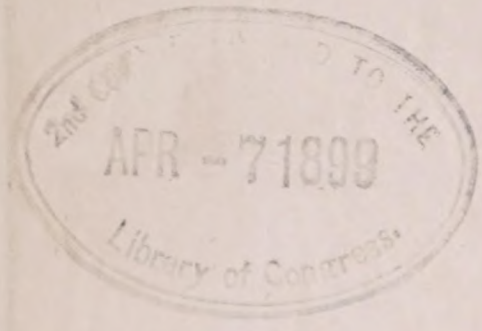
A MATTER OF BUSINESS

WILLIAM CURTIS STILES



A Matter of Business

And Other Stories

BY

WILLIAM CURTIS STILES

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PREFACE.

The writing of these little stories has been to the author a matter mostly of literary recreation. By the nature of them they have not been results of any research. The most that may properly be claimed for them, perhaps, is a tendency to impress some helpful lessons. The story that gives the volume its title does not profess to any technical knowledge of business as it is conducted to-day. The instances mentioned in the talks of Mr. Ray are actual however, though it may be doubted if they are the most flagrant adducible by any means.

It will probably be discerned by the reader that situations in life as it really is, do not eventuate as in the story. That is merely to say that literature is more ideal than experience. I only think such results as I have pictured in the endings of my stories are the things that *ought* to come about.

As the publishers have supposed that these stories are deserving the more permanent form in which they here appear, I have gained the courage to hope they may be interesting and acceptable to those who chance to read them.

Stonington, Conn., 1899. W. C. S.

FRONTISPAGE.

We want practical religion to go into all merchandise. It will supervise the labeling of goods. It will not allow a man to say that a thing was made in one factory when it was made in another. It will not allow the merchant to say that watch was manufactured in Geneva, Switzerland, when it was manufactured in Massachusetts. Practical religion will walk along by the store's shelves and tear off all the tags that make misrepresentation. It will not allow the merchant to say that is pure coffee, when dandelion-root and chicory and other ingredients go into it. It will not allow him to say that is pure sugar when there are in it sand and ground glass.

When practical religion gets its full swing in the world, it will go down the street; and it will come to that shoe-store, and rip off the fictitious soles of many a fine-looking pair of shoes, and show that it is pasteboard sandwiched between the sound leather. And this practical religion will go right into a grocery store; and it will pull out the plug of all the adulterated syrups, and it will dump into the ash-barrel in front of the store the cassia-bark that is sold for cinnamon and the brick-dust that is sold for cayenne pepper. And it will shake out the Prussian blue from the tea-leaves, and it will sift from the flour the plaster of Paris and bone-dust and soap-stone; and it will by chemical analysis separate the one-quart of water from the few honest drops of cow's milk, and it will throw out the live animalcules from the brown sugar.—*Talmage.*

A MATTER OF BUSINESS.

CHAPTER I.

BY LYING.

THERE was a time when nobody seemed to have a doubt about the high character and standing of the Lithgow house. The business had descended from two or three generations of Lithgows, and they had all of them been members of the First Church, and men of reputation for integrity in business.

It was merely the interpolation of a different ideal of business that at last impeached this standing in Jacques City. One cannot say how those uncomfortable intrusions began. But there came a time when methods of doing business that had never been questioned in the experience of the elder Lithgows began to attract attention and invite criticism. Let us say that it is the toning up of conscience in the breath of a new Christian demand for actual righteousness.

Mr. Ben Lithgow and Mr. Alcott Lithgow, brothers, and sons of Alcott Lithgow senior, who had retired, carried on the largest dry goods trade, with general branches that nearly made their place a department store, in the whole region of Grand River Valley in—never mind the state. They had associated with themselves a younger man, in fact a very young man, who had shown superior abilities in the knowledge and handling of fabrics. His name was Theodore Mack, and he also was an active member of the First Church.

The subject of Christ before Pilate happened to come in course before the Sunday-school of the First Church, and the same subject was treated in the pastor's evening address. Mr. Ben Lithgow was the sagacious and successful teacher of the largest class of young men in that large school.

"Pilate was not only a coward," said he to his class that Sunday, "but he was dreadfully short-sighted. As a mere matter of policy he could not afford to yield to the clamor of that mob. As a mere matter of policy it could not pay him to deliver Jesus up."

Mr. Markham, the young principal of the high school, suggested that he ought to have done right in the case, policy or no policy.

"Very true," said Ben, "but it would be worth a good deal to us all if we could learn that it pays to do exactly right. It would have been worth more to the stability of Pilate's reign if he had sent for a company of soldiers, and if he had said to that mob, 'As this man has done nothing he shall be protected. Touch him at your peril.' A lesson of that kind, not compliance, is what every mob needs. It was the right thing to do, and therefore it would have worked well."

"I am afraid your principle will not be very soon applied to politics and business," answered the principal.

And curiously enough he remembered at that very moment certain advertisements bearing the Lithgow name that he had himself tested to his cost, by the purchase of some of the offered bargains. But he did not dwell on the thought. He, with the whole community, had learned to discount advertisements.

"Pilate thought he could lay the blame on the Jews," said one of the class.

"Yes, and that," replied Ben, "was the most foolish and wicked part of the proceeding. And it is an attempt that has persisted. The most difficult thing in public affairs to-day is to fix responsibility. The mayor

lays the wrong to the chief of police, the chief to the courts, the courts to the peculiarity of the law. Among them all, official wickedness gets its chance and escapes consequences."

Again the principal thought of the great establishment on the corner of St. George and Cedar Street. He wondered if Ben would apply his reasoning about Pilate to the store and its affairs.

But Ben Lithgow was quite sincere in his views about Pilate, and was aware of the reputation which he had to maintain in Jacques City as a man of Christian integrity. Nevertheless he was sharp enough to be a casuist, and would have found several arguments at hand, had anyone actually challenged him to apply his own reasoning to the conduct of his store.

On that same Sunday Mr. Theodore Mack taught the Pilate lesson to his class of boys. The course of the discussion with them ran to the question of lying. One of his class asked if it would ever be right to lie.

"It would never be right," answered Mr. Mack. "But it might sometimes be excusable. As, for instance, if it were to save a man's life. Nothing would make it right, however."

"Doesn't one have to lie in business sometimes?

I've heard that you can't do business without lying a little," said another.

"I don't do business on that principle myself," said Mack, with a flush in his face.

"Do you believe a man can succeed in business and always tell the exact truth?"

"If a Christian man doesn't tell the exact truth, what shall we say of his Christianity? To lie merely to make one's money is to act Pilate over again. He did wrong because he thought it was to his advantage."

"Don't most business men lie about their goods?" asked another.

"Some do. I should be sorry to think they are the majority," answered Mack. "As for me, if I can't get money without lying I will never get money. But I don't believe lying ever pays in the end. It doesn't if God rules the world."

This Pilate lesson had a singularly earnest consideration that day among the members of the First Church. Mr. Ben Lithgow remarked to Rev. Donald Foss, the pastor, as they walked home from the evening service, that the lesson had afforded a splendid opportunity to bring out the duty of professing Christians in matters of truth and courage. Abstractly, he re-

joiced in this occasion. He knew he had ability in teaching, and felt sure he had rendered good service to the cause of righteousness.

It was curious, in view of all this, that his very first experience on Monday at the store should be by way of an application of his teaching in a very practical and unexpected form.

The cold season was going by, and there was an opportunity in the trade to offer a stock of cloaks at a mark-down price. They were advertised in the taking manner that had made the announcements of Lithgow Bros. & Mack notable in the region. On this particular Monday, quite early, Mrs. Pendleton, who was a very good customer, came to the great store to get a first choice of the bargain. Young Paul Carroll happened to be the clerk that undertook to show her the cloaks. Carroll was president of the Endeavor Society of the First Church. He was known by Mr. Mack especially as a young man of promise in the store and in the community. Without any pretensions to smartness, he had a faculty of attention and of memory that, with his Christian fidelity to duty, made him a valuable clerk in the store.

"I like this one," said Mrs. Pendleton, surveying

herself in one of the cloaks. "How can you sell them at the price though? I am almost afraid to buy."

"The cloak is quite worth the money, madam," said Carroll without hesitation.

"It is made of whole skins, of course? I am particular about that. That is what the paper said."

"I cannot guaranty that," said Carroll, flushing hotly.

