

BANNER OF LIGHT.



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THE SUNDAY MORNING SERMONS
OF REVS. EDWIN H. CHAPIN AND HENRY WARD
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EDWIN H. CHAPIN
At Broadway Church, N. Y., Sunday Morning,
May 29th, 1859.

REPORTED FOR THE BANNER OF LIGHT, BY DUER AND LOND.

Text.—And when he came to himself he said, how many
hired servants of my Father's have bread enough and to spare,
and I perish with hunger.—LUKE XX. 17.

Recalling your attention from time to time to this
suggestive parable of the prodigal son, for I can never
exhaust it, I ask you in this discourse to consider the
truth especially presented in these words—"and when
he came to himself." How wonderful is the condensa-
tion of these New Testament narratives. What im-
mense realities are contained in the few brief sentences.
The poor prodigal! It is a short story; and yet with
what a pregnant suggestion it is pointed. We have no
details of that wasteful and sinful career. We are
simply told that he went into a far country and spent
all he had in riotous living. We catch only an imagi-
nary glimpse of him in the road of destruction. The
transient light of sensual enjoyment flickers upon
him through those circling wine cups, and those mazes
of temptation; and then he appears before us a poor
deserted creature, clothed in rags, and glad to share the
food of swine. How changed from the flushed and
willful boy who demanded his patrimony, and in his
impetuosity to see the world hardly waited for the
father's blessings that fell with the father's tears upon
his head. But all this outward wretchedness, all these
rags, and huts, and swine, do not in themselves fur-
nish the special suggestion to which I allude. They are
merely accessories and symbols. But we find that
suggestion in the words of the text, and that sugges-
tion is, "and when he came to himself." The prodigal
came to himself. Now, whatever may have been the
immediate application of this parable, as it fell from
the lips of the Saviour, we cannot doubt that in its
primary significance it relates to all men, to you and
to me. It is useless to give it any narrower inter-
pretation than this. It applies to all men, not in any
general sense, but in their individual relations and
characteristics. Undoubtedly it well illustrates the
relative positions of the Jew and the Gentile in the
time of Christ. But it illustrates much more than
this. It illustrates the general fact of which they were
only special instances. To insist upon this limitation
would involve many incongruities. In short, as has
been said by another, "The parable grasps the
truths of which Jew and Gentile were, in their re-
lations, illustrations." Among which central truths,
my friends, I say once more, let us consider the applica-
tion to men in our day, and let us consider the applica-
tion to ourselves, of these words of the text—"and
when he came to himself."

These words indicate the spiritual condition of every
man who turns from a life of sin to repentance and to
God. And the first thing I wish to say concerning
them is, that they furnish testimony respecting our
nature; they furnish testimony respecting human na-
ture. On the one hand you will observe that this
crisis in the state of the prodigal does not support the
false development theory, and that it does not support
the idea that men grow steadily up into holiness and
righteousness, without a break and without a reversion.
To be sure, we may say that the extreme debasement
and violent sin of the younger son in the parable do
not strictly represent the moral situation of every man.
All men are not unnatural sons; all men are not dis-
sipated, profane, licentious, riotous livers, breaking
away from paternal restraints, going off into a far
country, and coming at last to the abject wretchedness
of the huts and the swine. Some men seem to grow
up moral; to be religious from the very outset. And it
may be difficult to find the precise point in their lives
where, by any marked change, they turned from the
downward career of evil to the upward course of good.
I do not dispute this statement. I believe there are
many men who have no single, sharp, tremendous
crisis in their lives, no conscious shock of supernatural
influences, instantaneously impelling them from a state
of sin to a state of grace, as it is called. I do not
know that any man has a right to look for any such
crisis, or to demand it of others as an evidence of their
Christian character. I am sure of one thing; I am
sure we have no right to limit the working of the spirit
of God Almighty, or the methods of his communica-
tion with the human soul. But yet this is done, and
it is the great fault I find with the common theory,
that it is to be presumed that the prodigal, yet con-
tinued in the terms of his theological vocabulary? This
is that substitution of theology for religion which
is the bane of the Christian world, and is the occasion
of incalculable evil. Nor is any man justified in wait-
ing for any such sharp, conscious crisis. He knows the
condition of his own soul. He knows whether he is
hungering and thirsting after righteousness. He knows
whether his heart is crying out after the living God.
That hunger, that thirst, that earnest desire, are they
not in themselves evidences of a divine inspiration?
And what is he to do simply to follow the impulse
which they give? And so you, my friend, desiring to
be righteous, wishing to be a Christian, yet waiting
for some most recent change before you enter into
the state, are you desirous for righteousness? Then
go on after righteousness. Do you want the living
God? Then go on seeking the living God, not waiting
for anything. Proceed; move forward; that is the
Christian life; not waiting for this sharp, great, pec-
uliar change. And I say that some, perhaps, have no
consciousness of any other condition but this; have no
consciousness but that they have always striven for
what seemed to them best and purest; have always en-
deavored to rise higher and higher in the Divine life,
to meet the demands of the Divine law.

And yet is it the case that any man, however smooth
his life may have run, so to speak, however correct his
moral example may have been, and whatever may have
been the depth of his religious feelings—is it the case
with any man that his growth in the Divine life has
been a steady growth, just as the plants and flowers are
growing to-day by the influence of the dew and the
rain and the sunshine? Has he grown up, I ask, with-
out a break, with no retrograde movement in his life,
with no retrograde influence at all, no balk and no
struggle? Has there been no time when the world be-
came real to him, so to speak; when God and Heaven
and truth and duty became great realities to him; when
he felt as though he had lived in a kind of maze or
dream, which had suddenly broken away, and left him
standing face to face with immense facts? Has there
been no such time in his life? Has there never been a
time when his soul has turned from the evil tendency
and downward course, struggling and panting for the
upward tendency and the right course? There is noth-
ing supernatural in that, according to his idea, though
I believe the Divine influences are working upon us
continually, and are supernatural. But having no con-
sciousness of his nature, but knowing that at such a
time he did deliberately turn from the evil and strike
after the good? I think this is the case with everybody.

And therefore I say that it is not a mere development
theory which by the language in the text. Our nature
does not steadily grow up without a break, without an
interruption. In every man, in one way
or another, more or less marked, there is something
that is akin to that experience in the life of the prodi-
gal. This on the one hand.

Then I say, on the other hand, that the illustration
in the text renders no support to the doctrine of total
depravity. You see this is a self-recovering which is
described by Christ in the chapter before us—a self-re-
covering; it is a "coming to himself" that marks the
peculiarity of the prodigal's career here. Now can we
suppose that when he "came to himself" he came back
to a condition of total depravity? Just look at the
matter in connection with the doctrine in all spiritual pro-
gress, and in all real religious life. And I ask you to
take the matter up independent of all theological and
of all prejudices, and ask yourself—did the prodigal
come back to total depravity when he came to him-
self? As I said in the commencement, this is an il-
lustration of the moral condition of every man, not of
an exceptional case, but of all cases. If the prodi-
gal was totally depraved when he started from his father's
house, he was just as bad as he was afterwards
among the huts and swine. He was just as bad when he
was obeying his father and living under his guidance
as when he was disobeying him and living away from
him. And when he came to himself, and the doctrine
of total depravity is true, he came back the same
man, and was just as bad as he had been. Now have we
in this suggestion that man is by nature totally cor-
rupted and depraved? No, my friends; I think we
have this suggestion, of a primal good in human nature,
as well as a primal evil. I say that good is primal,
and is deeper than the evil; just as goodness lies
around all the phenomena of nature and all the reali-
ties of the universe. Whatever may be their forms or
substances, evil is enclosed by broader and more com-
prehensive goodness. Inasmuch as the Infinite God is
in himself good, so in human nature in all its forms,
and with all the subtleties of evil, there is a deeper
and a more primal goodness.

People do not know themselves. I speak here last
Sunday of the ignorance which we have in regard to
other people, of the difficulty of knowing other people,
of the difficulty of stripping off this concentric, this
many-folded humanity, and finding the real essence
and substance of that humanity in individual hearts.
I say now that people do not know what is in them-
selves, much less what is in other men. I say that
there are hundreds and thousands living without know-
ing what they are fit for and what they are placed in
the world for; living in a maze of ignorance, in a
want of self-consciousness, drifting about here
and there, pursuing this thing and that thing, not
knowing themselves. My friends, it is but a trite
thing to say; but it is also an impressive and suggestive
thing, to say that we are capable of more good and
more evil than we may suppose until it is called out by
some emergency.

