dignity. "Because I certainly do not seem able to follow your train of thought."

"Why, that Habakkuk; he's the one who says it, sir. But then you know it's in the Bible, and I've made up my mind not to do it."

"Ah, I begin to understand. So you came up here to-night for the purpose of delivering a temperance lecture for my benefit. That was kind, certainly, and I am all ready to listen. Proceed."

Never was sarcasm more entirely lost. Tode was as bright and sharp as ever, and had never been taught to be respectful.

"No, sir," he answered, promptly, "I didn't come for that at all. I came to tell you that I had got to quit your business; but if you want to hear a temperance lecture there's Habakkuk; he can do it better than anybody I know of."

Mr. Hastings' dignity broke once more into laughter.

"Well, Tode," he said at last, "I'm sorry you're such a simpleton. I had a higher opinion of your sharpness. I think Mr. Roberts meant to do well by you. Who has been filling your head with these foolish ideas?"

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"Habakkuk has, sir. Only one who has said a word."

There was no sort of use in talking to Tode. Mr. Hastings seemed desirous of cutting the interview short.

"Very well," he said, "I don't see but you have taken matters entirely into your own hands. What do you want of me?"

"Nothing, sir, only I—" And here Tode almost broke down; a mist came suddenly before his eyes, and his voice seemed to slip away from him. The poor boy felt himself swinging adrift from the only one to whom he had ever seemed to belong. A very soft, tender feeling had sprung up in his heart for this rich man. It had been pleasant to meet him on the street and think, "I belong to him." The feeling was new to the friendless, worse than orphan boy, and he had taken great pride and pleasure in it; so now he choked, and his face grew red as at last he stammered:

"I—I like you, and—" Then another pause.

Mr. Hastings bowed.

"That is very kind, certainly. What then?"

"Would you let me bring up the mail for you evenings just the same? I wouldn't want no pay, and I'd like to keep doing it for you."

Mr. Hastings shook his head.

"Oh no, I wouldn't trouble a man of your position for the world. Jim, or some other *boy*, will answer my purpose very well. Since you choose to cut yourself aloof from me when I was willing to befriend you, why you must abide by your intentions, and not hang around after me in any way."

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Tode's eyes flashed.

"I don't *want* to hang around you," he began as he turned to go. Then he stopped again; he was leaving the house for the last time. This one friend of his was out of sorts with him, wouldn't let him come again; and the little Dora, who had showed him about making all the letters and figures, he was to see no more. All the tender and gentle in his heart, and there was a good deal, swelled up again. There were tears in his eyes when he looked back at Mr. Hastings with his message.

"Would you please tell your little girl that I'm glad about the letters and figures, and I'll never forget 'em; and—and—if I can ever do some little thing for you I'll do it."

Someway Mr. Hastings was growing annoyed. He spoke in mock dignity.

"I shall certainly remember your kindness," he said, bowing low. "And if ever I should be in need of your valuable assistance, I shall not hesitate to send for you."

So Tode went out from the Hastings' mansion feeling sore-hearted, realizing thus early in his pilgrimage that there were hard places in the way. He walked down the street with a troubled, perplexed air. What to do next was the question. That is, having settled affairs with Mr. Roberts,

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and slept for the last time in his little narrow bed, whither should he turn his thoughts and his steps on the morrow? Tode had been earning his living, and enjoying the comforts of a home long enough to have a sore, choked feeling over the thought of giving them up. A sense of desolation, such as he had not felt during all his homeless days, crept steadily over him; and as he walked along the busy street, with his hands thrust drearily into his pockets, he forgot to whistle as was his wont.

Mr. Stephens was hastening home from his office with quick business tread. He was just in front, and instinctively the boy quickened his step to keep pace with the rapid one. Tode knew him well, had waited on him at table when there came now and then a stormy day, and he sought the hotel at the dining hour instead of his own handsome home. He halted presently before a bookstore and went in. Tode lounged in after him. Already the old careless feeling that he might as well do that as any thing had begun to control him again. Mr. Stephens made his purchase, gave a bill in payment and waited for his change, and from his open pocket-book, all unknown to him, there fluttered a bit of paper, and lodged at Tode's feet. Tode glanced quickly about him, nobody else saw it. Mr. Stephens was already deep in conversation with an acquaintance, and might have dropped a dozen bits of paper without knowing it. The paper might be of value, and it might not. Tode composedly put his foot over it, put his hands in his pockets, and stood still. Mr. Stephens departed. There was a bit of brown paper on the floor. Tode stooped and carefully picked that and the other crumpled bit up, and busied himself apparently in wrapping something carefully up in the brown paper. Then he waited again. Presently a clerk came toward him.

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"Well, sir, what will you have?"

"Shoe-strings," answered Tode, gravely.

"We don't keep them in a bookstore, my boy."

"Oh, you don't. Then I may as well leave." And Tode vanished.

"Who's the wiser for that, I'd like to know?" he asked himself aloud as soon as the door was closed. Then he started for the hotel in high glee. He stopped under a street lamp to discover what his treasure might be, and behold, it was a ten dollar bill! Now indeed Tode was jubilant; a grand addition that would make to his little hoard, and visions of all sorts of wished for treasures danced through his brain. His spirits rose with every step; he sung and whistled and danced by turns. Had this strange boy then forgotten the errand which had taken him out that evening? Not by any means. He went directly to the office as soon as he reached the house and made known to Mr. Roberts his intention of leaving him. He stood perfectly firm under Mr. Roberts' questioning persuasions and rather tempting offers. He squarely and distinctly gave his reasons for leaving, and endured with a good-natured smile the laugh and the jeers that were raised at his expense. He endured as bravely as he could whatever there was to endure for conscience' sake that evening, and finally went up to his room triumphant—triumphant not only in that, but also over the fact that he had successfully stolen a ten dollar bill. Oh, Tode, Tode! And yet there was the teaching of all his life in favor of that way of getting money, and he knew almost nothing against it. He had only three leaves of a Bible; he had never heard the eighth commandment in his life. He knew in a vague general way that it was wrong, not perhaps to steal, but to be *found* stealing. Just why he could not have told, but he knew positively this much, that it generally fared ill with a person who was caught in a theft, but his ideas were very vague and misty; besides he did not by any means call himself a thief. He had not gone after the money, it had come to him. He was very much elated, and as he went about making ready for sleep he discussed his plans aloud.

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"I'll go into business, just as sure as you live, I will. I'll keep a hotel myself; I'll begin tomorrow; I'll have cakes and pies and crackers and wine. Oh bless me, no, I can't have wine, but coffee. *Jolly*, I can make tall coffee, I can, and that's what I'll have *prezactly*. This ten dollar patch will buy a whole stock of goodies, and I won't clerk it another day, *see* if I do."

By and by he quieted down, so that by the time his candle was blown out and he was settled for the night, graver thoughts began to come.

"'Tain't right to steal," he said aloud. "I know 'tain't right, 'cause a fellow always feels mean and sneaking after it, and 'cause he's so awful afraid of being found out. When I've done a nice decent thing, I don't care whether I'm found out or not; but then I didn't steal. I didn't go into his pocket-book, it blew down to me—no fault of mine; all I did was just to pick a piece of paper off the floor, no harm in that. How did *I* know it was worth anything? What's the use of me thinking about it anyhow? He'll never miss it in the world; he's rich—my! as rich as the President."

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Tode turned uneasily on his pillow, shut his eyes very tight, and pretended to himself that he was asleep. No use, they flew open again. He began to grow indignant.

"I hope I'll never have another ten dollars as long as I live, if it's got to make all this fuss!" he said in a disgusted tone. "I wish I'd never picked up his old rag—I don't like the feeling of it. I didn't steal it, that's sure; but I've got it, and I wish I hadn't."

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." That verse again, coming back to him with great force, beholding the evil and the good. Which was this? Was it good? Tode's uneducated, undisciplined conscience had to say nay to this. Well, then, was it evil?

"I feel mean," he said, reflectively. "As mean as a thief, pretty near. I wouldn't like to have anybody know it. I wouldn't tell of it for anything. S'pose I go down there to that prayer-meeting

and tell it. Would I do *it*? No, *sir*—'cause why? I'm ashamed of it. But then I didn't *steal* it; I didn't even know it was money. Oh bah! Tode Mall, don't you try to pull wool over your own eyes that way. Didn't you s'pose it was, and would you have took the trouble to get it if you hadn't s'posed so? Come now. And then see here, I wouldn't have anybody know about it; and after all there's them eyes that are in every place, looking right at me. 'Tain't right, that is sure and certain. I didn't steal it, but I've got it, and it ain't mine, and I oughtn't to have it. I could have handed it back easy enough if I'd wanted to. So I don't see but it looks about as mean as stealing, and feels about as mean, and maybe after all it's pretty much the same thing. Now what be I going to do?"

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And now he tumbled and tossed harder than ever. That same miserable fear of those pure eyes began to creep over him again, accompanied by a dreary sense of having lost something, some loving presence and companionship on which he had leaned in the darkness.

"I'll never do it again," he said at last, with solemn earnestness. "I *never will*, not if I starve and freeze and choke to death. I'll let old rags that blow to me alone after this, I will."

Then, after a moment's silence, he clasped his hands together and said with great earnestness:

"O Lord Jesus, forgive me this once, and I'll never do it again—never."

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After that he thought he could go to sleep but the heavy weight rested still on his heart. He was not so much afraid of those solemn eyes as he was sorry. An only half understood feeling of having hurt that one friend of his came over him.

"What be I going to do?" he said aloud and pitifully. "I *am* sorry—I'm sorry I did it, and I'll never do it again."

Still the heavy weight did not lift. Presently he flounced out of bed, and lighted his candle in haste.

"I'll burn the mean old rag up, I will, so," he said with energy. "See if I'm going to lie awake all night and bother about it. I ain't going to use it, either. I don't believe I've got any right to, 'cause it ain't mine."

By this time the ten dollar bill was very near the candle flame. Then it was suddenly drawn back, while a look of great perplexity appeared on Tode's face.

"If it ain't mine what right have I got to burn it up, I'd like to know? I never did see such a fix in my life. I can't use it, and I can't burn it, and the land knows I don't want to keep it. Whatever be I going to do? I wish he had it back again; that's where it ought to be. What if I should—well, now, there's no use talking; but s'pose I ought to, what then?"

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And there stood the poor befogged boy, holding the doomed bill between his thumb and finger, and staring gloomily at the flickering candle. At last the look of indecision vanished, and he began rapid preparations for a walk.



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CHAPTER XII.

THE STEPPING STONE.



HUS it was that Mr. Stephens, sitting in his private room running over long rows of figures, was startled, somewhere near midnight, by a quick ring of the door-bell. His household were quiet for the night, so he went himself to answer the ring, and encountered Tode, who thrust a bit of paper toward him, and spoke rapidly.

"Here, Mr. Stephens, is your ten dollars. I didn't steal it, but it blew to me, and I kept it till I found I couldn't, and then I brought it."

"What is all this about?" asked bewildered Mr. Stephens. "Come in, my boy, and tell me what is the matter."

And presently Tode was seated in one of the great arm-chairs in Mr. Stephens' private room.

"Now, what is it, my lad, that has brought you to me at this hour of the night?" questioned that gentleman.

"Why, there's your money," said Tode, spreading out the ten dollar bill on the table before them. "You dropped it, you see, in the bookstore, and I picked it up. It blew to me, I didn't steal it, leastways I didn't think I did; but I don't know but it's just about as bad. At any rate I've brought it back, and there 'tis."

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"Why!" said Mr. Stephens, "is it *possible* that I dropped a bill?" And he drew forth his pocket-book for examination. "Yes, that's a fact. Really, I deserve to lose it for my carelessness. And so you decided to bring it back? Well, I'm glad of that; but how came you to do it?"

"Oh," said Tode, "I couldn't sleep. The eyes of the Lord, you know, were looking at me, and I tumbled about, and thought maybe it wasn't right, and pretty soon I knew it wasn't, and then I asked the Lord Jesus to forgive me, and I didn't feel much better; and then I got up and thought I'd burn the mean thing up in the candle, and then I thought I musn't, 'cause it wasn't mine; and by that time I hated it, and didn't want it to be mine; and then after awhile I thought I ought to bring it to you, but I didn't want to, but I thought I ought to, and there 'tis."

Mr. Stephens watched the glowing face of his visitor during this recital, and said nothing. After he finished said nothing—only suddenly at last: [130]

"Where do you live, my boy?"

"I live at one of the hotels—no, I don't, I don't live no where. I did till to-night, and to-night I sleep there, and after that I don't belong nowhere."

"Have you been employed in a hotel?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why do you leave?"

"'Cause I can't be putting bottles to my neighbors any longer. You know what Habakkuk says about that, I suppose?"

Tode was ignorant, you see. He made the strange mistake of supposing that every educated man was familiar with the Bible. Again Mr. Stephens said nothing. Presently, with a little tremble to his voice, he asked another question:

"Have you given yourself to the Lord Jesus, my boy?"

"Yes, sir," Tode answered, simply.

"That is good. Do you know I think you have pleased him to-night? You have done what you could to right the wrong, and done it for his sake."

And now Tode's eye shone with pleasure. After a moment's silence he asked:

"What are you going to do with me, sir?" [131]

"Do with you? I am going to be much obliged to you for returning my property."

"Yes, but I didn't do it straight off, and at first I meant to keep it."

"Which was bad, decidedly, and I don't think you will do it again. Can you write?"

"Yes, sir," Tode answered him, proudly.

"You may write your name on that card for me."

Tode obeyed with alacrity, and wrote in capitals, because he had a dim notion that capitals belonged especially to names:

T O D E M A L L.

"What are you going to do for a living after this?" further questioned Mr. Stephens, thoughtfully fingering the ten dollar bill.

"Going to keep a hotel of my own."

"Oh, you are? In what part of the town?"

"Don't know. Down by the depot somewhere, I reckon."

Mr. Stephens folded the ten dollar bill and put it in his pocket. Tode rose to go.

"Now, my friend," said Mr. Stephens, "shall you and I kneel down and thank the Lord Jesus for the care which he has had over you to-night, and for the help which he has given you?"

"Yes, sir," answered Tode, promptly, not having the remotest idea what kneeling down meant, but he followed Mr. Stephens' movement, and was commended to God in such a simple, earnest prayer that he had never heard before. He went out from the house in a sober though happy mood. He felt older and wiser than he did when he entered; he had heard a prayer offered for him, and he had been told that the Lord Jesus was pleased with his attempt to do right. Instead of going home he went around by the depot, and bestowed searching glances on each building as he passed by. Directly opposite the depot buildings there were two rum-shops and an oyster-saloon. [132]

"This spot would do," said Tode, thoughtfully, halting in front of the illest looking of the rum-shops. "If I can set up right here now, why I'll do it."

A very dismal, very forbidding spot it seemed to be, and why any person should deliberately select it as a place for commencing business was a mystery; but Tode had his own ideas on the subject, and seemed satisfied. He looked about him. The night was dark save for street lamps, and there were none reflecting just where he stood. There was a revel going on down in the rum-cellar, but he was out of the range of their lights; elsewhere it was quiet enough. It was quite midnight now, and that end of the city was in comparative silence.

What did Tode mean to do next? and why was he peering about so stealthily to see if any human eye was on him? Surely with so recent a lesson fresh in mind, he had not already forgotten the All-seeing Eye? Was he going to offend it again? He waited until quite certain that no one was observing him, then he went around to the side of an old barrel and knelt down, and clasped his hands together as Mr. Stephens had done, and he said: "O Lord Jesus, if I come down here to live I'll try to do right all around here, every time." Then he rose up and went home to his room and his bed. He had been down in the midnight and selected the spot for his next efforts, and consecrated it to the Lord. Another thing, he had found out how people did when they talked with God. After that Tode always knelt down to pray.

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It was not yet eight o'clock when Tode, his breakfast eaten, his bundle packed, himself ready to migrate, sat down once more on the edge of that bed, and began to calculate the state of his finances. He had been at work in the hotel for his board and clothing; but then there had been many errands on which he had run for those who had given him a dime, or, now and then, a quarter, and his expenditures had been small; so now as he counted the miscellaneous heap, he discovered himself to be the honest owner of six dollars and seventy-eight cents.

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"That ain't so bad to start on," he told himself, complacently. "A fellow who can't begin business on that capital, ain't much of a fellow. I wonder now if ever I'll take a peak at this little room of mine again; 'tain't a bad room; I'll have one of my own just like it one of these days. I'll have a square patch of carpet just that size, red and green and yellow, like that, and I'll have a patchwork quilt like this one; who'll make it for me though? Ho, I'll find somebody. I wonder who'll sleep in this bed of mine after this? Jim won't, 'cause Jim sleeps with his brother. I reckon it's fun to have a brother. Maybe there'll be some fellow here that I can come and see now and then. Well, come Tode, you and I must go, we must, there's business to be done."

So the boy rose up, put away his money carefully, slung his bundle over his shoulder, took a last, long, loving look at the familiar surroundings, coughed once or twice, choked a little, rubbed his eyes with the sleeve of his jacket, and went out from his only home. On the stairs he encountered Jim.

"Jim," said he, "I'm going now; if you only *wouldn't*, you know."

"Wouldn't what?"

"Give your neighbor drink."

"Pooh!" said Jim, "*You're* a goose; better come back and be decent."

"Good-by," was Tode's answer, as he vanished around the corner. He went directly to the spot opposite the depot, which he had selected the night before, and descended at once to the cellar.

"Want to rent that stone out down there, between your building and the alley?" he questioned of the ill-looking man, who seemed to be in attendance.

"Um, well, no, I reckon not; guess you'd have a time of getting it away."

"Don't want to get it away; it's just in the right spot for me."

"What, for the land's sake, do you mean to do?"

"I mean to set up business right out there on that stone."

This idea caused a general laugh among the loungers in the cellar; but Tode stood gravely awaiting a decision.

"What wares might you be going to keep, youngster?" at last queried one of the red-nosed customers.

"Cakes and coffee."

"Oh, ho!" exclaimed the proprietor, eyeing him keenly. "And whisky, too, I wouldn't be afraid to bet."

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"Not a bit of it; you keep enough of that stuff for you and me, too."

"And where might you be going to make your coffee?"

"I ain't going to make it until I get a place to put it," was Tode's brief reply.

"Do you want to rent that stone, or not, that's the question? and the quicker you tell me, the quicker I'll know."

"Well, how much will you pay for it?"

"Just as little as I can get it for." This caused another laugh from the listeners.

"You're a cute one," complimented the owner. "Well, now, seeing it's you, you can have it on trial for two dollars a week, I reckon."

"I reckon it will be after this when I do," said Tode, turning on his heel.

"Hold up. What's the matter? Don't the terms suit? Why that's *very* reasonable!"

"All right. Then rent it to the first chap who'll take it for two dollars; but *I* ain't acquainted with

him."

"How much *will* you give then?"

"How much will you take?"

"Well, now, I like to help the young, so I'll take a dollar a week."

"Not from me," said Tode, promptly.

"Do hear the fellow! As generous as I've been to him, too. Well, come, now, its your turn to make an offer." [137]

"I'll give you fifty cents a week, and pay you every Saturday night at seven o'clock."

"It's a bargain," exclaimed the man, striking his hand down on the counter, till the dirty glasses jingled. There was a further attempt to discover the intention of the new firm, but Tode made his escape the moment the bargain was concluded, and went off vigorously to work to get the old barrel out of his premises. Then he departed, and presently made his appearance again with an old dry-goods box, which he brought on a wheelbarrow, and deposited squarely on the stone. Off again, and back with boards, hammer and nails. And then ensued a vigorous pounding, which, when it was finished, was productive of three neat fitting shelves inside the dry-goods box.

"Jolly," he said, eyeing his work triumphantly and his fingers ruefully, "I'm glad I own a hotel instead of a carpenter's shop. I wonder now which I did pound the oftenest, them nails or my thumb? Ain't my shelves some though? So much got along with; now for my next move. I wonder where the old lady lives what's going to lend her stove for my coffee? Must be somewhere along here, because I couldn't go far away from my place of business after it, specially if all my waiters should happen to be out when the rush comes. I may as well start off and hunt her up." [138]

Just next to the oyster-saloon was a little old yellow house. Thither Tode bent his steps, and knocked boldly at the door. No reply.

"Not at home," he said, shaking his head as he peeped in at the curtainless window. "No use of talking about you then. *You* won't do, 'cause you see my old lady must be at home. I can't be having her run off just at the busiest time."

There were two doors very near together, and our young adventurer tried the next one. It was quickly opened, and a very slatternly young woman appeared to him with a baby in her arms, and three almost babies hanging to various portions of her dress.

"Does Mr. Smith live here?" queried Tode.

The woman shook her head and slammed the door.

"That's lucky now," soliloquized Tode; "because he *does* live most everywhere, and I don't want to see him just about now—fact is, it would never do to have them nine babies tumbling into my coffee and getting scalded."

He trudged back to a little weather-worn, tumble-down building on the other side of his new enterprise, and knocked. Such a dear little old fat woman in a bright calico dress, and with a wide white frill to her cap, answered his knock. He chuckled inwardly, and said at once: "I guess you're the woman what's going to let me boil my coffee on your stove, and warm a pie now and then, ain't you?" [139]

"Whatever is the lad talking about?" asked the bewildered old lady.

"Why—" said Tode, conscious that he had made a very unbusiness-like opening, and he begun at the beginning, and told her his story.

"Well now, I never!" said the woman, sinking into a chair. "No, I never did in all my life! And so you left that there place, because you wasn't going to give bottles to your neighbors no longer, and now you're going into business for yourself? Well, well, the land knows I wish there wasn't no bottles to put to 'em—and then they wouldn't be put, you know; and if there's anything I *do* pray for with all my might and main, next to prayin' that my two boys would let the bottles alone—which I'm afraid they don't, and more's the pity—it's that the bottles will all get clean smashed up one of these days, in His own good time you know."

Tode turned upon her an eager, questioning look. [140]

"Who do you pray to?" he asked, abruptly.

"Why, bless the boy! I ain't a heathen, you know, to bow down to wood and stone, the work of men's hands, and them things as it were. I pray to the dear Lord that made me, and died for me too, and, for the matter of that, lives for me all the time."

A bright color glowed in Tode's cheek, and a bright fire sparkled in his eye.

"I know him," he said, briefly and earnestly.

"Now, do you, though?" said the little old lady, as eager and earnest as himself, "and do you pray to him?"

Tode gravely bowed his head.

"Then I'll let you have my stove and my coffee-pot, and my oven, and welcome, and I'll look after the coffee and the pies now and then myself. I'll give you a lift as sure as I have a coffee-pot to lend. Like enough you're one of the Lord's own, and have been sent right straight here for me to give a cup of cold water to, you know, or to look after your coffee for you, and it's all the same, you know, so you do it in the name of a disciple."

Will Tode ever forget the feeling of solemn joy with which he finally turned away from the dear little old lady's door? He had really talked with one of those who knew the Lord, and he was to see her every day, two or three times a day, and perhaps she knew things that he did not; about Habakkuk—like enough. "She knew about that bottle business as well as I did," he said gleefully, as he flew back to his dry-goods box. Such delightful arrangements as he made with her, too!—elegant cakes she was to make him, better than any that could be bought at the baker's he was sure, though he had called there on his way for the dry-goods box, and made what he considered a very fine bargain with him. Altogether it was a very busy day; he had never flown around more industriously at the hotel than he did on this first day of business for himself. He dined on crackers and cheese, and missed, as little as he could help, the grand dinner which would have been sure to fall to his share at his old quarters, and which he hardly understood that he had given up for conscience' sake. "There now," he said, with a final chuckle of satisfaction, just as the twilight was beginning to fall, "I'm fixed all snug and fine—by to-morrow morning, bright and early, I'll be ready for business!" Then suddenly he dived his hands into his pockets, and gave a low, long, perplexed whistle—then gave vent to his new idea in words:

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"Where in the name of all that's funny and ridiculous, be I going to spend the time 'tween this and to-morrow morning? Just as true as you're alive and hearty, Tode Mall, I never once thought of that idea till this blessed minute—did you?"

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"Whatever is to be did! I've slept, to be sure, in lots of places, on the steps, and in barrels, and I ain't no ways discomflusticated; but then, you see, after a fellow has slept on a bed for a spell, why, he has a kind of a hankering *after* a bed to sleep on some more. Hold on, though! why don't I board? That's the way men do when they go into business. Tode, you're green, *very* green, I'm afraid, not to think of that before. Course I'll board! I'll go right straight down to the old lady, and order rooms."

But the old lady shook her head, and looked troubled. "You see," said she, "I ain't got but one bed for spare, and I've got a boy. I've got two of 'em; but they don't sleep at home, only my youngest; he comes a visiting sometimes, and if he should come and find a stranger sleeping in his bed, why, he'd feel kind of homesick, I'm afraid, and I want Jim to feel that this is the best home that ever was, I do."

Tode bestowed a very searching look on the earnest little old woman in answer to this, and then spoke rapidly:

"I shouldn't wonder one bit if you was our Jim's mother down at the Euclid House—that's where I lived, and that's where he lives, only he don't sleep there—he sleeps with his brother Rick, down at the livery stable. Now, ain't they your two boys?"

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"They are so!" the old lady answered, speaking as eagerly as he had done.

"And so you know them! Well, now, *don't* things work around queer?" Then she shut the door and locked it, and came over to Tode so close that her cap frills almost touched his curly head, before she whispered her next sentence:

"Now, I know you will tell me just the truth. Do them two boys of mine touch the bottles for themselves?"

How gently and pitifully Tode answered the poor mother! "I guess they do, a little—all the fellows do, except just me—they don't think it's any harm."

"I knew it, I knew it!" she said, pitifully. "Their father would, and *they* will."

Then, after a moment, she rallied.

"But I don't give up hope for 'em, not a bit, and I ain't going to so long as I can pray for 'em. Now I'll tell you what we'll do. The Lord has sent you to help me, I do guess—I asked him if I couldn't have somebody just to give me a lift with them. You'll have Jim's room, and when he comes you'll be just nice and comfortable together, seeing you know each other. Rick, he never comes home for all night, 'cause he can't get away. And then you'll help me keep an eye on Jim, and say a word to him now and then when you can, and pray for him every single day—will you now?"

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So when the night closed in, Tode's bundle was unpacked, and his clothes hung on Jim's nails, and once again he had a home.



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CHAPTER XIII.



Y next evening business had fairly commenced. The first day's sales were encouraging in the extreme, the more so that Tode had rescued two boys from the vortex on his left, and persuaded them into taking a cup of his excellent coffee instead of something stronger.

Among the accomplishments that he acquired at the Euclid House was the art of making delicious coffee, an art which bid fair to do him good service now. He set a very inviting looking table. A very coarse, but delightfully clean white cloth, hid the roughness and imperfections of the dry-goods box; and his stock of crockery, consisting of three cups and saucers, three large plates, and three pie plates, purchased at the auction rooms, were disposed of with all the skill which his native tact and his apprenticeship at the Euclid House had taught him. After mature deliberation he had bargained for and rolled back the barrel, made it stationary with the help of a nail or two, and mounting it was ready for customers. He had them, too—one especially, whose appearance filled him with great satisfaction. With the incoming of the four o'clock train Mr. Stephens appeared, stopped in surprise on seeing his new acquaintance, asked numerous questions, and finally remarked that he had been gone all day, and might as well take his lunch there and go directly to the store. So Tode had the very great pleasure of seeing him drink two cups of his coffee, eat three of his cakes, and lay down fifty cents in payment thereof. Never was there a more satisfied boy than he, when at dusk he packed his cakes into a basket procured for the purpose, covered them carefully with the table-cloth, tucked the coffee-pot in at one end, and marched whistling away toward home. He had been gone since quite early in the morning, had procured his own breakfast and dinner, according to previous arrangement, but was going home to tea.

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It is doubtful if there will ever anything look nicer to Tode than did that little clean room, and that little square table, with its bit of a white patched table-cloth, and its three plates and three knives, and its loaf of bread, and its very little lump of butter; a little black teakettle puffed and steamed its welcome, and a very funny little old brown ware teapot stood waiting on the hearth. There was that in this poor homeless boy's nature that took this picture in, and he felt it to his very heart. It was better a hundred times than the glitter and grandeur of the Euclid House, for didn't he know perfectly well that the little brown teapot on the hearth was waiting for *him*, and had anything ever waited for *him* before?

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"Now we are all ready," chirped the old lady, cheerily, as Tode set down his basket and took off his cap. "Come Winny," and straightway there appeared from the little room of the kitchen a new character in this story of Tode's life, one whom the boy had never heard of before, and at whom he stared as startled as if she had suddenly blown up to them, fairy-like, from out the wide mouth of the black teakettle.

"This is my Winny," explained she of the frill cap. "This is Jim's and Rick's sister. Dear me! I don't believe I ever thought to tell you they had a sister. She was to school when you was bobbing back and forth yesterday and to-day, and she was to bed when you came home last night."

"Well she's here now," interrupted Winny. "Ready to be looked at, which she's likely to be, I should think. Let's have tea."

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Tode had been very uncertain as to whether he liked this new revelation of the family; but one word in the mother's sentence smoothed his face, and he sat down opposite the great gray eyes of the grave, self-possessed looking Winny with a satisfied air.

"Now," said the mother, looking kindly on him, "I've always asked a blessing myself at my table, because Jim and Rick they don't neither of 'em lean that way, but if you would do it I think it would be all right and nice."

Tode looked bewildered a moment; then adopted the very wise and straightforward course of saying:

"I don't know what 'asking a blessing' means."

"Don't you, now? Why it's to say a little prayer to God before you eat—just to thank him, you know."

A little gleam of satisfaction shone in Tode's eyes.

"Do good people do that?" he asked.

"Why, yes—all the folks I ever lived with when I was a girl. Deacon Small's family, and Esquire Edward's family, and all, used to."

"Every time they eat?"

"Every single time."

"That's *nice*," said Tode, heartily. Whereat the gray eyes opposite looked wonderingly at him. "I like that. Now, what do they say?"

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"Oh they just pray a little simple word—just to say thank you to the Lord, you know."

"And do you want me to do it?"

"Well, I think it would be nice and proper like, if you felt like it."

Reverently Tode closed his eyes, and reverently and simply did he offer his thanksgiving.

"O Lord, we thank you for this bread and butter and tea."

Then he commenced at once on the subject of his thoughts. Conversation addressed to Winny.

"Do you go to school?"

"Yes."

"What kind of a place is school?"

"Nice enough place if you want to learn, stupid if you don't."

"Do you want to learn?"

"Some."

"Well, what do you learn?"

"Reading, spelling, writing, geography, arithmetic, and grammar."

"My! What are *all* them things?"

"Don't you know what reading is?"

"Yes, I know them first three; but what's the long words?"

"Well, geography is about the earth."

"Earth? What do you mean, dirt?"

"Some—and some water, and some hills, and rivers, and cities, and mountains."

"But you can see all them things."

"Well, it tells you more than you can see."

"And what's t'other?"

"Arithmetic is about figures. What are you asking me so many questions for?—didn't you ever go to school?"

"Never did in all my life, not an hour. Now go on about the figures."

"Well, all about them—how to add and multiply, and subtract and divide, and fractions."

"Never heard of one of 'em," said Tode, with a little sigh. "What be they all for?"

"Why so you can buy things and sell them, and keep accounts, and everything."

"Then I ought to know 'em, 'cause that's what I'm doing. Do you know 'em?"

"I'm studying arithmetic, and I'm as far as fractions."

"Will you show 'em to me?"

"Mother," said Winny, turning despairing eyes on the attentive old lady, "he's such a funny boy. I don't know what to make of him."

"He wants to study and learn, deary, don't you see?"

"I think that's just as nice as can be," she added, turning to Tode. "Winny, she's a great scholar, keeps to the head of her class all the time, most, and she studies evenings, and you could get out your book, and she would show you all about things, couldn't you, deary?"

"I don't care," said Winny, listlessly. "Yes, I might if he wants to learn, and if he won't bother me too much."

Tode's cheeks were all aglow. He had awakened lately to the fact that there was a great deal in this world that he didn't understand, that he wanted to know about; and without a doubt but that this wise-eyed girl knew it all, and that he should learn it all, and that he should learn it from her in a little while. He went to work with alacrity. Examination came first—that is, it came after the dishes were washed. Then Tode displayed his reading powers, which really *were* remarkable when one considered that he could hardly tell himself how he happened to learn, but which sank into insignificance by the side of Winny's clear-toned, correct, careful reading. Tode listened in amazement and delight.

"That sounds just like mine," he said at last, drawing in his breath as she finished.

In return for which graceful compliment, which had the merit of being an unconscious one, Winny condescended to compliment him on the manner in which his letters, large and small, were gotten up.

"They ought to be nice," Tode explained, "the way I worked at 'em! It took me a week off and on, to make that K crook in and out, and up and down, as it ought to. Dora Hastings, she told me

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about 'em, and made the patterns. You don't know Dora Hastings, do you?"

"No, I never heard of her; but these are not patterns, they are copies; and there is no such word as 'em,' which you keep using so much. Our teachers told us so to-day."

"What's the reason there isn't?"

"Well, because there *isn't*; it's '*them*' and not 'em' at all. And you use a great many words that they wouldn't allow you to if you went to school."

"Well then," said Tode, with unfailing good nature, "don't *you* let me say 'em then—no, I mean '*them*.' You're the school misses, and I'm your school. Go on about the other things."

It was a busy evening. Arithmetic, except so much as had been required to count his small income, proved to be a sealed book to Tode; but the energy with which he began at the beginning, and tried to learn every word in it, was quite soothing to the heart of the young teacher.

The little mother sat at the end of the table, and sewed industriously on the clothes that she had washed and ironed during the day; but when a queer little old clock in the corner struck nine, she bit off her thread and fastened her needle on the yellow cushion, and interrupted the students. [153]

"Now, deary, let's put away our work. You've made a first-rate beginning, but it's time now to read your piece of a chapter, and then we'll have a word of prayer and get to our beds, so we can all be up bright and early in the morning."

Tode closed his book promptly, and looked on with eager satisfaction while Winny produced an old worn, much-used Bible—a whole Bible! and composedly turned over its pages with the air of one who was quite accustomed to handle the wonderful book.

"Where shall I read to-night, mother?" she asked.

"Well, deary, suppose you read what John says about the many mansions that they're getting ready for us."

"John didn't say it, mother," answered Winny, gravely. "Jesus said it himself."

"Yes, deary, but John heard him say it, and wrote it down for us."

So Tode listened, and heard for the first time in his life these blessed words:

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." [154]

Thus on, through the beautiful verses, until this:

"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do."