"But the advertisement says so. Lithgow Bros. & Mack wouldn't say so if it weren't so, would they?"

Carroll bit his lip and remained silent. Then recalling himself as he saw that his customer was taking off the cloak, he took another cloak from the pile and said,

"This cloak is of whole skins. I can guaranty it."

"But it is inferior in every way. I will think about it a little longer."

Carroll saw that she was miffed, and knew that his truth-telling, or the difference between that and the advertisement, had spoiled a trade. But he knew that he had done exactly right.

Mrs. Pendleton going out was intercepted by Ben, who greeted her with the greatest cordiality. He had seen her at the cloak stand, and so he said pleasantly,

"I trust you were able to be suited. We lose money on the cloaks but it is your gain."

Mrs. Pendleton, who was diplomatic and a well-bred woman, answered that she would think about the cloaks, and decide a little later. Ben knew, however, with the fine instinct of the trader that something had happened. He sauntered over to the cloak stand.

"I noticed Mrs. Pendleton trying on a cloak," he said to Carroll, concealing everything but a cheerful manner as he spoke.

"She didn't buy," said Carroll. "Said she might call again."

"Perhaps she didn't find a size," suggested Ben. He had a delicate, careful way of approach to everybody and Carroll could not tell that he was on a scent for the cause of the trouble.

"She found the right size, but she wanted a whole-skin cloak of this fur. There were none left."

"But this is whole skin," said Ben with confidence. Now Ben knew it wasn't, but he was resolved not to be put in the wrong by his clerk. He surmised instantly what had happened. Mrs. Pendleton had tested the advertisement and found it false. Carroll had also found out its character. But Ben was not disposed to

swerve from a business course that no one had ever questioned.

Carroll said nothing, but cast down his eyes.

"If any cloaks have gotten among the lot that are not whole skin," went on Ben, "it may have been by some mistake. But this is whole. It has Shane's mark, too. However—" He said no more but went smiling away. Carroll had not the least suspicion that he was angry. Ben was an adept in concealing his emotions.

Nevertheless, the next morning Carroll was needed in the furniture department. He thought it rather queer to be transferred. He felt certain that no one else among the clerks knew so much about fur cloaks as he did.

About Wednesday Ben incidentally remarked to Carroll that the trade was so dull the firm finally felt the need of curtailing somewhere. The next day this suggestion was repeated in a varied form. There was also a hint that it would be possible to re-organize the departments so as to get along with a smaller number of employes. Then, when pay-day came on Saturday there was a polite little note, regretting that the state of the trade compelled the firm to reduce the force, and giving him notice that after another week they

would be obliged to dispense with his valuable services.

And so naturally and so skillfully was all this done that Carroll could not find it in his heart to believe that the cloak incident had the least thing to do with it. Nevertheless, it was true that by some different distribution of the help, Lithgow Bros. & Mack were able to supply Carroll's place in such a manner that none of the friends he had in the store could really tell that there had been no reduction of the force after all.

More than this: Mrs. Pendleton being also a member of the First Church, was on good terms socially with the members of the firm. Ben was wise enough to be able to remedy the blunder—as he called it—of his clerk. He was successful enough in his explanations to induce the lady to return to the store where, unknown to herself, she got a much better bargain than she had refused. Ben had the business shrewdness to sell her the kind of cloak he had advertised, at the same price he had fixed for the pieced furs, and she got the impression, without the necessity of telling any actual lies, that the clerk had been mistaken, and that all of the offered cloaks were equally valuable. It was a slight loss to the firm, but it kept a good customer.

"What has become of Paul Carroll?" asked Mr. Mack, missing at length the well-liked clerk from the store.

"Paul made a little slip and we laid him off," said Ben.

"I don't remember to have been consulted," said Mack, a trifle sharply. "What did he do, anyhow?"

"Spoiled a trade, nearly lost us a good customer—Mrs. Pendleton."

Mack inquired into the matter closely. But Ben was shrewd enough to put the best construction on his own action. He had more than once been made uncomfortable by Mack's insistence in wishing to know all the little details of transactions in the firm.

Mack was not satisfied and went to Carroll. Carroll told him about the cloak incident, but added that he was not discharged for that matter so far as he knew.

Mr. Mack therefore went off, and on his own account went through the whole question of the cloak sale. Summing up all the things he learned, he began to be troubled and even startled. He found not less than seven distinct falsehoods in the advertisement. They were veiled, they were the common falsehoods of trade. Few of them would ever be detected. Some of them

were of a kind that, being so common, deceive no one very much. But they were falsehoods. Mr. Mack went home to his young wife, whom he found rocking to sleep their first baby.

"Now Theo, what, pray, are you scowling about? Look into this cradle now and smile, you sober man!" she said, kissing him as he came in.

His little frown vanished as he felt the warmth of the cheery place. But it came back a little later.

"It is the business, of course, dear," he said when she again charged him with the frown. "I have been thinking, and I think I shall do more than think."

"The first thing though is to tell me," said the little mother softly. "Speak it out now, and see if I don't get the frown out of your forehead, quick."

"I will, of course. Very well, I am thinking that I do not intend to get my money by lying. And I think that is settled."

"Who ever charged you with that now?" said Mrs. Mack, half ready to cry.

"Oh, no one; no one! I didn't mean to say that, either. Let me tell you." He went on and told her the whole story.

"And Paul Carroll has been turned off, without the

least doubt, because he didn't lie about that cloak. Ben doesn't mean to do wrong, very likely; but he does do wrong. It is in the business; and so many do it and have done it so long that he sees no wrong in it, I presume. But I am a disciple—a poor one, I know—of my Master; and I am bound I will do my business with Him in company or I won't do business at all. I know Ben. He won't take advice from me about moral questions. He is very skillful and brainy, but he is also very proud. If I tell him what I think of this way of advertising, he will be as pleasant about it as he always is, but he will see to it that I don't get any opportunity to work a reform at the store. He and Alcott are agreed, and they have the capital. So, now, you see the conclusion. If I want to be honest I have to get out."

"Out of the firm? O Theo!"

She did cry then. She believed—they both believed—that Mack's one great chance for future success lay in the connection he had made with the prosperous firm of Lithgow Bros.

CHAPTER II.

HE ISN'T HONEST.

ABOUT the time of the incident that we have related the plans of pastor Foss were completed for holding a succession of meetings by way of a late winter campaign. Owing to some disinclination of certain useful members to engage in a revival, the movement was not called by that name. Nevertheless the gentleman whom the pastor called in to assist, had a distinct desire to bring about a revival, of the sort that he plainly defined in his first address on Sunday morning. Before his coming Mr. Foss had carefully looked up his work in other places. He was reputed to be a man of great practical sagacity, and had been successful. His name was Ray—Rev. Milton Ray—and he was a smallish, thin-faced, pleasant-looking gentleman, without anything of the clerical air, and lacking entirely in any of the marks of a professional evangelist.

Mr. Ray came a week in advance of the meetings.

He visited pastor Foss, and spent the entire week in making himself familiar with the conditions of the church.

The first man he heard about and the member he heard about most, during this preliminary survey, was Ben Lithgow. Ben had entered into the pastor's plans from the first, and had been upon the special committee to correspond with Mr. Ray. He invited the visiting clergyman to his house, and talked over with him all the affairs of the church. He was in frequent conference with both the ministers at the pastor's house. With his brother Alcott, who was by no means so able as Ben but who held official position also in the church, Ben used his great influence to induce the young men in the town, and especially those within easy touch with the church, to plan to attend the special meetings.

In the midst of all this planning Ben was disturbed by the announcement of the junior partner that he had decided to withdraw from the firm. Mr. Mack having prepared himself to do the thing, was ready, if he had been asked, to state his reasons. But Ben and Alcott both had known for some time that Mack was not in sympathy with some of their business methods, and though the decision of Mr. Mack to retire was unex-

pected, Ben did not press him for a reason. The business relation was so definite that such a step had been provided for in the partnership contract, and Mr. Mack was able to receive his capital and current proceeds without the necessity of making an inventory.

The dissolution was announced on the very day on which Mr. Ray's meetings were to begin. Thus far Mr. Ray had scarcely heard of Mr. Mack. But Mr. Mack, too, was in his place that evening in the great vestry of the First Church. There had been a good canvass of the members, and the meetings began with a very large attendance. After the first meeting some of the influential members of the church remained to meet Mr. Ray.

"Where is Brother Lithgow?" asked the pastor when they had come together in the study.