There are veins of good and evil that lie unexplored
in the nature of any man, until their latent force is
elicited by some shock of circumstances. Let no man
in this uncertain and trying life dare to say what he
will not or what he cannot do. He cannot tell what
some sudden pressure may call forth. Temptation—re-
member it well—will not come at the point where you
expect it. When you are armed for it, and prepared to
meet it, then it would not be temptation. But it
will come where we are vulnerable, and with a force
that we cannot calculate beforehand. We know not
what capacity there is in us for evil. That ought to
make a man tremble. But it is better and more en-
couraging to know also that we do not know what ca-
pacity there is in us for good. Underlying the evil, I
repeat, deeper and more primal than the evil, there is
some spring in our nature that may be quickened to the
nobler issues. In seasons of sorrow, in hours of sacrifice,
how often has some great thing been done which
has greatly astonished the world and those who did it.
We remember it well, and seem to fitly only for the
soft air of prosperity and the soft cities of the world,
when affliction has darkened around her, and when the
deep love in her bosom is aroused, how has she arisen
and gone forth, dashing all perils, making all sacrifices,
clinging to the last shattered hope, shaming the intrep-
idity of heroes, and emulating the fortitude of mar-
tyrs. How often, too, in some rough, ill-trained spirit,
have we been surprised by some manifestation of a
bright humanity. How often from some unexpected
corner has some great virtue sparkled forth, shedding
light upon the surrounding wickedness and gloom. Yes,
this is a common expression. When we fall into a
misanthropic mood, and begin to be suspicious of hu-
manity, we often often find, as they say, the light
against ourselves rather roughly—something of that
kind breaks out, and we say, "Well, there is something
good in human nature after all." And so there is; and
the doctrine that says there is not, is not based upon
God's truth or upon facts. This mysterious human na-
ture, we do not know its depths, its springs, its hid-
den and far-reaching relations, until we turn from
these superficial dealings of life, these externals of
life, and come to ourselves. Then the very point by
which you can affect a man, the very point by which
you can bring him to a sense of his real condition, is to
show him that in him there is a better nature to which
he is doing violence and shame. Now does this foster
the pride of human nature, does it foster the idea of
foster the dignity of human nature? Some people in-
deed found great fault with Channing's doctrine of human
nature, that it makes too much of man, makes him too
much of a demigod.

I do not think you can make too much of a man's
abilities when you consider the correlative fact of his
responsibilities. I do not think you can make too
much of a man's gifts when you consider the other fact
of the uses which he makes of his gifts. As I have often
said, a man need feel no fear, need have no care, if the
doctrine of total depravity is true, for he cannot help
himself; he is locked up, he is fastened down, he has
no power to do better. Why should he care about re-
sponsibilities? Why should he care about guilt? But
a deep sense of guilt is excited when a man feels that
he has wasted powers, that he has misused gifts, that
he has had the ability to do this and has done exactly
otherwise. There is the incentive to repentance; there
is the pang and the sting of guilt. There is no
evangelical power in the doctrine of total depravity
when you bring it down to its clear logical results.
The prodigal in all his misery did not accuse somebody
else; he did not accuse his father; he did not accuse the
devil; he accused himself. He saw that he had
brought this misery upon himself. He had known bet-
ter; but he had taken his patrimony, and had gone of-
f on his own free will among the huts and the swine. All
he could say was, "I have sinned; I have sinned; I
have wasted powers; I have abused opportunities; but
I will arise and go to my father." He had brought his
miseries upon himself. Men may theorize as they
please; yet practically they acknowledge this truth—
that there is in human nature something deeper and
better than sin, or than the mere mask of evil with
which our faculties are often covered up. There is
something in human nature—and we all acknowledge it
spontaneously, we all acknowledge it practically—that
will respond to moral appeals. We never see a
man so far gone in any vice, we never see a man so far
gone in any crime, that we do not at least hope that we
could reach him, and believe that we might reach him,
that we did not believe that there is some pulse in the
depths of that man's nature that would respond to great
moral truths and appeals. That is practical common
sense, too. You can reach him. But if it is a lump of
total depravity that stands before you, what is the use
of your appeals?—what is the use of them? Yet Chris-
tianity itself makes these appeals to human nature. It
supposes man to be capable of judging of right and
wrong. We may get up all the ingenious theories we

please about human capacity to comprehend the infi-
nite, or to pass in judgment upon the manifestations of
God. Yet Christianity acknowledges that capacity. Christ
appeals to his works as an evidence of his divine
truth and authenticity. "The works," he says, "they
bear witness of him that sent me." He and Paul
constantly address something in man that comprehends
and sympathizes with truth and with goodness, which
they set forth. Not by any means that I hold the idea
that religion is simply that which is in accordance with
our nature—that is another thing. I say that the
Christian religion addresses our nature, finds a response
to its claims, finds some sympathy within us for its
truth and goodness. But it is not in accordance with
our nature; for upon this ground is based the skeptic's
doctrine that religion is simply the effect of human dis-
positions and constitutions. They tell us that place
man in one set of circumstances, and he will have one
kind of religion; put him in another set of circum-
stances and you will find another kind of religion, cor-
responding to those circumstances. They say you will
find the religion of the Scandinavian a very different
thing from the religion of the Hottentot; and just as
men are placed upon the globe you will see them
becoming debased or moral. There may be some
great circumstances which may produce some effect.
But the fact of it is, when you consider the real work-
ings of religion, you will find it going not according to
the tendencies of human nature, but going against the
grain of man's nature. And so the Apostle Paul,
liberal-minded, comprehensive man, was he a large,
liberal-minded, comprehensive man originally, when he
was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, leading a life of
glorious hosts at the heels of the Christians near to Damas-
cus? Not at all. He was originally as harsh and
sharp a bigot as you will find in any Christian church
of the present day. But look at the change! Chris-
tianity came to him, and the sharp, bigoted man became
the loving apostle. He who was so zealous for per-
secution, breathes now that beautiful chapter upon chari-
ty from which I preached last Sunday morning. The
entire current and tone of his nature was changed.
Something has gone against it, and not with it. No,
there is no support in the deep sense of the idea that
religion is molded by our nature, and is in accordance
with it. But a great many things show that it goes
right against our nature. It lifts us out of it and puts
us upon a new track, and drives us to a new end. And
yet it is none the less true we will find something in
our nature to respond to it; some elemental goodness
that has never died out. And this itself is a refutation
of the idea that man stands before you a mere mass
of total depravity. Religion finds something. Christ finds
something in humanity to come to; something primal
and deep that is worth saving. Oh! jewel of God
Almighty, trumpeted in the mire, but still worth find-
ing. Oh! sinner, with the divine image and
superiority, blasted by the sin and among the lost,
yet worth finding. Oh! lost prodigal, amid the huts
and the swine. Oh! poor, degraded, corrupted and
sinful human nature; not totally corrupted, not totally
depraved, still worth finding, worth saving; this is the
testimony which the parable gives concerning human
nature.

The next point which I gather from the text, is the
elusiveness of sin. I speak, of course, of sin in one
aspect now, not as against God, but as existing in
man. I do not speak of it in the character which it
presents to us as that which alienates us from infinite
goodness, although when you view it in this aspect,
it is dark and significant enough. I do not speak of
that character which relates to our acting against in-
finite goodness. I speak of it in another character. I
speak of it in its relation to ourselves. And here I say
that all sin is illusion. It is not merely alienation
from God, but alienation from our own better selves.
It is to our better selves I have referred under another
head. And here is another point that shows me that
man is not entirely out of the way. No man loves sin
merely because it is sin—merely because he knows it
is opposition to God's law. No man sees God in his
character, and sin in its character, and says, "I will
take sin in preference, just because it is sin, intrinsi-
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whom she had left at the time of the consummation of that, to her all-important event, the unenviable proprietress of a fashionable New York boarding-house, alas! quietly sleeping in her grave; her old heart no longer tortured by the thought so long endured while living, that Agnes, in her new relationship of wife and mother, had entirely outgrown all remembrances of parental claims and obligations.

In the death of Captain Cameron, Agnes had lost one of the most noble protectors and affectionate of husbands. So great, indeed, was the former's love for his beautiful wife, that it was with great difficulty that he could bring his mind to the belief that the object of his tender care and solicitude was but a woman, and as such, subject to the frailties and imperfections common to her sex.

The unexpected and dangerous illness of Captain Cameron, on his arrival in New York, after years of absence, at once arrested his wife in the midst of her career of pleasure, and excited no slight degree of alarm in the breast of one who had heretofore lived almost entirely for herself. Days and nights of constant watching, and the best medical aid which the country afforded could not stay the progress of disease, or shut out from the sick man's chamber the stern and dreaded presence of the spectre Death.

Agnes Cameron was a widow, with no one to turn to in the house of her affliction for comfort and sympathy, but the single child which God had kindly lent for her care and protection. It is said that violent grief is more speedily quenched than that of a calmer and less demonstrative nature. For a month after the decease of her husband Agnes Cameron confined herself entirely to her chamber, which she paced to and fro in a state of mental excitement bordering upon insanity. During this period of mourning she partook of but slight nourishment, refusing admittance to all the boarders in the house, many of whom manifested no small degree of pity and sympathy for the bereaved woman, and even repelling the embraces of her little daughter Blanche, who, in her total ignorance of death, could not thoroughly comprehend the cause of her mother's excessive sorrow.

By degrees, however, the tumult of emotion which had so fiercely raged in the widow's breast, began perceptibly to abate, until one day the permanent boarders at the Astor House were surprised at the appearance of Mrs. Cameron at the dinner-table; her dark face rendered, if possible, still more beautiful than ever, by its uniform pallor and melancholy expression, and her tall and well-proportioned form draped in deepest mourning.