"There, deary," said Winny's mother, "that will do. I want to stop there and think about it. Whenever I get more than usual trouble in my heart about Rick and Jim, I want to hear this chapter down to there, '*Whatsoever* ye shall ask,' and it gives me a lift, like, and then I pray away."

Could you imagine how you should feel if you had learned to love the Lord, and were as old as Tode was, and then should hear those words for the first time?

The tears were following each other down his cheeks, and dropping on his hand.

"Who does he mean?" he asked, eagerly. "Whose mansions be they that he's getting ready?"

"Why, bless you, one of them is mine, and there'll be one ready for everybody who loves *him*."

Tode's voice sank to a husky whisper.

"Do you think there's one getting ready for me?" [155]

"There's no kind of doubt about it, not if you love the Lord Jesus. I suppose as soon as ever you made up your mind to love him the Lord said, 'Now I must get a place ready for Tode, for he's decided that he wants to come up here with me.'"

Wiser brains than Tode's would doubtless have smiled at the old lady's original and perhaps untheological way of interpreting the truth; but he drank it in, and drew nearer to the true meaning of it than perhaps he would had it been learnedly explained.

"I never thought about it before in my life," he said, gravely. "And so that's heaven? And there ain't any trouble there I heard Mr. Birge say once in his preaching."

"Not a speck of trouble of any shape nor kind, nor nobody's wicked nor cross, and no bottles there, Tode, not a bottle."

"How do you know?"

"Cause it says so right out, sharp and plain. 'No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.' That's Bible words, and you and I know that where there's bottles, and folks give them to their neighbors, why there'll be drunkards."

Tode nodded his head in solemn assent. Yes, he knew that better perhaps than his teacher. Then he asked:

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"And what more about heaven?"

"Oh deary me! there's verses and verses about streets of gold, and harps, and thrones, and singing. Oh my! *such* singing as you never dreamed about, and we to be the singers, you know; and I couldn't begin to tell you about it all; and *you* never heard any of them verses? Well now, I *am* beat. Well I always pick 'em all out and read 'em Sunday. I like to make Sunday a kind of a holiday, you know, so I read 'em and study 'em, and try to picture it all out; but then you see I can't, because the Bible says that eyes haven't seen nor ears heard, and we can't *begin* to guess at the fine things prepared for us."

"Well now," broke in Tode, his lips hurrying to tell the thought that had been filling his mind for some minutes, "why don't everybody go there? I heard about that awful place where some folks go. Mr. Birge told about it in some of his preaching. Now what's that for? Why don't they all go to heaven?"

The little old lady heaved a deep sigh.

"Sure enough, why don't they?" she said at last. "And the curious part of it is, that it's just because they *won't*. They don't have to pay for it; they don't have to go away off after it; they don't have to die for it, because they've got to die anyhow; and they know it's dreadful to die all alone; and they know that every single thing that the Lord Jesus wants of them is to love him, and give him a chance to help them—and the long and short of it is, they *won't do it*."

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"That's *awful* silly," ejaculated Tode.

"Silly! Why, there ain't anything else in all this big world that anywhere near comes up to it for silliness. Why, don't you think," and here her voice took a lower and more solemn tone, and the wide cap frill trembled with earnestness. "*Don't* you think, there's men and women who believe that every word in that Bible over there is true, and they know there's such a verse as that we just heard, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that *will* I do;' and there's tired folks who know the Bible says, 'Come unto me all ye that are weary, and I *will* give you rest;' and there's folks full of trouble who know it says, 'Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he *will* sustain thee;' and there's folks chasing up and down the world after a good time who know it says, 'In thy presence is fullness of joy,' and 'At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore;' and there's folks working night and day to be rich who know it says, 'I am the true riches,' and, 'The silver and the gold are his,' and just as true as you live they won't kneel down and *ask* him for any of these things! Now *ain't* that curious?"

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"I should think he'd get kind of out of patience with them all," Tode answered, earnestly, "and say, 'Let 'em go, then, if they're determined to.'"

The old lady shook her head emphatically.

"No, he loves them you see. Do you suppose if my Winny and my boys should go wrong, and not mind a word I say, I could give 'em up and say, 'Let them go then?' No indeed! I'd stick to 'em till the very last minute, and I'd coax 'em, and pray over 'em day and night—and *my love*, why it's *just* nothing by the side of his. Why he says himself that his love is greater than the love of a woman; so you see he sticks to 'em all, and wants every one of them."

Tode resolved this thought in his mind for a little, then gave vent to his new idea.

"Then I should think folks ought to be coaxing 'em, folks that love *him*, I mean. If he loves all the people and wants them, and is trying to get them, why then I should think all his folks ought to be trying, too."

"That's it!" said the old lady, eagerly. "That's it exactly. He tells us so in the Bible time and time again. 'Let him that heareth say come.' Now you and me have heard, and according to that it's our business to go right to work, and say 'come' the very first time we get a chance. But, deary me! I do believe in my heart that's half the trouble, folks won't do it; his own folks, too, that have heard, and have got one of the mansions waiting for 'em. He's given them all work to do helping to fill the others, and half the time they let it go, and tend to their own work, and leave him to do the coaxing all alone."

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"Mother," interrupted Winny, impatiently drumming on the corner of the Bible, "I thought you said it was bedtime. I could have learned two grammar lessons in this time."

The mother gave a gentle little sigh.

"Well, deary, so it is," she said. "We'll just have a word of prayer, and then we'll go."

Tode in his little room took his favorite position, a seat on the side of the bed, and lost himself in thought. Great strides the boy had taken in knowledge since tea time. Wonderful truths had been revealed to him. Some faint idea of the wickedness of this world began to dawn upon him. All his life hitherto had been spent in the depths, and it would seem that if he were acquainted

with anything it must be with wickedness, yet a new revelation of it had come to him. "Ye *will* not come unto me, that ye might have life." He did not know that there was such a verse in the Bible; but now he knew the fact, and it gave this boy, who had come out of a cellar rum-hole, and had mingled during his entire life with just such people as swarm around cellar rum-holes, a more distinct idea of the total depravity of this world than he had ever dreamed of before. It gave him a solemn old feeling. He felt less like whistling and more like going very eagerly to work than he ever had before.

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"There's work to do," he said to himself. "He's got a mansion ready for me it seems. I won't ever want other folk's nice homes any more as long as I live, 'cause it seems I've got a grander one after all than they can even think of; but then there's other mansions, and he wants people to come and fill them, and he let's us help." Then his voice took a more joyful ring, like that of a strong brave boy ready for work. "There's work to do, plenty of it, and I'll help—I'll help fill *some* of them."

"The poor homeless boy," said the warm-hearted little mother down stairs. "Deary me, my heart does just go out to him. And to think that he owns one of them mansions, and never knew it! Well, now, he shan't ever want for a home feeling on this earth if I can help it. I do believe he's one of the Lord's own, and we must feel honored, Winny dear, because we're called to help him. Don't you think he's a good warm-hearted boy, deary?"

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"Oh yes," Winny said, indifferently. "But, mother, he does use such shocking grammar."



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CHAPTER XIV.

SIGNS AND WONDERS.

TODE bustled into the house half an hour earlier than usual. Before him he carried a great sheet of pasteboard.

"Where's Winny?" he asked, sitting down on the nearest chair, out of breath with his haste. "I've got an idea, and she must help me put it on here."

"Winny's gone to the store, deary, for some tea. Whatever brought you home so early? Isn't business brisk to-day?"

"It was until it came on to rain, and I had to put things under cover, and then I had my idea, and I thought I'd run right home and tend to it."

The door opened and Winny came in, tugging her big umbrella. Instinct, it could not have been education, prompted Tode to take the dripping thing from her and put it away.

"What on earth is that?" Winny said, pausing in the act of taking off her things to examine the pasteboard.

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"That's my sign—leastways it will be when your wits and my wits are put together to make it. I got some colored chalk round the corner at the painters, and he showed me how to use 'em."

"Tode, you said you would remember not to use 'em' and 'leastways' any more."

"So I will one of these days. I keep remembering all the time. Say, won't that make a elegant sign? I never thought of a sign in my life till Pliny Hastings he came along to-day. Did you ever see Pliny Hastings?"

"No. Tode, I *do wish* you would begin to study grammar this very evening. You're enough to kill any body the way you talk."

"Oh bother the grammar, I'm telling you about Pliny Hastings. He came along, and says he, 'Halloo, Tode, here you are as large as life in business for yourself. You ought to have a sign,' says he. 'What's your establishment called?' And you may think I felt cheap as long as I lived at the Euclid house, to have no kind of a name for my place. I thought then I'd have a name and a sign before this time to-morrow. So when I went for my dinner I bought this pasteboard, and I been studying the thing out all this afternoon between the spells of arithmetic, and I've got it all fixed now, and I've got another idea come of that I never see how one thing starts another. There's going to come a piece of pasteboard off this end, 'cause you see it's too long, and I'm going to have a circle out of that."

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"A circle. What for?"

"Oh you'll see when we get to it. But now don't you want to know what my sign is?"

"I suppose I'll have to know if I'm to help you, whether I want to or not."

"Well, I had to study on that for quite a spell. You see I want a name for my house, and then my

own name right under it, 'cause I like to see a man stand by his business, name and all; and then I want every body to know I stand up for temperance. I thought of 'Cold Water House,' but then you see it *ain't* a cold water house, cause coffee is my principal dish. Then I thought of 'Coffee House,' but there's a coffee house not more than two blocks away from my place, and they keep plenty of whisky there, and *that* wouldn't do. And I thought and *thought*, and by and by it came to me. I wouldn't have no 'House' at all about it, 'cause after all is said and done it's just a *box*; and I concluded to have a out-and-out temperance sign. I'll print a great big NO, so big you can see it across the street, and then we'll make two great big black bottles, like they keep rum in, standing by the 'No.' And then, says *I*, everybody will know where to find *me* on *that* question."

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Even grave Winny laughed over this queer idea.

"I can't make bottles any more than I can fly away," she said at last "And neither can you."

"I shan't say that till I've tried it about a month, *anyhow*," Tode answered, positively. "I never *did* like to give up a thing before I began it."

The white cap frill nodded violently over this sentiment

"That's the way to talk," said the little mother. "There's more giving up of good things before they're begun than there ever is afterward, I do believe."

Such an evening as they had! Winny, in spite of her discouraging words, entered into the work with considerable heartiness; and the slate first, and afterward pieces of brown paper covered over with grotesque images of black bottles, looking most of them, it must be confessed, like anything else in the world. Finally the sympathetic mother came to the rescue. She mounted a high chair to reach the topmost shelf in her little den of a pantry, where were congregated the few bottles that had ensued from a quarter of a century of housekeeping. One after another was taken down and anxiously examined, until at last, oh joyful discovery! the label of one showed the picture of an unmistakable bottle, over which a picture of the inventor of the bitters which it was supposed to contain was fondly leaning, as if it were his staff of life. The young artists greeted it with delight, and with it for a model produced such delightful results that by half-past eight the sign shone out in blue and black and red chalks.

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"Now for my circle," said Tode, seizing upon the piece of pasteboard which had been cut off. A large plate from the pantry did duty in the absence of sufficient geometrical knowledge, and the circle was quickly produced. Then did Tode's skill at making figures shine forth. In the bright red chalks did he quickly produce a circle of the nine figures around his pasteboard circle.

"Now what is all that for, I *should* like to know?" Winny asked, looking on half interestedly, half contemptuously.

"I'm just going to show you. You see, the lesson you gave me to-day is the addition table, and that addition table is a tough, ugly job, I can tell you. Well, I pelted away at it till dinner time, and I guess by that time I knew almost as much as I did before I begun it; and I went to Jones' after my dinner, and Mr. Jones he wanted me to take a note for him to a man at the bank, just around the corner from there, you know. Well I went, and the man I took the note to was busy counting money. He wouldn't look at me, but just counted away like lightning. I never see anything like it in my life, the way he did fly off them bills. It wasn't a quarter of a minute when he said to a man who stood waiting, 'Nine hundred and seventy-eight dollars, sir. All right.' Now just think of counting such a pile of money as that in about the time it would take me to count seventy-eight cents? Well, I come back, and I pitched into the addition table harder than ever, because, I thinks to myself, there's no telling but that I may have some money to count one of these days, and I guess I'll get ready to count it. But it was tough work. All at once, while I was looking at my pasteboard, and wondering what I should do with this end, it came to me. Now I'll explain. You see them nine figures around there? Well, thinks I, now there ain't but nine figures in this world, 'cause Pliny Hastings he told me that once, and I've noticed it lots of times since, that you may talk about just as many things as you're a mind to, and you'll just be using them same nine figures over and over again, with a nothing thrown in now and then, you know. Now, then, s'pose I begin at this one, and I say, 'one and two is three, and three is six, and four is ten.'"

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"For pity's sake say 'are ten,'" interposed Winny.

"Why?"

"Because it's right. Go on."

"Well, now, I could remember just as quick again if you'd give a fellow a reason for it. Well, and four are ten, and so all around to the nine. Well, I say that, and say it, and *say it*, till it goes itself, and then I begin at two, and say two and three is—no, *are* five, and on round to the nine, only this time I take in the one at the other end. Understand? Well, after I've learned that I begin with the three, and go around to the two, and so on with them all; and then I mix them up and say them every which way, and after I've put them a few different ways, let's see you give me a line of figures that I can't add!"

"That is so," said Winny, at last, speaking slowly and admiringly. "It is a very good way indeed. Tode, I shouldn't wonder if you would know a great deal after awhile."

"Well now," answered Tode, gleefully, "I call this a pretty good evening's work, painted a sign and made a new arithmetic, enough sight easier than the other, so far as it goes; and you've

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helped me, so now I'll help you, turn about is fair play. Bring out your grammar, and let's see what it looks like, and to-morrow I'll go into the second-hand bookstore and hunt one up. Then I'll pitch in and learn everything I come to."

He was true to his word, and thereafter grammar was added to the numerous studies to which he gave all his leisure time. Perhaps no motto could have been given Tode that would have helped him so much in this matter of study as did the one which he had overheard and adopted for his own: "Learn everything I possibly can about everything that can be learned." He was obeying its instructions to the very letter.

Sunday morning dawned brightly upon him. The first Sunday in his new business. The air was balmy with the breath of spring.

"Oh, oh," said Tode, drawing long breaths and inhaling the perfume of swelling buds and springing blades, "I just wish I could go to church to-day, I do. Wouldn't it be nice now to put on my clean shirt, and make myself look nice and spry, and step around there to Mr. Birge's church and hear another preach? I'd like that first-rate; but now there's no use in talking. 'Do everything exactly in its time,' that's one of my rules, and I'm bound to live up to them; and it's time now for me to go to my business. I'll go to church this evening, I will. I ought to be glad that folks don't want coffee and cakes much of evening, instead of grumbling about having to give 'em some this morning."

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Now it so happened, in the multiplicity of things which the new acquaintances had to talk over, that Sunday and church-going had not been discussed; and owing to the fact that Tode did not breakfast with the family, no knowledge of his intentions came to them, and no knowledge of that old command, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," came to him. True, he knew that stores and shops were closed quite generally on the Sabbath, but hotels were not, the Euclid House had never been, and Tode, without reasoning about it at all, had imbibed the idea that it was because they kept things to eat and drink. Now these were the very things which he kept, and people must eat and drink on Sundays as well as on any other days, so of course it was his duty to supply them.

So he put a clean white cloth on the dry-goods box in honor of this new bright day, arranged everything in the most tempting manner possible, and waited for customers. They came thick and fast. The Sabbath proved fair to be as busy a day at the dry-goods box as it used to be at the Euclid House. One disappointment Tode had. When he trudged down to the little house to have his great empty coffee-pot replenished, it was closed and locked.

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"Course," he said, nodding approvingly, "they've gone to church. I might a known they wouldn't wash and iron and go to school Sunday. I ought to remembered and took away my coffee. Well, never mind, I'll just run around to the Coffee House and get my dish filled, and that will make it all right."

So many customers came just at tea time that he found it impossible to go home to tea, but took a cup of his own coffee and a few of his cakes, and chuckled meantime over the fact that he was the only individual who could take his supper from that dry-goods box without paying for it.

It was just as the bells were ringing for evening service that he joyfully packed his nearly emptied dishes into the basket, shook the crumbs from his little table-cloth, folded it carefully, and rejoiced over the thought that he had done an excellent day's work, and could afford to go to church. The brown house was closed again, so he left his basket under a woodpile in the alley-way, and made all possible speed for Mr. Birge's church. Even then the opening services were nearly concluded, but he was in time for the Bible text, and that text Tode never forgot in his life. The words were, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

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I can not describe to you the poor boy's bewildered astonishment as he listened and thought, and gradually began to take in something of the true meaning of those earnest words. Mr. Birge was very decided in his opinions, very plain in his utterances. Milk wagons, ice wagons, meat wagons, and the whole long catalogue of Sabbath-breaking wagons, to say nothing of row-boats and steamboats, and trains of cars, were dwelt upon with unsparing tongue—nay, he went farther than that, and expressed his unmistakable opinion of Sabbath-breaking ice-cream saloons and coffee saloons; then down to the little apple children, and candy children, and shoestring children, who haunt the Sabbath streets. Tode listened, and ran his fingers through his hair in perplexity.

"It must come in *somewhere*," he said to himself in some bewilderment. "I don't quite keep a coffee house, and I don't—why, yes I do, sell apples every now and then; and as to that, I suppose I keep a coffee *box*. What if it ain't a house? I wonder now if it ain't right? I wonder if there's lots of things that look right before you think about them, that ain't right after you've turned 'em over a spell? And I wonder how a fellow is going to know?"

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Then he gave his undivided attention to the sermon again; and went home after the service was concluded, with a very thoughtful face. Jim was there making a visit, but Tode only nodded to him, and went abruptly to the little shelf behind the stove in the corner, and took down the old Bible.

"Grandma, where are the commandments put?" he asked eagerly, addressing the old lady by the title which he had bestowed on her very early in their acquaintance.

"Why they're in Exodus, in the twentieth chapter."

"And where's Exodus?"

"Ho!" said Jim. "You know a heap, Tode, don't you?"

Tode turned on him a grave anxious face.

"Do you know about them? Well, just you come and find them for me, that's a good fellow. I'm in a powerful hurry."

Thus appealed to, Jim, nothing loth to display his wisdom, sauntered toward the table, and speedily found and patronizingly pointed out the commandments. Tode read eagerly until he came to those words, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Then he read slowly and carefully, "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates."

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Three times did Tode's astonished eyes go over this commandment in all its length and breadth; then he looked up and spoke with deliberate emphasis,

"This beats all creation! And the strangest part of it is that you didn't tell me anything about it, grandma."

"Whatever is the boy talking about?" said grandma, wheeling her rocker around to get a full view of his excited face; and then Tode gave a synopsis of the evening sermon, and the history of his amazement, culminating with this first reading of the fourth commandment.

"And so you've been at your business all day!" exclaimed the astonished old lady. "Why, for the land's sake, I thought you had gone off to some meeting away at the other end of the city."

"I never once knew the first thing about this in the Bible. How was I going to know it was a mean thing to do?" questioned Tode, with increasing excitement. "And it was the best day I've had, too, and that makes it all the meaner."

And his voice choked a little, and his head went suddenly down on his arm.

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"Well, now, I wouldn't mind, deary," spoke the old lady in soothing tones, after a few moments of silence. "If you didn't know anything about it, of course you wasn't to blame. 'Tisn't as if you had learned it in Sunday-school, and all that, and I wouldn't mind about the business. Like enough you'll have more days just as brisk as Sunday."

"It isn't that," Tode answered, disconsolately, lifting his head. "It's all them Sundays that I've been and wasted, when I might have gone to meeting. Been righter to go than to stay away, it seems; and it's thinking about lots of other things that's wrong maybe, just like this, and a fellow not knowing it."

And as he spoke he listlessly turned over the leaves of the old Bible, until his eye was arrested by the words, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel."

"That's exactly it," he told himself. "I've got to have a Bible. I'll get one little enough to go into my jacket pocket, and then, says I, we'll see if I can't find out about things. And after this I'm to shut up box and go to church, am I? Well, that's one good thing, anyhow."

Presently he and Jim climbed up to the little room over the kitchen. No sooner were they alone than Tode commenced on a subject that had puzzled him.

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"I say, Jim, how comes it that you knew all about those things and never told *me*? That's treating a fellow pretty mean, I think. I always shared the peanuts and things I got with you."

"See here," answered Jim, in open-eyed wonder; "what are you driving at?"

"Why, *things* that you know and never told me. Here your mother has got a Bible, and you know verses in it, and know about heaven, and all, and you never told me a word."

Jim sat down on the foot of the bed and laughed, long and loud and merrily.

"I don't know, Tode, whether you're cracked, or what is the matter with you," he said at last, when he could speak, "but I never heard a fellow mixing up peanuts and heaven before."

Tode was someway not in a mood to be laughed at, so he gave vent somewhat loftily to a solemn truth.

"Oh well, if you're a mind to think that the peanuts is of the most consequence after all, why I don't know as I object."

And then the boy deliberately knelt down and began his evening prayer. He was too ignorant to know that there were boys who thought it unmanly to pray. It never occurred to him to omit his kneeling. As for Jim he felt himself in a very strange position. He kicked his heels against the bedpost for awhile, but presently he grew ashamed of that, and contented himself with very noisily making ready for bed. Tode, when he rose, was in a softened mood, and as he blew out the light said:

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"I wish you knew how to pray, Jim. I do, honestly, it's so nice."

"Praying and brandy bottles don't go together," answered his companion, shortly.

"No more they don't," said Tode, emphatically. "I had to quit that business myself."


If some of our respectable brandy-drinking, brandy-selling deacons *could* have heard those two ignorant boys talk!



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CHAPTER XV.

EXIT TODE MALL.

 N went the brisk and busy days; the soft air of summer was upon them, and still the business at the dry-goods box flourished, and was taking on fresh importance with every passing day. The people were almost numberless who grew into the habit of stopping at the little box, to be waited on by the briskest and sharpest of boys to delicious coffee and cookies, or as the days grew warmer to a glass of iced lemonade, or a saucer of glowing strawberries. The matter was putting on the semblance of a partnership concern, for the old lady rivaled the bakery with her cookies, both as regarded taste and economy; and in due course of time Winny caught the infection, studied half a leaf of an old receipt-book which came wrapped around an ounce of alum, and finally took to compounding a mixture, which being duly baked and carefully watched by the mother's practiced eye, developed into distracting little cream cakes, which met with most astonishing sales.

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Meantime there were many spare half hours in the course of the long days, which were devoted to the puzzling grammar and arithmetic, and gradually light was beginning to dawn over not only the addition but the subtraction table; or, more properly speaking, the addition circle. Tode nightly chuckled over his invention as he started from a new figure and raced glibly around to the climax, thereby calling forth the unqualified approbation of Winny, not unmixed now and then with a certain curious air of admiration at his rapid strides around the mystic circle. In fact, things were progressing. Tode began to pride himself on making change correctly and rapidly; began to wonder, supposing he had a one hundred dollar bill to change, could he do it as rapidly *almost* as that man at the bank? Began to grow very ambitious, and in looking through his arithmetic in search of nouns and verbs, chanced to alight on the word "interest;" read about it, plied Winny with questions, some of which she could answer and some not, went for further information to the older brother who was at work at the livery stable. The result of all of which was that our rising young street vagrant opened an account at the savings bank, and had money at interest! By the way, his trip to the livery stable revived his slumbering ambition in regard to horses, and thenceforth he spent his regular "nooning" in that vicinity, or mounted on one of the coach boxes with the "brother," who chanced to be one of the finest drivers on the list. Not a very commendable locality in which to spend his leisure, you think? That depends——. Tode's happened, fortunately, to be much the stronger mind of the two; and besides, you remember the guide which mounted guard in his jacket pocket. He found it in accordance not only with one of the famous rules, viz: "Learn everything that *is* to be learned about everything that I possibly can," but also in accordance with his inclination to learn to drive; so learn he did, although his desire to become Mr. Hastings' coachman had merged itself into a desire to own a complete little coffee house like the one around the corner from him, with veritable shelves and drawers, and a till to lock his money in.

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You think it a wonder that Tode never fell back into his old wretched street vagrant rum-cellar life. Well, I don't know. What was there to fall back to? I can't think it so charming a thing to be kicked around like a football, to be half the time nearly frozen, and all the time nearly starved, that people should tumble lovingly back into the gutter from which they have once emerged, unless indeed one resigns his will to the keeping of that demon who peoples the most of our gutters, which thing, you remember, Tode did not do. Besides, be it also remembered that the loving Lord had called this boy, and made ready a mansion in the Eternal City for him, and is it so strange a thing that the Lord can keep his *own*?

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It chanced one day that two coffee drinkers at his stand lingered and talked freely about a certain lecture that was to be delivered before the——. Tode didn't catch what society, and didn't care; but he did learn the fact that Mr. Birge was to be the speaker. Now there had come into this boy's heart a strong love for Mr. Birge; he had never spoken to him in his life, but for all that Tode knew him well, nodded complacently to himself whenever he chanced to meet Mr. Birge on the street, and always pointed him out as his minister. Very speedily was his resolution taken to attend this lecture. He didn't know the subject, and indeed that was a matter of very slight moment to him. Whatever was the subject he felt sure of its being a fine one, since Mr. Birge had chosen it. Well he went, and as the lecture was delivered before one of the benevolent societies of the city, the subject was the broad and strong one, "Christian Giving." Tode came home with some new and startling ideas. He burst into the little kitchen where the mother sat placidly knitting her stockings, and the daughter sat knitting her brows over her arithmetic lesson, and

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pronounced his important query:

"Winnie, what's tenths?"

"What's what?"

"Tenths. In counting money, you know, or anything. How much is tenths?"

"Oh, you haven't got to that yet; it is away over in the arithmetic."

"But, I tell you, I've *got* to get at it right away—it's necessary. I don't want it in the arithmetic; I want to do it."

Which was and always *would* be the marked difference between this boy's and girl's education. She learned a thing because it was in the book; he learned a thing in order to use it.

"What do you want of tenths, anyhow? Why can't you wait until you get there?"

"'Cause things that they ought to be helping to do can't wait till I've got there. I need to use one of them right away. Come, tell me about them."

"Well," said Winnie, "where's your slate? Here are six-tenths, made so—6/10."

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Tode looked with eager yet bewildered eyes. What had that figure six on top of that figure ten, to do with Mr. Birge's earnest appeal to all who called themselves by the name of Christian to make one-tenth of their money holy to the Lord?

"What's one-tenth then?" he said at last, hoping that this was something which would look less puzzling.

"Why, *this* is one tenth." And Winnie made a very graceful one, and a neat ten, and drew a prim bewildering little line between them.

"That is the way to write it. Ten-tenths make a whole, and one-tenth is written just as I've shown you."

"But, Winnie," said Tode, in desperation, "never mind writing it. I don't care *how* they write it; tell me how they *do* it."

"How to *do* it! I don't know what you mean. Ten-tenths make a whole, I tell you, and one-tenth is just one-tenth of it, and that's all there is about it."

"The whole of what, Winnie?"

"The whole of anything. It takes ten-tenths to make a whole one."

Poor puzzled Tode! What strange language was this that Winnie talked? Suppose he hadn't a whole one after all, since it took ten-tenths to make it, and he couldn't even find out what *one* of them was. Suppose he should never have a whole one in his life, ought he not then to give anything to help on all those grand doings which Mr. Birge told about?

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"I don't understand a bit about it," he said at last, in a despairing tone.

"Well, I knew you wouldn't," Winnie answered, touches of triumph and complaisance sounding in her voice. "You musn't expect to understand such hard things until you get to them."

And now the dear old mother, who had never studied fractions out of a book in her life, came suddenly to the rescue.

"Have you been reading about the tenths in your Bible, deary?" she asked, with winning sympathy.

"No, I didn't know they were there till to-night, but I've been hearing about them, how the folks always used to give one-tenth, and Mr. Birge made it out that we ought to now, but I don't know what it is."

The old lady dived down into her work-basket and produced a little blue bag full of buttons, of all shapes and sizes.

"Let's you and me see if we can't study it out," she said, encouragingly. "You just count out ten of the nicest looking of them white buttons, and lay them along in a row."

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Tode swiftly and silently did as directed, and waited for light to dawn on this dark subject. The old lady bent with thoughtful face over the table, and looked fixedly at the innocent buttons before she commenced.

"Now suppose," she said, impressively, "that every single one of them buttons was a five dollar bill."

"My!" said Tode, chuckling, in spite of himself, at the magnitude of the conception, but growing deeply interested as his teacher proceeded.

"And suppose the money was *all* yours. Well, now, it's in ten piles, *ain't* it? Well, suppose you take one of them piles away, and make up your mind to give it all to the Lord. Now, deary, I've studied over this a good deal to see what I ought to give, and it's my opinion that if you did that

you'd be giving your tenth. Now, Winny, haven't we got at it—ain't that so?"

"Of course," said Winny, leaving her book and coming around to attend to the buttons. "Isn't that exactly what I said? One, two, three, four. You have got ten-tenths here to make the whole, and one of them is one-tenth."

"Humph!" said Tode, "You might have said it, but it didn't sound like it one mite, and don't yet. I don't see as there's any ten-*tenths* there at all; there's ten *buttons*, leastways five dollar bills." [186]

"That's because you are not far enough advanced to understand," answered Winny, going loftily back to her seat.

"But see here," said Tode. "Suppose I had a lot of money, say—well, a hundred dollars, all in ones and twos, you know—*then* how could I manage?"

"Make ten piles of it, deary, don't you see? Put just as much in one pile as another, and then you'd have it."

Tode gave the subject a moment's earnest thought; then he gave a quick clear whistle.

"Yes, I see—all I've got to do is to keep my money in exactly ten piles; no matter how much I get never make another, but pile it on to them ten, serve each one alike, and then just understand that one of 'em ain't mine at all, but belongs to the Lord, and that's all."

"That's all," said the little old lady, with trembling eagerness. "And don't it look reasonable, like?"

"I should think it did," Tode answered, in a tone which said he had settled a very puzzling question for all time.

When he went to his room that evening he took out from the mass in his pocket a crumpled bit of paper, and looked at some writing on it. It read: "Genesis xxviii. 22." Mr. Birge had spoken of that verse, and Tode had marked it down. Now he carefully sought out the verse and carefully read it over several times; then he got down on his knees and prayed it aloud: "And of *all* that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." [187]

It was later in the season, quite midsummer, when the Rev. Mr. Birge, rushing eagerly down town past Tode's place of business, suddenly came to a halt. The place was unique and inviting enough, graceful awning floating out over the box, covered with its white cloth, fresh fruits on tins of ice, fresh cakes covered with snowy napkins, dainty bouquets of flowers, gleaming here and there, iced lemonade waiting to be poured into sparkling glasses—everything faultlessly pure and clean; but it was none of these things that halted Mr. Birge, nor yet the "No Bottles" which still spoke eloquently of the owner's principles, but the name—TODE MALL! The Rev. Mr. Birge had heard that singular combination of names but once in his life, and then under circumstances he had never forgotten. He stood irresolute a moment, then turned back and came under the little awning. Tode's face glowed with pleasure as he flung aside his grammar and came briskly forward to wait on his distinguished guest. [188]

"I'll take a glass of lemonade, if you please," began Mr. Birge, preparing to feel his way cautiously into the heart of this bright eyed boy, and find if he was indeed the one whose mother had prayed for him but once in her life, and that on her dying bed.

"Yes, sir," answered Tode, promptly, giving the glasses little gleeful chinks as he singled out the clearest.

"I see you keep a temperance establishment. I'm glad of that. I didn't expect to find a place in this quarter of the city where a temperance man could get any refreshment."

"Yes, sir, that's why I came down here to do business, 'cause there was nothing but rum all around here, and I thought it was time they had the other side of the story; and things *are* improving some. The man that kept the saloon right next to me drank himself to death, and broke down, and the man that moved in is going to keep Yankee notions instead of whisky."

By a few skillfully put questions Mr. Birge satisfied himself that the brisk young person who talked about "doing business" and his small acquaintance of the Albany cellar were one and the same; and by this time, drink as slowly as he could, the lemonade was exhausted. So, bound to be a valuable customer, he tried again. [189]

"What nice things do you keep hidden under that dainty napkin? Cakes, eh? Suppose I take one. Do they go well with lemonade?"

"First-rate, sir." And Tode's face was radiant with pleasure as he saw not only one but three of Winny's delicious cream cakes disappear.

Then Mr. Birge took out his pocket-book. It was no part of his intention just then and there to betray any previous knowledge of the boy's history; the little scene in that life drama which he had helped enact was too solemn and sacred, too fraught with what might be made into tender memories, to be given by a stranger into the hands of a rough and probably hardened boy; he could keep it to tell gently to this poor fellow in the quiet of some softly-lighted room, when he should have gained an influence over him for good, for he was a fisher of boys as well as men, this good man; and he told himself that the Lord had thrown this self-same boy into his path again, to give him a chance to do the work which a few hours' delay had robbed him of years ago;

and Mr. Birge knew very well that opportunities to do the work which had been let slip, nine years before, came rarely to any man. And he was glad, and he was going to be very wary and wise, therefore he drew forth his pocket-book.

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"Now what am I to pay you for this excellent lunch?"

"Nothing, sir." And Tode's cheeks fairly blazed with joy.

"Nothing!" answered the astonished customer.

"Yes, sir, *nothing*. I don't charge my minister anything for lunch. Like to have you come every day, sir."

"Your minister!"

"Yes, sir. Didn't you know you was my minister?" chuckled Tode. "Bless me, *I* know it, I tell *you*—known it this long time."

And then ensued a lively conversation, question and answer following each other in quick succession; and Mr. Birge went through a great many phases of feeling in a brief space of time. First came a great throb of joy. The boy is safe the mother's prayer is answered—good measure, pressed down, running over—not only a temperance boy to the very core, but a Christian; then a quick little thrill of pain—oh, his work was done, but his duty had been left undone; the Lord had gathered in this stray waif, but *he* was not the servant. Then, first great astonishment, and afterward humble, *very* humble thanksgiving. So then he was the servant after all; the Lord had called him in to help, and the work was begun on that stormy night, that night over which he had grumbled, and had doubting, questioning thoughts. Oh, there were a great many lessons to learn during that long conversation, and the minister smiled presently to himself over the memory of how he took it for granted that because the little yellow-haired boy had run away from his intended care nine years before, he had therefore run away from God; smiled to remember how carefully he was going to approach this rough, hardened boy. "Oh well," he said to himself, as he turned from the shade of the awning, compelled by the press of customers to defer further conversation, "I shall learn after a time that although the Lord is gracious and forbearing, and kindly gives me the work to do here and there for him, he can when he chooses get along entirely without the help of John Birge."