No one seemed to know. Perhaps he had not been informed. Perhaps he had been obliged to go home early. Mr. Foss felt that it was a distinct loss to the conference.

"His judgment is excellent in these matters," he remarked thoughtfully. "And he is unusually interested."

"It is but a short distance. I'll go and see if he

can come back," suggested Deacon Park, about to start off.

"That will hardly be necessary," said Mr. Ray with some decision in his manner. "I only wished to have a little talk, that any one of you can convey to Brother Lithgow if necessary."

Pastor Foss wondered if Mr. Ray appreciated the influence and good judgment of Mr. Lithgow.

"He will be ready to co-operate in anything we wish to carry out, I am sure," said the pastor, yielding the point. "But I wish he had stayed. I know he is ready to organize the young men of his class and others for aggressive work."

"As to that, I suggest that we are not quite ready yet. We shall have to tarry in Jerusalem a little longer. Things almost organize themselves when the Spirit falls on men. My judgment is that we would better do our work for some days yet in the church. Perhaps the world will be coming here without much urgency, if we in the church get at this business in the right way."

"If we do no going out at all," said Mr. Mack, who had ventured to remain to the conference, "such preaching as we listened to this evening will do us all

good. It did bear a little hard on the sins of the church, I admit, but I believe it was the truth."

"If we don't have too much of it," interpolated Deacon Park.

"I think I shall be able to tell when we are ready to go out and invite the people to the meetings. Meanwhile the best revival we can experience will be in the church, I am sure," said Mr. Ray. "I see some things in the way already, and they must be removed before we shall be able to reach sinners outside."

Mr. Ray talked more, but he was careful not to tell what these things were that he believed to be in the way. He insisted, however, that the invitations to come to the meeting on the next evening should be limited to the membership of the church. If others came in they would be welcome, but there was to be no concerted effort as yet to bring in the unconverted masses of Jacques City.

"He may be right," said Mr. Foss to Deacon Park as they parted that night. "But I have some idea the church would be stirred up quicker by filling up the meetings with as many sinners as we can induce to come."

"Not if he is going to dress us all down like that

for a week. That better be done in private," said the deacon with a laugh.

No one ever knew the real reason for the absence of Ben Lithgow from that conference. His first impression on hearing Mr. Ray had been a disappointment. He had hoped to hear from the ideas that he had himself advanced regarding the special meetings. He had not been able to endorse the evangelist's plain speech about church members. But in the course of the evening the general tenor of the evangelist's talk, more than any particular thing he had said, began to make Mr. Lithgow feel uncomfortable. It seemed evident that Mr. Ray did not mean to utilize at present the plans that Mr. Lithgow had suggested. In his deeper consciousness Ben felt some half-conscious antagonism. It might not have arisen from Mr. Ray's failure to carry out his plans, but this probably helped. To himself he thought all the way home that the evangelist promised to prove an impracticable and over-radical teacher. Radicalism in any direction did not approve itself to Ben. He held sagacious theories of expediency, and believed that he was well acquainted with the wise ways of manipulating men. And he was sure to rate Mr. Ray down if he should prove unskillful

in working all the policies and all the machinery of the occasion.

But pastor Foss learned more about Mr. Ray and his methods the next morning, and became disturbed about the prospect. The evangelist called early and went at the matter at once.

"I recognize your office here as pastor, Brother Foss," said Mr. Ray with a pleasant smile. "I want to work to your approval and have your co-operation. That has all been said before, you know. But I have found out some obstacles, and we must remove them if I am to go on. I had a good purpose in taking a week in Jacques City first. I have been looking around."

"I hope there is nothing insuperable in the way, surely," said Mr. Foss. "Tell me frankly, if you please, what is on your mind."

"Brother Lithgow," said Mr. Ray. "He and some others."

"What? You don't mean—that Brother Lithgow—is an obstacle?"

"Yes. The largest one. There are others. But he is the chief, because he has a certain kind of influence. We shall not have any revival unless he keeps out of it."

"Aren't you making a mistake? He is one of the consecrated and intelligent men of the First Church. We should be lost without him."

"I understand how you feel about Brother Lithgow. But, pardon me, he isn't the man to lead in this work."

Pastor Foss, red in the face, began to feel that he had made a mistake in Mr. Ray. He had jumped to conclusions and had misjudged the ablest helper in the church. Unless he could be disabused of this idea the work would be in danger.

"I think you must have been somehow wrongly informed. Who has questioned Brother Lithgow's ability, or judgment, perhaps?"

"No one but myself so far as I know. Nevertheless I have no doubts about the matter. I suggest if there is to be any organizing of the young men for this work he ought to leave that to me, and to those whom I will pick out. I have two in my mind already."

"But that is Brother Lithgow's especial gift. He has more influence among the young men of the city than almost any other man."

"That is probably true—influence of a sort. Nevertheless, I cannot use him. He must be made to feel that, so far as active work is concerned, he is to remain

quiet in this campaign. I look to you to aid in this matter. For one thing, I shall offend him and make him angry before long, if he comes to the meetings. He will not show it to anybody, but if he remains at the front he will not long work in harmony with me."

"I am sure you misjudge Brother Lithgow. He works smoothly with everybody. He is the most peaceable man in the whole congregation. I know him well, Brother Ray. Why do you say these things?"

"It is my business to find out men. If Mr. Lithgow were a common sinner, outside the church, he is the very first man I would attempt to convert. If I succeeded I should then have a good many more. But being inside, and ready to be thrown at me, so to speak, I can't use him. Why not? Well, first, he isn't honest."

"That is going too far, Brother Ray. It won't do to say that in Jacques City. He stands among the highest in his integrity."

"Of course I say nothing at all outside this study, Mr. Foss. But here I have been asked to speak frankly, and I do. And being here, I repeat that Mr. Lithgow is not honest. He is a diplomat, a man of high ideals in many directions, a man who knows the finest dis-

tinctions in ethics better than a Jesuit, and a man who would find words and find modes in which to serve his own defense. I even think he has character enough to take a hurt to his pride, and repent, and do better. This is the test to which I would like to put him. But it will take more than a few weeks. He is a man capable of sophistries that deceive even himself. But I do not think it best to let the church pause and this work fail just now in order to attack and master this one man. But it either comes to that, or to driving him out of the work for the present. He may even leave this church as a result, if his better nature does not conquer."

"Leave this church! Never. If it comes to that I would sooner stop now. I do not—pardon me—I do not credit what you are saying. Mr. Lithgow, if he has a fault, would be the first one to welcome the censure of a friend about it. Have you been to him?"

"You are mistaken, Mr. Foss. He would thank me, with a tear in his eye, and he would be full of arguments to show that I was mistaken, while thanking me for my interest. He would take me by the hand when I should leave him, and assure me that I had tried to render him a service; but he would be more than likely

to make up his mind, under his smile, that I am a meddler and a radical fellow generally, whom it was a mistake to call here; and he would go on with his dishonesty afterward."

"What dishonesty? Why have you thought him dishonest? It is the first intimation I ever heard of the kind anywhere."

"Then I suggest that you do not keep your ear to the ground. Pray, do you keep run of the business methods of the house of Lithgow Brothers? What does the outside world think of them?"

"They rate the highest in the town."

"That won't do. Do they do business on the same plan with the Rosenburg firm?"

"I suppose so. The great stores have methods much alike."