It was soon after this that my father took up his residence at the above mentioned hotel, where his chance acquaintance with Mrs. Cameron in a few months ripened into warmest friendship. If I have spoken somewhat at length of a personage whom I have thus early introduced into my narrative, I trust that the reader will pardon me, for in so doing I have endeavored to give the public eye some slight insight into the real character of a woman whose fate was destined to be so closely connected with my own in after years—years which cost my sensitive nature more heart-writhing moments of exquisite torture, than I have either time or inclination to transcribe upon cold white paper!

To return, then, to the period of my school days. For nearly two years I had been a happy and contented pupil of the Ursuline Convent, still standing on Manhattan Island. The natural quietness and seclusion of the place fascinated rather than oppressed my youthful heart, which even at that early age seemed to court solitude, in preference to the numerous sports and pleasures which, commonly speaking, constitute the sole delight of childhood.

During the first year of my life within the Convent walls, my father was in the habit of visiting me semi-monthly, at which times he usually spent a half an hour or more in earnest conversation with the Lady Superior, and the Sisters, whose particular duty it was to impart instruction to the junior members of the establishment. I need not tell you, dear reader, that such reunions between father and child were equally productive of happiness to all parties concerned; for my natural love for study, united to a tender and affectionate disposition, had won for the motherless girl the love and esteem of the several nuns connected with the institution, who never failed to submit to my father, at each visit, a good report of the previous behavior and studiousness of their favorite pupil.

At the commencement of the second year of my monastic existence, my father's visits began to grow less frequent. I was now rarely rewarded with a sight of his handsome and pleasant face oftener than once a month. As weeks rolled on, I became in a degree accustomed to this species of parental neglect upon the part of one who had hitherto guarded the earthly welfare and happiness of his child as dearly as that of his own.

An occasional missive from my father was now my only consolation during the long winter months which succeeded his well-remembered visit to the Convent, in the latter part of October. Even his monthly letters to the Lady Superior, enclosing my customary pin-money, (as my father always laughingly termed the few dollars allowed each pupil of the institution, for spending-money,) were exceedingly brief and matter-of-fact-like in their contents, besides being dashed off in a hurried and careless style of chirography, which seemed to imply that the mind of the writer of said document was thoroughly engrossed with business affairs; so much so as to render him totally oblivious to even the nearest and fondest claims of relationship. At that time my childish heart accepted the excuse before hinted at, as a just one, and which the Lady Superior, (the particular confidante of all my youthful sorrows,) in her ignorance of mankind fully believed; but maturer years have lifted the mystic veil from my once clouded vision, and I now look back upon the past and wonder how a child of ordinary perceptions could have been so blinded to the common frailties of human nature, even in the case of a dearly-loved father.

"Adrianna, there is a gentleman and lady waiting below to see you," said Sister Agnes, (a nun who had recently entered the Convent as a teacher, after a few years' residence in a similar institution situated at Emmetsburg, Maryland,) suddenly entering the infirmary, one fine May morning, where I had spent the most part of my time the past three or four weeks, on account of ill health, induced, as the physician of the establishment believed, by excessive mental labor in my ardent pursuit after knowledge.

The words had scarcely escaped the lips of my teacher, before I sprang up from the couch upon which I had been reclining in a state of extreme

weariness, and with the joyful cry of "It is my father!" I hurried from the room with a velocity of speed acquired by excitement, rather than real bodily strength. Before I had proceeded far, however, I became conscious of a slight sense of dizziness. On reaching the staircase, I hastily prepared to descend, but at the second step which I took, my feet bent under me like a reed, and with a sudden movement I was precipitated into the hall below.

When I awoke to my senses, I was lying upon the sofa in the spacious and gloomy parlor of the Convent, with my father and a tall and handsome looking woman, dressed in deepest black, anxiously bending over me, with a degree of tenderness that was quite refreshing to my sad and weary heart. My first impulse was to twine my arms fondly about my father's neck; but at that moment Mrs. Cameron, the bride elect of my dear parent, darted upon me a glance of such deep anger, that I uttered a faint shriek and shudderingly fell back upon my pillow again.

My father, perceiving the extreme agitation of his child, pressed a fervent kiss upon the pale brow before him, and placing his lips close to my ear, inquired softly the cause of my sudden emotion.

Opening my large blue eyes, which had been momentarily closed to shut out the sight of the dark face which had so frowned upon my first exhibition of childish affection toward my father, I said, in trembling tones, which, low as they were, did not escape the ready ear of Mrs. Cameron:

"Papa, I don't like that lady you brought with you! I'm afraid of her; for she just now scowled at me when I was going to kiss you."

My father must have felt mortified at my very plain language, for he prevented me from speaking more extensively upon the subject, by hastily saying:

"Tut—tut! Ada! I shall be obliged to put a bridle upon your little tongue, if you are not more careful of your words. In regard to Mrs. Cameron's scowling upon you, I am sure you must have been mistaken; for see! she is smiling as good-naturedly at you this very moment, as if my little daughter had not allowed a naughty remark to pass her lips."

I glanced simultaneously with my father toward his handsome companion. She had thrown aside her morning hat and silken veil, and now sat quietly before us in her dark and voluptuous style of beauty. The black eyes no longer glittered with a fierce light, but seemed melting with love and tenderness. Masses of purple black hair were carefully laid back from a brow of remarkable clearness and breadth, that now wore an air of placidness quite in harmony with the general beauty of her face; while around the ripe and dewy lips played a smile of rare sweetness, and revealing to the best possible advantage two rows of large and pearly teeth.

For a moment I became conscious of a feeling of shame engendered by the thought of the seemingly unjust remark which had so carelessly escaped my lips a few seconds before. Whether the lady noticed my confusion, I am unable to state; but taking a hand of mine gently within one of her own, she said, smilingly, in a voice of rich melody that thrilled my childish heart:

"I am very sorry that the impression formed by Ada, concerning her father's friend, was of so unpleasant a nature; but I trust that time will efface an idea which is doubtless the result of imagination in her present weak and nervous state, rather than the decision of a warm and loving heart."

I saw the forgiveness which I had earnestly craved, visible upon Mrs. Cameron's face; but I was too deeply ashamed of my past folly, to vouchsafe a reply; and so I only looked the thanks I had not power to utter.

My father stayed but a half hour longer; but before he left, he had the satisfaction of knowing that I had sustained no bodily injury from my recent fall, although at first completely stunned by the shock which I had experienced in being precipitated so great a distance. I fancied that my father looked pale and worried, when, on the point of leaving me, he was accosted in the hall by my kind friend, the Lady Superior, who informed him of the miserable health under which I had labored for the past month.

"Poor child!" he murmured, at the same time casting a tender, yet half sorrowful glance at my thin and almost colorless face; "she is as frail as her dear mother was before her." And with a fervent embrace, my loved parent bade me farewell, and after imparting a few words in confidence to the Lady Superior, left the Convent, accompanied by Mrs. Cameron, who kissed me so affectionately at parting, that I felt the love which I had at first so cruelly denied her, welling up deep and strong within my heart.

A few days subsequent to my father's visit to the convent, the Lady Superior received a letter from the former, announcing the news of his approaching marriage, and expressing a desire that I should be at once released from school, and return to the city, in order that preparations might be made to further my attendance at the nuptial ceremony.

It was with a somewhat saddened heart that I bade adieu to my numerous friends and teachers at the Convent, which had, since the death of my poor mother—a period of two years—afforded a quiet and comfortable asylum to the orphan girl. A few hours brought me to my place of destination—the Astor House. Here I was warmly welcomed by my father and his intended wife, Mrs. Cameron, who received me with extreme tenderness of manner, presenting me at the same time to her daughter Blanche, a pretty, dark-eyed girl of twelve summers, who, though but two years my senior, had already begun to ape the airs of a fine lady.

A week later and there was a grand wedding at Trinity Church, the bridegroom, Charles Lester, Esq., and the brilliant-looking bride none other than the charming widow of the late Captain Cameron. It was a dazzling affair, the papers said, and the opinion of the press ought to be worth something in this land of "the brave and the free," as the poets have styled America. If beauty, attire and riches are the insignia of splendor and greatness, then this wedding of my father's must have been, in every sense of the word, a glorious one. Blanche and I were the only bridesmaids on the occasion, the former being dressed in a showy frock of pink silk, contrasting finely with her olive complexion and dark curls; while I, pale almost to marble whiteness, was dressed simply, yet tastefully, in a double-skirted robe of blue silk. A more beautiful creature than the bride I could not well conceive of. A dress of heavy white moire antique fell in rich folds about her tall and finely-rounded form, and swept in its great length the richly-carpeted aisle, as, leaning upon my noble-looking father's arm, she moved gracefully along towards the altar. A beautiful veil and bertha of

Monition lace constituted the bridal trimmings of a costume elegant in its very simplicity, while upon neck and arms sparkled diamonds of remarkable size and brilliancy—the bridal gift of the enamored bridegroom.