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Nevertheless he did not yet make known the fact of his early acquaintance with Tode—not so much now that he wanted to keep it to help in melting the boy's heart, as that he had come to realize that Tode's mother was already his one tender memory, and that everything about that death-bed scene, if remembered at all, must be fraught with pain; so he still kept the story until some quiet time when they should be in a pleasant room alone. But this meeting was a great thing for Tode. From that day forth Mr. Birge realized fully that he was the boy's minister. He began at once to work carefully for him. Thursday evening Tode learned to close business at an early hour, and betake himself to the Young People's Meeting. He was toled into the Sabbath-school—more than that, he coaxed Winny in, a feat which her mother had never succeeded in performing.

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It was some time in September that a new duty and a new privilege dawned upon him, that of publicly uniting himself with the people of God. Tode never forgot the solemn joy which thrilled his soul at that time, when it was made known to him that this privilege was actually his. There came a wondrously beautiful October Saturday, and Tode stood by the window in Mr. Birge's study. It was just at the close of a long conversation. On the morrow the boy was to stand up in the church and take the solemn vows upon him, and his face was grave yet glad.

"By the way," said Mr. Birge, "yours is a very singular name. Fortunate that it is, or I never would have found you again; but it must be a contraction of something."

"Why yes," answered Tode, hesitatingly. He didn't know what contraction meant. "My name was once, when I was a *very* little youngster, *Theodore*; but I never knew myself in that way."

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"Theodore! A grand name—it belonged to a brother of mine once before he was called to receive 'the new name.' I like it; and Theodore the name goes down on my record. How do you spell the other? Are you sure that's all right?"

"M-a—" began our friend, then stopped to laugh. "Why no—I'll be bound that ain't my name, either. It's Mallery, that's what it is; no Mall about it."

Mr. Birge turned and surveyed his caller leisurely, with a quiet smile on his face.

"It seems to me, Master Theodore Mallery, that you are sailing under false colors," he said at last. "What have you to do with Tode Mall?"

Tode laughed.

"Well they nicknamed me so, and I suppose it stuck, and it seems like me; but my name truly is Theodore S. Mallery."

"Then of course I shall write it so." And after he had written it Mr. Birge came over and took the boy's hand.

"It is a pleasant idea," he said. "Let us take the new name, a picture of the new life which begins to-morrow, when you say before the world, as for me I will serve the Lord. Be very careful

of the new name, dear brother; don't stain it with any shadow of evil."

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Tode walked home slowly and thoughtfully in the gathering twilight, strange new thoughts stirring in his heart. He felt older and graver and wiser. He went round by his business stand; he took his knife from his pocket and carefully pried out the tacks which held his pasteboard sign; then he held it up in the waning light, and looked earnestly at the letters, his face working with new thoughts. But the only outward expression which he gave to these thoughts was to say as he rolled up the pasteboard:


"I must have a new sign. Good-by, Tode Mall, I'm done with you forever. After this I'm Theodore S. Mallery."



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CHAPTER XVI.

PLEDGES AND PARTNERSHIPS.

 HERE was a little bit of a white house, cunning and cozy, nestled in among the larger ones, on a quiet, pleasant street of the city. It was a warm June day, and the side door was open, which gave one a peep into a dainty little dining-room. There was a bright carpet on the floor, a green-covered table between the windows, with books and papers scattered about on it in the way which betokens use and familiarity instead of show. The round table was set for three, and ever and anon a dear little old woman bustled in from the bit of a kitchen and added another touch to the arrangements for dinner. A young miss of perhaps sixteen was curled in a corner of the lounge, working rapidly and a little nervously with slate, and pencil, and brain. The side gate clicked, and a young man came with quick decided tread up the flower-bordered walk. The student raised her eyes and found her voice:

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"Oh, Theodore! for pity's sake see what is the matter with this example? I've worked it over so many times that the figures all dance together, and don't seem to mean anything."

"What is it? Algebra?" And the young man laid his cap on the table, tossed the curls back from his forehead, and sat down beside her.

"Yes, it's algebra, and I'm thoroughly bewildered. Do you believe I ever *will* know much about it, Theodore?"

"Why, certainly you will. You're a good scholar now, if you wouldn't get into such a flurry, and try to add and multiply and divide all at once. See here, you've used the wrong terms twice, and that is the sum and substance of your entire trouble."

Winnie looked a little perplexed and a little annoyed, and then laughed.

"Have patience with your bundle of stupidity, Theodore," she said, half deprecatingly. "I may do you credit yet some day, improbable as it looks."

And then the dear old lady, who had been trotting back and forth at intervals, now ushered in a teapot and called them to dinner; and they three sat down, and heads were reverently bowed while the young man reverently said: "Our Father, we return thee thanks for these, and all the unnumbered blessings of this day. May we use the strength which thou dost give us to thine honor and thy praise." And the old lady softly said, "Amen."

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I do not know that you have ever heard the dear old lady's name, but it was McPherson—Mrs. McPherson. Of course you remember Winnie, and the young man was the person who used to be familiarly known by the name of Tode Mall, but it was long since it had occurred even to him that he was ever other than Theodore Mallery, the enterprising young proprietor of that favorite refreshment-room down by the depot; for the dry-goods box had disappeared, so also had the cellar rum-hole. There was a neat building down there, the name, "Temperance House," gleamed in large letters from the glass of both windows, and "Theodore S. Mallery" shone over the door. Within all was as neat and complete as care and skill and grace could make it; and that it was a favorite resort could be seen by standing for a few moments to watch the comers and goers at almost any hour in the day.

Theodore came down the street with his peculiar rapid tread, glanced in to see if his brisk little assistant was in attendance, then went across the street and around the corner to a grocery near at hand.

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"Mr. Parks," he said, speaking as one in the habit of being full of business and in haste, "can you cash this note for me? Good afternoon, Mr. Stephens," to that gentleman, who stood in a waiting attitude.

"Yes," said Mr. Parks, promptly, "if you will count this roll of bills for me. I'm one of those folks that I've read about who 'count for confusion,' I guess. Anyhow, these come different every time."

"With pleasure, sir," answered Theodore, seizing upon the bills with alacrity, and fluttering them through his fingers with the rapidity of thought. "Ninety-eight—seventy-three," he announced after a few seconds of flutter and rustle.

"Are you sure?"

"Quite." And again he ran over the notes, and announced the same result.

"Thank you," said Mr. Parks, with a relieved air. And as Theodore gathered up his bills and vanished, the old gentleman looking after him said:

"That's a smart chap, Mr. Stephens. I don't know his match anywhere around this city. True as steel every time, and just as sharp as steel any day."

"Yes," answered Mr. Stephens, quietly. "I have heard of the young man before, and know something of his character."

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Two hours afterward Theodore was reading a letter. It commenced:

"PRIVATE OFFICE, }
"June 16, 18—.}"

"*My Dear Young Friend:*

"It is something over four years since you came to me one night with my ten-dollar bill, since which time my eyes have been on you. I did not present you with the bill then and there, as I was tempted to do. I am not one of the croakers who think it sinful to reward honesty. God rewards every day our efforts toward the right; but I think the reward can come too suddenly when man takes it into his own hands. I stayed my hand. I determined instead to keep you in view, and keep the helping hand stretched out, unseen by you; but ready to come to your aid in time of need. No such a time has come to you. The Lord evidently took you for his own, and gave his angels charge concerning you. I have watched and waited. I know all about your character, young man, and more about your education than you think.

"As I said, your time of need, for which I have been waiting, has not come, but mine has. I need just such a young man as you—one who will be prompt, active and efficient. You know my place of business, and that I make few changes. I do not like the business you have chosen. Keeping an eating saloon is a respectable employment, always provided that the business is respectably conducted, which yours has been. I do not doubt that you have done much good. You have fought the giant enemy of this present time nobly and well. But the business is not suited to your capacity, by which I mean that your capacity overruns the business. Your pet enemy needs fighting, not only with strong principles but with money, and a certain kind of business power, both of which I can put you in the way to gain more rapidly.

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"In short, if you choose to come to me as one of my confidential clerks, on a salary which I will name when I see you, and which shall rise as you rise, I shall be glad to talk with you this evening at eight o'clock. If you have no idea of making a change in business; if your present occupation suits you, I will not trouble you to make me any reply other than to return this communication to me through the post-office, and we will quietly let the matter drop.

"Yours truly,
"JOHN S. S. STEPHENS."

Our young man caught his breath and held it in for a moment after reading this remarkable epistle. Yes, he knew Mr. Stephens' place of business very well indeed; it was the largest and finest mercantile house in the city; and to be fairly launched forth in his employ, with a reasonable prospect of suiting him, was to be a possible millionaire. And to think that that fearful ten-dollar bill, which had made his cheeks burn so many, *many* times, was the means that had brought him such a letter as this. "All things work together for good to them—" Oh yes, he knew that verse, and believed it, too. But what a strange idea that Mr. Stephens should have been watching him, should have known so much about his affairs, and instinctively he ran over his life to see what things he could have done differently had he known that Mr. Stephens was watching. Then his face flushed as he thought of the All-seeing Eye that had been fixed on him night and day; then he held his head erect, and reminded himself that whatever Mr. Stephens might have seen to condemn, God knew his heart, knew that through many failures and constant blunders he had been honestly trying to follow his guide. But how strange that Mr. Stephens should suppose him fitted for a clerkship in his store. He tried to decide what would be expected of him, what he ought to know in order to be fitted for the position. Prices and positions of goods? About these he knew nothing, nor did his want of knowledge in this respect particularly disturb him; he knew perfectly well that he had a quick eye and a quick memory, and a remarkably convenient determination to learn everything that could be learned in as short a space of time as possible. Book-keeping? How fortunate it was that he should have happened into Joe Brower's father's store just as Joe's father was giving his son a lesson in book-keeping, and that then and there had arisen *his* determination to study book-keeping, and that he had commenced it; and at first with a little of Joe's help, and then with a good deal of his father's, and finally with no help at all, he

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conquered it. Then what an extraordinary thing it was that he should have gone home to tea a little earlier than usual that evening three years ago, and so surprised Winny in the act of wiping away two tears, and found that they were shed because the dear mother couldn't possibly pay for the desire of Winny's heart, namely: French lessons; and that after much discussion and expostulation he should have been allowed to consecrate one of the ten piles, in which he always kept his money, to French lessons, and that he had begun at first for pure fun, and ended by working hard over the lessons, Winny, on her part, laboring earnestly to repeat in the evening just what she had learned during the day, until now after the lapse of three years he knew perfectly well that while he would undoubtedly make a Frenchman wild with his attempts at pronunciation, yet the French letter would have to be very queerly written that he could not translate, and the message an exceedingly crooked one that he could not render into smoothly written French. But how did Mr. Stephens know all these things? Well, never mind. Only, he said with energy, there are some more things that I *will* know if I have the good fortune to get near that German clerk of his, and Winny shall have her chance at German yet.

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Callers found their usually brisk host almost inattentive during the remainder of that afternoon. About five o'clock he dispatched a note, addressed "J. H. McPherson, Euclid House," and astonished and delighted his young waiter by an unusually early putting up of shutters, and of putting things generally to rights for the night. In fact, it was not more than seven o'clock when Jim McPherson arrived and found his old-time companion alone and in waiting.

"Halloo! What's up?" was his greeting.

"You received my note?"

"Yes, and have been dying of curiosity ever since to know what the 'important business intimately connected with' myself, could be about I thought at one time though, that I wasn't going to get away. All creation appeared to want to take supper with us to-night. What are you all shut up so early for?"

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"Business. Jim, I have just the chance for you to get away from there."

"How?"

"Well," and then his companion launched forth in an account of his afternoon letter, and the prospects which were opening before him, and also his idea of the prospects which were opening before Jim. When he ceased, the said Jim gazed at him in silence for a moment, and then said:

"And you offer me an out-and-out partnership?"

"Out-and-out. You can come right in here and take the business just as it is, furniture and fixtures of all sorts, and from this time forth until we change our minds I'll pay half the expenses and share the profits. That is—well, there's only one proviso."

"I thought there must be something somewhere. What is it?"

"You know, Jim, this is a temperance business."

"Of course. What's your proviso?"

"You must sign the pledge."

"Stuff and nonsense."

"Very well, if that's your final answer we will drop the subject."

"But, Tode, that's perfectly silly. Can't you trust a fellow unless he puts his name to a piece of paper like a baby? I don't drink, and I won't sell rum here. What more do you want?"

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"Want you to say so on paper."

"What for?"

"To gratify me perhaps. It isn't a great deal to do. If you mean what you say you can have no serious objection to doing so."

"Yes, but I have. I don't approve of signing away my liberty in that style."

"Who has been saying that to you?" asked Theodore, gravely.

"Perhaps I said it myself."

"I think not. I believe *you*, personally, have more sense."

Whereat Jim laughed and looked a little ashamed.

"No matter," he said at last, "I ain't going to sign a pledge for anybody, but I'm willing to get out of that business. I don't like making drunkards any better than you do, and I should have quit before if I could have seen any chance just on mother's account, but I never expected an offer like this."

To all of which Theodore made answer only by setting himself comfortably back in his arm-chair, pushing a fruit-basket toward his companion, and saying:

"Have a pear, Jim?"

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Then the talk drifted on to pears and peaches, and divers other fruits, until Jim said:

"Come, let's talk business."

Theodore opened his eyes large, and looked inquiring.

"I thought we were done with business," he said, innocently.

"Do you really mean that you withdraw your offer unless I will sign the pledge?"

"Why certainly. I thought you understood that to be my proviso."

"But, Tode, don't you think that is forcing a fellow?"

"Not at all. You are perfectly free, of course, to do as you please. If you please to decline a good offer, merely because you won't promise not to drink what you say you don't drink, and not to sell what you say you don't want to sell, why that is your own matter, of course, and I can not help myself."

Jim mused a little.

"Well, you see," he said presently, "I do now and then take a drop of wine, not enough to amount to much, and I'm in no danger of doing it very often, for I honestly don't care much for it."

"No. What then?"

"Why, I'd have to stop that, of course, if I signed your pledge." [207]

"Of course. What then?"

"Why, then," and here Jim broke down and laughed, and finally added: "Tode, I wish you were not such an awful fanatic about this."

"But since I am, what is to be done?"

Silence fell between the two for a time, until Jim said with a little touch of disgust:

"Tode, you're as set in your way as a stone wall."

"All right. What is the conclusion of the whole matter?"

"Oh fudge! bring on your pledge and give us a pen."

Instantly a drawer from a side table was drawn energetically out, and pen, ink, and a veritable pledge were placed before the young man. A few quick dashes of the pen, and "James H. McPherson" stood out in plain relief under the strongly worded total abstinence pledge.

His companion waited with flushing cheek and eager eyes until the last letter was written; then he sprang up with an energy that set the arm-chair upside down, and uttered a vehement:

"Good! Jim, oh Jim, I could shout for joy. I have fairly held my breath for fear you would not reach the point."

Jim laughed.

"What a fanatic you are!" he said in a tone of assumed carelessness. "How do you know I won't break it to-morrow?" [208]

"I know perfectly well. If I had not I should not have been so anxious to have you sign to-night. You happen to be as set in *your* way as an acre of stone fences."

More talk ensued—eager, future plannings. Those two young men, very unlike in many respects, yet assimilated on a few strong points. Theodore had constantly kept a hold on his early friend—at first because of the dear old mother, and finally because his stronger nature drawing out and in a measure toning Jim's, the two had grown less apart than seemed at first probable.

It wanted but twenty minutes to eight when the young men left the room where important business not only for time, but, as it came to pass, for eternity, had been settled, and hurried, the one to the Euclid House, and the other around the corner toward the great dry-goods house on the main business street. He stopped first though at the cozy little white house, moved with eager steps up the walk, flung open the side door, and spoke in tones full of suppressed excitement to the old lady, who was nodding over her large print Testament, Jim's birthday gift.

"Grandma, I have a present for you." And a crisp paper was produced and laid on the page of the open Bible. A glance showed it to be a temperance pledge—another look, a start, a filling of the dim old eyes with tears as the beloved name, James H. McPherson, swam before her vision, and true to her faith her loving voice gave utterance to her full heart: [209]

"While they are yet speaking I will hear.' I was just speaking to him again, don't you think, about that very thing. Oh the Lord bless him and help him. Now, deary, we won't be content with this, will we?"

Theodore shook his head emphatically.

"He must come over *entirely* to the Lord's side," he said, smiling, "now that he has come half way."

The city clock was giving the last stroke of eight as Theodore was ushered into the private office of Mr. Stephens. That gentleman arose to greet him with a smile of satisfaction, and then ensued another business talk, and the drift of it can be drawn from these concluding sentences:

"Well, sir," from Mr. Stephens to Theodore, as the latter arose to go, "how soon may I expect you? How long is it going to take you to get your business in shape to leave? We need help as soon as possible."

"I will be on hand to-morrow morning, sir."

"What! ready for work? How is it possible that you have dispatched matters so rapidly?"

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"Why," said Theodore, "from two o'clock until eight gives one six good hours in which to dispatch business."

And Mr. Stephens, as they went down the great store together, smiled again and said to himself:


"I don't believe I have mistaken my man."



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CHAPTER XVII.

TRANSLATIONS.

 HERE was an evening party at the house of the Rev. John Birge. Not one of those grand crushes, where every body is cross and warm and uncomfortable generally, but a cozy little gathering of young ladies and gentlemen, people whom the minister desired to see come into more social contact with each other. Among the number was Miss Dora Hastings. Dora still continued to come to Sunday-school, although she had arrived at that mysterious age when young ladies are apt to be too old for anything reasonable; but Dora, for some unaccountable reason, so at least her mother thought, clung to her little girl habits, and went to Sunday-school; so she chanced to be numbered among the guests at Mr. Birge's party. Pliny was also invited but had chosen not to come, so Ben Phillips had supplied his place as escort, and stood now chatting with her when a new arrival was announced.

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Mrs. Birge came to the end of the room where Dora stood, and with her a young gentleman.

"Dora," she said, "permit me to introduce a young friend of mine—Mr. Mallery, Miss Hastings."

Now it so happened that although Theodore had been for years a member of the same Sabbath-school with this young lady, and had seen her sitting in the Hastings' pew in church on every Sabbath day, still this was the first time that he had met her face to face, near enough to speak to her, since that evening so long ago when they conversed together on a momentous subject. Theodore's knowledge of the world and social distinctions had increased sufficiently to make him extremely doubtful concerning the young lady's reception, but Dora was cordial and frank, and said, "Good evening, Mr. Mallery," as she would have greeted any stranger, and set him at once at his ease.

Ben Phillips good-naturedly held out his hand, and said, "How d'ye do, Tode?" and made room for him to enter the circle. It was a curious evening to the young man, the first in that mysterious place called "society." Probably the young ladies and gentlemen fluttering through the rooms had not the faintest idea how closely they were being watched and studied by one pair of earnest eyes.

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Theodore's ambition for a yellow cravat had long since given place to more important things—given place so utterly that the subject of dress had been almost entirely passed over. Before this evening waned he was thoroughly conscious of his position. He discovered that his clothes were oddly fitted and oddly made; that his boots were rough and coarse; that his hands were gloveless; that even his hair was as curiously arranged as possible. He discovered more than this—to many of the gay company he was evidently a laughing-stock; a few of the more reckless ones deliberately and openly made sport of him. Ben Phillips, who had been cordial enough at first, found himself on the unpopular side, and ignored the almost stranger for the remainder of the evening. In vain did Mr. Birge try quietly to bring him inside the circle. Those of his guests who were too cultured to make merry at the expense of this foreign element which had come among them, yet seemed not to have sufficient courage to welcome him to their midst; those with whom he sat down frequently at the table of their common Lord seemed neither to know nor to desire to know him here; and Mr. Birge's effort to assimilate the different elements of his congregation seemed likely to prove a disastrous failure. A merry company were gathered around Dora Hastings. She held a book in her hand, and was struggling with the translation of a sentiment

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written therein in French, and judging from the bursts of laughter echoing from the group the attempt was either a real or pretended failure. Theodore stood at a little distance from them, perfectly able to hear what was said, yet as utterly alone as he would have been out in the silent street.

"What terrible stuff she is reading," he said to himself. "I wonder if she really *can not* read it, or if she has any idea of what it is." As if to answer his wondering, Dora turned suddenly toward him.

"We'll appeal for help," she said, gaily. "Mr. Mallery, do come to the rescue. My French is defective or the translation is incorrect, probably the latter."

Another burst of laughter followed this appeal; but Theodore, taking a sudden resolution, stepped promptly forward.

"I conclude," he said, glancing at the book, and then looking steadily around him, "that you really do not take in the meaning of this sentence, any of you?"

"I am sure I do not," answered Dora, gaily. "It is about 'everlasting eyes,' I think, or some such nonsense; but what little I once knew about French, and little enough it was, I assure you, has utterly gone from me, so have compassion on our ignorance if you can." [215]

Without further comment Theodore, with quiet dignity, read the sentence: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." As he finished his eye caught Dora's; her face was flushed and eager.

"You are right," she said, promptly. "We none of us understood the sentence, or we could never have indulged in foolish jesting over so solemn a truth."

Ben Phillips gave vent to his astonishment in words:

"Tode, how on earth did you learn French?"

Dora laughed lightly.

"He studied, I presume," she said, merrily. "And that you know is what *you* never would do, Ben. Mr. Mallery, suppose you come and decipher for me the motto underneath the French scene in the further parlor."

And taking Tode's offered arm the daughter of the millionaire moved down the long parlor by his side. Mr. Birge, coming at that moment from the dining-room, passed the two, then turning back sought his wife to say:

"The experiment has succeeded. Theodore is promenading with Dora Hastings."

"The *splendid* girl!" said Mrs. Birge, energetically. "I knew she would." [216]

Meantime Theodore had resolved on a bold stroke for the Master.

"Do you remember anything connected with that verse, Miss Hastings?" he asked, as the two entered the almost deserted back parlor.

"Indeed I do," Dora answered, eagerly. "I never forgot it, and your earnest questions about it, and I could tell you so little."

"I found out a great deal about it, though, taking the information that you gave me for a starting point, and I have reason to thank God that you ever showed me your little card. But do you know anything more of the matter now, experimentally I mean?"

Dora's voice trembled a little as she answered:

"I think—I—sometimes I hope I do. I am trying to learn a little, stumbling along slowly, with oh so many drawbacks; and do you know I think my interest in these things dates back to that stormy evening in prayer-meeting, when you asked me such queer questions? At least I thought them queer then."

No more standing aloof during that evening for Theodore Mallery. It mattered little how his clothes were cut or of what material they were made; so long as Dora Hastings walked through the rooms and chatted familiarly with him, not a girl present but stood ready to follow her example. [217]

Later in the evening Dora said to him, hesitatingly and almost timidly:

"Mr. Mallery, I don't like you to think that I was making sport of that Bible verse. I truly know almost nothing about French, and I didn't take the sense of it in the least until you read it."

There was another thing that the young man was very anxious to know, and that was whether her motive was mischief or kind intent when she called on him; and like the straightforward individual that he was, he asked her:

"What possessed you to suppose I could read it?"

"Oh," said Dora, innocently, "I knew you were a French scholar, because Mr. Birge told me so."

Someway it was an immense satisfaction to Theodore to know that Dora's intention had not

been to make light of his supposed ignorance. As he went home in the moonlight he laughed a little, and indulged himself in his old habit of soliloquizing.

"It's just the matter of fine boots and gloves, and a few things of that sort. I did decide once this evening to push the thing through, and make my way up in spite of gloves and boots and broadcloth, and I would now but for one thing. In fact I *have*; we braved it through together. That one girl is worth all the rest of them, and she came to the rescue fairly and squarely. If she had failed me I would have showed the whole of them a few things, but she didn't, and there's no occasion for making it such a martyrdom for any of them hereafter. On the whole, I believe I'll manage to get dear old Grandma McPherson other work besides tailoring after this. There is no earthly reason why I shouldn't dress as respectable as any body. I don't know but I owe it to Mr. Stephens to do so. Yes, sir, I've changed my mind—boots and broadcloth shall be my servants hereafter."

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Keeping in mind this new resolution, Theodore secured the first leisure moment, and inquired of Mr. Stephens what route to take.

"Going to have a new suit of clothes?" questioned that gentleman in a tone of polite indifference, not at all as though he had watched and waited for the development of that very idea. "Well, let me see. I think Barnes & Houghton will serve you quite as well as any. They are on—wait, I will give you their address."

The hour which Theodore had chosen was not a fashionable one at the great establishment of Barnes & Houghton, and he found some half dozen clerks lounging about, with no more important occupation than to coax some fun out of any material which chanced to fall in their way.

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"I want to look at some business suits," began Theodore, addressing the foremost of them, with a slight touch of hesitancy and embarrassment. It was new business to him.

"Then I'd advise you to look at them by all means; always do as you want to when you can as well as not, my boy," was the answer which he received, spoken in a tone of good-humored insolence, and not a clerk moved.

"Would you like a white vest pattern, or perhaps you would prefer velvet?" queried a foppish little fellow. And Theodore, who was sharper at that style of talk than any of them, and was rapidly losing his embarrassment, replied in a tone of great good humor:

"I never pick out my goods until I see them; but then perhaps the vest you have on is for sale? Are you the show-block?"

This question, put with great apparent innocence, produced a peal of laughter, for the vest in question was rather too stylish to be in keeping with the wearer's surroundings and business.

An older clerk now interposed.

"Show him something, Charlie—that's a good fellow."

"Can't," said Charlie, from his seat on the counter, "I'm too busy; besides I don't believe we could suit him. We haven't anything in the style his clothes are cut. There's a man right around the corner whose father made coats for Noah's grandsons; hadn't you better go to him?"

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"I say," put in he of the stylish vest, "can't you call in some other time, when business isn't quite so pressing? You see we're just about driven to death this morning."

Just how far this style of treatment would have been carried, or just how long Theodore would have borne it, can not be known, for with the conclusion of the last sentence every clerk came suddenly to a standing posture, and two of them advanced courteously to meet a new-comer, at the same moment that a gentleman with iron gray hair, and whom Theodore took to be one of the proprietors, emerged from a private office, and came forward on the same errand, and the young man nearly laughed outright when he recognized in the new-comer Mr. Stephens. The two gentlemen were shaking hands.

"Glad to see you again, Mr. Stephens," said he of the iron gray hair. "How can we serve you this morning?"

"Nothing for me personally, thank you." And then Mr. Stephens turned to Theodore.

"Do you find what you wish, Mallery? Mr. Houghton, let me make you acquainted with this young friend of mine—Mr. Mallery, Mr. Houghton. This young man, Mr. Houghton, is one of my confidential clerks, a very highly valued one, and any kindness that you can show him will be esteemed as a personal favor to me."

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Mr. Houghton bowed his iron gray head very low.

"Very happy to have Mr. Mallery's patronage; trusted they could suit him. Had he looked at goods? What should they have the pleasure of showing him this morning? Cummings, show Mr. Mallery into the other room, and serve him to the best of your ability."

And what shall be said of the half dozen clerks? Amazement, confusion and consternation were each and all vividly depicted on their faces. Mr. Stephens' clerk! a highly valued clerk! Mr. Stephens, of all men in the city, the last to be offended! Disgrace and dismissal stared them in

the face. For a little minute Theodore was tempted—half a dozen dignified words now, and he understood Mr. Stephens' position well enough to know that these same clerks would not be likely to offend in the same place again. One little moment, the next he turned on his heel and followed Cummings, the aforesaid Charlie, whose face was blazing, into the next room. A word, though, of private exhortation could not be amiss.

"You blundered, you see, this time," he said to Cummings, still good-naturedly. "Wouldn't it be well not to judge a fellow *always* by the cut of his coat?" [222]

"You're a brick!" burst forth the amazed Cummings. "I expected to be blown higher than a kite, and get my walking ticket besides. You're the best-natured fellow I ever saw."

"You're mistaken again, my friend. I lost my good nature almost entirely, and came within a word of telling the whole story; only one little thing hindered me."

"What was it?"

"Why I was reading in a very old book, just before I came out this morning, and one sentence read: 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,' and I thought to try it."

"Humph!" said Cummings.


But no descendant of the royal line could have been served more royally than was our friend Mallery at that house, by that young man, then and thereafter.



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CHAPTER XVIII.

"WINE IS A MOCKER."

HEODORE, or "Mallery," which was the name grown most familiar to him, was rushing down town belated and in haste. The business which had called him out had taken longer than the time which had been assigned to it, and in consequence the next appointment was likely to suffer. At the corner he paused and considered. "Let me see—if I go down this block, and up the track to the next corner, I shall save—one, two, three, four blocks. Yes, it will pay; I'll do it." On he went, struck the track presently, and moved rapidly along the iron walk. An unusual sight suddenly presented itself to his eyes, that of a carriage and two powerful horses coming around the curve, and making a carriage drive of the railway track. It took but a moment of time to discover three things, viz: that it was the Hastings' carriage, that the coachman was beyond a doubt too much intoxicated to know what he was about, and that the Buffalo Express was due at the distant depot in just two minutes, and must pass over the very track on which that carriage was trundling along. The perspiration came and stood in beads on the young man's pale face; but there was time for no other show of emotion—he must think and work rapidly if at all. "Could he possibly get those horses across to the other track in time?" No, for there was a perfect network of tracks just here, no place for a carriage at all, and a puffing engine directly ahead, liable to start at any instant, and ready to frighten the horses, who would probably rear, plunge, back, do *anything* but what he wished of them. There was a wretched gully on this side and a fence, but the fence was low, and the gully wide enough to receive the carriage if it could be forced down the embankment. During this planning Mallery was running with all speed toward the carriage, and then the depot bell began to ring, and the roar and puff of the coming train could be distinctly heard. The horses began to plunge, and make ready to break into a fierce run right into the jaws of the coming monster, when a firm hand grasped their bridles. Jonas had just sense enough left to try to resist this proceeding, and Mallery saw, with a throb of thankfulness, the whip drop from his unsteady hand, thus preventing the horses from being lashed into greater fury; then he applied all the strength of his arms and his knowledge of horses to the dangerous experiment of backing them down into the gully. They snorted and plunged, and were bent on going forward, and were steadily, and as it seemed with super-human strength, forced backward; and as the carriage crashed down the hill the very rearing of the horses drew Theodore's feet from the outer rail, and the train came thundering by. And now the affrighted horses seemed more than ever bent on rushing forward to destruction, while the long train shot onward. Mallery, while he battled with them, became conscious that from the raised window of the carriage a young face, deathly in pallor, was bent forward watching the conflict, and he renewed the determination to save that life thus resting, so far as human help was concerned, in his hands. Jonas had dropped the reins, and sat aghast, and sobered with terror. Now the long train had vanished, the puffing engine on the other track had gathered up its forces and followed after, and Theodore, by a dint of coaxing, soothing and commanding the terror-stricken animals, had succeeded in subduing them in part, and guiding the carriage up the bank and quite across the network of tracks; then gathering the reins in his hand he came to the carriage window and spoke, using in his excitement the name familiar to him in the days when she had given him his first lessons in writing. [224] [225] [226]

"There is no cause for further alarm, Dora. I will see that you reach home in safety."

Not one word to him did Dora utter; but she clasped her trembling hands, and said with white lips:

"Thank God."

And the young man added reverently and meaningly: "Amen."

Then he sprang to the driver's seat, and uttered two short firm words to the cowed and sober driver.

"Get down!"

Never was a command more promptly obeyed. There were five minutes yet before the next train would be due, time enough to make his way carefully along the uncertain road built only for iron horses; but the peril had been too recent for the young man not to make eager haste, nor did he draw a long full breath of relief until the last hated rail had been crossed and the corner turned on the broad smooth avenue. It was a nervous sort of a drive even then, for the horses had a torrent of pent-up strength, and had not so entirely recovered from their terror but that they were listening to every sound, looking right and left for suspicious objects, and apparently on the *qui vive* for an excuse for running away. How Theodore blessed Rick, and the livery stable, and the man who fifty years before had taken for his motto: "Learn everything you possibly can about everything that can be learned," as with skillful hand he guided the fidgety span carefully and safely through the maze of cart and carriage and omnibus wheels that lined the streets. And even then and there he laughed a half-nervous, half-amused laugh, as he passed the Euclid House, and saw one of the waiters looking out at him from a dining-room window; at the thought that that first burning ambition of his life was at last gratified, and he was actually occupying the coveted position of driver for the Hastings' carriage. The contrasts which his life presented again struck him oddly, a few moments after, when Mr. Hall, waiting to cross the street, recognized and touched his hat to him, with a wondering, curious glance. Mr. Hall was an elder in their church and superintendent of their Sabbath-school, and Theodore had himself cashed a draft for him in Mr. Stephens' private office not two hours before. He laughed a little now at the thought of Mr. Hall's bewilderment over his sudden change of business; and then presently laughed again at the thought that there should be anything incongruous in his, Tode Mall that was, turning coachman. At last the carriage turned into the beautiful elm-lined carriage drive that led to the Hastings' mansion, and drew up presently with a skillful flourish at the side door. The same John for whom Theodore used occasionally to run of errands for two cents a trip came forward, and stared furiously as the young man threw him the reins and opened the carriage door.

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Dora's composure had lost itself in a fit of trembling, and her teeth chattered so that she could not speak as he led her up the broad flight of steps. They were all in the hall—Mr. Hastings, hat in hand, just departing for the stables; Mrs. Hastings, in a state of transit from dining-room to drawing-room; and Pliny lounging on a sofa, his head done up in wet bandages. He sprang to his feet, however, when Theodore advanced still supporting his companion, and questioned eagerly:

"What the dickens is to pay?"

That gentleman chose to make things more comfortable before he answered. He unceremoniously appropriated sofa and cushions for the almost fainting girl, and said, peremptorily:

"Bring a glass of water. Mr. Hastings, that fan if you please. Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Hastings, she will be all right in a few moments."

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Then there was no resisting the storm of questions that followed, and he told the story as briefly as possible, only trying to impress one thought, that liquor was at the bottom of what had so nearly been a tragedy. Dora revived sufficiently to impress the fact that but for *him* she would not have been there to speak; and Mr. Hastings, in his excitement and exasperation against poor Jonas, whose quarter paid for the liquor which had almost brought death into their home, and would help to swell Mr. Hastings' own cash account on this Saturday evening, recognized in this deliverer of his child poor, ignorant, degraded Tode Mall, and forgot the lapse of time and possible changes of position, and seeking to do him honor, and do a safe thing for his family at the same time, spoke hurriedly:

"Where is that villain of a coachman? I'll discharge him this very hour. You must be a good driver, Tode, or you never could have got here alive with *those* horses after such a time. Don't you want the position of coachman?"