"Yes. Rosenburg is a Hebrew. He is, besides, a man without great business scruples beyond maintaining a degree of reputation in the city. Very well. The advertising methods and the selling methods of the two firms are, as you say, much alike. That is to say, they scheme day and night to beat each other. The Jew has no scruples about using a page in the Sunday paper to advertise his wares; so Lithgow Brothers must

do likewise or lose, they think, in the competition. The Jew lies about his wares as much as the case will bear, and the Christian goes a little farther in order to get the trade. And the head of the Christian firm is Mr. Lithgow. He has either not developed a conscience on the subject of his advertising, or he has reasoned himself out of its influence. Now such a man may have all the reputation and substance of a high life in every other direction, but that one fly will corrupt the whole ointment. Young men know all about these tricks of the trade. They know that Mr. Lithgow uses them. They know what I have found out on two or three visits to his store; that there are fabrics advertised there as all wool that under the glass show a distinct thread of cotton twisted in the spinning with a woolen sliver in the warp. Now it is absolutely certain that Mr. Lithgow never bought that cotton thread ignorantly. He knows more about fabrics than any other man in the whole state. He knows that certain goods that one of his clerks showed me, marked at a certain number of picks to the inch, is four picks coarser under the glass when you count them. He knows that some of the gloves in his boxes marked "a Paris" and sold for imported, are made in Fourteenth Street, New York;

and that certain buttons bearing a foreign mark are made in Medford, Massachusetts. He knows that every clerk in his store, every day of the year, does more or less lying, some of it mild, and some of it done in entire ignorance, but lying still. Now do you suppose others do not know this, too? Very well. What influence for upright righteousness, in the long run, can Mr. Lithgow have with young men? He might have some, with those who do not think of these things, but I could not ask the blessing of my God on this work if I put it or any branch of it into his hands. I have been here but a week and you have lived here three years; but, pardon me, I think nevertheless that I know considerably more about some of your people than you do. And, privately, I will tell you that the things I have been whispering to you constitute the reason for Mr. Mack's withdrawal from the Lithgow firm. I learned that, too. Brother Mack, so far as I can tell, now, is the man to lead the young men when we begin aggressive work—if we do."

During this quiet, serious but decisive talk, pastor Foss sat staring in dead astonishment at the evangelist. He began to have more respect for this quiet, practical man from that moment.

"I suppose it is common to all the business houses

to do such things," he said after a pause. "I have never given the thought to it that I ought, I suppose. But if these things are so—well—what ought to be done? Brother Lithgow is one of the leaders in the church. It will not be easy to shelve him."

"I think it may be very easy. That does not trouble me. But what he may do troubles me. He influences the church. The outside world I could manage all right. But if he drops out we shall have difficulty in keeping the united interest of the others."

"What do you propose, then?"

"To go ahead and do the work with those who will do it. I have counted up. I can tell who will stand by."

"The deacons, of course."

"Not one of them. But they will be liable to come in later, after the thing succeeds. Deacon Park is in the same boat with Mr. Lithgow. He is in trade, and he competes with the weapons of the sinner. I have been sampling his goods also."

"And these men are the lights of the church, too!"

"Exactly. But there is no reason for discouragement in that. It merely means that they haven't been toned up to the key of a higher life. They will all come

up a little later. The commercial standard is low and they go down to it. It is coming to be higher, and they will all be glad to tone up with it. But who is to do the toning up, Brother Foss. The Jew? That isn't our hope. We can't expect commercial righteousness unless these men who, like Brother Lithgow, belong inside the church of Christ, make the beginning."

"But is it necessary to compel our meetings, and the success of this movement, to wait on such issues? Isn't it better to go as far as we can, and use Brother Lithgow's influence for whatever he is fitted to do?"

"That is the matter with the church," said Mr. Ray with energy. "It has lost somewhat the power for revivals, because of that course. So long as God left us blind to these things—'the former times of this ignorance God overlooked'—perhaps we could go on working with men who were not altogether straight in their business. But I tell you a new light is come, and the world itself is thinking new thoughts about business methods. We may not have any revival, Brother Foss, but we may do more good by these meetings than we should if we had one."

But Mr. Foss felt, notwithstanding his conviction that the evangelist was right, that the plans he had laid

for these meetings were already far on the way to defeat.

"Brother Mack, of whom you speak," he said in a somewhat discouraged tone, "is a good young man, but he has very little influence. He is, in fact, regarded as somewhat visionary in his ideas about church matters. Now that he is out of the Lithgow house he stands for less than before in the community. To drop Mr. Lithgow and attempt to work through Mr. Mack—well, it looks to me like a doubtful generalship. But I will think over what you have said and see you again to-morrow."

Mr. Ray went off with a smile on his face, thinking that perhaps the way was a little clearer to the ends he had in view.

"At the house of God—it must begin there," he said to himself as he walked down the street.

CHAPTER III.

MR. RAY'S INSTANCES.

IT was not long before it began to be whispered by the members of the First Church that their special meetings were not succeeding as they had hoped. And one said to another that Mr. Lithgow seemed to have lost his interest in them all at once. The church members were urged to come faithfully to the services, and both Mr. Ray and the pastor carefully explained that it was intended to confine the attendance chiefly to the people of the church for the first week at least. Private meetings for prayer were held every afternoon after the first day, to which personal invitation was extended to such persons as the evangelist named.

Pastor Foss, who seemed to have the alternative left him of adopting the methods of Mr. Ray or abandoning the meetings, had reluctantly fallen in with these methods. The effort to bring out the church membership was fairly successful, and the representative

men and women of the church were in their places. After two or three nights of Mr. Ray's peculiar preaching curiosity began to be stirred and a larger number came. By Friday evening the large vestry was well filled.

Ben Lithgow was present every night, being wise enough not to show any resentment he might have felt at being so abruptly dropped out of the counsels of the evangelist. But what he heard rankled deeply in his mind. Instead of the ordinary appeals to the church in behalf of a spiritual life, and exhortations to pray for the meetings and bring in the sinners to be converted, he heard a radically different story. He felt surer every night that he ought to rate the evangelist down as a radical, and also as a man without deep spiritual culture. "Spiritual culture" was a favorite idea with Mr. Lithgow. When he heard incidentally that it was Mr. Ray's idea to work first with the church, he commended it, and remarked that the church needed toning up in spiritual things. But he hardly thought Mr. Ray was the kind of a man to accomplish this work, though he was discreet enough to refrain from saying so. But as the week went on he could not forbear from gently expressing his wonder here and there at the

methods of the meetings. They seemed like anything but revival meetings. For one thing, there was in them neither prayer nor song. The evangelist, coming in every night at precisely a quarter before eight, went into the desk and began reading and expounding the Scriptures. From that on for an hour, the applications of the Word to the life of the Christian and to the offices and opportunities of the church were made in a most unpretentious fashion, in a voice seldom raised above the conversation pitch. But, strangely enough, these talks began to tell on those who listened. There was a reserve of intensity and a directness of sincerity in Mr. Ray that could not be escaped. Nevertheless, what he said did not commend itself to the judgment of Mr. Foss, nor to a considerable number of the most influential members of the church. The pastor said it was true enough but probably impracticable—and Mr. Ray knew very well what the pastor's judgment was.

"These outside matters are not very well intended to promote a spiritual revival," declared Deacon Park. "I wonder what the man is up to anyway. Does he expect to make saints of all of us before he does anything else?"

"If he can do us good perhaps that is as well as to

do some other people good," said old Brother Watson, a poor but wise old Christian who overheard this remark. Brother Watson was human enough to be glad somebody was getting hit.

And it was apparent before this week was gone that the ones who felt that they were "getting hit" were the very ones who had been most instrumental among the laymen in inaugurating the movement. But especially had Mr. Ray enunciated Christian principles of business and of the personal relations of life. He had not intended merely to "hit" somebody. But he had his mission and his idea and he was faithful to them.

On Friday evening an event that had transpired in Jacques City and that had been made public that very day, furnished Mr. Ray with an illustration that he had not expected to have. Mr. Teller, one of the heaviest merchants in the city and a manufacturer, announced himself insolvent. It was found that he had taken advantage of all the legal privileges of a bankrupt, and so effectually that his creditors were unable to realize anything considerable from his assets. It was evident that Mr. Teller had failed to his own advantage, yet nothing positively illegal could be discovered. True, his reputation in Jacques City would be something less, but he

had never been rated as a man of extremely high principles.

Now the Christian men of the First Church, conversing about the matter before the evening meeting, were well nigh unanimous in accepting Mr. Lithgow's conclusion, which he argued with all appearance of charity but very cogently, that Mr. Teller was a logical result of his own un-Christian course. He had never been inside the churches, he was notoriously worldly and atheistic, and not much better might be expected of such a man.

On this Friday evening Mr. Ray had prepared to bring to an application quite direct the principles that he had been laying down in a somewhat general fashion all through the week. Mr. Lithgow was in his seat, well back, and feeling uncomfortable—he did not know exactly why.

"I have been told that one of your merchants has failed," began Mr. Ray abruptly, not as usual opening his Bible. "It is also said that his failure is not an unexpected event to himself. Every person in Jacques City will suffer as a consequence."

He paused, the place perfectly still, and looked over the room, and especially at the corner where Mr. Lith-

gow was sitting. Every one waited in intense interest for the quiet man to proceed.