As I heard the varied exclamations of surprise and delight which fell from the lips of the dense crowd that pressed against us upon all sides as we entered the church door, I could not help feeling a degree of pride in the thought that the woman whose beauty and queenly dignity of manner were the admiration of the vast throng that filled almost to overflowing so fashionable a place of worship, was to fill that sacred and endearing office of mother to one who had been for two years a stranger to all maternal caresses and precepts.

A bridal tour to Saratoga Springs and Niagara Falls occupied the next three or four weeks of our time, after which our little party returned to the more lasting engagements of home, in one of the most elegant residences which then adorned Fifth Avenue.

From this time, dear reader, I may safely begin to date my own miseries, as well as those of my beloved father. During the period commonly known as the honeymoon, Agnes Lester was all that could be desired, by even the most fastidious and exacting of husbands, in her double capacity of wife and mother.

As time wore on, however, my handsome step-mother began to exhibit certain traits of character, which, as months sped by, served to sow the seeds of dissension and strife in a household upon which the sun of happiness had once dawned so brightly. Agnes Lester aspired to be what the world properly calls "a married belle." Her great personal beauty, and the high position which she occupied in society, as the wife of the wealthy merchant, Charles Lester, Esq., at once furnished her ample opportunity for gratifying this one darling wish of her base heart, by bringing crowds of flatterers about a shrine which should have been dedicated only to the pure and unfading enjoyments of conjugal love.

For a time my indulgent father, in his great devotion to one who was all unworthy his noble affection, bore all the petty annoyances and little heart-slights to which he was daily subjected by the thoughtlessness and cruelty of his wife, in silence; but when scandal, with its venomous tongue, began to circulate reports relative to the inconsistency and purity of his wife, my poor sensitive-hearted father could no longer bear his domestic troubles uncomplainingly.

It was then, when goaded to madness at the thought of the disgrace which, like a dark and ominous shadow, brooded over his household altar, Charles Lester essayed to rebuke his wife for her neglect and imprudence, that the storm of anger burst unrestrainedly upon the head of my father and innocent self. In secret, the frown which I had learned to forget, as ever distorting the handsome features of my step-mother, now frequently rested upon the face of one whose mobile and ever-varying expression of countenance seemed like Shakespeare's Richard III. to say, "I can smile, and murder while I smile."

Perceiving that I clung to my father in his sorrow of mind, Agnes Lester did not hesitate to accuse me of treachery and deceit, whenever my father's absence gave her an opportunity to rate me on my return from school.

Even Blanche Cameron, (for she still proudly bore her father's name,) consented to be an accomplice of her mother's, in devising numberless plans for my mortification and discomfiture. For a time she almost succeeded in setting the hearts of nearly all my school-mates against me, by circulating a series of falsehoods throughout the academy, whose utter baselessness was at last discovered by one of the teachers, and which resulted in Blanche Cameron's expulsion from school.

This last act seemed to call forth the particular and lasting vengeance of my step-mother upon my unerring head. When at home, I was now treated with the utmost contempt by both Blanche and her evil-hearted mother, who perceiving the love which my father bore toward his innocent child, declared that she would flit more than ever with men of the world, and that, too, in the face and eyes of Charles Lester, who she no longer loved or cared for. Such was the example, my kind friends, which Agnes Lester boldly set forth before two young hearts just verging into womanhood.

Large sums of money were now lavished upon Blanche for dress by her showy and heartless mother, while I was denied the privilege of even selecting the simplest materials of my by no means elegant attire. The excess to which my step-mother carried her flirtations with other men, caused Charles Lester to isolate himself almost entirely from the society of which he had once been the chief ornament. The world, crediting the false statements of the several male admirers of Mrs. Lester and her daughter, (who had already taken her stand among the first season belles,) were led to look upon my father as a jealous and narrow-minded man, who, having lost all enjoyment for the pleasures of the world, was too selfish to allow his wife to seek her happiness in the society which constituted her particular realm.

Thus was my dear father misrepresented to those who had once professed the warmest friendship for Charles Lester. So passed four years of my father's married life with Agnes Lester—a woman whom he would not have hesitated to divorce himself from two years after he had proudly led her to the altar, had it not been for the publicity of the thing, and the disgrace which such an act would have cast upon the young life of his darling Ada, as he called me.

At last the hand of disease was laid upon my father's brow, and Charles Lester was confined to his bed with what the physician pronounced to be a slow fever. Even her husband's sudden illness did not for a moment arrest Mrs. Lester and her frivolous-minded daughter in the midst of their career of gayety and dissipation; and I, who had long been stigmatized by them as "papa's baby," was left to watch alone beside the sick man's couch.

I shall never forget the night upon which my dear father died. It was the anniversary of my sixteenth birth-night, and instead of the brilliant party which but a few nights previous had assembled within Mrs. Lester's drawing-room to congratulate the peerless Blanche upon her eighteenth birth-night, I sat silently keeping watch over the invalid, who had fallen into what seemed to me a most refreshing slumber. The doctor had just gone out, after informing me that the fever had evidently gained its climax, and that the morrow would, without doubt, find my father much better.

Of a sudden the door-bell rang, and a moment or two after a servant entered the room, bringing me a

card bearing the name of Paul Effingham. I had seen the latter gentleman but two or three times, and then only for the space of a few minutes, when I chanced to be spending an hour or so in the drawing-room below. His fine and singularly intellectual face had most favorably impressed me upon the occasion of our first introduction, and I was not surprised when, in the course of our limited conversation, he modestly revealed to me the fact of his being by profession a lawyer.

Now, however, my heart beat high, as I rapidly descended to the library into which he had been ushered, to meet Mr. Effingham, whom I well knew Blanche Cameron proudly boasted as being a particular admirer of hers. As I had anticipated, Mr. Effingham's first inquiries, after an exchange of civilities between us, were after my half sister Blanche. He seemed surprised when I told him that she had accompanied her mother to the opera, for she had herself invited him to call upon her that evening, previous to his departure for Washington, the following day, on business. Not wishing to lower even one, (who had for the past two years proved herself more and nearer than friend to me,) in the eyes of her professed admirer, I sought to make some excuse to Mr. Effingham for Blanche's breach of courtesy, but I saw by the silent workings of his expressive face, that though I had exerted my energies to the utmost in behalf of Blanche Cameron, I had most signally failed to convince him that such rudeness was attributable to thoughtlessness upon the part of the lady in question, rather than to any premeditated slight or purpose. When I chanced to speak of my father's severe illness, Paul Effingham seemed more surprised than ever at the absence of Mrs. Lester and her daughter, and I half fancied that I saw the young man shrug his shoulders, as if not crediting the truth of my remark, when I ventured to say that Blanche Cameron was quite an enthusiast upon the subject of music.

Mr. Effingham, with the natural spirit of a man who feels that he has been wronged and insulted by a person whom he had heretofore looked upon as a lady, determined to wait until the arrival of Blanche and her mother, for the purpose of showing the former that Paul Effingham at least had been true to his engagement.

Excusing myself from Mr. Effingham's presence, on the plea of my services being needed in the sick room, I hastened up stairs and was met at the door of my father's chamber by the Irish servant, whom I had left watching for a few minutes at the invalid's bedside, with the alarming intelligence that, "The master was either possessed with a devil, or ravin' crazy!"

With a single bound I reached the couch whereon my father was tossing to and fro, and calling by turns upon his poor lost wife to let him in at the gates of heaven, and for Ada, his dear child, to save him from the clutches of that devious serpent Agnes, who was fast dragging him down to the bottomless pit. I had known my father to be a little delirious at times during his sickness, but had never seen him in so excited a state as on that night.

With a woman's fears, I bade the servant to ask Mr. Effingham to run for Dr. Farley, our physician, who lived only some two or three blocks distant. When Paul Effingham returned a few minutes later, accompanied by the somewhat alarmed doctor, all traces of delirium had subsided upon the part of the sick man, but the cold moisture of death was fast settling upon his noble brow.

I saw the change which a few seconds had wrought upon my father's countenance, and a sudden conviction that I was about to lose all that was dear to me on earth flashed quickly across my mind. At that moment Dr. Farley moved to my side, and whispered in my ear, "Speak to him, Miss Ada, while he is yet conscious, for all hope is past!" I did not faint at so terrible an announcement, neither did I give vent to my sorrow in tears, but clasping my arms firmly about the dying man's neck, I murmured, "Father! dear father! have you nothing to say to your child?" For a moment he fixed his dark and glassy eye upon me, as if striving to read in that one glance the inward workings of my soul; then drawing me convulsively to his heart, as if fearful that some rude hand would snatch me from him, he said, in low and husky tones, "From the anxious faces of all present, I know that you believe me dying. I had hoped to live a few years longer, for your sake, Ada, but God has decreed that it should be otherwise. I need not tell you to think of me often, when I am gone, for a heart like yours, my dear child, will not easily forget the dead, even when in the midst of the living. Your mother's prayer-book, Ada," he said, "where is it?" Without speaking I drew it out from beneath his pillow. The dying man raised the volume slowly to his lips, and then handing it to me, said, "Take this, my dear child; it was my engagement present to your mother, and as such, cannot fail to be held sacred in the eyes of her only daughter. Ada, my beloved, this is all that I have to bequeath you in dying, and may God bless and protect the fatherless, when I am no more."