"Papa," said Dora, sitting erect, and with scarlet cheeks, "Mr. Mallery is Mr. S. S. Stephens' confidential clerk!"

Then the great man turned and looked on his ex-waiter at the Euclid House—the erect, well-built, well-dressed young man, standing hat in hand, with a curious blending of dignity and amusement on his face, and actually stammered, and muttered something about "not noticing, not thinking, not meaning, and everlasting obligations," in the midst of which the ex-coachman glanced at his watch, noticed the lateness of the hour in some dismay, signaled from the window a passing car, and hurriedly made his escape.

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This lengthy and unexpected interruption made a grievous tangle in his day's work. Arrived at

the store he flew about in eager haste, and then rushed with more than usual speed to the bank. Just five minutes too late; the last shutter was being closed as he reached the steps. "The first failure!" he said to himself in a disappointed tone. "But it can hardly be said to be my fault this time." His next engagement was an appointment to dine with Mr. Stephens at four o'clock, and with that, too, he was a little behind time.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Stephens, meeting him in the hall, "as sure as I'm alive you are five minutes behind time! I begin to be encouraged. It seems that you *are* a compound of flesh and blood after all."

Theodore smiled faintly; his peril was too recent for him to have regained his usual demeanor. [231]

"Here is your mail," he said, passing over a handful of letters and papers. "By being ten minutes late I was enabled to get the latest news, and I see there is a Lyons letter among them."

"Ah," said Mr. Stephens, "that is fortunate for Lyons. Suppose we step into the library, Mallery, and see what they say for themselves."

So the two passed into the business room and ran over the contents of the letter in question, as well as several others, conversing together in a manner which showed that the younger man had a marked knowledge of the other's business affairs, and that his opinions were listened to as if they carried weight with them.

"But the mail was not what detained me," said Theodore, presently. "And Mr. Stephens, I was too late for the bank."

"Well, it will do to-morrow, will it not?" queried the elder gentleman, composedly.

"Oh yes, sir, it will *do*; but then you know it is not the way in which we do business."

Mr. Stephens laughed.

"I used to consider myself the most prompt and particular man living," he said, gaily; "but I believe you are going to make one several notches above me. I am really curious to know what has thrown you out of your orbit this afternoon." [232]

Theodore's face flushed.

"I have been permitted to prevent a murder this afternoon, even after a father had furnished the weapons for his daughter's destruction," he said, speaking sharply. He was very savage on that question of intemperance.

"Horrible!" said Mr. Stephens, looking aghast. "Mallery, what *do* you mean?"

And then followed a recital of the afternoon's adventures. Had Theodore Mallery been the hero of a first-class novel he would have remained modestly and obstinately silent about a matter in which he had taken so prominent a part, but being very like a flesh and blood young man, it did not occur to him to hesitate or stammer—in fact he thought he had succeeded in doing a good brave deed, and he was very glad and thankful. Presently they left the library and went toward the parlor.

"Do you know I have another guest to-day?" asked Mr. Stephens, as they went down the hall together. "A Mr. Ryan, a lawyer. I think you are not acquainted with him."

"Ryan!" said Theodore, looking puzzled and racking his memory. "The name sounds familiar, but—oh!" and then he laughed, "Edgar Ryan?" [233]

"The same. Do you know him?"

"Why, yes, sir. I used to know him very well; served him every day at the Euclid House."

"Did you indeed! Well, I know very little about him, save that his father was a good friend to me once."

When Mr. Stephens presented his confidential clerk to Mr. Ryan there was a start, a look of bewilderment and confused recollection, accompanied by a sudden roguish twinkle of recognition, and then the polished lawyer became oblivious to the existence of "Tode Mall," and "Habakkuk," and "bottles," and greeted "Mr. Mallery" in a manner that became a guest of Mr. Stephens, toward Mr. Stephens' honored clerk. Then they all went out to dinner. And the dinner progressed finely until the coffee and dessert were served, and Mr. Stephens had dismissed the waiters and prepared for a half-way business talk; then suddenly his clerk gave a quick nervous push from him of the plate on which quivered a tiny mound of jelly, its symmetry destroyed by just one mouthful, and the crimson blood rolled to his very forehead. His confusion was too apparent and continued to admit of being overlooked, and Mr. Stephens asked, with a mixture of curiosity and anxiety:

"What is the trouble, Mallery?" [234]

"Mr. Stephens," said Theodore, earnestly with just a little tremble of pain in his voice, "you have made me disregard for the first time in my life the only prayer that my mother ever prayed for me."

Mr. Stephens, who knew the story of his life, looked bewildered and troubled, and said gently;

"I don't understand, Theodore;" while Mr. Ryan's eyes had the roguish twinkle in them again, because he did understand.

Theodore silently inclined his head toward the rejected plate.

"Oh," said Mr. Stephens, looking relieved, "do you object to the wine jelly? Why, my dear boy, isn't that almost straining a point? I don't understand the art of interfering with cookery."

"This is an excellent opportunity for me," began Mr. Ryan. "I've been wishing enlightenment for a long time on an abstruse question connected with the temperance theory. Mr. Mallery, you are a stanch upholder of the cause, I believe. May I question you?"

Theodore had regained his composure, and was quietly sipping his coffee.

"You may, sir, certainly," he said, playfully. "I believe nothing is easier than to ask questions. Whether I can answer them or not is, of course, another matter."

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Mr. Ryan laughed.

"But you used to be, or that is—well, something leads me to think that you are one of the Bible temperance men. Are you not?"

Theodore fixed a pair of full, earnest, unashamed eyes on the questioner's face before he said:

"Yes, sir, I entirely agree with Habakkuk on that subject to-day as in the past."

"Well then," said Mr. Ryan, dashing into the subject, "I'm in need of enlightenment. Isn't there a story in the Bible about a certain wedding, at which our Savior countenanced the use of wine not only by his presence, but by actually furnishing the wine itself by his own miraculous power?"

"There *is* such a story," said Theodore, continuing to quietly sip his coffee.

"Well, how do you account for it?"

"I suppose, sir, you know how great and good men account for it?" questioned Theodore.

"Oh yes, I know the story by heart, about two kinds of wine—one intoxicating, the other *not*, and that this wine at the marriage feast was of the non-intoxicating sort; but that at best is only supposition, not argument. I have as good a right to suppose it *was* intoxicating as you have to suppose it was not."

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"Have you?" said Theodore, with elevated eyebrows. "In that we should differ."

"Then that is the very point upon which I need enlightenment," answered Mr. Ryan, with a good-humored laugh. "Won't you please proceed?"

"I presume you grant, sir, that it is not superstition but *certainty* that there *were* two kinds of wine in those days," said Theodore.

"Oh yes. I'll accept that as fact."

"Well, then, as I am not a Greek nor Hebrew scholar, and I understand that you are, I will simply remind you of the very satisfactory and generally accepted statements of learned men concerning the two words used in those languages to express two distinct kinds of liquid, which words were not, I am told, used interchangeably. Then I should like to pass at once to simpler, and, for unlearned people like myself, more practical arguments. Do you lawyers allow your authors to interpret themselves, sir?"

"Certainly."

"Which is precisely what we do with the Bible. In a sense, the same Jesus who made wine of water at the marriage feast, is the author of the Bible, and if he is divine there must be no discrepancy in its pages. Now I find that this same Bible says, 'Wine is a mocker,' 'Look not upon the wine when it is red,' 'Woe to him that giveth his neighbor drink,' and a long array of similar and more emphatic expressions. Now how am I to avoid thinking either that Jesus of Nazareth was a mere man, and a very inconsistent one at that, or else that the wine at the marriage supper was *not* the wine with which we are acquainted, and which we will not use at all until 'it giveth its color in the cup and moveth itself aright?'"

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Mr. Ryan laughed still good-humoredly, and said:

"Have you committed to memory the entire Bible as well as Habakkuk, Mallery? But I can quote Scripture, too. Doesn't your Bible read, 'Give wine to those that be of heavy hearts?'"

"Yes, sir; and, according to our translation, the same article is used as a symbol of God's wrath: 'For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand.' Does that look probable or reasonable? It talks, moreover, about 'wine that maketh glad the heart of man,' and I leave it to your judgment whether we know anything about any such wine as that?"

"But, Mallery," interposed Mr. Stephens, "I want to question you now myself. I am a genuine temperance man I have always supposed. I accord with everything that you have said on the subject, and still I don't believe I see the connection between wine drinking and using the article as a condiment, or in my cakes and jellies."

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"Well, sir," said Theodore, turning toward him brightly, "the same Bible reads: 'If meat maketh my brother to offend, I will eat no more meat while the world stands;' and if we are to interpret the Bible according to its spirit, why doesn't it read with equal plainness; 'If wine maketh my brother to offend—'"

"But you surely do not think that an appetite for wine drinking can be cultivated from an innocent jelly?"

Theodore looked in grave surprise at his questioner as he said:

"That remark proves, sir, that you were not brought up in the atmosphere which surrounded my younger days, and also that you were never one of the waiters at the Euclid House; but that it takes much less than that to cultivate, or worse, to arouse an already cultivated appetite, I believe all trustworthy statements that have ever been made on the subject will bear me witness. Mr. Ryan, if you were a reformed drunkard, seated at this table, would you dare to eat that wine jelly?"

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Mr. Ryan spoke dryly, laconically, but distinctly:

"No."

Theodore turned to Mr. Stephens again.

"And the second is like unto it," he said, speaking low and gently. "'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'"

"But my neighbor isn't here," answered Mr. Stephens, playfully. "At least not the reformed drunkard of whom you speak; if he were I would be careful."

"But if you meet him on the street to-night," answered Theodore, in the same manner, "don't, I beg of you, say anything to him about his evil habits, because he may ask you if you neither touch, taste nor handle the accursed stuff; and while you are trying to stammer out some excuse for your condiments, he might suggest to you that you use the poison in your way and he uses it in his, and there is many a brain that can not see the difference between the two; in which case it seems to me to become the old story, 'If meat maketh my brother to offend.'"

Mr. Stephens laughed.

"He ought to have been a lawyer instead of a merchant. Don't you think so, Ryan?" he asked, glancing admiringly at the flushed young face.

"I told him so several years ago," said Mr. Ryan.

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Theodore was roused and excited; he could not let the subject drop.

"I can conceive of another reason why a good man should not harbor such serpents in disguise," he said, in the pleasant, half-playful tone which the conversation had latterly assumed.

"Let us have it by all means," answered Mr. Stephens. "I am court-martialed, I perceive and may as well have all the shots at once."

"Why, sir, what possible right can you have to beguile an innocent youth like myself to your table, and tempt his unsuspecting ignorance with a quivering bit of jelly which, had he known its ingredients, such are his principles and his resolves, and I may add such is his horror of the fiend, that he would almost rather have had his tongue plucked out by the roots than to have touched it?"

The sentence, began playfully, was finished in terrible earnestness, with trembling voice and quivering lip. There was no concealing the fact that this subject in all its details was a solemn one to him. Mr. Stephens watched for a moment the flushed earnest face. This man without wife or children, without home other than his wealth and his housekeeper furnished him, was fast taking his confidential clerk into his inner heart. He looked at him a moment, then glanced down at the table. Mr. Ryan's dish of jelly and his own still remained untouched. He spoke impulsively:

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"Ryan, are you partial to that ill-fated dish beside you?"

"Not at all," answered that gentleman, laughingly. "I have conceived quite a horror for the quivering, suspicious-looking lump."

Then Mr. Stephens' hand was on the bell.

"Thompson," he said to the servant who answered his summons, "you may remove the jellies." And the brisk waiter looked startled and confused as he proceeded to obey the order.

"They are all right," explained Mr. Stephens, kindly, "only we have decided to dispense with them." And as the door closed upon the retreating servant the host added, turning to Theodore:

"I will dispense with them as regards my table from this time forth. This is my concession to your beloved cause."

Such a bright glad look of thanks and admiration and love as his young clerk bestowed upon him in answer to this Mr. Stephens never forgot.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE "THREE PEOPLE" MEET AGAIN.

It is not to be supposed, because nothing has been said of intervening days, that the events recorded in the last two chapters followed each other in quick succession. In reality, when Theodore Mallery bought his first suit of ready-made clothing he had been but a very short time in his new place of business, but when the perilous railroad carriage drive was taken with the Hastings' carriage he had been Mr. Stephens' confidential clerk for three years, and was as much trusted and as promptly obeyed as was Mr. Stephens himself. He allowed a reasonable length of time to elapse after that momentous drive, and then one evening availed himself of Dora Hastings' cordial invitation to call. This was an attempt which he had never made before. Although he had gone somewhat into society since that memorable first evening at his pastor's house, yet the society in which he had grown most familiar, namely: that connected with his beloved church and Sabbath-school, was not the society in which Miss Hastings more generally mingled. This and her frequent and prolonged absences from the city, combined, perhaps, with other and minor causes, were the reasons why they had not again met socially; and, beyond an occasional bow as they passed each other in the church aisle, they had been as strangers to each other; this until the dangerous ride taken together. Then, as I said, after a little Theodore rang at the Hastings' mansion, had a peep of Dora sitting at the window, a peep of Mr. Hastings composedly pacing the length of the room, and after waiting what seemed to him an unreasonably long time for answer to his card, was courteously informed that the family were "not at home!" This was the great man's gratitude for the preservation of his daughter's life! He was grateful—was willing to make the young man his coachman, and to pay him in money; but he was not willing to receive him in his parlor on an equal social footing, for who knew better than he from what depths of poverty and degradation the young upstart had sprung! Theodore did not look very grave; he even laughed as he turned and ran lightly down the granite steps; and he was pleased but not surprised when a few days thereafter he met Dora on the square, and she stopped and frankly and distinctly disclaimed any complicity in her father's uncourteous act, or sympathy with his feelings. And there once more the matter dropped. [243]

On this evening, four weeks after the call, Theodore was walking rather rapidly toward his home; he had been spending the evening with Jim McPherson; the old stand had been enlarged and beautified, until now it was a very marvel of taste and elegance. Jim had evidently found his level or his hight. Theodore still retained his interest in the business, and guided it skillfully by a word of advice now and then. This evening of which I speak had been an eventful one. After a running commentary on the business in general, and the business of that day in particular, the talk had turned into another channel, and went on after this fashion:

"Do you know you are a kind of a standing marvel to me?" Theodore questioned.

"No," answered Jim, laughing. "Hadn't an idea of such a thing. I knew that you had been a *walking* marvel to me ever since I first laid eyes on you at the Euclid House; but I thought *I* was a commonplace kind of an individual who astonished nobody. Enlighten me." [244]

"Why," said Theodore, "you're such a square out-and-out honorable business man; as particular to be honest in trifles as in greater sums; as careful to render just exactly every man his due as it is possible to be."

"And that surprises you, does it? Much obliged." And Jim spoke in a laughing tone, but with a bright flush on his face.

"No, the marvel doesn't come in there," his companion had returned with gravity; "but in the fact that one so particular with his fellow-man should ignore or forget the obligations under which he is bound to render account for every day's work in the sight of God."

"How do you know that I do forget?"

"Because I know you to be *so* honest and honorable, that if you gave this matter thought and weight, its reasonableness would so press itself upon you that you would not even *try* to shake it off."

"How do you know that I *do* try?"

"My dear friend," said Theodore, tenderly, "how can I help knowing when I know so well the love of Christ for you, his yearning over you, and the fact that your mother's prayers are constantly going up for you, and yet that you still slight such love?"

"But how do you know that last to be a fact?" [245]

"My dear Jim, if you were not you would be a praying man, a Christian." [246]

"And I still ask, how do you know that I am not? Is my life so at variance with the principles of the gospel that you can not doubt it?"

Theodore turned eager, searching eyes upon his friend's face, and questioned tremulously:

"Are you a praying man, Jim?"

"I do hope and trust that I am."

The reply came in firm, clear tones, with a sort of undertone of solemn triumph in them; and Theodore rose suddenly, and going around to his side clasped hands with him in token of a new bond of fellowship, and his voice was husky as he said:

"My dear brother, forgive me for taking for granted that your position on this subject was unchanged because you did not choose to tell me so; but why did you not? Oh, if I *could* tell you how I have longed and prayed for this."

"I know it," said Jim, holding the proffered hand in a hearty grasp. "I have been wrong in that respect; but I felt so weak, so doubtful at times, so afraid of making blunders, that I thought it best to keep quiet, and if my life could not speak for me then it would be because there was nothing to speak. But I was at prayer-meeting last evening; sat over in the seat by the door. I heard what you said, and I came to the conclusion that the Lord had lighted my candle for me, and that I had hidden it away under a bushel as if I were ashamed of it; and I have been planning all day how to bring it out from the shadow and have it shine." [247]

You may imagine that the rest of that evening was blessed to those two young men. Those of you who by experience know any thing about it will understand how Theodore believed that he could never hear words more blessed than those which Jim spoke to him as they shook hands for good-night.

"Least of all, my dear fellow, should I have hid the story from you, for from the first to the last you have been the means, under God, of my finding him; and, Mallery, one of the longest strides I ever took toward the 'strait gate' was that evening when you almost *made* me sign the pledge. Oh, we have a new name to our roll. Did I tell you? Mr. Ryan."

"Not the lawyer?"

"Yes, the lawyer. Boards at the Euclid House, you know; signed at our last meeting. *You* had something to do with that, hadn't you? He said something to me in that queer way he has about meeting Habakkuk not long ago, and finding that he had added the whole Bible to his bottle argument." [248]

And so it was that Theodore did not go yet after all, but sat down again to discuss this new delight.

And thus it came to pass that he was walking rapidly down town at rather a late hour, and overtook two persons who were stumbling and muttering along the now nearly deserted street.

"Poor wretches," he said to himself; "poor miserable wretches! I wonder whether the rum-hole that sent them out in this condition was gilded and glittering, or was a veritable cellar stripped of its disguise? This is what I used to fear for Jim, the splendid fellow! I never half did him justice. What a boy, though, not to tell his mother. I wonder who the dear old saint will take up for her 'most special subject' now? Jim and Rick both gathered in. It will be Winny with twofold earnestness now, I presume. Oh, the mansions are filling up, and I thank God that he is letting me help to fill them. But who will I take now?"

"Le me lone," interrupted one of the poor drunkards, giving his companion a vigorous push, "I can walk without your help, I guess; pity if I couldn't!"

"Suppose," continued Theodore to his inner self; "suppose I should take that poor fellow who is leaning against the post? God's mercy is great enough for him. I want somebody to bring as a thank-offering for Jim and Rick—yes, and for Mr. Ryan, too. I believe I'll choose him. I'll find out who he is, and follow him up, with the Lord's help, until he chooses one of the many mansions for himself. How shall I go to work to discover who he is and where he belongs? I really doubt his knowledge of either subject just at present." [249]

Then the man embracing the post spoke for the first time.

"What you s'pose ails this confounded lamp-post? Won't stand still; whirls round like a wind-mill or a church-steeple, or suthin. B'lieve it's drunk, sure's you live."

Something in the manner, in the tones, thick and foolish and unnatural though they were, brought Theodore to a full stop before the poor fellow, and caused him to look eagerly in the upturned face, while the blood surged violently through his veins.

"Drunk!" returned the less intoxicated companion, contemptuously. "You're drunk yourself, that's what's the matter. You better come on now and let that lamp-post stay where it is. I ain't going to drag you both home, I reckon."

Meantime Theodore laid a firm steady hand on the arm of the drunken man, and spoke in a low quiet tone, "Pliny," for he had too surely recognized the voice, and knew now beyond the shadow of a doubt that the "poor wretch" in question was Pliny Hastings, and that his drunken companion [250]

was the old friend of his boyhood, Ben. Phillips. So these three, whose lives had commenced on the same day of time, had crossed each other's paths once more. With very little effort he persuaded the poor bewildered fellow to desert his whirling post, and a carriage returning empty from the midnight train came at his call, and the three were promptly seated therein, and the order given by Theodore, No.—Euclid Avenue. A strange ride it was for him. His companions sang and yelled and quarreled by turns, until at last the sleepy stage came upon them, and this but for one thing was a relief. It had been no part of his plan to be seen by any dweller in the Hastings' mansion that night; but if this man was to be an utterly helpless log how could he help it? However, he comforted himself with the thought that a servant was probably in waiting, and that they could get him quickly and quietly to his room. So when the carriage rolled up the avenue and halted before the door, he sprang out, and once more rang the bell and awaited admittance to Hastings' Hall. He had not long to wait; he heard the night-latch click sharply, and a moment thereafter the door swung open, and he confronted not a servant but Dora, looking nearly as white and quite as grave as she had on the day of the ride.

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"Dora!" he said, in his surprise and alarm. "Why, is it you? Where is your father?"

"Papa is in his room. Is it Pliny, Mr. Mallery?"

"Yes," said Theodore, gently. "Don't be alarmed, Miss Hastings, he is not injured; he—it is—"

Dora interrupted him.

"I understand but too well, Mr. Mallery. Is he unconscious—asleep, or what?"

"Asleep," answered Theodore, briefly, feeling that words were worse than useless.

"Then could you—could we *possibly* get him to his room without the knowledge of any one? If we *only could*."

"We will try," the brief reply breathing sympathy and pity in every tone. "Have you a servant whom you can trust?"

Dora shook her head in distress.

"There isn't a servant up but John, and papa rang for him not five minutes ago."

"Never mind then—I know the driver; he is trustworthy. Be prepared to show us the way to his room, Miss Hastings."

Swift and quiet were their movements. The driver, one of the wisest of his set, seemed to comprehend the situation by instinct, and trod the halls and stairs as though his feet had been shod in velvet. He was a strong man, too, and between them they carried the slight effeminate form with ease and laid him upon the elegant bed in his elegant room, he still sleeping the heavy drunken sleep which Dora had learned to know so well.

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She stood now in the hall with compressed lips and one hand pressing the throbbing veins in her forehead, waiting while Theodore turned down and shaded the gas, and arranged the sleeper's head in a more comfortable position on the pillow. He had with a brief low-spoken sentence dismissed his helper the moment they had deposited their burden on the bed. Presently he came out into the hall, and closing the door behind him followed Dora lightly and swiftly down the stairs. Not a word passed between them until he stood with his hand on the night-latch; then he said:

"Can I serve you in any way to-night, Miss Hastings?"

The reply was irrelevant but very earnest:

"Mr. Mallery, I do not know how to thank you for this night's kindness."

"There is no need of thanks," he said, gently. "Take heart of grace, Miss Hastings. God helping us we will save him yet. I had selected him for my subject of special pleading before I knew who he was."

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Dora's white lips quivered a little.

"Then there are two to pray for him!" she said, eagerly.

"Yes, and 'if two of you shall agree'—you know. Good-night."

He had one more hard task to perform. The carriage was waiting, and the other drunken son must be conveyed to his father's house. A few moments of rapid driving brought them to the modest white house, with its green blinds, one of them with the slats turned so that the pale tearful watcher at the window could see the carriage, and before Theodore had time to ring the door was unbolted, and this time it was a gray-haired father who received them. Grim and silent was he, but ever and anon as they were passing up the stairs they heard a low heart-rending moan from the poor mother, who had left the window and buried her head among the cushions of the sofa. Theodore knew nothing about the sweet sleeping baby who had nestled so cozily in the great rocking-chair twenty-three years before; but the mother did, and had lived to understand that had her precious baby Benny slept the sleep that knows no waking when in his infancy, it would have been infinitely better than the stupor of body and brain that held him now.

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"Young man," said Mr. Phillips, as they reached the outer door again, "I don't know who you

are, but I am thankful that you have saved us from any further disgrace by bringing him home. God grant that this night's work may be a warning to you, and that you may never need such disgraceful help for yourself."

He evidently mistook Theodore for one of the boon companions of his son. The driver, overhearing the remark, chuckled softly, and remarked to himself: "That's a good one! He's mistook his chap this time, I could tell him;" but Theodore bowed in respectful silence, and felt a consuming pity for that heavily stricken father.

As he entered the carriage the driver volunteered some information.

"That man sells rum himself, in his grocery over there across the street, and he fought against the 'no license' petition like a wild tiger last fall."


"Drive me home now, please," said Theodore aloud, in answer to this; and to himself he said, as he sank wearily among the cushions: "Then I pray God to have mercy on him, and not make his judgment heavier than he can bear."



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CHAPTER XX.

MRS. JENKINS' TOMMY.

 HERE came a low tapping on the green baize door of Mr. Stephens' private office. "Come," said Mr. Stephens from within, and a clerk entered.

"Is Mr. Mallery in, sir? There is a queer looking personage in the store who insists upon seeing him."

"Mallery," said Mr. Stephens, turning his head slightly, and addressing an individual farther back behind a high desk, "are you engaged?"

"Nine seventy-two—one moment, Mr. Stephens—nine eighty-one, nine ninety, one thousand. Now, sir, what is it?" and in a moment thereafter Mr. Mallery emerged. The clerk repeated his statement.

"Very well," said Theodore, "I'll be out in one moment." He still held the package of one thousand dollars which he had just counted in his hand. "There is your money, Mr. Stephens," he said, laying it down as the outer door closed on them.

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"All right, is it?"

"All right."

"What have you done with the rest?"

"Locked it up."

"And the key?"

"In my pocket. Do you wish it, sir?"

"No," said Mr. Stephens, smiling. "Did you ever forget anything in your life, Theodore? I did not think you had time to turn a key before you came out."

"I turned it nevertheless," answered Theodore, significantly. "You know I don't trust that young man, sir."

"Not yet?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I hope and trust that time will prove you wrong and me right."

"I hope so, certainly," answered Theodore, dryly.

"But you don't believe it." And Mr. Stephens laughed a little as he added: "Now, Mallery, if you *should* happen to be mistaken this time!"

Theodore answered him only by a grave smile as he went out of the room. It was a busy spot outside—clerks and cash boys were flying hither and thither, and customers were many and impatient. Making his way through the crowd, bowing here and there to familiar faces, Theodore sought for the person who awaited him.

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"A queer looking personage," the clerk had said, and over by one of the windows stood a meek-faced old woman, attired in a faded dress and shawl, and a rather startling bonnet as regarded shape. She looked as if she might be waiting or watching for somebody—at least she was not

looking around with the air of a purchaser, and she was being rudely jostled every moment by thoughtless people or hurried clerks. Theodore resolved to discover for himself if this were the one in waiting, and advanced to her side.

"Can I do anything for you, madam?" he asked, with as respectful a tone as he would have used to Miss Hastings herself.

The woman turned a pair of startled eyes upon him; then seeming to be reassured, asked suddenly:

"Be you Mr. Mallery?"

"That is my name. What can I do for you?"

The old lady dropped him a very low, very odd little courtesy ere she answered:

"And I'm the widow Jenkins, and I've come—well, could I possibly see you alone for a bit of a moment? My head is kind of confused like with all this noise and running about; them little boys act as if they was most crazy anyhow, hopping about all over. I didn't know they allowed no playing in these big stores; but then you see I'm from the country, and things is queer all around; but if I only could see you all alone I wouldn't take a mite hardly of your time." [258]

"You may come with me," answered Theodore, not stopping to explain the mystery of the cash boys, and show how very little like play their hopping about was after all. He led the way to a room opening off the private office, and giving the old lady one of the leathern arm-chairs, stood before her, and again inquired kindly:

"Now what can I do for you?"

"Well," began Mrs. Jenkins, her voice trembling with eagerness, "it's about my Tommy. He's the only boy I've got, and I'm a widow, and he lives at the Euclid House—works there, you know, and sleeps there, and all; and he's a good-natured, coaxy boy; he kind of wants to do just as everybody says; and he's promised me time and again that he wouldn't drink a mite of their stuff that they live on there, and he doesn't mean to, but they offer it to him, and the other boys they laugh at him, and kind of lead him along—and the long and short of it is, the habit is coming on him, Mr. Mallery, coming on fast. I've coaxed Tommy, and he means all right, only he don't do it; and I've been down there to Mr. Roberts, and talked to him, and he's just as smooth as glass, and the difference between him an' Tommy is that he don't mean it at all, not a word of it, any of the time. I see it in his eyes, and I've tried to coax Tommy away from there, but he thinks he can't find anything else to do, and they are good to him there, and he's kind of bent on staying, and I've done every blessed thing I could think of, and now I am at my wits' ends." [259]

And the voluble little woman paused long enough to wipe two glistening tears from her withered cheeks, while her listener, roused and sympathetic, asked in earnest tones:

"And what is it you would like to have me do? Tommy is in danger, that is evident. I do not wonder that you are alarmed, and I am ready to help you in any possible way. Have you any plan in view in which you would like my assistance?"

Before Mrs. Jenkins answered she bestowed a look of undisguised admiration on the earnest face before her, as she said:

"They told me you'd do it. Jim said—says he, 'if that man can't help you no man can, and if he *can* he will. He told my Katie that last night, and I made up my mind to come right straight to you." And then she dashed eagerly into the important part of her subject. "I've laid awake nights, and I've thought and thought, and planned. Now that Mr. Roberts, he's a slippery man, and when you talk to him he says he's under orders, and he does just as he is directed. Now, according to my way of thinking, it ain't no ways likely that Mr. Hastings goes and orders him to feed them boys on rum. But then it flashed on me last night about that Mr. Hastings—why he must be a good kind of a man, he give five hundred dollars to the Orphans' Home only last week." [260]

"He ought to," interrupted Mallery. "He helps to manufacture the orphans."

"Well, that's true, too; but then like enough he don't stop and think what he is about—that's the way with half the folks in this world, anyhow; he may be willing to kind of help to keep them boys from ruin, and save his rum at the same time, and I was just thinking if somebody would just go and have a good kind plain talk with him, like enough he would promise to send Mr. Roberts word not to let them boys have any more drink, and that would help along the other boys as well as mine." [261]

Theodore could scarcely restrain a smile at the poor woman's simple faith in human nature; he almost dreaded to explain to her how utterly improbable he felt it to be that Mr. Hastings would listen to any such plea as the one proposed.

"Why don't you go to him?" he questioned suddenly, as the eager eyes were raised to his awaiting his answer.

"Oh *dear me!*" she answered in consternation, "I should be flustered all out of my head entirely. I never spoke to such a man in my life. I shouldn't know what to say at all, and it wouldn't do any good if I did. Jim, he said if you couldn't do it nobody need try."

"Jim overestimates my powers in this direction as in all others," Theodore said, smiling. "I have

perhaps less influence with Mr. Hastings than with any other person, and I haven't the slightest hopes that—" And here he stopped and listened to his thoughts. "After all," they said to him, "perhaps you misjudge the man—perhaps he really does not think what an injury he is doing to those boys simply by his good-natured carelessness. Suppose you should go to him and state the case plainly? You really have some curiosity to see how he will meet the question; besides, it will at least be giving him a chance to do what is right if the trouble arises from carelessness; and, moreover, how can you be justified in disappointing this poor old mother? At least it would do no harm to gratify her, if it did no good."

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"Well," he said aloud, "I will make the attempt, although I am afraid it will be a failure; but we will try it. I will see Mr. Hastings at the earliest possible moment, and will do what I can; but, in the meantime, are you doing *all* you can for your boy? Do you take him to God in prayer every day?"

The mother's eyes drooped, a little flush crept into the faded cheek, a little silence fell between them, until at last she said with low and faltering voice:

"That's a thing I never learned to do. I don't know how to do it for myself."

"Then you must remember that there is one all-important thing which you have left undone. My mother's prayer saved me from a drunkard's life. I know of no more powerful aid than that."

Very grave and sorrowful looked the poor mother; evidently she knew nothing about the compassionate Savior, who was ready and willing to help her bear her burden. Well for her that the young man in whom she trusted leaned on an arm stronger than his own. The mother had one more request to make of him.

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"Could you *possibly* go to see my Tommy?" she asked, with glistening eyes. "If you only could know him, and kind of coax him, he would take a notion to you like enough, and then he would go through fire and water to please you; he's always so when he takes notions, Tommy is."

Theodore promised again, and finally walked with the old lady down the long bewildering store to the very door, and bowed her out, she meantime looking very happy and hopeful.

Being familiar of old with the habits of the Euclid House, Theodore chose next day the hour when he judged that Tommy would be most at leisure, and sought him out. The landlord was a trifle grayer, decidedly more portly, but was in other respects the same smooth-tongued, affable host that he was when Tode Mall ran hither and thither to do his bidding. Theodore attempted nothing with him further than to beg a few minutes' chat with Tommy. He was directed to the identical little room with its patch of red and yellow carpet, upon which he found Tommy seated, mending a hole in his jacket pocket.

"So you're a tailor, are you?" asked Theodore, cheerily, seating himself familiarly on one corner of the little bed, and having a queer feeling come over him that the room belonged to him, and that Tommy was quite out of place sitting on his piece of carpet.

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The young tailor looked up and laughed good-humoredly.

"Queer tailor I'd make!" he said, gaily. "Mother, she does them jobs for me generally, but this is a special occasion. I've lost ten cents and a jack-knife to-day, and I reckoned it was time for me to go to work."

"I used to live here," said Theodore, confidentially. "This was my room. I used to have the table in that corner though, and I've always intended to come back here and have a look at the old room, but I never have until this afternoon."

Tommy suspended his work, and took a good long look at his visitor before he asked his next question.

"Be you the chap who made the row about the bottles?"

"The very chap, I suspect," answered Theodore, laughing.

Tommy sewed away energetically before he exploded his next remark.

"I wish you had *rowed* them out of this house, I vum I do. Mother, she don't give me no peace of my life with talkings and cryings, and one thing and another, and a fellow don't know what to do."

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The subject was fairly launched at last quite naturally, and what was better still, by Tommy himself; and then ensued a long and earnest conversation—and in proof that the visit had been productive of one effect that the mother had hoped for and prophesied, Tommy stood up and fixed earnest, admiring eyes on his visitor as he was about to leave, and said eagerly:

"There isn't much a fellow couldn't do to please you if he should set out."

"And how much to please the dear mother, whose only son he is?" answered Theodore, quickly.

Tommy's eyes drooped, and his cheeks grew very red.

"I do mean to," he said at last. "I mean to all over, every day; but the fellows giggle and—and—well I don't know, it all gets wrong before I think."