"Those who impeach Mr. Teller's honesty may forget that he is the product and fruit of a commercial system. That system will pass away whenever the principles that I have been teaching here throughout this week take possession of the Church of Christ. The Church of Christ is God's instrument for the world's regeneration. She cannot regenerate commerce from its inequalities and falsehoods unless the commerce represented by Christian merchants shall itself become honest and just."

This was getting towards close quarters. Mr. Ray relieved the strain a trifle by relating an incident in commercial life. Then he came back to his attack.

"Christian men belonging to the Church of Christ do not always do business on Christian principles. More than this, they do not always do business honestly. The merchants of Jacques City are very scarce who could throw any stones at the man whose failure is being ascribed to over-sharp methods in this town today. Why? Because his methods are, and have been, the methods of the trade. The particular sins do not matter to this point so much. But I assert that Chris-

tian men, men who are bearers of the church banner, men who stand high in her counsels, do not scruple to advertise in the papers that circulate on the Lord's Day. There may be an honest difference of opinion about the ethics of that thing. But how can men who do that stand clear as examples of Sabbath keeping? That is a question for the conscience—is a question for you all to think about."

Mr. Lithgow very nearly rose up, as if to make an answer then and there, but restrained himself, and though red in the face he would not show to others his feelings by walking out as he was tempted to do.

"Let it be answered, if you like, that the Sunday paper has come to stay—does the Christian defend it? And if he does not, who is responsible for it? How many such papers could live in Jacques City, without the advertising patronage of Christian men?"

Mr. Ray had not intended to raise this question chiefly just then. It was only preliminary to getting their close attention to another question. He told another story about a certain Sunday newspaper and then went to a larger question.

"But whatever difference there may be in our judgments about this matter that I have opened, there can

be none at all about some other standards that seem to be set by Christians in business. Here is a leading and reputable magazine for instance, announcing a contest of competition, whereby one may obtain a costly set of books. Nothing at all is said in the advertisement about the payment of money. But on sending for the particulars I learn that in order to enter this competition I am obliged to purchase another set of books almost as costly. That is a trick of the trade, the merchant will tell you. But the common man, thinking out problems from the standpoint of Christ's ethical demands, understands that it is dishonest. No standards of trade can justify it, in my eyes. Christ would not run a magazine that way, be very sure. And yet the publishers of this one are leaders in Christian work.

"One of the most prominent tradesmen in this country advertises a great encyclopedia at a very low price. His advertisement states distinctly that it is new from cover to cover. In various ways it is announced as an original work, brought down to date. What now am I to think when I open it and find that it is made from the revised plates of a cyclopedia that has been on the market for more than twenty years? Yea, more, what am I to think when it is sold on an arrangement with

one of the great denominational publishing houses? They doubtless are not responsible for that advertisement, but are they not responsible for permitting the arrangement to remain private while the public is thus cheated? And this merchant is a Sunday-school superintendent and a prominent Christian.

"What if you were to go inside the secrets of a great publishing house run by Christian men, and learn their methods. Here is one that advertises in all the magazines. In the advertisements the publisher is apparently made to say that a certain number of sets of a certain work have been 'reserved' for its readers at a special price and on special terms. But what if you were to find out that actually the only interest the publisher of the magazine or paper has in the work is merely to print the advertisement at a specified rate. Suppose the advertiser has merely taken this way to seem to get the endorsement of the paper or magazine by the form of his advertisement and no such arrangement as the advertisement states has ever been made? Now I assert that that kind of lie has been printed again and again in journals that are even professedly Christian.

"Suppose I go into a man's store and buy a garment. It is called all wool. I ask if it is all wool and get the

satisfactory answer, Suppose I discover that it was so-called merely because that is the trade name for the fabric. Has any one lied?

"Suppose a bankrupt stock of goods is advertised for sale and prices are quoted that tempt me to go and buy. Let us say even that I have received my money's worth. But suppose it happens that I discover that the bankrupt stock consists of a few goods bought for the purpose of the clearance, and the remainder of goods that the merchant had left over and wants to close out. Suppose I am not cheated; nevertheless, has not that merchant lied?"

And so on for some time Mr. Ray went on exposing some of the modern methods of business. Not a movement meanwhile was made by the audience. They were hearing things that everybody knows are true, but now they were slowly set out against the white background of Christian truth. From the subtle and thorough exposure by instances of business methods, Mr. Ray then, suddenly pausing for an instant to give force to his contrast, began to hold up the demand of the world and of our Lord upon Christians. He pictured a converted young man set down in a modern store or a great business house where such things are done. He pictured

Christ standing behind counters and desks laying down his eternal law of righteousness. And then with an apostrophe that made men weep, he called Christ out of his ancient history, and prayed him to look on all these things and say what his people ought to do, beginning at the house of God.

And then almost before any one could be sure he was done he walked out and went home. He refused to see any one that night, and no man knew what happened in his chamber, where he shut himself from human eye and alone with his Maker.

But at the church the sensation was one that had never before been witnessed there. Mr. Lithgow was full of sarcasm, and wondered if "the fellow" had ever been inside a business house. Deacon Park said openly that he was done with the meetings from that moment. And under this lead there were a good many who felt that the wind was blowing unfavorably, and that they ought to follow their leaders.

Pastor Foss, in deep despair, went home early and left them talking there.

But Mr. Mack, walking home with his wife, said thoughtfully:

"This will be a revival sure enough, dear."

"If they don't pack him off to-morrow," said Mrs. Mack dubiously.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. PENDLETON'S EXPERIMENT.

WHEN the meetings were resumed on Sunday and Monday there was a noticeable absence of the leading members. They had talked over the matter continuously, and the conservative and evidently reasonable counsel of Mr. Lithgow, Deacon Park and others whom they influenced, turned the scale against Mr. Ray and his methods. They went to the pastor of course and argued the case. Pastor Foss, between two fires and afraid that the meetings would divide the church, was equally afraid to discontinue them for the same reason. He urged the brethren to stand by and give the matter further trial, but his plea was unsuccessful.

Nevertheless the report of the talk on Friday evening had crept abroad in the town, and the evident excitement into which it had thrown the membership contributed to bring in enough outsiders to fill the places made vacant by the church brethren. Mr. Ray had ex-

pected this. He had informed Pastor Foss that the ground was now cleared, so that they might go ahead and try to win the unconverted by a different sort of preaching. This was attempted and there was a degree of success. But the antagonism of so many church members prevented any marked success and the meetings closed after two weeks more of steady effort on Mr. Ray's part. He declared before he went that it had been apparent to him from the first that no extensive revival would occur, as the church itself was not in a condition to take care of the fruits, and that his success and the success of the movement would not be seen in any immediate additions to the membership.

"Nevertheless," he said during his closing address, "I have a profound conviction that a large and mighty work has been wrought here that will affect the life of this church for years to come."

Mr. Ray went home, or to some other field, and the influential portion of the First Church settled down to the habit of speaking of the effort as an abortive one, and of Mr. Ray as a well-meaning man who evidently was not well-calculated for the kind of work the church needed to have done.

"What do you thing now of the revival, Theodore?"

asked Mrs. Mack as they prepared for the morning service on the Sunday after Mr. Ray's departure.

"I think we have had one, dear. It may not appear just yet, but the church will feel it later. So will the town, or I have not reckoned aright the power of truth."

"It was good, plain preaching anyhow. It ought to do good," assented Mrs. Mack.

"And it will. It has done good already. I have never thought as much about this matter of business honesty before; but now my mind is set thinking that way I am finding out a good many things. For one thing, I am finding out why some of the young men in my class have not come into the church. There are the Ames boys, for example. They both work for Deacon Park in his store. I drew it out of them after Mr. Ray gave that Friday night talk. They confessed that their reason was not a very good one, but it amounted to the fact that they don't think Deacon Park does business as a Christian man should. They told me some instances, too. I tell you, Mr. Ray hit the nail on the head. It seemed to me like a singular corroboration of my judgment in leaving the firm."

They went to church with this matter in their minds, and it was not entirely pleasing to them to hear a kind

of apologetic sermon from Mr. Foss that seemed intended to take off the edge of the soreness in the hearts of certain of the brethren.

Mr. Mack, meanwhile, had made arrangements to go into business on his own account. He had three thousand dollars, and could raise a little more on some real estate. He knew that he was risking it in a doubtful enterprise in the face of the wealthy and powerful house of the Lithgows, who would be likely to regard him as an especially obnoxious rival. His first move after deciding on this step was to engage Paul Carroll, whose value he knew, as his head clerk—his only clerk, in fact, for the present, so modest were his beginnings.