The last words had hardly died away upon his lips, before the painful death-rattle vibrated loudly upon my ear. A faint gasp, and the darkly-fringed lids dropped like a curtain over eyes that would no longer beam with love and tenderness; the hands fell powerless at his side, and then I knew that the fierce warrior, Death, had at last slain his greatest enemy, Life, against whom he had so long and unsuccessfully battled. I well remember seeing Blanche and her mother enter the chamber of death, in their opera costumes; and of Dr. Farley and Mr. Effingham's bearing me in their arms away from the motionless body of the beloved dead, to whom I still wildly clung in the anguish of my deep grief, and nothing more. When I at last awoke to a state of consciousness, some three days after, during which time I had lain as it were entranced, I was quietly told by the nurse in attendance, that my father had been laid in his grave, beside the body of his first wife, the day previous. On hearing this intelligence, I wept passionately. The fountains of my grief-stricken heart were now unsealed, and the flood of tears that followed brought relief to my aching soul.

Some three or four weeks after my father's funeral I was summoned to the library by my step-mother, to hear the reading of a paper, in which my deceased father had settled his entire property upon Agnes Cameron and her child, on the occasion of that lady's marriage with Charles Lester. Not the slightest provision was made for me in the will, except so far as Mrs. Lester was disposed to exercise a charitable spirit toward the only child of her second husband. In the presence of a lawyer and two or three wit-

nesses, I was told to examine my father's signature. I recognized the clear and familiar handwriting as that of Charles Lester's, and was then told that my presence in the room was no longer necessary, as the lawyer's business was particularly with the widow Lester.

My first thought, upon finding myself dependent upon the bounty of my step-mother, was to return to the Convent, and there end my days, so thoroughly did I realize at that time the utter friendlessness of my situation, what few living relatives I had being settled in cities far distant from New York. Having expressed my intention to return to monastic life, in the presence of Blanche and my step-mother, I was surprised to find that, far from opposing such a course of procedure upon my part, that they most heartily approved a plan which would, without doubt, rid them forevermore of my presence. Vain hope of their selfish hearts! destined alas, never to be fulfilled according to their cruel desires!

Just at this time, when undecided as to what course I had best pursue, now that I occupied the position of a beggar even in my father's house, my eye was attracted one evening to an advertisement in one of the papers of a Philadelphia gentleman, for a governess to his two children. The chance offered seemed to my inexperienced mind an excellent one, and I at once set about answering it. A favorable reply was immediately returned to me, expressing the hope that I would exercise as little delay as possible in the matter. Without informing my step-mother and Blanche of the new change which I had made in regard to my future prospects, I packed my trunks, and took my departure, as my overjoyed relations firmly believed, for Manhattan Island.

I had filled to satisfaction the post of governess in the family of Mr. Dinmore, at that time the editor of one of the leading Philadelphia journals, when the aforesaid gentleman one day quietly informed the family assembled at the dinner-table, that a young gentleman from New York, a lawyer, whose name he had forgotten, was to lecture the coming evening before the Young Men's Library Association, at their lecture room in Girard College, and that if favorably impressed with him as a man, he should undoubtedly extend to him the hospitalities of his house during the lecturer's stay in town.

Evening arrived, and Mrs. Dinmore being troubled with a severe headache, I was requested by that lady to bear her husband company to the lecture, which was on the "Commercial Prosperity of our Country." A large audience thronged the spacious lecture-room of Girard College. The moment for the lecturer to make his appearance was at hand. All eyes were turned towards the door of an ante-room, out of which the president slowly advanced, followed by a tall and intellectual looking man of some thirty years of age. Advancing to the front of the platform the president announced the speaker of the evening as Paul Effingham, Esq., of New York! A thrill of strange delight shot through my frame at this sudden yet pleasurable intelligence.

At near midnight two persons might have been seen conversing earnestly together in the drawing-room of Mr. Dinmore's residence, on Chestnut street. I have not told you their names, for my readers must have already divined that said couple were none other than Paul Effingham and myself. The young lawyer on being presented to me at the close of the lecture, had at once recognized the daughter of Charles Lester, even in her new position of governess. He listened with peculiar interest to my story, and could not think that my father had ever rationally and intelligently affixed his signature to a paper which cut off his child from any share in his property, except so far as a step-mother might be disposed to exercise her charity towards the only child of her late husband. I told him I had never known of his making a will, but that the one which I had been invited to examine by Mrs. Lester and her lawyer bore the date of the eve of her marriage with Charles Lester. From Mr. Effingham, who had left for Washington, (where he remained for a month,) the morning after my father's death I learned that Mrs. Lester and Blanche were still living in their former splendor at the house of my late father in Fifth Avenue. Upon his calling there upon his return from Washington, to inquire after my humble self, he had been received with great coldness upon the part of Blanche, who sneeringly informed him that his friend Miss Lester was in all probability a shaven-headed nun, and a sojourner in the Convent at Manhattan Island, where she had been partially educated when a child. My blood boiled when I listened to this remark, which no other heart but Blanche Cameron's could have prompted; but I tried to entertain towards her a feeling of pity rather than of anger.

During our lengthy conversation, Mr. Effingham chanced to refer to the prayer-book, which my father had bequeathed to me as a dying gift. At the former's request I went to my room and extracted an object of so much sacredness from the bottom of my trunk, where it had lain untouched for months. My friend unclasped the golden fastening which bore upon its somewhat dingy surface the beloved names of both father and mother. The covers were of velvet, but were now both faded and worn. At sight of it I could not restrain my tears, for I remembered how constantly my father had perused its contents during the last two years of his life. Upon opening it Mr. Effingham discovered that the fly leaf appeared to have been pasted closely down to the cover, as if to conceal something beneath the surface. With my permission Paul Effingham ran the blade of his knife along the edge of the book, when lo! out fell a paper, which, upon examination, proved to be my father's will, made while visiting his two brothers in Baltimore, some eight months previous to his death, and which made his daughter Adrianna Lester sole heiress to his large property.

Another month found the tide of affairs strangely turned in the favor of one who had been for months an exile from her father's roof. The discovery of the forged will was a great blow to the pride of Mrs. Lester, who was just upon the point of being married to the black-hearted lawyer who had been her accomplice in guilt, when I suddenly asserted my claim as heiress of my late father's estates.

Blanche and her mother have accepted the bounty of Adrianna Lester, now the happy wife of Paul Effingham, because, finding themselves suddenly penniless, they knew not where else to look for a home.

"Our girls they are pretty,
And gentle as the dove;
As any the world ever knew—
Talk not about Spanish,
Or Circassian or Danish,
Or Greeks near their summer skies blue,
But give me our ladies,
As free as the grain is,
When sprinkled with roses and dew."

Written for the Banner of Light.

MY HOME.

BY HENRIETTA.

Beyond those distant hills,
Beyond the deep blue sea—
There, when "the Father" wills,
My happy home shall be,
Oh! beautiful, and fair, and free!

Beyond the purple West,
Beyond the setting sun—
In fadecless verdure dress'd,
There, when life's toils are done,
Shall be my home of rest!

My mother waiteth there
To welcome back her child!
Her gentle brow such smiles doth wear
My heart with ecstasy grows wild,
To think of love that I shall share
Beyond! beyond! beyond compare!

Written for the Banner of Light.

THE FIEND'S FIELD.

BY KATE KEITH.

A wild tract of country is that which lies round about, and, in fact, forms the Wrekin; and well did the little dreary, desolate, and isolated hamlet of Wrekinwold merit its appellation. The few scattered buildings of which it consisted, stood on ground whose gradual swell assumed in some places the appearance of hills, but which are absurdly misnamed, when magnified, in school "geography books" into mountains.

These hills, like many others, were, as well as the country for miles around them, at the period of which we write, a vast expanse of sterile, treeless heath, generally uncultivated; but were attempted to be turned into arable land, ill repaying the labors of the agriculturist, and far too arid to be converted into pasturage. The inhabitants of Wrekinwold were consequently a poor and idle race; and hand in hand with their poverty and idleness, went ignorance and superstition.

Among the proprietors and cultivators of land, residing in the vicinity of Wrekinwold, was a man named Powell, who had, it was supposed, amassed a considerable fortune by successful experiments upon the unpromising district where his house stood. But Powell possessed another treasure—a lovely and beloved daughter, for whom he had toiled incessantly, and who, it was well known, was destined to inherit the fruits of his labors.

This motive had undoubtedly, at first, stimulated the fortunate farmer to those bold agricultural speculations, in which the risk was exceedingly great, but the success, if achieved, splendid; yet, after awhile, losing sight of his original incentive to exertion, the love of lucre for itself only, took complete possession of his soul, and he became a hard-hearted, selfish, and penurious man. The poor have generally, except where they happen to be personally concerned, a great idea that Divine retribution will almost immediately overtake the evil-doer; and the neighbors of Powell, who had readily attributed his uncommon prosperity to the peculiar favor of heaven, upon this lamentable change in his disposition, expected nothing less than to witness some terrible manifestation of its wrath; it may even be surmised that their "wish was father to the thought."