On the whole Theodore understood his subject very well—a good-natured, well-meaning, easily-tempted boy, not safe in a house where liquor was sold or used, *certainly* not safe where it was freely offered and its refusal laughed at. He even hesitated about going to Mr. Hastings', so sure was he that even with the most favorable results from the call, Tommy would be unsafe in the Euclid House; but then there were other boys who might be reached in this way, and there was his promise to the old lady, and there was besides his eager desire to see what Mr. Hastings would do or say. On the whole he decided to go.

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"I *do* manage to have the most extraordinary errands to this house," he soliloquized, while standing on the steps of Hastings' Hall awaiting the answer to his ring. "I wonder how circumstances will develop this evening?"

He had not long to wait; he had taken the precaution to write on his card under his name, "Special and important business," and Mr. Hastings stared at it and frowned, and finally ordered his caller to be admitted to his library. It was in all respects a singular interview. Mr. Hastings was at first stiffly, and afterward ironically polite; listened with a sort of sneering courtesy to all that the young man had to say concerning Tommy and his companions, and when Theodore paused for a reply delivered himself of the following smooth sentences:

"This is really the most extraordinary of your many extraordinary ideas, Mr. Mall—I beg your pardon (referring to the card which he held in his hand), Mallery, I believe your name is *now*. I did not suppose I was expected to turn spy, and call to account every drop of wine that chances to be used in my buildings; it would be such utterly new business to me that I feel certain of a failure, and *we business* men, Mr. Mall, do not like to fail in our undertakings. You really will have to excuse me from taking part in such a peculiar proceeding. If we have such a poor weak-minded boy in our employ as you describe, I feel very sorry for him, and would recommend his mother to take him home and keep him in her kitchen."

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Theodore arose immediately, and the only discourteous word that he permitted himself to utter to Dora's father was to say with marked emphasis:

"Thank you, Mr. Hastings, I will suggest your advice to Mrs. Jenkins; and as she is a feeble old lady, I presume if her son becomes a drunkard and breaks her heart you will see that his sisters are comfortably provided for in the Orphans' Home. Good-evening, sir."

"Don Quixote!" Mr. Stephens called him, laughing immensely as his clerk related the story of his attempt and failure.

"I only gave him a chance to carry out some of his benevolent ideas, and save a capable waiter at the same time," answered Theodore, dryly. "But he is evidently too much engrossed with his Orphans' Home to be alive to his own interests."

"So you contemplate a speedy removal of Tommy from the Euclid House, do you?" said Mr. Stephens, reflectively.

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"Yes, sir. Just as soon as I can secure him a position elsewhere."

"Can McPherson take him?"

"Hardly. He has a case now not unlike Tommy's in which he is deeply interested, and which occupies all his leisure time."

"Can you make him useful here?" said Mr. Stephens, thoughtfully, balancing his pen on his finger.

"Useful? No, sir, I fear not—at least not just at present."

"Can you keep him busy then?"

"Yes, sir, certainly."

"Then send for him," said Mr. Stephens, briefly, resuming his writing.

Theodore turned suddenly and bestowed a delightful look on his employer as he said eagerly:

"If there were only a few more people actuated by your principles we should need fewer Orphans' Homes."

"Confound that fellow and his impudence!" said the irate Mr. Hastings, as he finished detailing an account of Tommy's exit from the Euclid House under the supervision and influence of Mr. Mallery.

Pliny glanced up from his dish of soup, and opened his eyes wide in pretended surprise.

"One would suppose, sir, that you were not particularly grateful to the fellow for his rescue of your daughter from an untimely grave," he said, demurely.

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"Untimely fiddlestick!" was Mr. Hastings' still more irritable reply. "He thinks he is a hero, and presumes upon it to intrude himself in a most insufferable manner. I have no doubt Jonas would have got along without any of his interference."

Dora's face flushed and then paled, but the only remark she made was:



CHAPTER XXI.

MIDNIGHT WORK.

“ING-A-LING-LING,” said Mr. Stephens' door-bell just before midnight. Mr. Stephens glanced up in surprise from the paper which he was studying and hesitated a moment. Who could be ringing his bell at that late hour? Presently he stepped out into the hall, slipped the bolt and admitted Theodore Mallery. The young man followed his employer into the brightly-lighted library; it was the same room, with the same furnishings that it had worn that evening when he, a forlorn, trembling boy, had made his first call, and at midnight, on Mr. Stephens.

"What unearthly business brought you out at this hour?" said the wondering Mr. Stephens.

"Premonitions of evil," answered Theodore, laughing. "Do you believe in them?" And he glanced about the familiar room, and dropped himself into the great arm-chair, where he remembered to have seated himself once at least before.

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"What is the matter with this room?" he asked, as his eyes roved over the surrounding. "Something looks different."

"I have been having a general clearing out and turning around of furniture since you were in—moved the books and rubbish out of that corner closet for one thing, and prepared it for those closed ledgers. Good place, don't you think?"

"Has it strong locks?" asked Theodore, glancing around to the closet in question.

"Splendid ones, and is built fire-proof."

Theodore took in both the lock and the fact that the key was in it.

"An excellent place for them," he answered. "Is there anything in it now?"

"No, empty. What brought you here, Mallery? I hope you have no more work for me to do to-night. I was just thinking of my bed."

"A very little, sir. I have those papers ready for your signature, and it occurred to me if you could add that to-night I could get them off by the early mail."

"What an indefatigable plodder you are to get those papers ready so soon, and an unmerciful man besides to make me go over them to-night. What will ten or a dozen hours signify?"

"I don't know," answered Theodore, gravely. "Great results have arisen from more trivial delays than ten or a dozen hours." Then he looked straight before him, apparently at the mirror, but really at the closet door. It was closed when he looked before; it was very slightly ajar now. Wind? No, there *was* no wind within reach; it was a surly November night, and doors and windows were tightly closed.

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"Then there is really no escape for me?" yawned Mr. Stephens, in an inquiring tone.

"None whatever," answered Theodore, playfully. "It won't take you half an hour, sir, and you know it is a very important matter, involving not only ourselves but others."

"True," said Mr. Stephens, more gravely. "Well, pass them along."

And while Theodore obeyed the order, and appeared engrossed in the papers, he was really watching that closet door. It certainly moved, very slightly and noiselessly, and it certainly was not the wind, for the wind had no eyes, and at least one very sharp eye was distinctly discernible in the mirror, peering out at them from that door! The owner of the eyes seemed to have forgotten the long mirror, and Theodore's convenient position for seeing what passed behind him. Whose eye was it? and why was the possessor of it shut up in that closet? Theodore watched it stealthily and sharply. It grew bolder, and the door was pushed open a little more, a *very* little, just enough to reveal the shape of the forehead and a few curls of black hair. Then suspicion became certainty—they belonged to the young man whom he had disliked and distrusted since the day in which he had first entered the employ of Mr. Stephens, six months before. Very strange and just a little unreasonable had seemed his distrust. Mr. Stephens had tried sober argument and good-humored raillery by turns to convince his confidential clerk that he was prejudiced. All to no purpose. Theodore could give no tangible reasons for his unwavering opinion; but his early living by his wits, among all sorts of people, had so sharpened his ideas that he felt almost hopelessly certain that a villain was being harbored among them. Now while he tried to answer coherently Mr. Stephens' questions, he was thinking hard and nervously what

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was to be done. What was the man's object in hiding at midnight in his employer's house? Was Mr. Stephens' life in danger? Was the man a murderer, or simply a thief? What did he know of their private affairs? What had Mr. Stephens in his house that proved a special temptation? How should he get all these questions answered? The hot blood surged to his very temples as he remembered Mr. Stephens' departure from the store that very afternoon with twenty thousand dollars for deposit. What if for some reason the deposit had not been made, and was still in Mr. Stephens' possession—in this very room perhaps! He remembered with a shiver that the young man in question was in the private office during the making up of the money package, and that Mr. Stephens talked freely before him, that they had gone out together, that Mr. Stephens had directed his clerk to walk down to the bank with him while he gave certain orders for the next day's business. Should he risk a bold question and so discover the truth in regard to the deposit, and perhaps at the same time discover to the thief its present whereabouts? He saw no other way, and feeling that he had little time to lose plunged into the question.

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"By the way, Mr. Stephens, was the deposit all right?"

Mr. Stephens glanced up quickly.

"What possessed you to ask that troublesome question?" he said, laughingly.

"Natural curiosity, sir. Were you in time?"

"I am almost afraid to answer you," said Mr. Stephens, still laughing, "lest you will put me under lock and key at once as a person suspected of insanity. If I must confess, though, I stopped with Winters ten minutes to introduce him to the new librarian at the reading-room, and thereby *just* lost my chance at the bank."

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Theodore promptly controlled the shiver that ran through his frame. Winters, in the closet there, probably knew the facts, and all others connected with the money, as well as Mr. Stephens did. He spoke in his usual tone.

"What did you do with the money, sir? It was not in the safe when I closed it for the night?"

"That I suppose is the very wickedest of all my wicked deeds. I was too thoroughly tired, besides being too hurried, to tramp back to the store. I came near intrusting the bundle to Winters to take back, but I had respect for your ugly prejudices, and concluded to make a safe of my own house for one night."

For an instant Theodore hesitated. Should he risk the possibility of giving the inmate of the closet the information which he did not already possess by asking what had been done with the money? His precaution was in vain. Mr. Stephens continued his confession:

"I've locked it up though, *double* locked it indeed, over in that iron box, and put the key belonging to the box on the shelf in that closet and locked *them* up. Shall I bury that key in the cellar now?"

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Now indeed Theodore's face paled. *Could* anything be more fearfully arranged? He asked but one more question:

"Where *is* the key now?"

"*Here* in my pocket; and I declare I'll deliver it over to you for safe keeping. I shall feel ten degrees less wicked."

Theodore reached out his hand mechanically for the key, and turned it over in cold fingers. Then a skeleton key had been used, for there was the key in the lock at this moment. Winters must have been startled into his retreat by some sudden noise, and have forgotten to remove the evidence of his perfidy. Rapidly were several schemes turned over in his mind. Should he walk over that way and attempt to lock the closet? No, for then in view of all the conversation that had just occurred Winters was sharp enough to know that he had been discovered, and desperate enough, Theodore believed, to do anything. There was room enough in the closet for two, or indeed three men, and perhaps the villain had accomplices. Could he propose to Mr. Stephens that they carry the strong box to his private room? No, for that would give the thief a chance to escape if he chose through the library window; the same thing might occur if he enticed Mr. Stephens from the room and told him the story. Winters might suspect, was undoubtedly armed and ready for any desperate action. All these thoughts flashed through Theodore's brain while Mr. Stephens was reading down one page, and ere the leaf was turned he had decided on his plan of action.

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"Mr. Stephens," he said, speaking in his usual tone, and rising as he spoke, "I have a little matter of business just around the corner from here, which I think I will attend to while you are reading those papers."

Mr. Stephens glanced up and laughed.

"I will recommend you for one of the night police," he said, gayly. "You have business at all hours of the night in all imaginable places."

Meantime Theodore had been taking in the position of the strong box, and decided that he could get a nearer view of it without exciting the suspicion of Winters in the closet. It was, as he feared, unlocked and empty! Now at all hazards the thief must not be suffered to escape.

"I will take your night-key, Mr. Stephens," said Theodore, quietly, "and let myself in without ringing on my return."

A moment more and he stood alone on the granite steps. The night was still and gloomy, the moon gave only a fitful glimmering now and then as it peeped from between heavy clouds, the air was sharp and piercing, but the young man on the steps felt in a white heat as he waited in breathless anxiety for the advent of a policeman. [278]

One thing he had determined upon, not to leave the steps where he stood guard over the gray-haired unsuspecting man inside. There was no telling how soon Winters might weary of his cramped quarters, and attempt to escape by first shooting his employer. Would the policeman never come? He heard steps and voices in the distance.

"Come out here, old moon, and give a fellow a little light on the subject. What you putting about, I'd like to know? You haven't got to blunder along home in the dark. This is the most extraordinary street I ever saw anyhow; it keeps whirling round and turning somersaults, instead of walking straight ahead like a respectable street."

The voice that uttered these disjointed sentences was only too well known to Theodore. He stepped down one step and spoke in a low tone:

"Pliny, what does this mean? Where are you going?"

"Going round like a top, first on my head and then on my heels. How are you?" [279]

Poor Theodore! the plot thickened. What should he do with this poor drunkard? Could he endure to let him stagger to his home to that waiting sister in this condition? A shrill, sharp, merry whistle broke at this moment on his ear; that voice he knew too, and waited until its owner came up; then addressed him still in low tones:

"Tommy, where are you going?"

"Going home—been to a fire—whole block burned down by the square, Mr. Stuart's house and —"

Theodore checked his voluble information.

"Have you seen anything of McPherson?"

"Yes, sir; he was at the fire too. Just whisked around the corner below here to go to his rooms. We came up together."

Theodore's listening ear caught the sound of an approaching policeman, and he hastened his plans. Pliny had sunk down on the steps and was muttering to himself in drunken, broken sentences.

"Tommy," said Theodore, addressing that individual, "there are empty carriages coming around the corner; the train is in. Will you take this young man in a carriage, drive to McPherson's door, and tell him to drive to my rooms with you, and make this gentleman comfortable till I come? Can I trust you, Tommy?" [280]

"Yes, *sir*, every time," Tommy answered, proudly.

The policeman came up.

"What's all this?" he asked, gruffly.

Theodore turned to him and spoke a few words in a low rapid tone, and he moved hastily away. Then Theodore came back to Pliny.

"Will you go and spend the night with me at my rooms, Pliny?" he asked, gently.

"Well," said Pliny, trying to rouse himself from his half stupor, "I *did* promise Doralinda Mirinda that I'd come home, but seeing the street has taken such a confounded notion to go round and round, why I guess she will excuse me and I'll oblige you."

"This boy will call a carriage for you and make you comfortable, and I will be with you as soon as possible. I have a little business first."

He gave a little shiver of relief as he saw Pliny stagger quietly away with Tommy. All this time, and indeed it was but a *very* little time, although it seemed hours to the young man whose every nerve was in a quiver, his ear had been strained ready for the slightest sound that might occur in the room over which he was keeping guard; but the utmost quiet reigned. Winters evidently suspected nothing, and was biding his time. "The villain means to escape hanging if he can," muttered Theodore, under his breath. [281]

And now the dim moonlight showed the tall forms of three policemen approaching. He advanced and held a brief whispered conversation with them, then the four ascended the steps. Theodore applied his night-key, and with cat-like tread they moved across the hall, and the library door swung noiselessly open. They were fairly inside the room before Mr. Stephens, intent upon his papers, observed them. When he did he sprang to his feet, with a face on which surprise, bewilderment and consternation contended for the mastery. "Theodore," he gasped, rather than said; and it was Mr. Stephens' sorrow ever after that for one little moment he

believed that his almost son had proved false to him. The next the whole story stood revealed. From the moment that Mr. Stephens uttered his exclamation all attempt at quietness was laid aside. A policeman strode across the room, flung wide the closet door, and said to the cowed and shivering mortal hiding therein, "You are my prisoner, sir," and from his pocket produced the handcuffs and proceeded to adjust them, while another disarmed him. Theodore went over and stood beside the gray-haired startled man.

"Don't be alarmed, sir," he said, gently and quietly; "the danger is quite over now. His pockets must be searched," this to the policeman. "He has twenty thousand dollars about him somewhere that belong to us." [282]

"My boy," said Mr. Stephens, tremulously, and with utmost tenderness in his tones, "what does all this mean? How did you learn of it?"

"By a special providence, I believe, sir," answered Theodore, reverently.

Meantime the packages of money were found and in order.

"Have you special directions, sir, in regard to the prisoner?" questioned the policeman.

Mr. Stephens broke away from Theodore's restraining arm and went toward Winters.

"My poor, poor boy," he said, compassionately, "how *could* you do it?"

Winters' eyes expressed nothing but malignancy as he muttered between shut teeth:

"Because I *hate* you, and that upstart who hoodwinks you."

Theodore came forward with quiet dignity.

"Mr. Stephens," he said, laying a gently detaining hand on the gentleman's arm, "let me manage the rest of the business for you, you are excited and weary. Secure the man in safe and comfortable quarters for the night," he added, turning to the policeman, "and you will hear from Mr. Stephens in the morning." [283]

Five minutes more and Theodore and Mr. Stephens were left alone in the library.

"No explanations to-night," said Theodore, with an attempt at playfulness, as the other turned toward him with eager questioning eyes. "I withdraw my prohibition, sir, as regards the papers, and will permit you to retire at once."

"One word, Theodore, about the point that troubles me the most What shall we do with the poor young man?"

Theodore's face darkened.

"The very utmost that the law allows," he said, sternly. "He deserves it all. If you desire my advice on that point I should say—"

Mr. Stephens interrupted him, laying a quiet hand on his arm and speaking gently:

"My boy, suppose you and I kneel down here and pray for him?"

All the heat and anger died out of Theodore's face. He remembered the midnight interview which took place years before in that very room, when Mr. Stephens was the judge and he himself the culprit. He remembered that at that time Mr. Stephens had knelt down and prayed for *him*. Reverently now he knelt beside the noble-hearted man, and heard him pour out his soul in prayer for the "poor boy" who had tried so hard to injure him. When they arose he turned quiet smiling eyes on his young friend as he said: [284]

"My dear boy, can you advise me now?"

"You do not need advice, sir," said Theodore, speaking somewhat huskily and with a reverent touch in his voice. "Follow the dictates of your own noble soul in this as in everything, and you will be sure to do the best thing."

It was two o'clock when Theodore applied his own night-key and entered his front door. The gas was still lighted in the back parlor, and thither he went. It was not the back parlor that belonged to the little cottage house near the depot; not the same house at all, but one larger and finer, and on a handsomer street. The back parlor was nicely, even luxuriously, furnished with that dainty mixture of elegance and home comfort which betokens a refined and cultivated taste. Winny had grown into a tall young lady with coils of smooth brown hair in place of the crisp locks of her childhood. Her crimson dress set off her clear dark complexion to advantage. The round table was drawn directly under the gaslight, and she sat before it surrounded by many beautiful books and writing material. She glanced up at Theodore's entrance, and he addressed her in grave business-like tones:

"Winny, do you know it is two o'clock? You should not study so late at night under any circumstances." [285]

"You should not perambulate the streets until morning, and then you would have no knowledge of my misdemeanors," answered Winny in exactly the same tone, and added: "What poor drunken wretch have you and Jim in train to-night?"

"Is Jim here?" said Theodore, eagerly.

"Yes, and has been for an hour. He stumbled up stairs with a poor victim who was unable to walk, and domiciled him in your room. Remarkable company you seem to keep, Mr. Mallery. Who is the creature?"

"The heir of Hastings' Hall," said Theodore, briefly and sadly.

Winnie looked both startled and shocked

"Oh, Theodore! not Pliny Hastings?"

"Yes, Pliny Hastings. The admiration of half the young ladies in the city, and they are industriously helping him to be what he is. Good-night, Winnie. Don't, for pity's sake, study any later," and Theodore ran lightly up stairs and entered his own room on tiptoe. The room was utterly unlike Tode Mall's early dream. No square of red and green and yellow carpet adorned the spot in front of the bed—instead a soft thick carpet of mossy green covered the floor, and Theodore had pleased himself in gathering many a dainty trifle with which to beautify this one room that he called home. To-night the drop-light was carefully shaded, and in the dimness Theodore had to look twice before he distinguished McPherson mounted on guard in the rocking-chair beside the bed, while on it lay, sunken in heavy sleep, Pliny Hastings.

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"Well!" was Theodore's brief greeting.

"Yes!" was Jim's equally laconic reply.

"What did you think had become of me that I could not attend to my own business?" asked Theodore, dropping wearily into the nearest chair.

"Tommy said you were putting three policemen in jail, or something."

"It was *something*, sure enough," answered Theodore, smiling faintly; and then he gave a rapid and condensed account of the midnight scene, interrupted by many exclamations of horror and amaze from his listener.

"Had you much trouble in this quarter?" he asked presently, going to the bedside and looking long and earnestly at Pliny.

"Very little. Tommy had some difficulty before they reached me; but he is a plucky little chap, and was firmly resolved upon carrying out your instructions to the letter, so he gained the day. Isn't it remarkable that he should have been the one to assist in the rescue of Mr. Hastings' son?"

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"Isn't it?" said Theodore, emphatically. "And Mr. Hastings would not lift one finger to assist in *his* rescue."

"What in the world are you going to do next?" said Jim. "In this case I mean," nodding his head toward Pliny.

"Going to keep on doing, and when I have done all that I can, give myself up to patient waiting and hopeful praying," was Theodore's solemn answer.

When he spoke again it was in a slightly hesitating tone, with a glance at his watch.

"There is just one thing more which ought to be done to-night, Jim."

"All right," said Jim, promptly. "There's no special use in going to bed to-night, or rather this morning. Too late to pay, so bring on your business. What comes next?"

"They ought to know at Hastings' Hall where this young man is."

"Ho!" said Jim, with an astonished and incredulous air, "I don't imagine there will be many sleepless eyes in that house if they don't hear of his whereabouts until he appears again. I fancy they are too much accustomed to it."

"There is one member of the family who will wait for him, nevertheless."

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"Who?"

"His sister. He remembered it himself, as bad as he was."

Jim looked searchingly at the half-averted face of his friend for a moment; then seeming to have come to some conclusion, arose and began to don his overcoat.

"Then if I understand you, Mallery, you think that his sister ought to be apprised of his safety, and you judge it would be well, if possible, to do so without disturbing any other members of the family?" This he said after having waited a moment in vain for his friend to speak again.

Theodore turned toward him, and eagerly grasped his hand as he spoke:

"You understand everything, my dear fellow, better than I can tell it. God bless you for your kindness and thoughtfulness."



CHAPTER XXII.

POOR PLINY!



HE surliness of that November night broke into dazzling sunlight the next morning, and the sun was nearly two hours high when Pliny Hastings rolled himself heavily over in bed, uttered a deep groan, and awoke to the wretchedness of a new day of shame and misery and self-loathing.

For he loathed himself, this poor young man born and reared in the very hotbed of temptation, struggling to break the chain that he had but recently discovered was bound around him, making resolutions many and strong, and gradually awakening to the knowledge that resolutions were flimsy as paper threads compared with the iron bands with which his tyrant held him. After the groan, he opened his eyes, and staring about him in a bewildered way, tried to take in his unfamiliar surroundings.

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"Where in the name of wonders am I now?" he said at last and aloud. Whereupon Theodore came to the bedside and said, "Good-morning, Pliny."

"What the mischief!" began Pliny, then he stopped; and as memory came to his aid, added a short, sharp, "Oh!" and relapsed into silence.

"Are you able to get up and go down to breakfast with me?" questioned Theodore. And then Pliny raised himself on his elbow, and burst forth:

"I say, Mallery, why didn't you just leave me to my confounded fate? I should have blundered home somehow, and if that long-suffering sister of mine had chanced to fail in her plans, why my precious father would have discovered my condition and kicked me out of doors, for good. He has threatened to do it—and that is the way they all do anyhow. Isn't it, Mallery? *make* drunkards, and when their handiwork just begins to do them credit, kick them out."

"I think it would be well for you to get up and dress for breakfast," was Theodore's quiet answer.

"Why don't you give it up, Mallery?" persisted Pliny, making no effort to change his position. "Don't you see it's no sort of use; no one was ever more possessed to be a fool than I am. What have all my everlasting promises amounted to but straws! I tell you, my father designed and planned me for a drunkard, and I'm living up to the light that has been given me."

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"I see it is quite time you were ready for breakfast, Pliny. I am waiting, and *have* been for two hours, and I really haven't time to waste, while you lie there and talk nonsense. Whatever else you do, don't be foolish enough to cast all the blame of your misdeeds on your father."

Pliny turned fiercely. "Who else is there to blame, I should like to know?" he asked, savagely. "Didn't he give me the sugar to sip from the bottom of his brandy glass in my babyhood? Haven't I drank my wine at his table, sitting by his side, three times a day for at least fifteen years? Haven't I seen him frown on every effort at temperance reform throughout the country? Haven't I seen him sneer at my weak, feeble efforts to break away from the demon with which he has constantly tempted me? If he didn't rear me up for a drunkard, what in the name of heaven *am* I designed for after such a training?"

"Pliny," said Theodore, speaking low and with great significance, "for what do you suppose *my* father designed and reared *me*?"

One evening, months before, Theodore had, in much pain and shrinking, told the whole sad story of his early life to Pliny, told it in the vague hope that it might some day be a help to him. Now, as he referred to it, Pliny answered only with a toss and a groan, and then was entirely silent. At last he spoke again in a quieter, but utterly despairing tone.

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"Mallery, you don't know anything about it. I tell you I was *born* with this appetite; I inherited it, if you will; it is my father's legacy to me, and the taste has been petted and fostered in every imaginable way; you need not talk of my manhood to me. I have precious little of that article left. No mortal knows it better than I do myself; I would sell what little I have for a glass of brandy this minute."

Theodore came over to him and laid a quiet hand on the flushed and throbbing temples. "I know all about it, my friend;" he said, gently. "I know more about this thing in some respects than you do; remember the atmosphere in which I spent my early boyhood; remember what *my* father is. Oh, I know how hard it is so well, that it seems to me almost impossible for one in his own strength to be freed; but, Pliny, why *will* you not accept a helper? One who is mighty to save? I do solemnly assure you that in him you would *certainly* find the strength you need."

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Pliny moved restlessly, and spoke gloomily, "You are talking a foreign language to me, Mallery. I don't understand anything about that sort of thing, you know."

"Yes, I know. But, what has that to do with it? I am asking you why you *will* not? How is it

possible that you can desire to be released from this bondage; can feel your own insufficiency, and yet will not accept aid?"

"And I am telling you that I don't understand anything about this matter."

"But, my dear friend, is there any sense to that reply? If you wished to become a surveyor, and I should assure you that you would need to acquire a knowledge of a certain branch of mathematics in order to perfect yourself, would you coldly reply to me that you knew nothing about that matter, and consider the question settled? You certainly would not, if you had any confidence in me."

Pliny turned quickly toward him.

"You are wrong in that last position, at least," he said, eagerly. "If I have confidence in any living being, I have in you, and certainly I have reason to trust you. The way in which you cling to me, patiently and persistently, through all manner of scrapes and discouragements, is perfectly marvelous! Now, tell me why you do it?"

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Theodore hesitated a moment before he answered, gravely:

"If you want to know the first cause, Pliny, it is because I pledged you to my Redeemer, as a thank-offering for a gracious answer to my prayers, which he sent me, even when I was unbelieving; and the second is, because, dear friend, I love you, and *can not* give you up."

Pliny lay motionless and silent, and something very like a tear forced itself from between his closed eyelids.

"Pliny, will you utterly disappoint me?" said Theodore at last, breaking the silence. "Won't you promise me to seek this Helper of mine?"

"How?"

"Pray for his aid; it will surely be given. You trust me, you say; well, I promise you of a certainty that he stands ready to receive you. Will you begin to-day, Pliny?"

"You will despise me if I tell you why I can not," Pliny said, hesitatingly, after a long, and, on Theodore's part, an anxious silence.

"No, I shall not," he answered, quickly.

"Tell me."

"Well then, it is because, whatever else I may have been, I have never played the hypocrite, and I have sense enough left to know that the effort which you desire me to make, will not accord with an engagement which I have this very evening."

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"What is it?"

"To accompany Ben Phillips to the dance at the hotel on the turnpike, nine miles from here. I'm as sure that I will drink wine and brandy to-night, as I am that I lie here, in spite of all the helps in creation, or out of it. So what's the use?"

"Will you give me one *great* proof of your friendship, Pliny?" was Theodore's eager question.

"I'll give you 'most anything quicker than I would any other mortal," answered Pliny, wearily.

"Then will you promise me not to go with Phillips this evening?"

"Ho!" said Pliny, affecting astonishment. "I thought you were a tremendous man of your word?"

"There are circumstances under which I am not; if I promise to commit suicide, I am justified in saner moments in changing my mind."

"I didn't exactly promise either," said Pliny, thoughtfully. "I had just brains enough left for that. Well, Mallery, I'll be hanged if I haven't a mind to promise you; I'm sure I've no desire to go, it's only that confounded way I have of blundering into engagements."

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"I'm waiting," said Theodore, gravely.

"Well, I *won't* go."

"Thank you;" this time he smiled, and added:

"How about the other matter, Pliny?"

"That is different;" said Pliny, restlessly. "Not so easily decided on. I don't more than half understand you, and yet—yes, I know theoretically what you want of me. Theodore, I'll think of it."

A little quickly checked sigh escaped Theodore; he must bide his time, but a great point had been gained. There came a tapping at the chamber door. Theodore went forward and opened it, and Pliny, listening, heard a clear, smoothly modulated voice ask:

"Will your friend take breakfast with you, Theodore, and have you any directions?"

"No special directions," answered Theodore, smiling. "Is that a hint that we are woefully late,

Winnie? It is too bad; we will be down very soon now."

"I'm a selfish dog, with all the rest," Pliny said, sighing heavily, as he went around making a hurried toilet. "How is it that you have any time to waste on a wretch like myself? Did you ever have your head whirl around like a spinning wheel, Mallery?"

"I sent a note to Mr. Stephens early this morning, saying I should not be at the store until late. Try ice water for your head, Pliny." This was Theodore's reply to the last query. [297]

The dainty little breakfast room, all in a glow of sunlight, and bright with ivy and geranium, looked like a patch of paradise to Pliny Hastings' splendor-wearied eyes. Winnie presided at the table in a crimson dress—that young lady was very fond of crimson dresses—and fitted very nicely into the clear, crisp, fresh brightness of everything about her. Pliny drank the strong coffee that she poured him with a relish, and though he shook his head with inward disgust at the sight or thought of food, gradually the spinning-wheel revolved more and more slowly, and ere the meal was concluded, he was talking with almost his accustomed vivacity to Winnie. He hadn't the least idea that she had stood in the doorway the evening before, and watched him go stumbling and grumbling up the stairs. Theodore glanced from one bright handsome face to the other, and grew silent and thoughtful.

"Where is your mother?" he said at last, suddenly addressing Winnie.

"She is lying down, nearly sick with a headache. I feel troubled about mother; she doesn't seem well. I wish you would call on your way down town, Theodore, and send the doctor up." [298]

Pliny noted the look of deep anxiety that instantly spread over Theodore's face, and the many anxious questions that he asked, and grew puzzled and curious. What position did this young man occupy in this dainty little house? Was he adopted brother, friend, or only boarder? Why was he so deeply interested in the mother? Oh he didn't know the dear little old lady and her story of the "many mansions," nor the many dear and tender and motherly deeds that she had done for this boarder of hers, and how, now that he was in a position to pay her with "good measure, pressed down and running over," he still gave to her respectful, loving, almost adoring reverence. Pliny had not been a familiar friend of Theodore's in the days when the latter had heated his coffee at the old lady's little kitchen stove, and the stylish Winnie had made distracting little cream cakes for his saloon. Indeed the friendship that had sprung up between these two was something singular to them both, and had been the outgrowth of earnest efforts on Theodore's part, and many falls and many repentings on Pliny's.

"What a delightful home you have," Pliny said, eagerly, as the two young men lingered together in the hall; and then his face darkened as he added: "It is the first table I have sat down to in many a day without being tempted on every side by my faithful imp, starting up in some shape or other, to coax me to ruin. I tell you, Mallery, you know nothing about it." [299]

"Yes, I do," Theodore answered, positively. "And I know you're in dire need of help. Come home with me to dinner, will you?"

Pliny shook his head.

"Can't. Some wretched nuisance and her daughter are to dine with us, and I promised mother I would be at home and on duty. I must go up directly, and there is a car coming. Theodore, don't think me an ungrateful fool. I know what I think of myself and of you, and if ever I *am* anything but a drunkard, why—Never mind, only may the God in whom you trust bless you forever." And this warm-hearted, whole-souled, hot-brained, sorely-tempted young man wrung his friend's hand with an almost convulsive grasp, and was gone.

Theodore looked after him wistfully. Winnie came to the window while he still stood looking out; he turned to her suddenly.

"Winnie, enter the lists with me, and help me fight rum and his allies, and save the young man."

"How?" said Winnie, earnestly.

"Every way. Help me to meet him at every time, to save him from himself, and, worst and hardest of all, to save him from his family. I would like to ask you to pray for him." [300]

"Very well," answered Winnie, gravely, returning his searching look with one as calm. "Why don't you then?"

"Because I have reason to fear that you do not pray for yourself."

This time she colored violently, but still spoke steadily:

"Suppose I do not. Can't I possibly pray for any one else?"

"You *can*, certainly, if you will; but the question is, will you?" And receiving no sort of reply to this question, Theodore turned away and prepared to go down town.

The Hastings' family had filed out to the dining-room after the orthodox fashion—Mr. Hastings leading out the fashionable Boston stranger, Mrs. De Witt, and Pliny following with her elegant daughter. All traces of last night's dissipation had been carefully petted and smoothed away from the young man's face and dress, and he looked the very impersonation of refined manhood. As for Dora no amount of care and anxiety on her mother's part could transform her into a fashionable

young lady—no amount of persuasion could induce her to follow fashion's freaks in the matter of dress, unless they chanced to accord with her own grave, rather mature, taste. So on this November day, while Miss De Witt was glowing and sparkling in garnet silk and rubies, Dora was pale and fair in blue merino, and soft full laces; and in spite of plainness and simplicity, or perhaps by the help of them, was queenly and commanding still. The table was dazzling and gorgeous, with silver and cut glass and flowers. Pliny established his lady and devoted himself to her wishes, eating little himself, and declining utterly at least half of the dishes that were offered. Brandy peaches, wine jellies, custards flavored with wine, fruits with just a touch of brandy about them, how they flitted and danced about him like so many imps, all allies of that awful demon *rum*, and all seeming bent on his destruction. Pliny's usually pale face was flushed, and his nerves were quivering. How much he wanted every one of these spiced and flavored dainties only his poor diseased appetite knew; how thoroughly dangerous every one of them was to him only his troubled, tempted conscience knew. He heartily loathed every article of simple unflavored food; he absolutely longed to seize upon that elegant dish of brandy peaches, and devour every drop of the liquid to quench his raging thirst. Still he chatted and laughed, and swallowed cup after cup of coffee, and struggled with his tempter, and tried to call up and keep before him all his numerous promises to that one true friend who had stood faithfully beside him through many a disgraceful downfall.