When Mr. Mack's first unpretentious announcement appeared in the city papers, Mr. Lithgow, who had been watching for this movement and who knew that it was coming, went over in the most friendly fashion to greet his new rival in the business. He thought he saw the end of this enterprise. He was long-headed and business-wise, and had outlived a good many small enterprises in the years he had been in business.

"I have been looking for you to branch out, Brother Mack," he said cordially. "I came over to give you my congratulations and wish you every success. Be as-

sured that the house of Lithgow will stand ready to render you every possible encouragement and assistance. We are brethren of the same church, and ought to be ready to help one another. I hope you will be free to let me know if I can be of any service."

Mr. Mack received this overture with a proper expression of gratitude. He understood that he was not large enough to be regarded as a rival. He wondered how actual business competition would affect Lithgow's view of the mutual duty of church members in business.

Ben took a quick survey of the store without seeming to do so. With his experienced eye he saw that the stock had been chosen and arranged with the taste and judgment that he knew Mack possessed, and that it had, after all, no mean and scanty appearance. He also noticed Paul at the desk, whom he greeted with a studiously kind word, congratulating him on so soon finding congenial employment. Paul's presence here made him considerably uncomfortable, however. He reflected that it would be inevitable that the cloak incident would be talked over between Mr. Mack and his former clerk.

For two months there was but a small trade at the

new store. It began to be said by the friends of Mr. Mack at the church and outside that it was a mistake for him to set up a business in the same town with the Lithgow house. It was also noted confidently that Mr. Mack did not seem to have any such faculty for attractive advertising as his great rivals displayed. His announcements were of the most matter-of-fact kind, but noticeable for entire absence of all superlatives. Mr. Mack actually avoided saying that anything he had was the best or the cheapest in the city. The announcements, however, kept on repeating the statement that every customer would be treated alike and was guaranteed a just and fair value for his money.

One day in April Mr. Pendleton happened to want some gloves, and happened to think of them as he was passing Mr. Mack's store.

Mr. Pendleton was a large manufacturer of agricultural implements, a man of the world, though his wife belonged to the First Church, and he was very wealthy.

"I think I will try Mack," he said half aloud, and at once turned into the store. He remembered that Mr. Mack was a good and quiet fellow and trying to get

on, and he had no objection to helping him to the extent of the profit on a pair of gloves.

He specified the kind he wanted.

"These are right. I always buy this make. They are better than our American gloves. How is it that they can make better gloves over there, Mr. Mack?"

"These are American," said Mr. Mack smiling.

"No—Paris. I know them well."

"They usually bear a Paris mark. I have taken off the mark from the box. You will find it inside the glove, though. I can't very well take that out, as it is printed. But they are made in New York. I have been in the factory frequently."

"Imitation, do you mean?"

"Just what I mean. But that doesn't go here. They are the same kind you will get anywhere in town under the Paris brand."

"But I don't want an imitation. I want the Paris article."

"I have some imported gloves—from Paris, too. But they are not so good as these and they cost a little more."

Mr. Pendleton looked at the gloves, and then at Mr. Mack, and then at the gloves again.

"But why don't you let the mark be? I should have felt altogether better if I had not found it out. Call them Paris gloves by all means, Mr. Mack." He laughed and laid down the price of the gloves.

"There are no false brands in this store," said Mr. Mack, quietly.

"It must be a sort of millennium place, then," said Mr. Pendleton, and went out still laughing.

The matter did not impress him greatly just then, and he was a man so constantly busy with his great manufactory that he did not think of this incident again for some days.

One morning at the breakfast table, however, he happened to hear his wife remark that she was going to Lithgow's to make some purchases during the morning.

"Better go to Mack's. He has a millennium store," said Mr. Pendleton, a little jocosely. Then he narrated the incident of the gloves, and added,

"Mack is a good fellow, though he will starve to death trying to be honest. It is an ideal, but it won't work yet. World's too blame sharp for that. However, I learned a thing or two about gloves. I've laid my plans to play that thing off on Ben when I buy any

more of his American-Paris gloves. Won't I lay him out though? I'll just tell him where the things are made."

Mr. Pendleton went to his office, and later Mrs. Pendleton, on the hint she had received, took a notion that she would really go and try the new store and patronize Mr. Mack a little as a sort of Christian duty.

When she reached the little store she was a trifle surprised to find Paul Carroll behind the counter. In an instant his face reminded her of the cloak that she had bought of the Lithgow house and of the incident that happened there.

Mrs. Pendleton was a diplomatic and shrewd woman, and spent some time making small purchases before she opened the matter on her mind. At length, having mentally organized her proceeding, she said, with an aspect of unconcern and very pleasantly,

"I saw you last at Lithgow's, Mr. Carroll. Let me see—didn't you sell me a fur cloak there?"

"No, madam. We did not happen to have any that suited you."

"True, I remember. You made some error, I think. I wanted a whole skin and—let me see—I think you said the one I wanted was pieced. But Mr. Lithgow

thought you had committed an error. I went back and bought the cloak. It was the whole skin, don't you know?"

Paul turned a little red, but made no answer to this. Mrs. Pendleton appeared not to notice his embarrassment. She was recalling the remarkable Friday night address of Mr. Ray. She had been one of the members who had felt kindly towards the evangelist.

"I hope," she said with seeming carelessness, "that the matter did not prove serious to you. I ask because I see you are out of the place. It was not long after that you got through there, I think?"

"Mr. Lithgow stated that he was obliged to reduce the force," said Paul. He would not mention to another his suspicion that had been well-nigh confirmed in his mind, that he had been discharged for refusing to misrepresent the cloak.

"There is so much that is false in business," said Mrs. Pendleton, "that I never know when I am getting cheated. How did you like Mr. Ray?"

The transition was natural enough in her train of thought, and Paul followed it instantly because he too was thinking of the things Mr. Ray had said.

"I was helped," he said simply. "I think he was right, too."

"About the business men, do you mean?"

"About business—yes."

"But my husband says no store could be run on his idea a great while. Its competitors would soon ruin it."

"Perhaps so. But it ought not to be so. It wouldn't, either, if Christians would think of it more, and refuse to trade with dishonest merchants."

"I have heard that Mr. Mack changes all his brands where they are not true. Does he, I wonder?"

"Beg pardon—but I fear he would not like me to talk of his affairs that way. But I am willing to say that there are no falsehoods tolerated or practiced in this business."

"Perhaps you still think that was a pieced cloak?" said Mrs. Pendleton, abruptly returning to her point.

"Yes, madam."

"But I have it at the house. I can show it to you if it would convince you."

"The one I showed you is almost certainly at Lithgows' still. I saw it there the day I left, and it was then time to put them back in the regular

cloak department. The sale was over for the season, practically."

"And you think I bought a different one?"

"Yes, madam."

"The price was the same."

"You are a good customer there, are you not?"

"I suppose so. I buy a good deal."

"If you got a whole skin cloak—perhaps you did—for the cut price, then the house lost money through my statement to you. But they saved more by pleasing you, of course."

"Oh! I see. But Mr. Lithgow did not say that the cloak I bought was the same one you showed me. That was what we call a 'trick of the trade' then, doubtless."

Paul was again silent. He had felt it his duty to state the facts in his own defense, but he would not pass any comment upon the transaction. He had never mentioned it to anybody except Mack.

Mrs. Pendleton went away and was thoughtful all the remainder of the day.

"I traded at Mack's to-day," she reported to Mr. Pendleton at the dinner hour. "I wonder if that kind of business ought not to be encouraged."

"Suit yourself, my love. Mack is a good fellow. If you find what you want and the price isn't too high, it is just as good as anywhere, I should say."

"But that isn't the whole of it, I think. If that young man is trying an experiment in honesty, I should suppose that people who like honesty better than they like tricks would feel a duty to help on the experiment."

"Church people especially. You folks over there at the First Church make a lot of prayers, and all that, but when it comes to trading with one of you, you have no objection to cheating the teeth out of a man's mouth. That is a kind of religion, I admit, that I don't take stock in. But if Mack has a better sort of religion to put up, I agree with you that the praying contingent ought to give him a lift. I think I will do a little trading there myself. That's merely to avoid getting imposed upon. Besides, his stock, though it is so small, is a fine one. Anybody can see that the first thing."