At length their evil anticipations were destined to be gratified; and not one, but many successive bad seasons caused the farmer's crops to fail, and his cattle to be seized with an infectious disease. Powell was straitened, but not ruined; and while his avaricious heart was filled with grief to find that he had lost the fruits of many years' toil, a sudden and happy thought struck him, that his daughter should, at any rate, become the rich lady he had always intended her to be; the only difficulty was how to effect it.

At Wrekinwold a young fellow lived, styled Tony Ryeacroft, of whom nobody knew anything but that he was a very disorderly personage, considered himself a gentleman, dressed like a lounging, slatternly country squire—suffered his neighbors to understand that he was as wealthy as idle, (and far from ordinary was his idleness); but whence he and his money came, or the means whereby he made it, was a mystery—for that make it he must, seemed evident to the bores of Wrekinwold, who could not comprehend that heaven showered blessings upon vice and indolence hardly to be obtained by the frugal, virtuous, and industrious. Accordingly some fancied that he must be engaged in the smuggling trade; others, more wisely, considering the inland situation of Shropshire, imagined him a shareholder in a mine, or generalissimo of a company of highwaymen; some, again, pronounced him to be "a limb of the law," and others "a limb of Satan," a distinction, he it observed, however, without a difference in the apprehension of wiser people than the inhabitants of Wrekinwold.

Tony Ryeacroft was an old and ardent admirer of Madge Powell; but the poor girl, by no means captivated with his ruffianly demeanor, slovenly attire, lax principles, and the mystery attached to his birth, connections, and mode of life, had not only received his addresses with the contumely they merited, but had obtained her father's consent to a union with George Bennett, to whom she had long been tacitly engaged, and they were to be married as soon as gold should be added to the good and noble gifts which nature had lavished on him.

Powell, with his affairs in an unprosperous condition, now only became anxious to get his daughter off his hands as quickly as possible, and recollecting that Tony Ryeacroft was a husband for her at any time, (and, as he had always protested, at any price,) he scrupled not to declare, null and void, all stipulations and promises between himself, his daughter and poor George; vowing that he would disinherit her if she did not immediately accept the proposal of Tony Ryeacroft.

In vain Madge wept, pleaded, reasoned, and remonstrated; her father (as fathers frequently are) was inexorable. Poor Madge! to her such severity was new; and sad was the lesson she had now to learn, that adversity could steel the heart of a hitherto fond parent, though an irreligious man, against a faithful and loving child.

It was a blustering evening in Autumn; the winds moaned fearfully about the Wrekin, and dark, heavy clouds scudded across the sky. Ryeacroft was sitting by a roaring coal-fire in the ancient dilapidated mansion which he called his own, and which had formerly belonged to the Lord of the Wrekin, whose family had left it to Tony, upon his first appearance in the hamlet, at a rent little superior to that by which from time immemorial bats, birds, vermin, and reptiles, had tenanted the ruined edifice.

Tony, we say, was sitting by a large pit-coat fire

—not dreaming, like the poet who listens to the fierce, wild music of the rushing blast, while he conjures up an Arendia in the glowing carbon—but busily engaged in watching a large nondescript vessel upon it, in which an apparently metallic composition of saffron hue was bubbling and steaming. At no great distance from him stood a table, strewn with lumps of various metals, and a strange assortment of moulds, sand, screws, gimlets, files, gravers, instruments, and combinations of the mechanical powers, for which it would have been difficult for the uninitiated to have found a name or use. Tony, however, was Moslerian enough to know very well what he was about; his door was bolted and doubly locked, and he expected no interruption to his pursuits on such a forbidding evening.

But a violent ringing at the great gate of his fortress announced a visitor, and though he had given a strict charge to the old woman who officiated for him in every male and female capacity, to admit no one, and though he heard her pertinaciously protesting that he was "not at home," yet, to his extreme dismay, he also heard the intruder exclaim, as with heavy strides he approached the door of his sanctuary—

"Do n't tell me about 'not at home,' I know that he is, and I must and will see him."

The intruder now reached Ryeacroft's apartment, on the door of which he bestowed many a hearty knock, exclaiming at intervals—

"Why, Tony—Tony Ryeacroft—let me in, I say."

At last Ryeacroft, from within, replied in a solemn tone:

"*Dubastion theologists!* which, being interpreted, good neighbor, means, *Demon, avant!*"

"I say, Tony," cried the stranger, "please to be putting no tricks upon me. I am neither a demon nor a good neighbor; but, as you may know by my voice, if you have half an ear left, your old friend Powell."

"*Paspasra iconathem dentemastion!*" answered Ryeacroft, "which is, being interpreted, *Welcome, for I know thee!* and here you shall enter if you fear not."

Then, unfastening the door, Tony said, in his usual manner:

"As you have spoiled all my philosophical work for to-night, and I fear, too, for many succeeding nights, I cannot bid you so cordially welcome as—"

"Ay, but you will, though, when you know what I've come to say. Ugh! what an odor of burnt tin, or copper, or brimstone, perhaps. Why, Tony, what have you there, simmering on the fire? And what do you mean to do with these queer instruments? And, above all, what is come over your tongue, that you talk so outlandish?"

Ryeacroft replied only with a most mysterious look, and re-fastening the door, stole again on tiptoe to his seat.

Powell took the chair opposite, and as he held his large, tanned hands within an inch of the fire, while his curious grey eyes roved stealthily over the apartment and person of its owner—whose linen trousers, waistcoat opened at the breast, and uncovered arms, on so cold an evening, excited no small surprise—he ventured to ask him whether the warm work in which he seemed to be occupied were magic?

"Even so," replied Ryeacroft, with all the gravity he could command; "but, my excellent friend, start not; the branch of magic in which you now behold me engaged, does not belong to the black art, but is natural magic—the white, or golden one, which has no kind of connection with the others. Golden, indeed, may I well term it, since it teaches by the science of divine sublimations and transmutations, how to compound—that is, how to make—gold!"

"Whew!" whistled the astonished and delighted lover of wealth, starting up and seizing the alchemist's hand, which he almost wrung off in the fervor of his transport. "There's some sense in that kind of magic! Ah, Master Ryeacroft, I once fancied that I too had made, though in a different way, and with huge toil and trouble, a little of that same gold; but—"

Here poor Powell bent his head over the molten metal until his nose almost touched it; and whether its deleterious fumes, or the overwhelming consideration of Tony's extraordinary power for the accumulation of wealth deprived him of articulation, is uncertain; but decidedly he found himself unable to conclude his observation.

Tony was kind enough to partially relieve him from his embarrassment:

"My good friend, you mean to say that you find gold of late neither so easy to obtain, nor, when once lost, to recover?"

Powell sighed deeply and looked perplexed. Tony continued:

"A man can't help bad seasons. Even with me all is not fair weather; for instance, your visit this evening renders vain all the long labors of an entire day. The contents of that vessel are useless now."

Consternation and horror were depicted on Powell's countenance at this avowal; he managed to stammer out a few apologies for his unlucky intrusion, and tremulously inquired the cause of so strange a fatality.

"Why, you see, my dear sir," said Ryeacroft, drawing his chair close to Powell's, and assuming one of his best aspects of mystery—"Hist! what was that?" looking cautiously round the room. "I hope that no one is present but ourselves."

"I hope—I believe so too," replied his terrified listener, not daring to look behind him, lest his eyes should encounter the apparition of a wicked lord of the Wrekin, who was particularly believed to haunt the deserted mansion-house.

"I fancy, Master Ryeacroft, it was only the wind which shrieks to-night."

"Well, sir, it might have been; but as I was about to remark—when engaged in this little business, I am obliged to be extremely careful, since the White Art has determined enemies in those wicked spirits who are sole agents in the Black Art, and who are sure to trouble me whenever they discover that I am employed in the transmutation of metals. Nay, such is their boldness, that they sometimes intrude upon me in the form of my most familiar friends; and had you, sir, happened to have been other than you seemed by your voice, you could not have withstood *Dubastion theologists*. But it is not interruption from the spiritual world only which I have to fear when at my profitable studies, but as there is as much magic in the art of making gold as there is in the shining metal itself when it is made, I can only undertake the employment under certain conjunctions and influences of the planets; and should mortal shadows cross the heavenly houses, the dominant spirits are offended, and my power lost for the space of seventy hours."

This absurd jargon, which was relished by Powell

*Good neighbor—a respectful term for the fairies.

in exact proportion to its unintelligibility, so exalted Tony in his credulous hearer's estimation, that after gazing at him for some minutes in silent awe, he ventured to inquire whether so wise a man could not teach him some secret whereby to insure good crops and sound cattle in future.

"To say the truth, sir," replied Ryeacroft, "I have long been thinking of you in this very matter; for, admiring Madge Powell as I do, I cannot unmoved behold adversity overtake her father; and if I have hitherto, when I knew the means of assisting you lay in my power, held my peace, attribute such conduct to my motives but indifference and unkindness. Perhaps I might dread the charge of impertinent interference in family affairs, which did not concern me; or perhaps I might be aware of certain conditions, which of necessity I must impose upon him whose fallen fortunes I desired to raise, and which would unhappily seem, in his eyes, to compromise the disinterestedness of my heart."