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"What an abstemious young gentleman!" simpered Miss De Witt, as for the fourth time Pliny briefly and rather savagely declined the officious waiter's offer of wine custard. "Don't you eat any of these frivolous and demoralizing articles? Mrs. Hastings, is your son one of the new-lights? I have really been amused to see how persistently he declines all the tempting articles of peculiar flavor. *Is it a question of temperance, Mr. Hastings? I'm personally interested in that subject. I heard your star speaker, Mr. Ryan, hold forth last evening. Did you hear him, Mr. Hastings?*"

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"I did not," answered Pliny, laconically, remembering how far removed from a temperance lecture was the scene in which he had mingled the evening before. He was spared the trouble of further answer by his father's next remark.

"It is a remarkable recent conversion if Pliny has become interested in the temperance question," he said, eyeing him curiously. "I really don't know but total abstinence is a good idea for weak-minded young men who can not control themselves."

Pliny flushed to his very forehead, and answered in a sharp cutting tone of biting sarcasm:

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"Elderly gentlemen who seem to be similarly weak ought to set the example then, sir."

This bitter and pointed reference to his father's portly form, flushed face, and ever growing fondness for his brandies, was strangely unlike Pliny's courteous manner, and how it might have ended had not Miss De Witt suddenly determined on a conquest, I can not say.

"Look, look!" she suddenly exclaimed, clapping her hands in childish glee. "The first snow-storm of the season. Do see the great flakes! Mr. Hastings, let me pledge your health, and your prospect of a glorious sleigh ride," and she rested jeweled fingers on the sparkling glass before her.

Pliny's head was throbbing, and the blood seemed racing in torrents through his veins. He turned a stern, fierce look upon the lady by his side, muttered in low hoarse tones, "Pledge me for a glorious fool as I am," drained his glass to the very bottom, and abruptly left the table and the room. And Miss De Witt was serenely and courteously surprised, while the embarrassed mother covered her son's retreat as best she might, and Dora sat white and silent. On the table in Pliny's room lay a carefully-worded note of apology and explanation from Pliny to Ben Phillips. It was folded and ready for delivery. Pliny dashed up to his room, seized upon the note and consigned it to the glowing coals in the grate, then rang his bell furiously and left this message in its stead:

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"Tell Phillips when he calls that I'm going, and he'll find me at Harcourt's."



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CHAPTER XXIII.

JUDGMENTS.

 NLY a few of the clerks had assembled as yet at the great store. It was still early morning, and the business of the day had not commenced when young McPherson rushed in, breathless, and in his haste nearly overturned a clerk near the door; then he stopped, panting as he questioned:

"Is Mr. Mallery in?"

"Yes, sir; he's always in. It's my opinion he sleeps in the safe," added his informant, in discontented under tone. Theodore's promptness was sometimes a great inconvenience to the

sleepy clerks.

"I want him immediately. Where is he?"

"In the private office, sir. We have sent for him," said Tommy, coming forward with the air of one who was at least a partner. Two minutes more and Theodore was beside him. [306]

"There's been an accident," explained Jim, rapidly, "and you are very much needed."

"Where, and for what?"

"At the Euclid House. Pliny Hastings and Ben Phillips, they were thrown from their carriage. Hastings asked for you at once."

Theodore glanced behind him and issued a few brief directions.

"Tommy, bring my hat. Edwards, keep these keys in your safe until Mr. Stephens comes. Holden, tell Mr. Jennings when he calls that the bill of sale is made out, and shall be ready for him at noon. Tommy, you may take the letters that are on my desk to the post-office. Now, McPherson, I am ready. Give me the particulars. Is it serious?"

"I fear so. What few particulars we know is that they tried to drive across the track with the Express coming at full speed. The horses took fright, of course, backed into the gully, and both gentlemen were thrown some distance. Why they were not killed, or how they escaped being dashed in pieces by the train, is a wonderful mystery."

"What insane spirit prompted them to attempt crossing the track at such a time?"

"The spirit of rum. They were both intoxicated."

His listener uttered an exclamation fraught with more dismay than he had before expressed, and asked his next question in a low, troubled tone: [307]

"Where were they going?"

"Going home. They had been out on that South road, nine miles from the city, to attend a dance; had danced and drank by turns all night, and were dashing home between five and six in the morning. So Harcourt says, and he is good authority, for he was right behind them, returning from the same place, and in not much better condition than they until the accident sobered him."

Poor Theodore! he had had particulars enough; his heart felt like lead. How *could* he hope, or work, or pray, any more? They walked in absolute silence to the corner, signaled a car, and made as rapid progress as possible. Only two questions more did Theodore venture:

"Did you say Pliny asked for me?"

"Yes—or, no, not exactly asked for you, but kept constantly talking about you in a wild sort of way, referring to some promise or pledge of his own, we judged, for he kept saying: 'I never deliberately broke my word to him before,' and then adding in a pitiful tone: 'He will have nothing to do with me now; he will never believe me again,' I think the doctor fears that his brain is injured." [308]

It was some moments before Theodore could trust his voice to speak; and then he said, inquiringly:

"His parents have been apprised of the accident, of course?"

"Why, no," answered Jim, in a startled tone. "At least I doubt it. Nobody seemed to think of it. The fact is, Theodore, we were all frightened out of our wits, and needed your executive ability. I had been down at the depot to see if my freight had come, and arrived on the scene just after the accident occurred. I had just brains enough left to have both gentlemen taken to the hotel and come for you."

Arrived at the Euclid House the two young men went up the steps and through the halls so familiar to both of them, and sought at once the room where Pliny had been placed. Two physicians were busy about him, but they drew back thoughtfully as Pliny, catching a glimpse of the new-comer, uttered an eager exclamation.

"It's no use," he said, wildly, as Theodore bent over him. "No use, you see; the imps have made up their mind to have me, and they'll get me, body and soul. I'm bound—I can't stir. I promised you—oh yes, I can promise—I'm good at that—they don't mind that at all; but when it comes to performing then they chain me." [309]

"That is the way he has raved ever since the accident," said the elder physician, addressing Theodore. "It is an indication of a disordered brain. Are you the young man whom he has been calling? We were in hopes you could quiet him."

"Does the disorder arise from liquor," said Theodore, sadly.

"Oh no, not at all; at least it is not the immediate cause. Can you control him, do you think?"

Theodore bent over him; he was still repeating wildly, "They'll get me, body and soul," when a cool hand was laid on his burning forehead, and a quiet, firm voice spoke the words: "Pliny, they *shall not* get you. Do you understand? They *shall not*." And at that forlorn and apparently

hopeless hour the young man's faith arose. Some voice from that inner world seemed to reach his ear, and repeat his own words with strong meaning: "No, they *shall* not."

The physicians, who had hoped a great deal from the coming of this young man, about whom the thoughts of their patient seemed to center, had not hoped in vain. He grew quieter and gradually sank into a sort of stupor, which, if it were not very encouraging, seemed less heart-rending than the wild restlessness of the other state. [310]

Then Theodore bethought himself again of the Hastings' family. No, they had not been sent for, everybody had thought about it, but nobody had acted. Mr. Roberts was not at home, and the two doctors had been busy about more necessary business.

"It must be attended to immediately," Theodore said. "Which of you gentlemen is Mr. Hastings' family physician?"

"Neither of us," answered the elder gentleman, laconically. "I don't even know who his family physician is."

"Dr. Armitage is," added the younger, from his position at the foot of the bed. "And he is out of town."

"That's lucky," was the sententious comment of the old doctor.

"Why?" asked Theodore, fixing earnest, searching eyes on his face.

"Because Dr. Armitage uses rum, *rum*, RUM, everywhere and always: and ten drops of it would be as certain death to this young man, in his present state, as a dose of prussic acid would."

"Who is the elder of those two physicians?" questioned Theodore of one of the waiters as they left the room together.

"That's Dr. Arnold, just the greatest man in this city folks think, and the young fellow is Dr. Vincent, a student once, and now a partner of Dr. Arnold." [311]

Theodore mentally hoped, as he recognized the familiar names, that Dr. Armitage's absence would be indefinitely prolonged. He glanced into the room where Ben Phillips lay. He was insensible, and had been from the first. Two more physicians were in attendance there, but seemed to be doing nothing, and shook their heads very gravely in answer to Theodore's inquiring look. Mr. Phillips had been seen down town, near the freight office, and thither Jim had gone in search of him. There seemed to be nothing for Theodore but to go to Hastings' Hall himself. He shrank from it very much—nothing but messages of evil, or scenes of danger, seemed to connect him with this house.

"They will learn to look on me as the very impersonation of evil tidings," he said, nervously, as he awaited admittance. His peremptory ring was promptly answered by John.

"Was Mr. Hastings in?"

No, he was not; he and Mrs. Hastings had accompanied Mrs. and Miss De Witt to the house of a friend, nine miles distant, and were to be absent two days. In spite of himself Theodore felt a sense of relief.

"Then tell Miss Hastings I would like to see her at once," was his direction. [312]

John stared.

"It was very early. Miss Hastings had not yet left her room. If Mr. Mallery could—"

Theodore interrupted him.

"Tell her I must see her at once, or as soon as possible." And at this opportune moment Dora came down the stairs. Theodore advanced to meet her, and feeling almost certain of the character with which he had to deal, came to the point at once without hesitation or circumlocution.

"I am not the bearer of good news this morning, Miss Hastings. There has been an accident, and Pliny is injured, not seriously we hope. He is at the Euclid House. Would you wish to go to him at once?"

Dora's face had grown paler, but she neither exclaimed nor fainted, and answered him promptly and firmly.

"I will go to him at once. Mr. Mallery, our carriage is away, will you signal a car for me? I will be ready in five minutes. But tell me this much. Ought I to send for my father and mother?"

"I fear you ought," said Theodore, gently.

She turned at once, and issued brief, rapid and explicit orders to the waiting John, and in less than five minutes they were in the car. On the way down Theodore gave her what meager knowledge he possessed concerning the accident, withholding the bitter cause of it all, which, however, he saw she too readily guessed. As they passed Dr. Armitage's house he said: "Dr. Armitage is not at home." And she answered emphatically: "I am glad of it." Then he wondered if she were glad for the same reason he was. At noon Mr. and Mrs. Hastings arrived, and before the [313]

day was done the other anxious watchers had reason heartily to wish that their coming had been longer delayed. Evidently Dora had not inherited her self-control from her mother, or if she had Mrs. Hastings had not a tithe of it remaining, and her nervousness added not a little to the wildness of the suffering patient. Mr. Hastings on his part seemed anxious and angry, both in one. He said to Dora savagely that he hoped it would teach the reckless fellow a lesson that he would never forget, and resented with haughty silence Dr. Arnold's sententious reply, that "it was likely to do just that." Then he openly and unhesitatingly regretted Dr. Armitage's absence, sent twice to his home to learn concerning his whereabouts, and was not improved in temper by learning that he was lying ill at Buffalo; and, finally, with much hesitancy and visible annoyance, that would have provoked to withdrawal a younger and less eminent man, committed the case into Dr. Arnold's hands. The doctor skillfully evaded the questions that were trembling on Mrs. Hastings' lips and hungering in Dora's eyes concerning the nature and extent of Pliny's injuries, which fact led Theodore to be very much alarmed, and yet he was totally unprepared for the abrupt answer which he received when he first found a chance to ask the question in private.

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"He hasn't a chance in a hundred; brain is injured; is morally certain to have a course of fever, and he has burned his system so thoroughly with poison that he has no rallying power."

It was late in the afternoon before the doctor, after issuing very strict and careful orders, left his patient for a few hours. Mr. Hastings turned at once to Theodore, and spoke in the haughty, half-sarcastic tone which he always assumed toward him.

"Now, young man, I don't know how you became mixed up with this sad accident; some people have a marvelous faculty for getting mixed up with troubles. Neither do I know to what extent you have attempted to serve me; but if you have put yourself out in any way for me or mine, I am duly grateful, and stand ready, as you very well know, to liquidate your claims with a check whenever you are prepared to receive it."

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In justice to Mr. Hastings, be it said that he had drank a glass of brandy just before this insulting speech, and its fumes were already busy with his brain. Theodore made no sort of reply; his heart was too heavy with a sickening dread of what was to come to be careful about maintaining his own dignity—and, indeed, Mr. Hastings gave him very little time, for he immediately added: "And now, as the doctor has ordered absolute quiet, it is advisable for all who are not useful, to absent themselves from the sick-room. Therefore, it would perhaps be well for you to retire at once."

Theodore bowed gravely, and immediately left the room. Dora immediately followed him—her cheeks were glowing, and her eyes were unusually bright.

"Mr. Mallery," she began—speaking in a quick, excited tone—"I beg you will not consider yourself grossly insulted. Papa does not mean—does not know—" and she stopped in pitiful confusion.

Theodore spoke gently—"I am not offended, Miss Dora—your father is excited, and withal does not understand me. But do not think that I have deserted Pliny, or can desert him. And we will give ourselves continually to prayer concerning him. Shall we not?"

The first tears that Dora had shed that day rolled down her cheeks; but she only answered:

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"I thank you *very* much," and vanished.

Deprived thus suddenly of the privilege of doing for and watching over his friend, Theodore bethought himself of the other sufferer, and sought the room where he had been carried. He tapped lightly at the door, but received no answer, and afraid to make further demonstrations, lest he might disturb the sick one, he turned away. But a waiter just at that moment flung open the door, and to his amazement, Theodore saw that the room was empty!

"Where is Mr. Phillips?" he inquired, in surprise.

"They have taken him home, sir. Didn't you know it?"

"No, I did not," answered Theodore, shortly, and turned quickly away. In spite of himself, a bitter feeling of almost rebellion possessed him.

"He is able to be carried home," he muttered, "while his partner in trouble must toss in delirium—and *he* was much the most to blame this time, I have no doubt!"

No sooner had these sullen thoughts been uttered than he was startled at them, and ashamed of himself. He struggled to regain a right feeling toward the more fortunate man, and punished himself by determining to go at once to Mr. Phillips' residence, and inquire in person for his son, instead of returning to the store and sending a message, as he had at first intended. A flushed-faced, swollen-eyed servant answered his ring, and to his inquiry as to how Mr. Phillips was, answered:

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"Well, sir, he's doing the best he can."

"Can I see him?" asked Theodore, wondering at the strangeness of the answer.

"I guess so—or I'll see. Come in!" and she flung open the parlor door and left him. In a few minutes the elder Mr. Phillips entered. He recognized Theodore at once, though the two had met but once in their lives. The look of unreconciled pain on his face settled into a sterner form as he

encountered Theodore, and he spoke with a marked sternness—"Young man! were you with my son last night? Are you one of those who helped lead him astray?"

"I thank God I am not!" answered Theodore, fervently, yet in gentle tone. Even though he believed that the young man's father had been one of the most potent influences in the ruin of his son, yet the present was no time to have it appear.

"I called to see if I could in any way serve you, and to know if I might see your son."


"Thank you—there is nothing more to do—but you can see him!" The voice that uttered those hopeless words was husky with suppressed tears, and yet, as he opened a door at his right, motioned Theodore forward, and abruptly left the room, the sad and solemn truth had not so much as glimmered on the young man's mind. Not until he had fairly entered and nearly crossed the back parlor, were his feet arrested by the presence of death. Even then he could not believe it possible that God had called for the soul, and it had gone. He stood still and looked on the straight motionless figure, covered with its drapery of white. He advanced and looked reverently upon the face that only yesterday he had seen bubbling with life and fun. The icy seal was surely there, the features had felt that solemn, mysterious touch, and grown sharper and more clearly defined under it. Nothing in his life had ever come to Theodore with such sudden and fearful surprise. Pliny, then, was the one still hovering this side, and the other gone. What an awful death! "Murdered," he said, with set lips and rigid face. "Just murdered! That is the proper term. Why could they not be hung like other murderers? Was it because their crime was committed by degrees, instead of at one fatal blow?" He could not trust himself to stand looking on that still face, and pursue these thoughts further. He turned quickly away, and mechanically opened the family Bible, in hope of something to steady his fierce, almost frightful, thoughts. He opened to the family record—saw the familiar name Benjamin Phillips—born Nov. 17th, 18—. The date was familiar too—the date of his own birthday—year, month, even day. How strange the coincidence! Pliny's birthday too—he had long known that; now here were the trio. Three young men launched upon life in the same day of time! How *very* different must have been the circumstances of each! He glanced about the pleasant room; he could imagine with what lavish love and tender care this young man's early years had been surrounded—he knew something of the high hopes which had centered in him. He knew all about the elegance and grandeur of Pliny's home—he had vivid memories of the horrors of his own. Now here they were, Pliny struggling wildly with his disordered brain—this one—where? Who had made them to differ? Was this the repeal of the old, old sentence: "The iniquities of the fathers shall be visited upon the children?" But then what a father had *his* been to him, and yet how full of signal blessing and wonderful success had his life been! Then sounding sweetly through his brain came the sentence: "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." Had the gracious Lord, then, come to him, and thrice filled what a father's place should have been? And was he but showing these fathers, who had dared to take the responsibility upon themselves, and while they fed and petted and loved the poor bodies, starved and seared the souls, what *their* love, when put in defiance to *His*, could do? Being utterly deserted of human love, had it been better for him than this misguided, unsanctified, distorted love had been to these two young men? Aye; for they had kept the parents' place—assumed the responsibilities, and yet ignored the most solemn of them all. Moved by a powerful, all-controlling emotion, Theodore sank on his knees beside the silent form, and cried out in an agony of prayer—"Oh, *my* Father, thou hast taken this soul away beyond the reach of prayer or entreaty—bind up the broken hearts that this thy judgment has caused. Thou doest all things well. But oh, I pray thee, spare that other—save *his* life yet a little—give him time. Oh, be *thou* his Father, and lead him even as thou hast led me. Hear this cry, I beseech thee, for the sake of thy Son!"

Then he went softly and reverently from the room and the house of mourning. There stood two others beside that still head when it was pillowed in the coffin—the stricken father and mother. They stood and dropped tears of utter agony on the face of their first-born and only son. Did a vision come to them of the time when they had leaned lovingly over the sleeping baby in the great rocking-chair, standing empty there in the corner? Did they remember how merrily they had laughed, as they assured each other that they had no fear of "Baby Ben" becoming a drunkard? Oh, if they *had* feared, and prayed, "Lead him not into temptation," and made earnest effort to answer their own prayers, would the end have been as it was?



CHAPTER XXIV.

A DOUBLE CRISIS.

HEODORE was at his post in the private office deep in business when his next hasty summons came. Pliny was raving and repeating his name incessantly, and Dr. Arnold had said that he must come immediately or the consequences would be fatal.

"I shall remain all night if I am permitted to do so," Theodore explained to Mr. Stephens while he was putting bills and notes under lock and key. "And in the morning—"

"In the morning get rest if you can," interrupted Mr. Stephens. "At all events, do not worry about the store. Remain with the poor boy just as much as you can while he lives. I will see that all goes right here. McPherson is coming in to help me; he has his new clerk under splendid training."

Theodore looked the thanks that his heart was too heavy to speak. Mr. Hastings glanced up grimly as he entered Pliny's room, twenty minutes afterward, but did not choose to speak. Nobody noticed the omission—for eyes and thoughts were too entirely engrossed with the sufferer. And then commenced a hand-to-hand encounter with death. Day by day he relentlessly pursued his victim, and yet was mercifully kept at bay. The fever burned fiercely, and the faithful, watchful doctors worked constantly and eagerly. Theodore was constantly with his friend. When the delirium ran high this was absolutely necessary, for while Pliny did not seem to recognize him, yet he was calmer in his presence. Mr. Hastings had ceased to demur or grumble—indeed, sharp and persistent anxiety and fear had taken the place of all other feelings. Pliny had disappointed him, had angered him, had disgraced him at times, yet he reigned an idol in his father's heart.

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During all these anxious days and nights Dr. Arnold's face had been grave and impassive, and his voice had failed to utter a single encouraging word. But one night he said, peremptorily:

"There are too many people, and there is too much moving around in this room every night. I want every single one of you to go to bed and to sleep, except this young man. You can stay, can you not?" This with a glance toward Theodore, who bowed in answer. "Well, then, you are the only watcher he needs, and the sooner the rest of you retire the better it will be for the patient."

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Mr. Hastings rebelled utterly.

"There was no occasion for depending upon strangers," he said, haughtily. "Any or all of the family were ready to sit up; and besides, there were scores of intimate friends who had offered their aid."

And the doctor, quite as accustomed to having his own way as Mr. Hastings could possibly be, answered, testily:

"But the family and the 'scores of intimate friends' are just the beings that I don't want to-night, and this 'stranger' has proved himself a very faithful and efficient nurse during the last few weeks, and *he* is the one *I'm* going to leave in charge."

He carried his point, of course. Dr. Arnold always did. When the door was closed on the last departure he came with very quiet tread to Theodore's side, and spoke in subdued tones.

"This night is a matter of life and death with us; he needs the most close and careful watching; above all, he needs absolute quiet and the absence of all nervousness. There will be a change before morning—a very startling one perhaps. It is for this reason I have banished the family. I trust *you*, you see."

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"I don't trust myself," answered Theodore, huskily, yet making a great effort to control his voice.

"It is more to the point that *I do* just at present; the next eight hours will be likely to determine whether it has all been in vain. I will give you very careful directions, and I will be in twice during the night, although I am absolutely powerless now; can do no more than you will be able to do yourself. Meantime that friend of yours, McPherson I think his name is, will be on guard in the room next to this, ready to answer your lightest call. Indeed, you may open the door between the two rooms, but on no account speak or move unless absolutely necessary. This heavy sleep will grow lighter *perhaps*. Now, I want your fixed attention." Then followed very close and careful directions—what to do, and, above all, what *not* to do.

"Doctor, tell me one word more," said Theodore, quivering with suppressed emotion. "How do *you* think it will end?"

"I have hardly the faintest atom of hope," answered this honest, earnest man. "If, as I said, after midnight this sleep grows heavier, and you fail to catch the regular breathing, you may call the family. I think no human sound will disturb him after that; but if, on the contrary, the breathing grows steadier, and occasionally he moves a little, then I want you fairly to hold your breath, and then we may begin to hope, provided nothing shall occur to startle him; but I will be in by twelve or a little after."

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The doctor went away with lightest tread, and Theodore opened the door of communication with the next room, met the kind, sympathetic eyes of Jim resting on him, returned his grave, silent bow, and felt sustained by his presence, then went back to his silent, solemn work. Close by the bedside, and thus, his head resting on one hand, his eyes fixed on the sleepless face, his heart going up to God in such wordless agony of entreaty as he had never felt before, passed the long, long hours. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place." How this watcher blessed God for that promise now! His, then, were not the only watcher's eyes bent on that white face; but He who knew the end from the beginning—aye, who held both beginning and end in the hollow of his hand, was watching too. More than that, the loving Redeemer, who had shed his blood for this poor man's soul, who loved it to-night with a love passing all human knowledge, was the other watcher. So Theodore waited and prayed, and the burden of his prayer was, "Lord, save him." Ten, eleven, twelve o'clock, still that solemn silence, still that wordless prayer. No doctor yet "I

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would not leave you if it were not absolute necessity," he had said. "Life or death in another family, with more for human knowledge to do than there is here, takes me away; but I will be back as soon after twelve as possible." Would he *never* come? It was ten minutes after twelve now, still no change—or, was there? Could he catch the breathing as distinctly now? Was the sleep heavier? Ought he to call the family? Oh, compassionate Savior! must they give him up? Had not his been the prayer of faith? And yet the breathing was certainly distinct, the pulse was steady—a half hour more, one or two little sighs had escaped the sleeper; other than that death-like stillness reigned. *Was* he better or worse? Oh for the doctor's coming! Suddenly Pliny gave a quick restless movement, then lay quiet; and then for the first time in long, long days, spoke in natural yet astonished tones:

"Theodore!" Then with a sudden nervous tremor and a startled tone: "What is it? What is it?"

Theodore knew that great beads of perspiration stood on his forehead, but his voice sounded natural and controlled as he stood with cup and spoon beside the bed. [328]

"Hush, Pliny, you have had the headache, it is night. Swallow that and go to sleep."

Like a weary, submissive child Pliny obeyed; and Theodore, trembling in every limb so that he dropped rather than sat down in his chair, again watched and waited. A shadow fell between him and the light and his raised eyes met the doctor's. He had come in through the room where Jim was waiting. He came with noiseless tread to the bedside, and the instant his practiced eyes fell on the sleeping face they lighted up with a quick, glad look. Moving silently back to the door again he signaled Theodore to come to him, while as silently Jim slipped by and took his place. Rapidly the story of the night was rehearsed.

"Well," said the doctor, with smiling eyes, "I believe we have now to 'thank God and take courage.' Can you follow the rest of my instructions as implicitly as you have these? I would remove this strain on your nerves if I dared, but it is a fearfully important night, and you see I can trust you."

"I can do it," said Theodore, with a curious ring of joy in his softly voice. "I can do *anything* *now*."

And the rest of that night was given not only to faithful watching and nursing, but to thankful prayer, and to solemn promises that his spared life should be more than ever his special charge, his constant care, until one of those "many mansions" should be set apart as his. [329]

It was four weeks after this eventful night. Pliny was bolstered back among the pillows in the rocking-chair, resting after a walk half way across his room. It was a clear, sharp winter morning, but there was freshness and sunshine in Pliny's room. Both Theodore and Dr. Vincent were his companions. Theodore was making his morning call, and the young doctor was waiting to see what effect the morning walk would have upon the invalid, who was so slowly and feebly rallying back to life. Mrs. Hastings and Dora had gone to Hastings' Hall, where they were now able to spend a small part of each day. The conversation between the two gentlemen, faintly helped along by Pliny, was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Hastings, and with him a stranger to Theodore, but he was greeted by Pliny as Dr. Armitage, whereupon Theodore made him an object of close scrutiny, and discovered that his face not only bore traces of the frequent use of liquor, but stood near enough to learn from his breath that he had so early in the morning indulged in a glass of brandy. He came forward with an easy, half-swaggering air, bestowed an indifferent glance on Theodore, and a supercilious one on Dr. Vincent, and addressed Pliny. [330]

"Well, young gentleman, you've had a hard pull, they tell me, as well as myself. Fortunately I could consult with *myself* or I should have died. How is it with you?"

"I had better advisers than myself," answered Pliny, smiling.

"Wants building up," said the doctor, turning abruptly from the son to the father. "Never'll gain strength in this way—ought to have begun tonics three weeks ago. Well, we'll do what we can to repair the mischief. Port wine is as good as anything to begin on. You may order a bottle brought up, if you please."

As Mr. Hastings rang the bell and gave the order, Pliny stole a glance of mingled entreaty and dismay at Theodore and Dr. Vincent. The latter immediately advanced, and respectfully addressed the old doctor.

"I beg your pardon, sir; but if you will study the patient's pulse a moment you will observe that his nerves are not in a condition to bear liquors of any sort."

Dr. Armitage answered him first by a prolonged stare before he said:

"I studied pulse and nerves, and things of that sort, before you were born, young man."

"That may be," answered Dr. Vincent, firmly, "but Dr. Arnold and myself have been studying this gentleman's for the past six weeks, and in a fearful state they have been, I assure you. You must remember that you have hardly seen him as yet, and have not examined the case." [331]

By this time the wine had arrived, and Dr. Armitage, while he busied himself in pouring out a glassful, assumed an air of jocoseness and said:

"Perhaps you would not object to opening a private class instruction in *nerves* and the like, by

which means I might gain some information, and you prove a benefactor to your race." Then to Pliny: "Now, sir, drink that, and it will put new life into you." And the tempting glass was held exasperatingly near poor Pliny's weak and fearfully-tempted hand. Theodore, standing close beside him, saw the great beads of perspiration gathering on his white forehead, and fairly *felt* the quiver of excitement that shook his frame. To save Pliny from taking the glass, and entirely uncertain as to what he should do next, he mechanically reached out his hand for it. Dr. Armitage evidently regarded him as an ally, and at once resigned it, saying, with his eyes still fixed on Pliny: "Drink it slowly and enjoy it. I'm sure I don't wonder that you are wasted to a skeleton."

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Pliny's pleading eyes sought Theodore's, and he spoke in a low, husky whisper:

"Finish this business quick in some way, or I shall drink it—I know I shall."

Dr. Vincent had drawn near and caught the import of the whisper. With a very quiet manner, but also with exceeding quickness, he took the glass and deliberately poured it into the marble basin near which he stood, and the fragrant old wine instantly gurgled down innumerable pipes, and was harmless forever. Dr. Armitage's red face took a purplish tint, and he turned fiercely to the man who dared to meddle with his orders.

"Do you know what you are about?" he shouted rather than said. "Are you aware that I am the family physician at Hastings' Hall?"

"I am aware of it," was Dr. Vincent's quiet and composed reply. "And it makes no sort of difference to me, so long as I remember that Dr. Arnold has had this particular case in charge from the first, and his orders are distinct and explicit, and I am here to see that they are obeyed, which thing I shall do even if I have to send the entire contents of that bottle in the same direction that part of it has traveled. At the same time I am sorry to be *compelled* to lay aside the courtesy due from one physician to another."

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At this most opportune moment the door opened quietly and Dr. Arnold entered. He went at once to Pliny's side, and placed his finger on the throbbing wrist, as he said with an inquiring glance about the room:

"It strikes me you are all forgetting the need of quiet and freedom from excitement. This pulse is racing." Then for the first time noticing Dr. Armitage, he addressed him courteously. "Good morning, Doctor, you are on your feet again, are you? I congratulate you. Meantime Dr. Vincent and myself have been doing your work here for you to the best of our abilities."

In answer to which Dr. Armitage drew himself up with an air of extreme hauteur, and said, addressing Mr. Hastings:

"The time has come, sir, for you to choose between this gentleman and myself. If you desire any further service of him then I will consider your name withdrawn from my list."

Dr. Arnold elevated his eyebrows, evidently astonished that even Dr. Armitage should be guilty of so gross a violation of propriety, while Dr. Vincent drew near and in rapid undertone related the cause of the disturbance. Dr. Arnold at first frowned, and then as the story progressed nodded approvingly.

"Quite right, quite right; he should not have touched the stimulus under any circumstances whatever. Dr. Armitage, I am persuaded that even you would have frowned on the idea had you watched this case through in all its details."

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Dr. Armitage did not so much as vouchsafe him a glance, but kept his angry eyes still fixed on Mr. Hastings as he said:

"I repeat my statement. This matter must be decided at once. You have but to choose between us."

Now this really placed Mr. Hastings in an extremely awkward dilemma. Dr. Armitage was not only his family physician, but the two had had all sorts of business dealings together of which only they two knew the nature; but then, on the other hand, Mr. Hastings believed that Dr. Arnold had saved the life of his son. He knew that life was in a very feeble, dangerous state even now, and he actually feared that Dr. Armitage occasionally drank brandy enough to bewilder his brain, and at such times perhaps was hardly to be trusted, and yet he could not dismiss him.

"Really," he stammered, "I—we—this is a very disagreeable matter. I regret exceedingly—" And just here relief came to him from an unexpected quarter. Pliny roused himself to speak with something of his old spirit.

"You two gentlemen seem to ignore my existence or overlook it somewhat. I believe I am the unfortunate individual who requires the service of a physician. Dr. Armitage, I have no doubt that my father will continue to look upon you as his guardian angel, physically speaking; but as for me, I'm inclined to continue at present under charge of the pilot who has steered me safely thus far."

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"That being the case," said Dr. Arnold, briskly, "I will resume command at once, and order every single one of you from the room, except you, Dr. Vincent, if you have time to remain and administer an anodyne, and you, young man, must go directly back to bed."

Mr. Hastings promptly opened a side door and invited Dr. Armitage to a few moments' private


conversation, and Theodore departed, jubilant over the turn affairs had taken, and fully determined that Dr. Vincent should be *his* family physician.



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CHAPTER XXV.

STEPS UPWARD.

 AN you take another boarder, grandma?"

This was the question with which Theodore startled the dear old lady, while she and Winny still lingered with him at the breakfast table. Jim had eaten in haste, and hurried away to his daily-increasing business. But Theodore had seemed lost in thought, and for some little time had occupied himself with trying to balance his spoon on the edge of his cup, instead of eating his breakfast. At last he let the spoon pitch into the cup with a decisive click, and asked the aforesaid question. Grandma McPherson, looking a little older, it is true, than on the blessed day in which "Tode Mall" first sought her out, but still having the look of a wonderfully well preserved old lady, in an immaculate cap frill, a trifle finer than in the days of yore, and a neat black dress, presided still at the head of her table. She dropped her knife, at Theodore's question, and gave vent to her old-time exclamation: "Deary me, what notion has the dear boy got now?"

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"He has an Inebriate Asylum in view, mother, and wants to engage you for physician, and your daughter for matron."

This was Winny's grave explanation. Theodore did not even smile. She had unwittingly touched too near the subject of his thoughts.

"Don't tease the boy, Winny dear," said the little gentle mother; then she turned her kind, interested eyes on him, and waited for his explanation.

"The fact is, I want to get Pliny away from home," he said, anxiously. "You have no idea of the temptations that constantly beset him there. I don't think it is possible for him to sit down to his father's table at any time without being beset by what the poor fellow calls his imps."

"What a world it is, to be sure," sighed Grandma McPherson, "when a boy's worst enemy is his own father. Well, deary, I'm ready to help you fight the old serpent to the very last, and so I am sure is Winny. What is your plan?"

"He thinks of coming into the store—he can have poor Winter's place for the present. At least, Mr. Stephens has made him that offer. He seems to feel the necessity of doing something, if for no other purpose than to use up his time."

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Winny glanced up quickly. "Is that all his splendid collegiate education is going to amount to?" she asked, wonderingly, and possibly with a little touch of scorn in her voice. "A clerk in Mr. Stephens' store! I thought he was going to study law?"

"He has used up his brain-power too thoroughly to have any hope of carrying out these plans—at least at present," answered Theodore, sadly. "But, after all, I think we may consider his life not *quite* a failure, if he should become such a man as Mr. Stephens. Well, grandma, my plan is, that he could room with me, and so make you no extra work in that direction, and, if you *could* manage the other part, I believe it would be a blessed thing for Pliny."

"Oh, we can manage that all nicely! Can't we, Winny dear? You are willing to try it, I know!"

"Oh, *certainly*, mother—anything to be on the popular side—only I think we might hang out a sign, and have the advantage of a little notoriety in the matter."

There was this alleviating circumstance connected with Winny: She didn't mean a single one of the sharp and rather unsympathetic things that she said—and those that met her daily had come to understand this and interpret her accordingly. So Theodore arose from the table, greatly relieved in mind, and not a little gratified, that daughter, as well as mother, was willing to cooperate with him. Thus it was that Pliny found himself domiciled that very evening in Theodore's gem of a room—his favorite books piled with Theodore's on the table, his dressing-case standing beside Theodore's on the toilet-table opposite.