"Thank you, my dear. We'll try the thing and see."

Now Mrs. Pendleton was a woman who, when she started in to do a thing, could not rest with any halfway measures. She thought over and over what Mr. Ray had said, and then reflected on her husband's criticism of church members. She did not sympathize with

it, but she was sad to be obliged to confess that it had truth in it and might be supported by instances.

But perhaps a better state of things was coming as a result of Mr. Ray's visit, and perhaps she could help to hasten its coming.

The next day was the meeting of the Dorcas Society. It afforded her a good opportunity and she improved it. Mr. Mack's attitude about business falsehoods was carefully mentioned. Here and there his fine new stock of goods was commended. Suggestions as to the duty of the members to encourage this experiment in honesty were insinuated with all her woman's tact. Above all, it was made known to several people of wealth that day that Mrs. Pendleton, who was a leader and the richest woman in the church, was trading at the new store. This was the most effectual piece of business of all. There were some who might have heeded the suggestion as to the duty to encourage Mr. Mack, but there were far more who would think that they were not in the fashion unless they patronized whatever she pattronized.

The result was that within three or four weeks the new store had begun a most prosperous and lucrative business.

Its new customers included people of ample means, who were not so often found at bargain counters as some, and who were able to appreciate the well-selected stock of Mr. Mack's goods.

It was inevitable that Mr. Lithgow, on the sharp lookout for what all his rivals in business might do, should soon learn of this accession to the custom of the new store.

CHAPTER V.

TO BEAT HONESTY WITH PRICES.

IT frequently happens that the shrewdest of men, continually engaged in sharp-witted competition where the selfish motive is the common impulse of life, fail utterly in attempting to understand a completely different code of casuistry.

This happened signally in the case of Mr. Ben Lithgow. He would have smiled tolerantly and incredulously at the suggestion that Mr. Mack's growing prosperity had come about in violation of all his own practices in doing business. He understood well enough the necessity of showing a face of absolute integrity to the world, but to him it was folly and vagary to undertake business outside the lines of sharp and unswerving calculation of the competitive forces that he must meet. If the defeat of these forces meant the using of methods that his unscrupulous rivals used, up to the point of safety to the reputation of the house, he deemed that the first law of self-preservation required him to

use them. And that anybody could succeed in business and ignore these facts that he believed to be great laws of trade, was beyond his understanding. When, therefore, he saw Mr. Mack's business evidently growing, he only smiled on, and set his wits to work on the problem along the old lines.

"It is a new stock and a new place," he said to Alcott as they discussed the matter in the private office of the firm. "There is no capital behind, and I happen to know that he cannot undersell us without loss. The thing will break before the year is up."

"But meanwhile," said Alcott, "he is getting some of our best customers. Mrs. Pendleton hasn't been in this store for some time."

"There was some mistake there. But they will all be back after Mack has tried his little experiment. I am sorry for him, because it will leave him penniless when the break comes."

Alcott did not feel so sure of the break, and was more disturbed by the situation.

"I think we ought to do something about it, though. It has affected the receipts perceptibly."

"We'll give them some bargains, I think. The price will take care of trade in the end, no matter what he

does. He is probably trying to sell under cost to get our trade."

"I haven't heard it that way. I am certain we are going under him in all the main lines."

"And we have only to keep that up. That will be enough. But just for the present we might as well put out some flyers. That new stock of handerchiefs that came last night is a good thing to lose a little on. Suppose we try them."

Adopting this policy, the Lithgow house now undertook to beat honesty with prices. They put out a flaming announcement that, had Mr. Ray been around to follow it up, would have satisfied him of his wisdom in retiring Mr. Lithgow from the front in the meetings. That which was advertised was a most taking bargain, and the advertisement contained enough falsehoods to satisfy a professional politician. The handkerchiefs were set forth as a large importation direct from Lyons. The reason given for the ridiculously cheap price was that they were made in nunneries, and by persons who earned but a few cents a day at the labor. They were said to be all hand-embroidered, and the lace was of a certain rare quality.

"What about Ben's handkerchiefs?" said Paul to

Mr. Mack, when the advertisement came out and had been examined in the new store.

"We got the start of him in time, but he beats us considerably in the price," said Mr. Mack with a smile. "Here are some of them."

Mr. Mack had been alive to the movements of the trade, and had bought some of a large auction stock of handkerchiefs but a few days previously.

"Hand made?" asked Paul.

"Not a bit of it. These came from Peckham's establishment in Boston. There is a little hand-work in the corners. I will show you. This part here."

Paul examined the handkerchief and plainly saw the difference in the work.

"They were not made by nuns then?"

"Working girls, earning about sixty cents a day. It is a shame, but I can't regulate it. I wish I could."

"And the lace—that isn't according to the advertisement either, perhaps."

"Peckham's people buy the borders from a Boston house. They are American and very good too."

"How then can Ben sell them at so much lower price than we ask for them?"

"By losing money on them."

"But he says in the announcement that he is able to save a very small margin. Perhaps that is another falsehood."

"I can't say. He may have had them given to him. But after the first bid they were all sold at one price. He may have succeeded in breaking the price, where I couldn't; but my belief is that he loses two cents on every handkerchief."

Mr. Mack was not deceived in this. Ben had reckoned that he would put into this attraction not only two cents on each handkerchief, but his freights and expenses, and the cost of the announcements. This was the regular method with flyers, and was reckoned as a mere advertising expense.

The legitimate result of the announcement was realized, bringing a great number of ladies to the store, but the device did not fasten any of the people who had been recently buying at the new store. On the contrary, when it became known that Mr. Mack was selling the same handkerchiefs and plainly telling his customers where and how they were made, though he did not sell so many as the Lithgow house, the story went around and the town was not long in putting the real estimate on the flaming advertisement. The firm lost some

dollars on the sale, and Mr. Mack made money on his handkerchiefs, nevertheless.

For a time the devices of advertising and schemes of this nature kept customers coming in great numbers to the Lithgow store, and Ben felt sure that he was underselling, and beating the new house. But somehow the best people, the people of money and taste, more and more went to Mr. Mack. The result was that at the end of the summer, Ben, taking account of the whole situation, discovered that he was no longer competing with Mr. Mack, but with the cheap trade houses of the city. He was getting many of their customers, and they were sure to give character to his establishment if he should continue to bid for that kind of trade. It was certain that the people who were more and more going to Mr. Mack would not come back, nor would the Lithgow house be able to keep the better class of trade that remained to them if the store should get the reputation of being a "cheap John" establishment. More than all this, the game had not been worth the candle. They had actually lost money in the process of attempting to beat Mr. Mack by advertising bargains and falsifying in their advertising. That kind of thing had never been questioned before, but now, after six months, the

truths that Mr. Ray had burned into a few minds were slowly creating a new standard of business in the minds of a great many people, and they were people who carried weight in Jacques City.

Of course Ben Lithgow did not know he was competing against these silent forces of Christian righteousness. Less did he know that they were insinuated with the wit and enthusiasm of a woman's tongue, aided by the gossip of clubs and the tea-talk at many social tables. But the condition of his business now made him sure that there was a movement hostile to the Lithgow house. And he could not help seeing that what he was losing Mr. Mack was gaining. From one clerk and a small shop, the new business had grown until there was a force of clerks almost equal to that of the Lithgow's and Mr. Mack had taken a larger store which was yet inadequate for the business.

"I begin to think there is something the matter, Alcott," said Ben one day, as they were casting up the situation. "Mack has some kind of drawing card that we haven't seen. If we do not get at the matter soon we shall be ruined. There's money enough, of course, but the business is getting to be in bad shape. He has the cream and we are fast running to the dregs."

"That is about the size of it. You will agree with me before long that it is that evangelist that began it. That thing of abolishing all the tricks and false labels and all that, has taken hold. That is at the bottom of it, you may be sure."

"Perhaps. But I am not ready to admit it yet. If I believed it were that, I should feel sure of beating him in the long run. I tell you, the great laws of trade and the great recurring tendencies of human nature are not upset by a little flurry. It might do for an ideal state of society, but in this world people buy where they think they get the most for the least. The first law of trade is to make them think so. This house was built up on that idea. All the money we have came to father, and down to us, from carrying out that idea. It is absurd to suppose that a man can run against such deep-seated laws and succeed in the end. It must be something more. Mack himself is probably more popular than we counted on. Paul is a taking fellow, too. It was a mistake to let him go, visionary as he was. However, the thing now is to inquire what is to be done."