"Conditions! You mean my daughter's hand! By all that's holy, she shall be yours!" exclaimed Powell, in ecstasy; "and to tell the truth, Tony, it was this very matter which brought me here to-night!"

"Indeed!" answered the wily Ryeacroft; "why, to be candid in return with you, I am not now so anxious about Madge, after her decided rejection of me. But come—my conditions are simply these: that you make over all your property to her whom I once loved; or rather draw up an instrument which shall cause the revenue of your farm to revert, upon your decease, to him who shall then be her husband."

"It shall be done!" cried Powell, in raptures.

"What next?"

"If you can certainly assure me of the performance of this condition—"

"I can—I do."

"Then listen to what I am going to communicate: You are aware," he continued, "that Satan, (*Dubastion theologists!*) as Prince of the Air, is entrusted with the sole command of all tempests, winds, frosts, blights, &c., which, falling upon the earth, injure its fruits and cattle. This power, then, ought, as far as is allowable, to be conciliated; and, if he is not, his vengeance is fearful upon the presumptuous mortal who insults him by disregarding his supremacy. In Scotland, therefore, it has been, from time immemorial, a sensible custom to set apart a small portion, as a rood or two, or half an acre of arable ground, as an offering to the evil spirit, whom, for fear of offending, they designate by some friendly title, as good man, good fellow, &c.; this portion, which is left uncultivated, and with certain ceremonies in which I am competent to instruct you, consecrated to the demon, is termed the 'Goodman's Croft,' in plain English, 'Fiend's Field.' Now, Mr. Powell, it has struck me that the late extraordinary losses of a man hitherto so thriving as yourself, can only be referred to your want of respect towards the dark power, who, perceiving you adding acre to acre, purchasing this field, and enclosing that portion of stony, sterile, waste land, without setting apart so much as half an inch for himself, has resented the neglect you best know how."

"Nothing more likely," answered Powell.

The advice consequent upon this communication was, that Howison should enclose a fresh portion of common—not the old worn ground—and that there should be an annual sacrifice of a black hen and a sheep's heart pierced with pins, in the croft at midnight. The ceremonies of the consecration Master Ryeacroft was to arrange at his leisure.

Powell then took his departure, sincerely thankful and marvelously enlightened; repeating incessantly, during his dreary homeward walk, (as far as he could count the syllables,) the mysterious exclamation to which the alchemist had attached so magical a meaning.

Madge Powell and George Bennett now saw with despair that their hopes were to be frustrated by avarice on one side, and craftiness on the other; and, while they felt themselves the victims of Ryeacroft, they knew that Powell was his dupe. Madge, however, who still retained, in spite of her father's sordid feelings, some little influence over his hard heart, gained, by tears, entreaties, and other all-prevailing female arguments, the respite of one entire year before her dreaded union with Ryeacroft; for, as Powell could not help acknowledging, there was some reason in her observation, that he would have an opportunity by that time of proving for himself whether Tony had actually ensured to him the promised prosperity.

It was the evening of the 31st of October, the celebrated vigil of All Saint's Day—more familiarly known, perhaps, as the Scottish and Irish Hallowe'en—when Powell, after frequent conferences with Tony Ryeacroft, proceeded to act for, and by himself, according to the adept's instructions. He had lately enclosed a considerable portion of the Wrekinwold, lying at a distance of about three miles from his home, and behind some of the highest of the hills. The Fiend's Field, a full and fair acre of this acquisition, was situated at its extremity, and was upon this auspicious evening to be consecrated.

Powell, who had invited a party of his daughter's young friends, George Bennett and Ryeacroft among them, to burn nuts, and try charms with her, drank deep potations of strong ale; and, at a signal given by Ryeacroft, soon after the clock had struck eleven, wrapped himself in his great frieze coat, took down his mossy, oaken cudgel, and sallied forth—joked, of course, by his juvenile guests, who asserted that he was going to dip his shirt-sleeves in the fairy spring beyond the hills.

Headless of their jests, Powell went on his way, but with an exceedingly heavy heart, thus to quit a warm fire-side, blythe company, and excellent cheer, for a long, dreary, and cold walk over the Wrekinwolds—the wind howling, the rain falling in sullen, heavy drops, the night dark as death, and such a night, too! the witching hour of all the year, and its witching hour so near! And what was he going to do? unto whom to offer sacrifice? To be sure he did it but as a mere piece of foolish formality, to please Ryeacroft; there could be nothing sinful in such a frolic, more than in those simple charms in which he knew, at twelve o'clock, all the gay youths and maidens at the Grange would be engaged.

Thus alternately a prey to the smittings of conscience, and the sophistries which were to heal them, and frequently, whistling, singing, and repeating aloud the efficacious scrap of magical lore taught him by Tony, Powell contrived to find his way across hilly, arable, and waste lands, to his new territory. The walls of an old stone building, of which the country people could give no satisfactory account, stood in the portion fenced off for the Fiend's Field.

Home believed it to have been a Catholic chapel, dedicated to St. Hubert, the hunter's patron, and thence termed Hubb's House on the Hill; some thought it an ancient watch-tower, while others, referring its origin to the Romans, thought they displayed an extraordinary share of erudition by the conjecture.

All, however, agreed that it had been for ages the resort of fairies, apparitions, and witches, who held an annual festival on the Wrekin, though on what night of the year no one could positively say, since no person had ever yet been found sufficiently courageous to watch in and about Hubb's House in order to effect so important a discovery.

The recollection of these traditions by no means tended to raise the sinking spirits of Powell, whose teeth fairly chattered with affright, and whose limbs almost failed him as he groped his way into the building, where Ryeacroft had assured him he must offer the propitiatory sacrifice. The slightest degree of fear was to be deprecated, as liable to incense the being whom he came to conciliate; a circumstance that added to his trepidation.

Terror and fatigue, occasioned by the pace at which he had walked to reach the ruin ere the stroke of midnight, caused him to sink almost exhausted upon the ground; but, recovering, he took from his pocket a tinder-box and matches, struck a light, and set fire to a previously prepared pile of furze, sticks, and faggots, mingled with turf, damp earth, and stones, in order to prevent its immediate combustion. Then, taking from a niche in the ruined wall, the black hen and the heart, brought for this sacrifice during the day by Tony and himself, he cast them upon the blazing altar, meaning to utter an invocation taught him for the occasion, when, unluckily, out slipped by mistake the more familiar phrase, whose significance, according to Ryeacroft, was—"Demon, avant!"

Immediately a burst of wild, deriding laughter, so loud that it shook the walls of the crazy building, and seemed echoed and re-echoed by every stone, saluted the ears of Powell, and this had no sooner subsided, than a voice, whose tone seemed to freeze the very blood at his heart, exclaimed:

"Pool! *Paspasra iconathem dentemastion*, thou would'st say. Wherefore am I summoned?"

The white, curling smoke which had, upon the firing of the combustible altar, rolled in gross, suffocating volumes, around the narrow area enclosed by the ruined walls, having found a vent through the roofless tower, as through an ample chimney, now rose majestically upwards in a dense, white column, mingled with bright streams of ascending flame; so that Powell was clearly enabled to discern, standing before him, a black and gigantic apparition, whose dusky countenance was stern and sorrowful, and whose glittering eyes, illumined by the reflection of the burning materials, glowed like living fires.

At length, in faltering tones, Powell gave utterance to the lesson he had studied.

"I, a poor fortune-fallen mortal, have summoned thee, in order to crave for the future fruitful crops and sound cattle; is my sacrifice accepted?"

"Art thou ready," interrupted the power, gloomily, "to fulfill the terms agreed upon by our trusty servant, Anthony Ryeacroft?"

The mortal bowed his assent, for terror had sealed his tongue.

"Thy sacrifice is accepted, then," pronounced the demon; "see that thou fail not in thy compact, lest when we meet again—for we shall meet again—"

"I know it!" groaned Powell; "upon this same night next year, we shall—"

At this moment the distant church clock slowly chimed twelve; the blazing altar suddenly became extinct; a hollow, rushing sound echoed through the ruin, and Powell, half frenzied, darted from its shelter.

Wild, wet, and haggard, at about ten minutes to one, he entered the Grange; his guests were gone, and Madge, beside a cheerful fire, was awaiting her father's return in a mood as cheerful, ready to jest with him upon his secret expedition; but when he rushed in with the wildness of a maniac, and sat with staring eyes fixed on the fire, without uttering a syllable, the poor alarmed girl could only ask him in broken accents, what he had done, and what he had seen.

At length she placed in his damp, cold hand a glass of mulled ale; and, a little refreshed, he replied to her remonstrances:

"Go to bed, child—to bed, I say; but remember your father in your prayers, for he may never pray again."

And, so saying, he left his terrified daughter to muse upon and mourn over the dreadful meaning of his words.

During the ensuing year it was singular that Powell had not the slightest occasion to complain of a bad season, scanty, damaged crops, or diseased cattle. He and Ryeacroft lived upon terms of extreme intimacy, while George Bennett and Madge still continued, though more covertly than heretofore, their affectionate intercourse; but some rumors getting abroad that Powell, having entered into a compact with the evil power, had consecrated to him that acre of his estate in which stood the old haunted chapel of St. Hubert, the inhabitants of Wrekinwold, though not, as was hinted at the commencement of this tale, the most virtuous peasantry in existence, looked coldly and askance upon him, taking credit to themselves for superior sanctity, because they had not fallen so deeply into the gulph of perdition.