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"This is jolly!" he said, eagerly, surveying with satisfied eye all the neat appointments of the room, when at last everything had been arranged in accordance with his fastidious taste.

"I declare I feel as if I had been made over new, or was somebody else altogether—ready to begin life in decent, respectable earnest!"

And then he suddenly dropped into the arm-chair at his side, and buried his face in his hands.

"Well now!" said Theodore, cheerily. "That's rather an April change, when one considers that it

is only January. My dear fellow, what spell has come over you?"

"I was reminded of Ben—I don't know how or why just then—except that thoughts of him are constantly coming to haunt, and sometimes almost madden me. Oh, Mallery! that is a past that can never, *never* be undone!" He spoke in a hollow, dreary tone, and his slight form, enfeebled by disease, was quivering with emotion; yet what could his friend say? How try to administer comfort for such a grief as that? He remained entirely silent for a few moments, then offered the only consolation that he could bear.

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"The past is not yours, Pliny, but in a sense the present and future are. Let us have it such a future that it can be looked back upon with joy, when you and I have become gray-haired men. Now, Pliny, it is late. Will you join me in my Bible reading—since you and I are a family, can not we have family worship?"

Pliny arose quickly. "I will not disturb your meditations," he said, a little nervously. "But you know my taste don't run in that line."

Then he began a slow, monotonous walk up and down the room. Theodore opened his Bible without further entreaty or comment; but as Pliny watched the grave face, he could not fail to notice the disappointed droop of his friend's features, and the line of sadness that gathered about his sensitive mouth. Suddenly Pliny came to a stand-still, and finally went abruptly to Theodore's side.

"Dear old fellow!" he said, impulsively—laying his hand with a familiar, almost caressing, movement on the arm of the other—"Would it afford you an unparalleled satisfaction if I should settle quietly down there, and read in that big book with you?"

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Theodore looked up with a faint smile, and returned steadily the look from those handsome blue eyes as he said—

"More than I can tell you."

"Then hang me if I don't do it! Mind, I don't see in what the satisfaction consists, but that is not necessary, I suppose, in order to make my act meritorious. Now, here goes!" Down he dropped into a chair, and resolutely took hold of one side of the large handsome Bible. Theodore reveled in Bibles; he had them of numerous sizes and of great beauty; he had not forgotten the time when he had none at all, and after that how precious two leaves of the Sacred Book became to him. After the reading, he linked his arm in Pliny's, and said in so winning and withal so natural and matter-of-course a tone, "It will be very pleasant to have a companion to kneel with me—I have always felt a desire for one," that Pliny did not choose to decline. So the young man, reared in a Christian city, surrounded by hundreds of Christian men and women, felt himself personally prayed for, for the first time in his life.

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The rest of that winter was a busy one—full of many and bewildering cares. Besides his pressing duties at the store—and they daily grew more pressing, as the responsibilities of the business were thrown more and more upon him—Theodore had undertaken to be a constant shield and guard to the constantly tempted young man.

No one who has not tried it knows or *can* know how heavy is such a weight. Daily the sense of it grew upon Theodore; not for an hour did he dare relax his vigilance; he was perfectly overwhelmed with the countless snares that lay in wait *everywhere* to tempt to ruin. Not a journey to or from the store, not a trip to any part of the city or any errand whatever, but was fraught with danger, and evening parties and receptions and concerts were absolute terrors to Theodore; nor was it a light task to arrange his affairs in such a manner as to be always ready for any whim that chanced to possess Pliny's brain—and when that was arranged, it was sometimes equally difficult to discover a pretext for his constant attendance, in order that Pliny's sensitive blood might not arise in opposition to this surveillance. However, the plans, most carefully and prayerfully formed, were not to be lightly resigned, and with one new excuse after another, and with Mr. Stephens always for his aid, Theodore managed to get successfully through the winter—or, if not successfully, at least with but few drawbacks. And of these—oh, strange and bitter thought!—the Hastings family were the worst.

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On his visits to his father's house, Pliny had to go alone. Mr. Hastings had been sore opposed to the new arrangements, both as regarded business and boarding, from the very first, and, though he could not conquer Pliny's determination, had managed to make it very uncomfortable for him; had chosen also to lay the principal blame of the entire arrangement—where, indeed, it belonged—on Theodore, and glowered on him accordingly. So Theodore staid away from the great house altogether, and struggled between his desire to keep Pliny away from that direst of all temptations, and his desire not to interfere with the filial duties which Pliny ought to have had, even though no such ideas possessed him. Twice during the winter Pliny took from his father's hand the glass of sparkling wine, and thereby roused afresh the demon who was only slumbering within him—he came out from the grand mansion disgusted, frightened at his broken resolves, and yet, towering above every other feeling, was the awful desire to have more of the poison; and what would have been the closing scene of that visit home, but for one thing, Pliny in his sane moments next day shuddered to think. The one thing was, that Theodore, first worried, and then alarmed at his friend's long stay, finally started in search of him, and took care that their ride down town should be in the same car, and by coaxings and beguilings, and also by force of a stronger will, enticed him home, and petted him tenderly through the fiery headache which the one glass and the tremendous excitement had induced.

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The second visit was the more dangerous, and fraught with direr consequences. Theodore was unexpectedly detained by pressing business, and Pliny seized upon that unfortunate evening in which to go home; and he reeled back to his room at midnight, just sense enough left to find his way home, with the aid of a policeman.

Theodore sat up during the rest of that long, weary night, and bathed the throbbing temples, and soothed as best he could the crazed brain, and groaned in spirit, and prayed in almost hopeless agony; yet, while he prayed, his faith arose once more, and once more the assurance seemed to come to him that Christ had not died for this soul in vain.

There was one important matter that occurred during the winter. Over the doors of Mr. Stephens' dry-goods establishment had hung for a dozen years the sign: "Stephens & Co.," the "Co." standing for a branch house in Chicago. It was a glowing April morning in which Theodore and Pliny, both a little belated by a business entanglement of bills and figures that had taken half the night to set straight, were rushing along with rapid strides. They had left the street-car at the corner, and the height of their present ambition was to reach the store before the city clock struck again, which thing it seemed on the point of doing, when suddenly both came to a halt and stared first at the store opposite, and then at each other in speechless amazement. The familiar sign was gone, and in its place there glittered and sparkled in the crisp air and early sunshine a new one—

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"STEPHENS, MALLERY & CO."

Theodore rubbed his eyes, and stared in speechless wonder, while Pliny gave vent to his emotions in lucid ejaculatory sentences:

"Well! upon my word and honor!—As sure as I'm alive!—If that don't beat me!"

Meantime Theodore dashed abruptly across the road and entered the store, Pliny following more leisurely, still staring at the magic sign. The clerks all bowed and smiled most broadly as the junior partner passed down the store; but that gentleman was too excited to notice them closely, and hurried into the private office. Mr. Stephens came forward on his entrance, his face all aglow with smiles, and cordially held out his hand.

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"Mr. Stephens!" gasped Theodore, "how—what?" and then, utterly overcome, sank into one of the office-chairs, and covered his face with his hands.

"My dear boy," said Mr. Stephens, with an outward calmness and an inward chuckle, "what is the matter with you this morning?"

"What does it mean, sir? How came you to? How could you?"

"Lucid questions, my boy! I stand for one pronoun, but who is *it*?"

"*You* know, Mr. Stephens. The sign! The name!"

"As for the sign, my dear fellow, it announces the name of the firm, as heretofore. I hope my partner will pardon me for keeping my name first. The new name means a great deal to me. It has meant a great deal in past days, and I mean it shall mean a great deal more in many ways. Are you answered, my friend?"

Then followed a long, long talk—eager and excited on Theodore's part; earnest and serious on Mr. Stephens'—the substance of which was that the young clerk had been entered as full partner in the extensive and ever-increasing business, or at least was to be so entered as soon as what Mr. Stephens called the trivialities of the law had been attended to.

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"You told me a few days ago that you had fully decided to make the mercantile business yours for life, and as I thought I could offer you as good advantages as you could find elsewhere, I couldn't resist the temptation to give you a bit of a surprise," explained Mr. Stephens, as Theodore still looked bewildered. "I hope you are not offended at my rudeness?" This he added gravely, but with a little roguish twinkle in his eyes.

"But, Mr. Stephens, how can it be? Why I I haven't a cent of money in the world to put in the firm. It is utterly unjust to yourself," explained Theodore, in distressed tones.

"I am not so sure of that first statement, my boy;" and now both eyes and face expressed a business-like gravity. "I remember, if you do not, that I am twenty thousand dollars better off to-day than I should have been but for your courage and unparalleled presence of mind. Moreover, you have more funds than you seem to be aware of. Do you remember a certain ten-dollar bill which you brought to me one midnight? Well, I held that bill in my hand, intending to present it to you to assist you in setting up business for yourself; but on learning that your intentions were to open a hotel, I concluded to await the development of affairs and invest otherwise. After I became conversant with your peculiar ideas concerning hotels, I discovered that you needed no assistance from me. But that ten dollars I invested sacredly for you, and a more remarkable ten dollars never came into my hands. Everything that I have touched through it has turned to gold. Your bank-book is in the left hand private drawer of my secretary. So, young man, you can investigate the state of your funds whenever you choose, and bestow whatever portion of them upon the new firm that your wisdom suggests."

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Theodore still remained with his elbow leaning on the table, and his face shaded with his hand. After a little silence Mr. Stephens came around to him and placed two hands trembling with earnestness on his slightly bowed head, and spoke in gentler tones than he had used heretofore.


"Above and beyond all these things, my dear boy, you are the only son I ever had, and you have well and faithfully filled a son's place to me. May I not do what I will for my own?"



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CHAPTER XXVI.

THEODORE'S INSPIRATION.

EW YORK postmark—that's from Ingolds & Ferry, I suppose. Chicago, that must be from Southy, and this is Ned's scrawling hand; now for the fourth—Albany. Who the mischief writes me from Albany?"

This was Mr. Stephens' running commentary on his letters. He broke the seal of the Albany one, and glanced at its contents.

"Um," he said, meditatively, leaning his elbow on the table and his chin on his hand. "Now to whom shall I send this appeal? I don't know of any one. Mallery?"

"Yes, sir," answered Theodore from behind the screen.

"Do you know of any one who could go to Albany in December and give—stop, I know myself. Yes, that's an idea."

"You certainly know more than I do then," answered Theodore, laughing. "What do you happen to be talking about, sir?"

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"How soon can you give me ten minutes of your valuable time?"

"At once, if you so desire," and the young man emerged into the main office, and came forward to the desk.

"Read that, then," answered Mr. Stephens, tossing him the Albany letter.

"A temperance lecture, eh, before the Association; that's good," said Theodore, running his eye rapidly over the few lines of writing. "Mr. Ryan would be a capital man to send them. Don't you think so, sir? But then it's in December. Ryan will not have returned from Chicago by that time, I fear; but then there's Mr. Williams, he is a fine speaker and—"

"I tell you I've found a man," interrupted Mr. Stephens; "the very man. Theodore, you must deliver that temperance lecture yourself."

"What a preposterous idea!" And before Theodore proceeded further he gave himself up to a burst of merriment; then he added: "I thought you a wiser man than that, sir. Why, I have never peeped in public."

"Don't you take part in the Wednesday meetings every evening, and lead three out of four of the Saturday evening ones, and speak in the Young Men's Association meetings every month?"

"Yes, sir, certainly; but those are religious meetings, entirely different matters, and I—why, Mr. Stephens, I never thought of such a thing!"

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"I have often. I tell you, Theodore, you have talents in that direction. You think and feel deeply on this matter of intemperance. If you don't understand it thoroughly in all its bearings, I'm sure I don't know who does, and you speak fluently and logically on any subject. Of course there must be a first time, and Albany is as good a place as any. This old friend of mine who has written for a speaker, will treat you like a prince, and there is plenty of time for preparation; the meeting is not until the 22d of December, and this is only October. My heart is very much set on this, my boy."

But Theodore could not do much besides laugh; he burst into another merry peal as he said:

"My dear sir, I *can't* jump into the person of a full-fledged orator in a month, not even to please *you*."

"I'll send in your name and acceptance," was Mr. Stephens' positive answer. "There is no reason why you should grow into the character of a quiet, rusty merchant like myself. I mean to send you adrift now and then. Besides, you owe it to the cause, I tell you; you could do incalculable good in that way."

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But Theodore was not to be persuaded. The most that Mr. Stephens could win from him was permission to delay answering the letter a few days, and the promise that meantime he would make the matter a subject of prayerful consideration.

"Meantime there is another matter on hand," said Mr. Stephens, turning promptly, as was his custom, from one item of business to another. "Information derived from Hoyt demands either

your or my immediate presence in their establishment. You understand the state of their affairs, do you not?"

"Perfectly. Am I to attend to that business?"

"Well, it would be a great relief to me if you could. I hate the cars."

"Very well, sir; I can go of course. What time shall I start?"

"What time *can* you start?"

Theodore glanced at his watch.

"The Express goes up in forty minutes. Shall I take that train?"

Mr. Stephens smiled, and made what sounded like an irrelevant reply:

"Your executive ability is perfectly refreshing, Theodore, to a man of my gray hairs and crushing weight of business."

Theodore seemed to consider the reply sufficiently explicit, and in forty minutes afterward, valise in hand, swung himself on the Express train just as it was leaving the depot. Mr. Stephens' last remark to him had been, "Remember, my boy, to think of that matter carefully, and be prepared to give me a favorable answer; my heart is set on it." And Theodore had laughed and responded, "If I have an inspiration during my absence I may conclude to gratify you."

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This all happened on an October day. The rest of the winter that was in progress during that last chapter, and the long, bright summer, had rolled away, and now another winter was almost ready to begin its work. The summer had been a quiet one aside from business cares and excitements. Pliny still retained his boarding place in the quiet asylum that had opened to him when his own home had proved so dangerous a place. Dora Hastings had spent the most of the summer with her parents, traveling East and North, but Pliny had remained bravely at his post struggling still with his enemy, but still persisting in carrying on the warfare alone. This one matter was a sharp trial to Theodore's faith; indeed he felt himself growing almost impatient.

"Why *must* it be that *he* should halt and hesitate so long!" he exclaimed in a nervous and almost a petulant tone, as he paced up and down the back parlor one evening, after having had a talk with the little mother. "I am sure if ever I had faith for any one in the world I had for him."

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"Have you got it now?" she asked him, gently. "It appears to me as if you were pretty impatient—kind as if you thought you had prayed prayers enough, and it was high time they were answered."

Theodore looked surprised and disturbed, and continued his walk up and down the room for a few moments in silence; then he came over to the arm-chair where she sat, and resting his hand on her arm, spoke low and gently:

"You probe to the very depth, dear friend. Thank you for your faithfulness. I see I must commence anew, and pray, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.'"

Well, the Express train whizzed past half a dozen minor stations, and halted at last at the place of Theodore's destination. Circumstances favored him, and the business that brought him thither was promptly dispatched. Then a consultation with his time-table and watch showed him a full hour of unoccupied time. He cast about him for some way of occupying it agreeably. Just across the street was a pleasant building, and a pleasant sign, "General News Depot and Reading Room." Thither he went. The collection of books was unusually large and choice, Theodore selected a book of reference that he had long been desiring to see and took a seat. Several gentlemen were present, engaged in reading.

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Presently the quiet was interrupted by the entrance of a middle-aged gentleman, to whom the courteous librarian immediately addressed himself.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Cranmer. Can I serve you to a book?"

"No, sir," responded the new-comer, promptly. "I don't patronize this institution, you know, sir."

Theodore glanced up to see what sort of a personage this could be who was so indifferent to his privileges. He looked the gentleman in every sense, refined, cultivated and intellectual. At the same moment one of the other readers addressed him.

"Why the mischief don't you, Cranmer? Have you read every book there is in the world, and feel no need of further information?"

"Not by any manner of means; but I'm a temperance man myself."

"What on earth has that to do with it?"

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And Theodore found himself wondering and listening intently for the answer.

"A great deal in this establishment. The truth is, if we had no drunkards we'd have no books."

"What's the meaning of your riddle, Cranmer?" queried an older and graver gentleman, who had been intently poring over a ponderous volume.

"Don't you know how the thing is done?" said Cranmer, turning briskly around toward the new speaker. "They use the license money of this honorable and respectable old town to replenish the library!"

"I don't see what that has to do with temperance," promptly retorted the young man who had begun the conversation. "Using the money for a good purpose doesn't make drunkards. To what wicked use would *you* have the funds put?"

"I would keep the potter's field in decent order, and defray the funeral expenses of murderers and paupers. That would be putting liquor money to a legitimate use, making it defray its own expenses," returned Mr. Cranmer, composedly.

"Well but, Cranmer," interposed the old gentleman, "explain your position. It isn't the money belonging to the poor drunken wretches that we use for the library, it's only what we make the scamps pay for the privilege of doing business." [357]

"For the privilege of making drunkards," retorted Mr. Cranmer. "Here, I'll explain my position by illustrating. As I was coming up just now I met old Connor's boy; he was coming up here, too. The poor fellow is hungering and thirsting after books. He has been at work over hours to my certain knowledge, for six weeks, to earn his dollar with which to join this Library Association. He just accomplished the feat last night, and was rushing over here, dollar in hand, and joy in his face. Just as he reached the door old Connor stumbled and staggered along with his jug in his hand, of course. 'Here you,' he said to the boy, 'what you hiding under your arm? And what you about, anyhow? Mischief, I'll be bound. Here give it to me whatever 'tis.' Now, gentlemen, I stood there, more shame to me, and saw that poor wretch of a father deliberately take that hard-earned dollar away from his boy. I saw the boy go crying off, and the father stagger to that rum hole across the street, get his jug filled, and pay that dollar! Now when that respectable rum-seller comes to pay his license money, he is as likely to bring that stolen dollar as any other—and they are all stolen in the first place from wives and children; and when this *splendid* Library Association, which is an honor to the town, buys its next books, it buys them with money stolen from the Jimmy Connors of the world. That's my opinion in plain English, and I don't propose to pay my dollar in supporting any such anti-temperance institution." [358]

Theodore had listened attentively to this conversation, and his blood was roused and boiling. He turned quickly away from the long line of splendid books, and addressed Mr. Cranmer.

"I entirely agree with your position, sir," he said, earnestly. "And I do not see how it is possible for any strictly temperance man to feel otherwise."

"Good for you, young man," responded Mr. Cranmer, warmly. "I like especially to see a *young* man sound and square on this subject."

"Well, now, I call that straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel," remarked a gentleman who had heretofore taken no part in the conversation. "I'm a temperance man myself, always have been, but I consider that carrying the thing to a ridiculous extreme."

At this point Theodore, much to his regret, heard the train whistle, and was obliged to leave the question unsettled; but the first remark he made to Mr. Stephens on his return, after business was disposed of, was: [359]

"Well, sir, I found my inspiration."

"Ah, ha!" said Mr. Stephens. "Glad of that. What is your text?"

"The amazing consistency of the so-called temperance world," answered Theodore, dryly.

It was this combination of circumstances that led him to take his seat one wintry morning in a Buffalo train, himself ticketed through to Albany. There was still five minutes before the train would start; and while he chatted with Jim who had come to see him off, the opening door revealed the portly form of Mr. Hastings, muffled to the throat in furs, and with the identical "Wolfie" thrown over his arm—newly lined indeed in brilliant red, but recognized in an instant by its soft peculiar fur, and familiar to Theodore as the face of an old friend. Instantly his memory traveled back to the scenes connected with that long-ago and well-remembered journey when "Wolfie" proved such a faithful friend to him. His face flushed at the thought of it, and yet the corners of his mouth quivered with laughter. He flushed at the memory of the wretched little vagrant that he was at that time, and he laughed at the recollection of "Wolfie's" protecting folds and the new and delicious sense of warmth that they imparted to him. What a curious world it was. There sat Mr. Hastings in front of him now, as he had sat then, a trifle older, more portly, but in all essential respects the same haughty, handsome gentleman. But what mortal could recognize in himself the little wretched vagabond known familiarly as "Tode Mall!" He tried to travel backward and imagine himself that young scamp who stole his passage from Albany to Buffalo, at which thought the blood rolled again into his face, and he felt an instinctive desire to go at once and seek out the proper authorities and pay for that surreptitious ride. Moreover, he [360]

resolved that being an honest man now it was his duty so to do, and that it should be the first item of business to which he would attend after leaving the cars. Then he glanced about him to see if he could establish his identity with the little ragged boy. A gentleman with gray hair and gold spectacles bowed and addressed him.

"Good-morning, Mr. Mallery. Going East far?"

This was the merchant whose store joined their own. He knew nothing about "Tode Mall," but he held intimate business relations with the junior partner of the great firm. Even Mr. Hastings bowed stiffly. Mr. Stephens' partner and the small boy who traveled in his company years before were two different persons even to him. At one of the branch stations that gentleman left the train, much to Theodore's regret, as he had a curious desire to follow him once more in his journeyings and note the contrasts time had made. Arrived in Albany, he looked with curious eyes on the familiar and yet unfamiliar streets. Every five minutes he met men whom he had known well in his boyhood. He recognized them instantly now. They did not look greatly changed to him, yet not a living soul knew him. He went into establishments from which he had been unceremoniously ordered, not to say kicked, years before, and presented their business card, "Stephens, Mallery & Co.," and was treated by those same business men with the utmost courtesy and cordiality. He went down some of the old familiar haunts, and could not feel that they had much improved. He met a bloated, disfigured, wretched looking man, and something in the peculiar slouching gate seemed familiar to him. He made inquiries, and found him to be the person whom he had half surmised, the old-time friend of his boyhood, Jerry, the only one who had had a word of half comfort to bestow on him when he landed in Albany that eventful night after his trip with Mr. Hastings, homeless and desolate. Jerry stared at him now, a drunken, sleepy stare, and then instinctively stood aside to let the gentleman pass, never dreaming that they had rolled in the same gutter many a time. Does it seem strange to you that during all these years Theodore had not long ere this returned to this old home of his and sought out that wretched father? Sometimes it seemed very strange to him. Don't imagine that he had not given it long and serious thought, but he had shrunken from it with unutterable terror and dismay; he had no loving, tender memories of his father—nothing but cruelty and drunkenness and sin by which to remember him. Still oftentimes during these later years he had told himself that he ought to seek out his father; he ought to make some effort to reclaim him. He had prayed for him constantly, fervently, had poured out his whole soul in that one great desire; still he knew and remembered that "faith without works is dead." He had made some effort, had written earnest appeals hot from his heart, to which he had received no sort of a reply. He had written to one and another in Albany, prominent names that he remembered, clergymen of the city as he learned their addresses, begging for some assistance in the search after his father. Each and all of these attempts had proved failures. To some of his letters he had received answers, courteous, Christian answers, and the gentlemen had lent him their time and aid, but to no purpose. Apparently the name and place of the poor, low rum-seller had faded from the memory of the Albanians. He had disappeared one night after a more tremendous drunken row than usual, and had never been seen or heard of since. This was all. And Theodore, baffled and discouraged, had yet constantly meant to come to the search in person, and as constantly had shrunken from setting out, and delayed and excused himself until the present time. Now, however, he intended to set about it with vigor. "No matter what he is, nor how low he has sunken, he is *my father*, and as such I owe him a duty; and I must constantly remember that it is not he of whom I have bitter memories, but rum, rum! rum!!" This he told himself with firmly set lips, and a white, determined face.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

DAWN AND DARKNESS.

 WEDDLE HALL was reasonably full. The citizens of Albany had turned out well to do their townsman honor, howbeit they did not know that he had tumbled about in their gutters and straggled about their streets up almost to the verge of young manhood. Theodore had felt many misgivings since that day when he suddenly and almost unexpectedly to himself pledged his word to address an Albany audience on this evening; but he had three things to assist him. First, he was thoroughly and terribly in earnest; secondly, he was entirely posted on all the arguments for and against this mammoth subject of temperance—he had studied it carefully and diligently; and, finally, he always grew so tremendously indignant and sarcastic over the monstrous wrong, and the ridiculous and inconsistent opinions held by the masses, that in ten minutes after he commenced talking about it he would have forgotten his audience in his massive subject, even though the President and his Cabinet had been among them. So on this particular evening, his blood roused to the boiling point through brooding over the wrongs that had come to him by the help of this fiend, he spoke as he had no idea that he *could* speak. Had Mr. Stephens been one of his auditors his face might have glowed with pride over his protege. Had Mr. Birge been present to listen to the eloquent appeal his heart might have thanked God that the little

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yellow-haired boy who stood in solemn awe and took in the meaning of his mother's only prayer, had lived to answer it so fully and grandly in the city of his birth.

After the address there was a pledge circulated. Theodore was the first to write his name in bold, firm letters, and he remarked to the chairman as he wrote: "This is the fifteenth pledge that I have signed. I am prouder every time I write my name in one." There were many signers that evening, among them several whose tottering steps had to be steadied as they came forward. Then presently there came a pretty girl, leading with gentle hand the trembling form of an old man; both faces looked somewhat familiar to Theodore, yet he could not locate them. [366]

"Who are those two?" he said, as the little girlish white hand steadied the feeble fingers of the old man.

"That is an interesting case. The girl has been the salvation of the old man; he is her grandfather. They belonged to a miserable set, the lowest of the low, but there seemed to be something more than human about the child. Her father was killed in a drunken broil, and her mother lay drunk at the time, and died soon after; but she clung to this old man, followed him everywhere, even to rum holes. She got mixed in with a mission Sabbath-school about that time, started down in that vile region where she lived; that was a great thing, too; it was sustained principally by an earnest young man by the name of Birge—and, by the way, I have heard that he has since become a minister and is preaching in Cleveland."

"He is my pastor," answered Theodore, while his eyes sparkled.

"Is it possible! Well, now, if that isn't a remarkable coincidence!"

Theodore knew of some more coincidences quite as remarkable, but he only said:

"And what further about this child?"

"Why, I really think she became a Christian, then and there, young as she was—not more than five or six. After that she followed up her grandfather more closely than ever. People have seen her kneel right down in the street, and ask God to 'make grandpa come home with her right away.' The old man gave up his rum after a time, though no one ever thought he would. He has since been converted, and they two are the most active temperance reformers that we have in the city. They are at every meeting, and are constantly signing pledges and leading up others to do so." [367]

"What are their names?"

"He is Grandfather Potter—used to be known as 'old Toper Potter;' and she is known throughout the city as 'Little Kitty McKay.'"

"Why! she lived—" exclaimed Theodore; then he stopped. What possible use could there be in telling the chairman of this great meeting that "little Kitty McKay" lived in the attic of a certain house on Rensselaer Street at the same time that he lived in the basement; that her father was killed on the same night in which his mother died, and that in consequence of the fight and the murder, both of which took place in his father's rum cellar, he and his father had hurriedly decamped in the night, and wandered aimlessly for two years, thereby missing Mr. Birge's little mission school? [368]

"What did you say, sir?" said the chairman, bending deferentially toward the distinguished orator of the evening.

"She lived in Albany during this time, did you say?"

"Oh yes, sir; she has never been out of this city."

And then, leaving the chairman to wonder what that could possibly have to do with the subject, Theodore bent eagerly forward. Two men were taking slow steps down the central aisle, trying to urge on the irresolute steps of the third—and the third one was Jerry! They were trying to get him forward to the pledge table. Would they succeed? It looked extremely doubtful. Jerry was shaking his head in answer to their low entreaties, and trying to turn back. Theodore arose suddenly, ran lightly down the steps, and advanced to his side.

"Jerry," he said, in distinct, low tones, "come; you used to be a good friend of mine, and I want you to do a good turn for me now, and sign this pledge."

Jerry turned bleared, rum-weakened eyes on him, and said in a thick, wondering voice:

"Who the dickens be you?"

"I'm an old friend of yours. Don't you know me? I used to be Tode Mall. Don't you remember? Come, take my arm; you and I have walked arm in arm down Broadway many a time; let us walk together now down this aisle and sign the pledge together." [369]

For all answer Jerry turned astounded eyes upon the speaker, and muttered in an under tone:

"You be hanged! 'Tain't no such—yes, 'tis—no 'tain't—'tis, too—them's his eyes and his nose! I'll be shot if it ain't Tode Mall himself!"

"Yes," said Theodore, "I'm myself positively, and I want you to come with me and sign that pledge. I signed it years ago, and with God's help it has made a man of me. It will help you, Jerry."

Come."

Great was the rustle of excitement in the hall as the notorious Jerry presently moved down the aisle leaning on the arm of the orator, and it began to be whispered through the crowd that he was once a resident of Albany, and actually a friend of that "dreadful Jerry Collins!" Many and wild were the surmises concerning him; but Theodore, all unconscious and indifferent, glowed with thankful pride as he steadied the pen in the trembling hand, and saw poor Jerry's name fairly written under the solemn pledge. On the morrow the eager search for the missing father was continued, aided by Jerry and by several others as it gradually began to dawn upon their minds who the father was, and who and what the son had become. Utterly in vain! Had the earth on some dark night opened suddenly and silently and swallowed him, he could not, it would seem, have passed more utterly from mortal knowledge than he had. As the search grew more fruitless Theodore's anxiety deepened. He prayed and mourned over that lost father, and it was with an unutterably sad heart that he finally dropped as a worthless straw the last seeming clew and gave him up.

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There was one other sacred duty to perform. When the orphan son left Albany one winter morning there stood in one of the marble shops of the city, ready to be set up with the first breath of spring, a plain and simple tombstone bearing for record only these two words, "Dear Mother," and underneath this seemingly inappropriate inscription, understood only by himself, "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." The day was unusually cold in which Theodore, on his homeward journey, was delayed at a quiet little town. The Express train, due at three o'clock, had been telegraphed three hours behind time, and he took his way somewhat disconsolately to a dingy little hotel to pass the intervening hours as best he might. "Strange!" he muttered drearily, "that I should have been delayed just here, only forty miles from home, with not a single earthly object of interest to help pass the hours away." He went forward to the forlorn little parlor, where a few sticks of wet wood were sizzling and smoking, and vainly trying to burn in a little monster of a stove over in one corner. Theodore flung himself into a seat in front of this attempt at a fire, kept his overcoat on for the sake of warmth, and looked about him for some entertainment. He found it promptly. Thrown over the back of a chair in the opposite corner was a great fur overcoat, with a brilliant red lining, and an unmistakable something about it that distinguished it from all other overcoats in the world. Theodore knew at a glance that it belonged to Mr. Hastings. He started up and went toward it, smiling and saying within himself: "Is this furry creature my good or evil genius, this time, I wonder?" Then he went out to the horrible bar-room to make inquiries. The clerk knew nothing about Mr. Hastings; had never heard his name as he knew of. There was a man there, a stranger—had been for two days; he was sick, and they had put him to bed, and they were doing what they could for him. He had seemed unable to give his name or his residence. Paralysis, or something of that sort, he believed the doctor called it. It had begun with a kind of a fit. Yes, that fur overcoat belonged to him. Theodore requested to be shown immediately to the stranger's room. Alone, helpless, speechless, in the dingiest and most comfortless of rooms, he found Mr. Hastings! He went forward with eager, pitying haste, and spoke to the poor man—no answer, only a pitiful contortion of the face, and a hopeless attempt to raise the useless hand. Clearly there was work enough for the next three hours! With the promptness, not only natural in him, but added to by long habit, Theodore went to work. Under his orders the room assumed very speedily a different aspect; the attending physician was sent for and consulted with; he was a dull little man, but appeared to know enough to say that he didn't know what to do for the sick man. "It was a curious case; he had never seen its like before."

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"Then why haven't you telegraphed for his own physician and friends?" questioned Theodore, indignantly.

"Why, bless your heart, sir!" exclaimed the proprietor of the hotel, "where would you have us telegraph, and to whom? He came here and fell down in a fit, and hasn't spoken since; and he had no baggage nor papers about him, so far as I can find, for it was precious little he would let me look. I assure you we have done our best," he added, in an injured tone.

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Theodore apologised for his suspicious words; and failing to get even a nod from the sick man, to show that he understood his eager questions, acted on his own responsibility, and made all haste to the telegraph office. There he dispatched separate messages to Mrs. Hastings and Pliny, adding to Pliny's the words, "Bring a doctor." To Mr. Stephens he said, "Unavoidably detained." Then one, utterly on his own private responsibility, to Dr. Arnold, "Will you come to C— by first train? A case of life and death." After that there was nothing to do but wait. Another sick-bed! Theodore sat down beside it in solemn wonderment over the incidents, many and varied, that were constantly bringing him in contact with this man and his family. The great troubled eyes of the sick man followed his every movement, and he could not resist the impression that at last they seemed to recognize him and take in some thought of hope. It seemed terrible, this living death, this unutterable silence, and yet those staring eyes, he did not know whether it was a hopeful indication or otherwise, but at last they closed and the sufferer seemed to sleep heavily. Wearily passed the hours; he chose not to leave his charge to meet the two o'clock train, but sent a carriage and waited in nervous torture for the whistle of the train. At last there was a sound of arrival, and eager voices of inquiry below. He left in charge the stupid little doctor, who was doing his utmost to keep awake, and went down stairs. They were all there, frightened and inquiring—Mrs. Hastings, Dora, Pliny, and, oh joy! Dr. Arnold himself! Theodore threw open the door of the dingy parlor.

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"Come in, please all of you," he said, in a tone of gentle authority; "and be as quiet as possible."

Nevertheless they all talked at once.

"Is it a fever?" Mrs. Hastings asked, shivering and cowering in a frightened way over the wretch of a stove.

"What is it, Mallery?" Pliny asked in the same breath; while even the taciturn doctor questioned, "What is the meaning of my imperative summons?"

For them all Theodore had prompt answers.

"No, madam"—to Mrs. Hastings—"Not a fever, I think. Pliny, I hardly know what it is—the doctor in attendance seems equally ignorant. Dr. Arnold, if you will come with me, and these friends will wait a few moments, perhaps I can bring them an encouraging report."

In this commotion only Dora kept white, silent lips, nerved herself as best she could for whatever this night was to bring forth, and waited. Theodore could not resist going over to her for an instant. She turned quickly to him, and laid a small quivering hand on his arm—

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"Mr. Mallery, I know *you* will tell me *the truth!*"

"The *entire* truth, Miss Dora, just as soon as I know it. I do not know how much the danger is; yet, meantime, flee to the Strong for strength. Will you come, Dr. Arnold?"

Pliny followed, and the three moved silently up to the quiet chamber. Dr. Arnold stood quietly before the sleeper—felt his pulse, bent his head and listened to the beating heart, touched with practiced fingers the swollen veins in his temples, then stood up and turned toward the waiting gentlemen.

"Well, doctor?" said Theodore, with nervous impatience, while Pliny fairly held his breath to hear the answer; it came distinct and firm from the doctor's lips—not harshly, but with terrible truthfulness:

"He is entirely beyond human aid, Mr. Mallery!"

Then the room seemed to Pliny suddenly to reel and pitch forward, and both doctors were busy, not with the father, but the son.

What a fearful night it was! Pliny's shattered nervous system was not strong enough to endure the shock. Mrs. Hastings went from one fainting fit to another, with wild shrieks of anguish between—but all sound that escaped Dora, when Theodore gently and tenderly told her "*the truth*," was, "Oh, God, have mercy!" and the rest of that night she spent at her father's bedside, on her knees.

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It was high noon before his heavy slumber changed to that unending sleep, but the change came—without word or sound or the quiver of a muscle—suddenly, touched by its Maker's hand, the busy heart *stopped*.

"Can you get through the rest of this fearful scene without me?" Dr. Arnold asked in the afternoon when all was over. "I must go home. I have had three telegrams this morning. Dr. Armitage is ill again, and his wife has sent for me. I will try to make all arrangements for you in the city, if you think you can get along."

"Yes," said Theodore, "I can manage. Pliny is up again, you know. But, doctor, tell me what this sickness was. What was the cause of the sudden death?"

"Rum!" said the doctor, in short, stern tones. "That is, an over-dose of brandy was the immediate cause of the fit, and the continued use of stimulants through many years the cause of the paralysis. It is just another instance of a rum murder—that's hard language, but it's true—and the son is fearfully predisposed to follow in his father's footsteps. I fear for him."

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"Pliny has overcome that predisposition at last, I hope and trust. I think he is safe now."

"They are never safe, I think sometimes, until they are in their graves," answered the doctor, moodily.

"Or in the 'Everlasting Arms,'" returned Theodore, reverently. But while this conversation was in progress, there was a more dangerous one going on up-stairs. Mrs. Hastings had recovered from her swoons, but was lying in a state of semi-exhaustion in her room. She raised her head languidly as she heard Pliny's step, and gave her orders for the night.

"Pliny, you will have to take the room that opens into this, for the night. I am too nervous to be left alone. Dora is going to have the room on the other side of the hall. She doesn't mind it in the least, she says. I wish I had her nerves; and, Pliny, I feel that distressing faintness every few minutes. You may order a bottle of wine brought up, then pour out a glass and set it on that light stand by my bedside; then do try to have the house quiet—the utter inconsiderateness of some people is surprising!"

Had Theodore been less occupied, or been at that moment within hearing, he would have contrived to have these orders countermanded, or at least carried out by some one besides Pliny; but he was making final arrangements with the doctor in regard to meeting him on the next morning's train, so he knew nothing about that fatal bottle of wine.

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"There is barely time for us to reach the cars," said Theodore, hurriedly, the next morning, not

turning his head from his valise to look at the new-comer, but knowing by the step that it was Pliny.

"I am sorry that we shall have to hurry your mother and sister so. How are you feeling? Did you get any rest last night, my poor fellow?"

"Feeling like a spinning-wheel going round backward and tipping over every now and then," Pliny answered, in a thick, unnatural voice, and then Theodore let valise and bundle and keys drop to the floor together, and turned a face blanched with horror and dismay upon his friend. There was no disguising the fearful fact—Pliny had been drinking, and even then did not know in the least what he was about, or what was expected from him. Removed by just a flight of stairs from his father's corpse, having the charge of his mother on one side, and his young sister on the other, he yet had forgotten it all, and lost himself in rum. Poor, wretched Pliny! Poor Theodore as well! Which way should he turn? What do or say next? How could he help yielding to utter despair? There were circumstances about it that he did not know of; he knew nothing yet about that bottle of wine, nor how Pliny had trembled before it; how he had walked his floor and struggled with the evil spirit; how he had even dropped upon his knees and tried to pray for strength; how he had even lain down at last, considering the tempter vanquished; how it was not until he was called toward morning to minister to his mother's needs, and she had said, as she set down the wine-glass:

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"How deathly pale you look, Pliny! Take a swallow of wine; it will strengthen you, and we all need to keep up our strength for this fearful day. Just try it, dear—I know it will help you!"

Then, indeed, had Pliny's courage failed him; he took the glass from his mother's offering hand, and drained its contents. After that you might as soon have tried to chain a tiger with a silken thread as to save Pliny when once that awful appetite had been again aroused. Wine was as nothing to him, but he was in a regularly licensed hotel, and there was plenty of liquid fire displayed in a respectable and proper manner in the bar-room. Thither he went, and speedily put himself in such a state that he whistled and yelled and sang while his father's coffin was being carried down stairs.

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Now, what was Theodore to do? He flung himself into a chair opposite his bed, where Pliny had just sense enough left to throw himself, and tried to think. Dora first—this knowledge, or if that were not possible, at least this sight, must be spared her. But there was no time to spare—he resolutely put down the heavy bitter feelings at his heart, and thought hard and fast. Then he hastened down stairs. "I want two carriages instead of one," he said to the landlord, who long ere this had felt a dawning of the importance and wealth of this company that he was entertaining, and was all attention.

The second carriage was obtained, and Pliny, with the aid of the little doctor, who had proved himself kind-hearted and discreet, was gotten into it.

"Where is Pliny?" queried Mrs. Hastings, as, after much trouble and delay, she stood ready for Theodore's offered arm.

"He has gone ahead with the baggage," was Theodore's brief explanation. Then he hurried them so that there was no time for further questioning, though Mrs. Hastings found chance to say that, "It was a very singular arrangement—that she should suppose his mother and sister were of more importance than the baggage." The train was in when they reached the depot; but the faithful little doctor had obeyed Theodore's instructions to the very letter—seating Pliny in the rear car, and checking baggage and purchasing tickets for the entire party. When they were seated and moving, Theodore left the ladies and sought out Pliny. He occupied a full seat, and was asleep. With a relieved sigh, Theodore returned to the mother and daughter—evaded the questions of the former as best he could, speaking of headache and faintness, both of which troubles Pliny undoubtedly had—but the great truthful eyes of Dora sought for, and found the truth in his.

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"Don't despair," he said to her, gently, even while his own heart was heavy with something very like that feeling. "The Lord knows all about it. He *will not* forsake us."

It was not to be supposed that a car ride of scarcely two hours would steady poor Pliny's brain. Theodore had thought of that, and prepared for saving him any unnecessary disgrace. McPherson, sitting in the little office back of his "Temperance House" that morning, saw a boy approaching with a telegram for him. It read:

"Meet the 10.20 Express with a *close* carriage.

"THEODORE MALLERY."

So, when the train steamed into the depot, the first person whom Theodore saw was the faithful Jim. A few hurried words between them explained matters, and Pliny was quietly helped by Jim and Mr. Stephens into the close carriage and whirled away before Theodore had possessed himself of all of Mrs. Hastings' extra shawls and wraps.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

DEATH AND LIFE.



HERE had been a grand and solemn funeral. A long line of splendid coaches had followed the millionaire to his last resting-place. Rosewood and silver and velvet and crape had united to do him honor. Many stores in the city were closed because Mr. Hastings had extensive business connections with them. The hotels were closed because Mr. Hastings owned three of the largest; the Euclid House was shuttered and bolted, and long lines of heavy crape floated from the numerous doors. Many hats had been uplifted, many gray heads bared, while the closing words of the solemn burial service were once more repeated, and then the mourners had returned to their places, and the long line of carriages had swept back, and the city had taken down its shutters and opened its doors again, and the world had rushed onward as before. Only in that one home—there the desolation tarried. Through all the trouble and the pain Theodore had been with them constantly. That first day he had accompanied them home of necessity, their rightful protector being still in his drunken sleep. Arrived there, they needed help and comfort even more than they had before. There were friends by the hundreds, but Theodore could not fail to see that while Mrs. Hastings appeared incapable of directing, and indeed very indifferent as to what was done, Dora turned steadily and constantly to him for advice and assistance. Pliny was prevailed upon to go at once to his room, and was very soon asleep. When the wretched stupor of sleep had worn itself out upon him, and left the fearful headache to throb in his temples, Theodore was at his side, grave and sad and silent, but patient still, and gentle as a woman. Only a few words passed between them, Pliny speaking first in a cold, hard tone.

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"Go away, Mallery, and let me alone—everything is over. All I ask of you is to send me a bottle of brandy, and never let me see your face again."

Theodore's only answer was to dip his hand again into cool water, and pass it gently over the burning temples; then he said:

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"I think it would be well to lie still, Pliny. They do not need you below at present, and your head is very hot."

Pliny pushed feebly with his hand.

"Go away, Mallery, I can not endure the sight of you. It is all over, I say. I will never try again."

Very quietly and steadily went the firm, cool hand across his forehead, and the voice that answered him was quiet and firm.

"No, I shall *not* leave you, dear friend, and all is *not* over. You are going to try harder than ever before, and I am *never* going to give you up—NEVER!"

Silence for a little, then Pliny said:

"Then don't leave me, Theodore, not for an *instant, day or night*—promise."

And Theodore, ignoring all the strangeness of his position, promised, and remained in the house, the watcher-guard and helper of more than Pliny.

Not for an instant did he lose sight of his friend; through all the trying ordeal of the following days he was constantly present. Even in Pliny's private interviews with his mother, Theodore hovered near, and his was the first face that Pliny met when he came to the door to issue any orders. It was Theodore's hand that held open the carriage door when the son came to follow his father to his final resting-place, and it was Theodore's arm that was linked in his when he walked down the hall on his return.

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These were sad things to Theodore in another way. Despite all Mr. Hastings' coldness to him, he had never been able to lose sight of the memory of those days, now long gone by, in which the rich man had in a sense been his protector and friend. He could not forget that it was through *him* that his first step upward had been taken. Aside from his mother, Mr. Hastings was perhaps the first person for whom he felt a touch of love. He could not forget him—could not cease to mourn for him.

There was, only a week after this, another funeral. There was no long line of coaches, and no display of magnificence this time—only a quiet, slow-moving procession following the unplumed hearse. Only one store in the city was closed, and not a hundred people knew for whom the bell tolled that day; but did ever truer mourners or more bleeding hearts follow a coffin to its final resting-place than were those who gathered around that open grave, and saw the body of Grandma McPherson laid to rest for awhile, awaiting the call of the great Maker, when he should bid it come up to meet its glorified spirit, and dwell in that wonderful *Forever!*

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The messenger came suddenly to her, in the quiet of a moonlight night, when all the household were asleep; and none who saw her in the morning, with that blessed look upon her face, that told of earth receding and heaven coming in, could doubt but that when in the silent night she heard the Master whisper, "Come up higher," she made answer, "Even so, Lord Jesus."

So they laid her in the silent city on the hill, very near the spot where, by and by, there

towered and blazed Mr. Hastings' monument; but when they set up *her* white headstone they marked on it the blessed words: "So he giveth his beloved sleep."

But oh, that home left without a mother—the dear, loving, toiling, patient, self-sacrificing mother!

"Dear old lady," were the words in which Theodore had most often thought of her, and I find on thinking back that I have constantly spoken of her thus, but in reality she was not old at all; her early life of toil and privation and sorrow had whitened her hair and marked heavy lines as of age on her face. Her quaint dress gave added strength to this impression, and Theodore when he first met her was at that age when all women in caps and spectacles are old, so "Grandma" she had always been to him, but they only wrote "sixty-three" on her coffin.

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They were sitting together, Theodore and Pliny, the first evening they had spent alone since the changes had come to them. They were in their pleasant room which must soon be vacated, for the guiding presence that had made of them a family was wanting now. They had not been talking, only the quietest common-places—neither of them seemed to have words that they chose to utter. They were sitting in listless attitudes, each occupying a great arm-chair, which they called "study-chairs." Theodore with his hands clasped at the back of his head, and Pliny with his face half hidden in his hands. The latter was the first to break the silence.

"Mallery, you are *such* a wonderment to me! What is there about me that makes you cling so? I thought it was all over during that awful time. I don't know how you can help despising me, but you don't know how it was. Oh, Theodore, I tried, I struggled, I *meant* to keep my promise, and even at such a time as that the sight of my enemy conquered me. Now, *what* am I to do? There is no hope for me at all. I have no trust, no confidence in myself."

"That at least would be hopeful if it were strictly true," Theodore answered, earnestly. "But, Pliny, it is not *quite* true. If you utterly distrusted yourself, *so* utterly that you would stop trying to save yourself alone, and accept the All-powerful Helper's aid, I should be at rest about you forever."

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Contrary to his usual custom, Pliny had no answer ready, seemed not in the least inclined to argue, and so Theodore only dropped a little sigh and waited. It was not despair with him during these days—his faith had reached high ground. "Ask, and ye *shall* receive," had come home to him with wonderful force just lately, while he waited on his knees; he felt that he should never let go again for a moment. Still there seemed nothing now for him to do, nothing but that constant watching and constant praying; and he had only lately come to realize how much these two things meant. Presently, sitting there in the silence, he bethought himself of Winny in her desolation.

"Pliny," he said, suddenly, "shall not you and I go down and try to help poor Winny endure her loneliness? Do you know she is utterly alone? Rick's wife is in her room with the child, and Rick and Jim just went down the walk together."

Pliny seemed nothing loth, and the two descended to the dear little parlor where so many happy hours had been passed. Winny had turned down the gas to its lowest ebb, and was curled into a corner of the sofa, giving up to the form of grief in which she most indulged—utter, white silence. She sat erect as the two young men entered, and Theodore turned on the gas; Pliny took the other corner of the sofa, and Theodore the chair opposite them. He looked from one to the other of the white worn faces. What utter misery was expressed on both! A great longing came over him to comfort them. But what comfort could he offer for such troubles as theirs, save the one thing that both rejected? He gave voice to his thoughts almost without intending it, with no other feeling than that his great pity and desire for them were beyond his control.

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"How much, *how very much*, you two people need the same help! What utter nothingness any other aid is. I have not the heart to offer either of you the mockery of human sympathy," he spoke in gentle, sad tones, and straight way was startled with himself for speaking at all. Winny turned her great gray solemn eyes on her companion in the other corner.

"Do *you* feel the need of help?" she asked, gravely. "Heaven knows I *do* feel the need of something I don't possess. I am utterly shipwrecked. I don't know which way to turn. I do, if I only would turn that way. Mother had help all her life long—help that you and I know nothing about. Do you doubt that?"

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"No, I *don't*," answered Pliny, solemnly.

"Then why can't we have it if we both need it, and can get it for the asking? Mother prayed for you as well as for me. The very last night of her life I heard her. I know what she prayed for is so. I'm tired of struggling. I've been at it, Theodore knows, for a great many years. If mother were here to-night I would say to her: 'Mother, I'm not going to struggle any more; I'm going to give myself up,' and that would make her happy—oh, too happy for earth. Well, I'm going to, anyway. I'm sick of myself; I want to get away from myself; I need help. You've struggled, too; I know by myself. Suppose we both give up. Suppose we both kneel down here this minute, and say that we are tired of ourselves, and ashamed of ourselves and we want Christ. Theodore will say it for us. Will you do it, Mr. Hastings?"

She had spoken rapidly and with the same energy that characterized all her words, but with solemn earnestness. Pliny bowed his head on his two hands, while utter silence reigned; and

Theodore, wonder-struck over the turn that the conversation had taken, yet had breath enough left to say

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"Lord Jesus, help them, help them. Oh, remember Calvary and the 'many mansions,' and help them both. Let the decision be now." This prayer he repeated and re-repeated. Then suddenly Pliny arose.

"If ever any one on earth needed help and strength it is I," he said, hoarsely. "Yes, I *want* to give up if I can," and he dropped upon his knees.

In an instant Winny was kneeling, and Theodore's whole soul was being poured out in prayer for those two. A moment and then Pliny, in low, hoarse voice said:

"Lord, help me; I am sinking in deep waters." And Winny added: "Savior of my mother, I am sick of sin; take me out of myself and into thee."

When they arose Theodore stole quietly from the room and left them alone. He went up to his own closet and prayed such prayer of thanksgiving as was recorded in heaven that night, and the angels around the throne had great joy.

Not yet were the shocks and changes coming to these households over. Not two weeks had the millionaire been sleeping his last sleep, when there burst like a bombshell on the business world the startling news that his millions had vanished into vapor, or perhaps it would be speaking more properly to say into poison. Strange, wild speculations, that the acute, far-sighted business man would never have touched for a moment had he been himself, had been entered into while his brain was struggling with the fumes of brandy. Notes had been signed, sales had been made and debts contracted upon an enormous scale; in short, the whole business was in a bewildering entanglement.

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"There won't be five thousand dollars left out of the whole immense property," said Edgar Ryan, one of the lawyers in charge, at the close of a confidential conversation with Theodore, and Theodore, like the rest of the world, stood for a little stunned and aghast over this new calamity.

"I never saw such a tangle in all my days," continued Ryan, earnestly. "The amount of property shipwrecked is almost incredible. The man was never intoxicated in his life, and yet it may be truthfully said of him that he has let rum swallow all his millions. I tell you, Mallery, you and Habakkuk were undoubtedly correct."

Theodore turned and walked soberly and wearily away. He had not the heart just then to smile over the memory of anything. There followed weary, anxious, harassing days—days in which Pliny remained doggedly behind the counter, and Theodore almost entirely ignored the store, and gave himself up to following the footsteps of appraisers and auctioneers and policemen, and in trying to shield Mrs. Hastings and Dora, for the red flag floated out from the grand mansion proudly known for years as Hastings' Hall. Oh change! Can anything in all time be compared in swiftness and sharpness and terror to that monster who swoops down upon our hearts and homes, and almost in the twinkling of an eye leaves them desolate? Oh heaven! With all its glories and its joys, can anything in all the bright description equal in peace and rest and comfort that one precious sentence which admits of no thought of change: "And they shall reign forever and ever?"

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There were plans innumerable to be made and acted upon. Rick and his wife had gone back ere this to their Western home. Winny had steadily refused their urgent petitions to accompany them, and worked faithfully on in her honored position in one of the great graded schools. She and Jim had taken board together in a quiet house as far removed from the dear old home as possible. Mrs. Hastings had promptly accepted the invitation of her husband's brother in Chicago. The invitation had also been extended to Dora, and she had as promptly declined it. Her strong, independent nature asserted itself here. She would not go to live a dependent in her uncle's home. She would not teach music, for which she pronounced herself unfitted by nature and education; but she would take the boys' room next to Winny's in the aforesaid graded school, and share the quiet little room in the boarding house, whither Winny had carried many of her household treasures.

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It was all settled at last, and when Mrs. Hastings was ticketed and checked for Chicago under the escort of one of the firm who was going thither, and the young ladies were quietly domiciled in their new and pleasant room, Pliny and Theodore came to the first breathing place they had found for many a day, and felt absolutely forlorn and disconsolate. They were together in the store, the last clerk had departed, and their loneliness only served to add to their sense of gloom.

"Well," said Pliny, closing the ledger with a heavy sigh, "if we had a local habitation we'd go to it now, wouldn't we?"

"Probably," answered Theodore, drumming on the counter with his fingers. "Where *are* we going to live, Pliny, anyway?"

"More than I know," was Pliny's gloomy answer. "In the street for all I seem to care just at

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present."

And then the office door clicked behind them, and Mr. Stephens appeared.

"I thought you were gone, sir," said Pliny, rising in surprise.

"No, I was waiting your movements. Come, young gentlemen, I want you both to come home with me. There is no use in remonstrating, my boy," he added, laying his hand on Theodore's shoulder, as the latter would have spoken. "I have had your and Pliny's rooms ready for you this week past, and have only waited until you were at leisure to take possession. I keep bachelor's hall, you know, and if ever a man needed something new and fresh about him I do. So do as I want you to for once, just to see how it will seem."

There was much talk about the matter, argument and counter argument; but in the end Mr. Stephens prevailed, as in reality he generally did, when he set his heart upon a thing, despite his statements that Theodore kept him under complete control. Before another week closed the two young men were cozily settled in their new quarters, and really feeling as much at home as though half their lives had been spent there.

There was one other matter which came to Theodore as a source of great satisfaction. [397]

"Mallery," Mr. Stephens had said to him one morning when they were quite alone in the private office, "have you any special interest in the Hastings' place?"

Theodore hesitated a little, and then answered frankly enough:

"Yes, sir, I certainly have. There are many associations connected with that house that will always endear it to me."

"Then you may be interested to know that I have become the purchaser of it; and if at any time, for any reason, you should wish to make special disposition of it, it shall always be in a state to await your orders. Real estate is valuable property, and as good a way as any in which to dispose of surplus funds."

Theodore came out from behind the screen to try to offer some word of thanks, but Mr. Stephens had pushed open the green baize door and vanished.



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CHAPTER XXIX.

SOME MORE BABIES.



RS. JENKINS' Tommy stood on the sidewalk in front of the store, in a nicely fitting new suit, white vest and kid gloves. It was not yet the middle of the afternoon, but the great store was closed and shuttered and barred. A gentleman came briskly down the street and halted before the young man, with a surprised look on his face as he questioned:

"How now, Tommy, what's to pay? It isn't possible your firm has failed and foreclosed? What are you all bolted and barred at this time of day for?"

Tommy arched his eyebrows.

"Have you been out of town, sir?" he asked, in a tone which plainly said, "It isn't possible that you've been *in* town and not heard the cause of this closed store?"

"Just so," answered the good-natured gentleman. "I've been West, and I want to see Messrs. Stephens and Mallery in a twinkling." [399]

"Can't do it," said Tommy, promptly, and with the air of a policeman. "They are otherwise engaged, both of them—all three of them, I may say. Mr. Hastings is in it, too. There's been a double wedding. Haven't you heard of it, sir?"

"Not a word," answered his listener, with commendable gravity. "They've been as whist as mice. Tell us all about it."

"Well, sir, it was to-day at twelve o'clock, in the First Church—Dr. Birge's, you know. He married 'em. Splendid ceremony, too! and they looked—well, they all looked just grand, I tell you!"

"Don't doubt it in the least, Tommy, but who the mischief were they?"

"Why, Mr. Mallery and Miss Hastings, and Mr. Hastings and Miss Winny McPherson, and they're both of our firm, you know; at least Mr. Hastings he's our confidential clerk now, and we all say that he'll be partner one of these days, as sure as guns. We all went to the wedding, every one of us, cash boys and all; then we all went to Mr. Stephens', and had just the grandest kind of

a dinner with the brides and grooms. And Dr. Birge and Mr. Ryan they toasted them."

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"Wine or brandy?" interposed the gentleman, slyly.

"Neither!" answered indignant Tommy, with flashing eyes and glowing cheeks. "They had pure water, ice water. They don't have any wine or brandy in that house nor in our firm, I can tell you, sir."

"Good for you, Tommy—stand up for your principles. Well, what came next after you were all toasted and ice-watered? Is Mrs. Hastings, senior, in town? Dear me, how long is it since she went away?"

"It's pretty near three years. No, she isn't in town. She's in feeble health, and they're going out there to Chicago to see her, the whole tribe of them. They take the four o'clock Express, and we're all going to the cars with them, about a dozen carriages. It's time they were on hand, too. I had to come down to the store after a package that was left here, and there they are this minute; and so you see, sir, you can't see either Mr. Stephens or Mr. Mallery in a twinkling. I ride in the eighth carriage." And at this point Tommy's shining boots bounded away.

After the visit to Chicago was concluded, interspersed by several pleasant side trips, the bridal party separated one bright June morning at the Cleveland depot, Pliny and his wife preparing to settle down in their new home, while Mr. and Mrs. Mallery went on to New York. Theodore had been there perhaps a dozen times since he took that first surreptitious trip with Mr. Hastings, but in these visits he had always been a hurried business man, with little leisure or taste for retrospect. Now, however, it was different, and traversing the streets with his wife leaning on his arm, he had a fancy for going backward, and painting pictures from the past for her amusement. The hotel to which he had escorted Mr. Hastings on that day had advanced with the advancing tide, and was just now in the very zenith of its prosperity. Thither he found his way, and led Dora up the broad steps and down the splendid halls, and finally booked his name, "Theodore S. Mallery and wife," and tried in vain, while he issued his orders with the air of one long accustomed to the giving of orders, to conceive of himself and that ridiculous little wretch who squeezed in among the gentlemen on that long ago morning to discover, if perchance he could, what his traveling companion's name might be, as one and the same.

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"Now, I am going to show you some of the wretchedness that abounds in this elegant city," he said to his wife one morning as he dismissed the carriage after an hour's exciting drive, and proposed a walk. "It is a remarkable city in that respect. I am never struck with the two extremes of humanity as I am when in New York."

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"I was thinking only this morning," Dora answered, "how very few wretched people I had met in the streets."

"Wait a bit; see if in ten minutes from this time you are not almost led to conclude that there is nothing left in this world but wretchedness and filth and abomination."

They turned suddenly around the corner of a pleasant street, and as if they were among the shifting scenes of a panorama, the entire foreground had changed. Wretchedness! that word no more described the horrors of their surroundings than could any other that came to Dora's mind. The scene beggared description. "Swarms of horrors!" she called them in speaking of the people afterward. Just now she clung silent and half frightened to her husband's arm. He, too, became silent, and appeared occupied solely in guarding his wife and shielding her from disagreeable collisions. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation of delight:

"Look, Dora! this is the building of which I have read but have never seen. I have not had time to come so far down before this. Can you imagine a more delightful oasis in this desert of filth and pollution?"

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There it stood, the great, *clean*, splendid building! towering above its vile and rickety neighbors. And in bright, clear letters, that seemed to Theodore to be written in diamonds, gleamed the name; far down the street it caught the eye, "Home for Little Wanderers."

Dora looked and smiled and caught her breath, and then the tears dropped one by one on her husband's sleeve. It almost seemed like the voice of an angel speaking to the world from out of that moral darkness.

"Oh, if I had known that day when I was in New York of such a spot as this in all the world, what a different world it would have looked to me. The idea that there could be a home *anywhere* in all the universe, or beyond it, for such as I had never occurred to me." Theodore spoke in low, earnest tones, full of deep and solemn feeling.

"But, Theodore," said Dora, gently, "if you *had* known of this home, or any like it, and gone thither instead of to Cleveland on that day, where would you have been now, and what would have become of me?"

Theodore smiled down on his fair young bride, and drew the hand that rested on his arm a little closer as he answered:

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"I am quite content, my darling. I am not complaining of the guiding Hand that led me home. I

have surely reason to be utterly and entirely satisfied with my lot in life; but there are not many boys such as I was who find little blue-eyed maidens to bring precious little Bible cards to them, and so write lessons on their hearts that will tell for all time—yes, and for all eternity."

"There are not many Dr. Birges and Mr. Stephenses," said Dora, emphatically. And Theodore's response was quite as emphatic:

"Very few indeed! If there were only *more*. But, Dora, isn't it a grand enterprise? Let us go in. I have always intended to go through the mission; but, you see, I waited for *you*."

They went up the broad, pleasant flight of steps. The children, hundreds of them, were at dinner. Such an array of clean, and, for the most part, pleasant faces! Such a wonderful dinner as it must have been to them! Dora's face glowed and her eyes sparkled as she watched them. Then they all went together to the great, light, pleasant chapel, with its hanging baskets, and its white flower urns, and its creeping vines, and fragrant blossoms; its grand piano on the platform as perfect in finish and as sweet of tone as if it were designed to chime with the voices of more favored childhood. Dora's bright eye took in the scene in all its details with great delight and satisfaction, but she did not feel the solemn undertone of thanksgiving that rang in Theodore's heart. How could she? What did she know in detail of the contrast between the present and the past lives of these children? And who knew better than he the awful scenes from which they had been rescued! How they marched to the sound of the quickstepping music! How their voices rang out in songs such as the angels might have loved to join! It was a sort of jubilee day with them, and there were many visitors and many speeches, and much entertainment. As he looked and listened, Theodore had constantly to brush away the starting tears. Presently Mr. Foote came with brisk step and smiling face toward the spot where Theodore and his wife were sitting.

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"You are interested in the children, I know, sir," he said, confidently. "Come forward please, and give us a brief speech. The children will like to hear one who shows his love for them beaming in his face."

Theodore answered promptly:

"No, sir, I will not detain them; they have had speeches enough. Besides, my heart is quite too full for talking." At the same time he arose. "I would like to write my speech, though, if you please, sir. Have you pen and ink convenient?" And he went forward with the leader to the desk. A few quick dashes of the pen over a blank from his check-book, and he stood pledged for five hundred dollars for "Howard Mission."

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"How much I have to thank Dr. Birge for preaching that glorious sermon on the 'tenths,' and dear grandma for teaching me with her white buttons the meaning of the same," he said to Dora as they made their way out from that beautiful haven into the reeking street. "How every single impulse for good counts back to some influence touched long ago by an unconscious hand! I wonder if the Christian world has an idea of what it is doing?"

They tarried but a few hours in Albany, long enough to visit that quiet grave with its simple tribute, "Dear Mother." And there again came to Theodore's heart sad memories of his father. Oh, if his body *only* lay there in quiet rest underneath those grasses; if he could have the privilege of setting up *his* headstone, and marking it with a word of respectful memory; if he could have but the *faint hope* of a meeting place for them all in that city beyond, what more could he ask in life? And yet who could tell? Perhaps it was even so; perhaps there had come even to his father an eleventh hour? The "arm of the Lord was not shortened" that it could not save where and when and how he would. And there had been prayers, constant and fervent, sent up for him; and perhaps the eleventh hour was yet to come; he might be still in this world of hope. Theodore's heart swelled at the thought.

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"My darling," he said, turning toward the young face looking up to his, and full of tender sympathy, "he may be living yet—my poor father, you know. We will never cease to pray that if he is still on earth God will have mercy. We will pray together, will we not?"

And then both remembered that other father, about whose grave June roses were blossoming to-day, for whom they could pray nevermore; and so though she laid her hand in his in token of sympathy, she made no answer on account of fast falling tears.

"For our *own* room, Dora, in lieu of many pictures let us have some of these exquisite illuminated texts. I like them *so* much; and we can never tell how much good they may do a servant or a chance passer through. There are some in particular that I want to select." This Theodore said to his wife as they stood together in a picture store.

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"There! I want that one above all others," and he held it up for her admiration. It *was* a beauty; the letters were exquisitely formed, and the words were: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Then they chose, "Peace be to this house"—this for the hall. And another favorite, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

"This is yours, Dora," Theodore said, presently, laying before her a delicately shaded sentence

on tinted board, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee." And she smilingly answered: "Then this for you," "He shall keep thee in all thy ways."

And so their homes were filled with lessons from the great guide-book, speaking silently on every hand.

It might have been something like three years after this date that the Buffalo Express was behind time one day. Pliny Hastings was at the depot in a state of impatient waiting. I do not know that it occurred to him that he had been in precisely that spot and condition one evening years ago. The whistle of the train rang out at last, and Pliny stepped back near the restive horses, ready for emergencies. He swung open the carriage door as Theodore Mallery advanced from the train.

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"You're a pretty man to be late *to-day* of all days in the world," was Pliny's greeting, in a sort of good-humoredly impatient tone.

"Scold the engineer, not me," responded Theodore, in the same manner. "I fretted inwardly all the way from C—. All well at home?"

And then the two gentlemen entered the carriage, Theodore waiting to give the order, "Home, Jacob." And he had not a thought of the ill-favored urchin who had once tumbled up on the driver's seat of a carriage similar to this one, and peered down curiously at the boy Pliny inside. He even did not remember that he made a resolution to become the driver some day of a pair of horses like those behind which he was luxuriously riding, so utterly do we grow away from our intentions and ambitions.

The carriage swept around the fine old curve and stopped at the side door of Hastings' Hall that was. The place had a familiar look, but the present inmates disliked the old aristocratic sounding name, and in view of the wide green lawn and the noble shade trees had named it simply "Elm Lawn." Dinner was waiting for the master of the house, and it was a birthday dinner, too, in honor of the first anniversary of that great day to another heir of the grand old house. He was sleeping now, tucked into a great easy chair, while his lace-curtained crib was given up to a younger, tinier baby, who sucked his thumb and did *not* sleep. Both babies frowned and choked and sneezed over their respective father's kisses or whiskers, or both. Both appeared in all their glory at the dinner table; and all the bright happy company were in blissful ignorance of a scene so nearly similar that had occurred when the supposed young heir of Hastings' Hall reached the close of his first year. Yet this *was* different, for Mr. Stephens asked a blessing on this bright glad scene, and Dr. Birge returned thanks for the joy and beauty of the day, and the health and hopes of these two babies were remembered in glasses of sparkling water.

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And the supposed heir of other days was the fond proud father of the precious crowing bundle now pulling at his beard. What cared he for Hastings' Hall? It was a fine old place enough, and he had enjoyed coming there every day of his life; but his own bright home was just around the corner, and contained more life and joy and beauty than did all Cleveland. So he thought.

"What have you named your babies?" questioned a chance caller.

"This is Master Pliny Hastings Mallery at your service," responded Theodore, tossing his boy aloft until he tried to reach the ceiling and yelled with glee. While Winny, after glancing at her husband's face and noting his moved look, answered simply: "We call ours Baby Ben."

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After Dr. and Mrs. Birge, and he who called himself Grandfather Stephens, had departed, they went, these two fathers, to the room above, where the babies cuddled and slept, and the loving mothers watched and talked. They all went over and stood by the crib and the easy chair.

"Let us have a special celebration of this day," said Theodore. "Let us consecrate these two boys anew to the beloved Giver of all our blessedness."

Then they all knelt down, each husband encircling with one arm the form of his honored wife, and resting the other hand on the forehead of his darling, and Theodore first, then Pliny, laid their hearts' dearest treasures at the feet of their common Lord.

"We are very happy," Dora said, when they had risen, still clinging to her husband's hand.

"Very happy," answered Theodore, clasping tenderly the dear true hand. "And it is a happiness that will continue whatever comes, so we remain always at the feet of the Master and keep our treasures there."

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Pliny was looking at the babies, with a face full of humble tenderness.

"We have quite given them up to *Him*," he said, in an earnest, solemn tone. "Now let us pray that he will consecrate them *peculiarly* to the sacred cause of temperance."

And Theodore and the two mothers said: "Amen."

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Transcriber's Notes

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

This text uses the archaic spelling of "height" as "hight." This was retained.

One instance each of "foot-ball" and "football" was retained.

The remaining corrections made are indicated by dotted lines under the corrections. Scroll the mouse over the word and the original text will appear.

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