The marriage of Ryeacroft and Madge was fixed for the first of November succeeding that in which the sacrifice was consummated; consequently the anniversary of the event, which was to be observed with similar ceremonies, fell upon the vigil of All Hallowes, and of her bridal. A larger party than that which had assembled at the Grange the year preceding was now met for the double purpose of celebrating the rites of the "spiritedly" Hallowe'en, and the approaching marriage of so universal a favorite.

When Madge beheld her father depart, as he had done exactly a twelvemonth before, on his mysterious nocturnal errand, she strove to detain the guests, conjecturing that his second ramble would not be longer than the first. One o'clock, however, struck, and the rustic company rose to depart; the rival lovers, only, perceiving her anxiety for her father, would not quit her. Ryeacroft pressed her much to retire to rest, urging that as she must rise early in order to prepare for a ceremony, which was to take place at eight o'clock, she needed repose.

His entreaties were replied to in a tone of bitterness, which with Madge was very unusual; and, after an apology from Ryeacroft, for having offended unintentionally, the trio maintained a gloomy silence, anxiously listening for the steps of Powell. But nothing stirred to interrupt the awful stillness which

began to oppress the hearts of the waiting party like a weight, save the dropping embers and the unwearied click of the clock.

The hour of two at length struck, louder, each fancied, than it ever had done before; and Madge, bursting into tears, exclaimed:

"I will wait one hour longer for my father, and if he does not come then he shall be sought, for I am sure harm has come to him!"

She described his agitation upon his return—the Hallowe'en past—from his nocturnal expedition, which she now declared was undertaken for unholy purposes, adding:

"And now that we are on the subject, do tell me, Master Ryeacroft, what my poor father meant by purchasing a piece of land which still lies fallow, and which it seems he never intends to cultivate?"

Tony refused to afford her the slightest information, and his companions witnessed with surprise the ashy paleness of his countenance, and a perplexity, perturbation and terror, which all his efforts at ease and self-possession were insufficient to conceal. He had frequent recourse to some brandy, which, with the remains of the All-Hallowmass supper, still stood on the table; and, at last, overcome by the frequency of the application, he fell into a profound slumber.

"Were it not," said Madge, "for my uneasiness respecting my father, I could laugh at the unwholesome figure of that reprobate, and at the trick we have played him. Ah, George! how strangely surprised he will be to-morrow when I declare in church—Mark! I did you not hear a noise?"

Nothing, in fact, was stirring, yet Madge unfastened the door of the house nearest the road by which she knew her father must return, and looked out.

It was a clear, frosty, moonlight night, but no Powell appeared; and as the hour passed without his arrival, Bennett began, like poor Madge, to forebode the worst. So insistent that she should retire, and suffering Ryeacroft to remain where he was and sleep off the effects of the brandy, he set forth alone in quest of the unhappy Powell.

Madge threw herself upon her bed in her clothes, and having for another hour prayed as fervently as she had wept bitterly, sunk exhausted into a kind of doze, that might be termed stupefaction rather than repose. From this state she was aroused by a violent rapping at her chamber door. It was now full daylight, though the morning was cold and cloudy.

"Madge, my dear girl, for heaven's sake come here!" exclaimed George, as he still knooed and lifted in vain the latch of the bolted door. This was followed by a low, deep hum, as of the mingling of voices in consternation and sorrow. With trembling hand Madge unfastened the door, and drawing her gently from the chamber, George endeavored, in a tender and soothing tone, to prepare her mind for the fatal tidings.

"Oh Heavens!" cried the distracted girl, "my father—my poor father—is then no more! Speak! is it not so? And Ryeacroft is his murderer?"

"Hush, dear Madge, hush! I may not without cause thus put any man's life in jeopardy. Ryeacroft, suspicious as is his flight from Wrekinwold, was, as you know, sitting with us when this lamentable accident befel your father, whose body I found at some distance from here, bearing, as you will perceive when you have sufficient firmness to look upon it, every indication of having been destroyed by gunpowder, or something like it."

A neighbor now entered, panting for breath. He brought tidings that Hubb's House was totally demolished—no one stone being left upon another! That fragments of the building were strewn about Goodman's Croft, and the fields near it, and that all were blackened and burnt, as if the place had been destroyed by an explosion.

"How singular it is," observed Madge, looking up through her tears, after an hour or two had elapsed, "that neither my unhappy parent nor Anthony Ryeacroft should be here on this eventful morning to learn that I became your wife three months ago!"

The opinion now entertained was, that Ryeacroft had endeavored to secure immediately that wealth for which alone he desired the heiress of the infatuated Powell; and that only a few hours previous to the marriage, when she might fancy that nothing could delay it, luring his luckless dupe, under superstitious pretences, to a lonely and shunned ruin, in the middle of the night, he there accomplished his destruction; having instigated him to light a pile of combustible materials which contained, unknown to his victim, a quantity of gunpowder.

The rustics of Wrekinwold, however, tenacious of the superstitions of their day and country, affirmed that as Powell failed to perform the promise, his daughter being already married, the evil one had thought proper to carry off the soul of the unfortunate man in a tempest of fire and sulphur, leaving behind, to ensure the destruction of Ryeacroft, the blackened and mangled corpse.

Ryeacroft was, in the course of a few days, apprehended and securely lodged in Shrewsbury jail. Being convicted upon another serious and singular charge, he was sentenced to suffer the extreme penalty of the law. An execution having been levied upon the rich Tony for debt, among his other property were found certain instruments, engines, utensils, metals and metals, which clearly proved him to be long to a gang of coiners, for whose apprehension the magistrates of Shropshire had long been on the alert. He refused to betray his accomplices in "the divine art of transmutation;" and to the last persisted in denying, with the most solemn asseverations, any implication in the murder of Powell, save that which had unhappily accrued to him by the fatal termination of a mere youthful frolic, got up, he affirmed, for the purpose of obtaining a wealthy alliance, and of creating a profound idea of his own knowledge and power.

Leaving this mysterious subject still in darkness, thus died the crafty Ryeacroft. But for some years after the catastrophe of our story, it was a tradition current among the inhabitants of Wrekinwold that annually, upon the eve of All Saint's Day, those who happened to cross the site of Hubb's House at midnight, would behold the apparition of Powell; an elderly man, who appears with useless labor to be gathering and piling up visionary stones, which sink down and disperse as soon as collected. Should the startled wanderer on the Wrekin take courage to ask the phantom who he is, and what he is doing, he will civilly and sadly reply:

"Friend, go thy way, and heap not up riches which thou knowest not who shall inherit. Beware, I say, of the chaff which fitteth away at the breath of the least wind, even as thou perceivest these stones do, wherewith I strive forever and forever to erect an altar to the Goodman of the Croft, and from which I labor through everlasting years—but in vain—to clear the field of my great master—the Fiend!"

begin to oppress the hearts of the waiting party like a weight, save the dropping embers and the unwearied click of the clock.

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Religion, Politics, and Socialism.

Sunday Morning, May 20th, 1859

REPORTED FOR THE BANNER OF LIGHT, BY T. J. ELLINWOOD.

human mind, the bondage of doubt and fear, the purpose to open up, to the extent, the causes of bondage which are active in our mind, and have come under my own notice, and which are living influences now. My remarks will be rather a discussion of what I have seen, than an abstract discussion. What, then, are some of the causes which act to produce religious distress and spiritual bondage among men? There are several of these causes which come under the general head of False Conceptions as to what Religion is.

First, a great mistake as to what religion is, is the occasion of stumbling and distress, and of spiritual bondage. There are some men who teach, and many who understand, that religion is a sudden, an instantaneous, distinctive experience of moral power—a kind

If, on the other hand, when I inquire concerning them, I find that they were daily life of a man, people say of him, "If there ever was a man who tried to govern himself by a law of his own kindness, and who revered God, and loved men. I think he is one?" and if, when I ask the man himself, he says, "When were you converted?" he says "I do not know?" and if I say that I ever was converted, sir, I never was aware of any transition point between my old darkness and unbelief, and my present light, and faith. I did not understand, as I do now, I did not know what was going on. I was wrought in me. It seems as though what had been developed in me in such a way as to be imperceptible to my own recognition. I do not think I have been converted, for I have not passed through any remarkable experience, by which I am enabled to fix upon the day or the hour when I met with a change in my feelings?"—if, when I inquire concerning a man's daily life. I receive such accounts of his character from friends, as that, when I ask him about his own conversion, he makes some statement, which I cannot believe, I believe him to be a Christian, although he is unable to give the date when he became one. Let a man feel every day and hour that his life is governed by a spirit of benevolence, and he need not trouble himself to be able to give the time when he got religious. The date is of no account, if the life is only right.

A third class of churches place the evidence of religion in the proper observance of the elements of

be taught to our children, to members of our church, and to the community. I do not object to a body of divinity—if it

[illegible]