"We might try to buy him out, or take him back into the house. After all, the long standing of this house ought to be enough to attract him."

"And bring his methods along? It wouldn't work. If he has had success with his notions about brands and all that, it is only for some other reason that I haven't got at yet. But, as you say, he might consider it. Very likely there could be some yielding about some things. If we keep the ear of the clerks, most of the things he is notional about could be managed without setting Mack by the ears, probably."

Acting on his idea Ben cautiously approached Mr. Mack on the question of returning to the firm and combining the business.

"My ideas are such," said Mack, frankly, "that I should hardly like to be responsible for a business hereafter that I cannot wholly control. Besides, I am making some money here."

Ben did not doubt that when he looked around, especially as he saw in the store at that very moment some of his old customers who in the past had been among the best buyers of his goods

He was free in commending Mr. Mack's methods, and suggested that there would be nothing in the way of carrying them out if the partnership were re-established. But Mr. Mack was satisfied to try his experiment through. He knew that for the present he was

beating his neighbor, in spite of the tricks of advertising and the bargains to attract the thoughtless.

Ben returned and reported his failure to Alcott.

"The only thing left to do," he said grimly, "is to go on underselling. But we must do it with the kind of stocks that he sells, and lose enough in the process to make it worth while for his custom to come to us."

The Lithgow house therefore dropped the bargain announcements in the papers and, instead, sent through the mails a series of gilt-edged lithographed statements, quoting prices upon certain high class goods that Mack had been selling as specialties, so far below his rival that the sacrifice would be costly if the customers should respond. But as Ben had said, there was "money enough" in the Lithgow family to run a losing business if necessary for an indefinite time, in order to beat a competitor.

These notes went to all his old customers and were worded as a courteous invitation to the best people, suggesting an hour in the day when they would not be discommoded by the crowds at the store. This last, Ben thought, was the real attraction in the circular. It was an appeal to the exclusiveness of the "best people."

But such is the fatuity of a man in the wrong! That

very paragraph defeated him. About every person to whom this note was addressed knew that there were no large crowds going to the Lithgow store at any hour, and they with one accord, in the light of all the discussion of his methods that had been made in the past months, understood this as another of the sly and unnecessary fictions that now were understood to be a characteristic of the announcements of Lithgow Bros. There was no response from the "best people" but, on the other hand, the bargain-hunters were out in force, and the house had the satisfaction of losing a good deal of money before they found out that they had only made another blunder. It was a discouraging fight for them.

In the midst of these operations Miss Katherine Lithgow, Ben Lithgow's daughter, returned from a foreign trip where she had been studying art and music after her graduation a year earlier.

It was Katherine who at last restored the reputation of the Lithgow house.

CHAPTER VI.

KATHERINE INVESTIGATES.

KATHERINE LITHGOW possessed a share of her father's sagacity, enhanced by the fine intuitions of a cultured and intelligent young woman. She returned from Europe with the most exalted ideals, shaped at the outset in a seminary where exalted Christian standards provided the prevalent atmosphere. She was one of the fine instances of the educated American girl, independent and executive, with a nearly imperious will that, owing to her vivacious amiability, carried nothing of asperity in her manner, but asserted itself nevertheless with an ingenious persistence that was admirable.

Katherine was easily the most beautiful girl as well as the smartest one in Jacques City, and modest enough not to be sensibly conscious of that fact. Her father's wealth and standing in the town gave her an added claim to social leadership in the highest social circles, and she ruled there in a way without lording it over

anybody, rather by her own grace and beauty than by the force of these favorable antecedents.

This had been true before she went abroad, and it was certain to be the case all the more on her return, with the additional culture and tone of her traveling experience to enhance her charms.

A few days after her arrival at home Katherine drove down to the store with her buckskin ponies, accompanied by a friend. The store was a familiar place where her father, who idolized Katharine, gave her free run, and where she picked and purchased usually to her heart's content, among the goods of the great establishment.

"What a lot of new clerks, papa!" she cried, pausing at the office to fling him a little kiss through the wire guards. "Where's Paul? I looked all over for him."

Paul was a special favorite with Katharine.

"I am sorry to say Paul left us. He went with Mack," said Lithgow in some slight confusion. He did not care to say that Paul had been discharged. He had discovered that that affair was a slip of judgment and it humiliated him so that he disliked to talk about it.

Katharine went on about the store and soon made

other discoveries. She wondered if her shopping abroad had made the difference in her feeling about her father's store. Was it cheaper than it used to be before she went away or was it merely the contrast to more pretentious establishments which she had visited?

"Where are all the old shoppers this afternoon, papa?" she asked again after a tour about the place. "I haven't seen a soul I know. Why! Didn't I always come to the store to get the news? What has happened?"

"Off day, Kate, I reckon," answered her father rather sheepishly, "But some of them of course change. There are plenty of customers though, you observe."

"Not like old times, though. Everybody I have seen looks dreadfully common. It seems different."

"And you the democrat of the family! I am afraid a sight of crowned heads has modified your democracy, my dear."

"No, no! Not a whit. I am crazier than ever on that subject, I can tell you. I brag about America everywhere I go. But that doesn't mean that a girl must like all the crowds better than she likes her own set, does it? And they don't seem to be out shopping, at all events, this afternoon."

Ben could have told her with considerable accuracy where she would almost certainly find some of them, but the subject was such a sore one that he hastened to change it, and Katharine went home half-believing that she had merely fallen upon an exceptional afternoon in shopping practice.

But when she had tried it several afternoons more, and had failed to get a satisfactory answer from her father to her sharp, sly questions on the subject, she put her wits at work, and soon found out the facts.

For one thing she remembered that Paul was at Mr. Mack's and, as she wanted to see him and had not happened to meet him elsewhere, she went into the new store. But as it was in the morning there were none of her special friends at the establishment.

Paul was pleased and confused by this radiant visitor, and did no end of blushing under the frank eyes of Miss Lithgow whom, to tell the truth, he had long adored afar off. Paul was over-modest in his disposition, and had not ventured to dream of lifting his aspirations to the level of this dazzling star. But he could not prevent himself, and no one could prevent him, from worshiping her afar off. And as he saw no harm in that, he did not try to prevent it.

Katherine had all the time there was, and Paul did not happen to be driven with work, so she stayed and gossiped with the clerk for an hour with the freedom of old acquaintance. The theme at length became somewhat religious in a way, and turned on the meetings. Katherine had been duly informed in her letters from home that the meetings had been a disappointment and a failure.

"I did not call them a failure," said Paul. "Neither does Mr. Mack. True, they did not at the time add many members to the church, but they sowed a good deal of needed truth in the town."

"I heard that it was all about business. Papa thought the man was out of his place." Paul did not answer this, and Katharine went on volubly: "The church is as nice and dull as ever then, I suppose. I wish they would have a revival, or something, to 'liven things up. What are the young people doing anyhow?"

Paul told all he thought might be new to her as to the work at the church, especially of the Endeavor Society of which he was still president.

"I wonder what you left papa's store for. Didn't he pay you enough?"

This abrupt question upset Paul for a moment,

though he had been preparing his mind for it from the first moment she began the conversation. He cast down his eyes and colored deeply. Katharine instantly divined that there was something indelicate in her question, and said with a little toss of her head:

"It is no business of mine, of course. What a lot of trade you have here. Mr. Mack must be getting very rich. But I must go. Here I've wasted a whole hour talking to you. You don't deserve it, Paul Carroll. Now don't ask me to come again. I'm coming anyhow. I'll be at the Endeavor meeting now every time, regularly, too. Oh, I have a whole head full of ideas to fire off! I'm afraid I've interfered with your work, though."

She charmed him with a vanishing smile and sailed out like a sunbeam leaving Paul in a flutter of good spirits.

"Tell me why Paul left your store, papa," said Miss Persistence that evening at dinner. She was as curious as any other woman, and Paul's embarrassment had led her to suspect that there had been some disagreeable trouble about the separation.

"Mack may have offered him more," said Lithgow, feeling guilty under her searching glance.

"But I should think there was money enough to keep a fine salesman like him, if you had wished. He is head clerk at Mr. Mack's. But I thought you never got left in that fashion, papa. Did you get left, I wonder?"

"'Get left,' comes near being slang — for a returned European tourist—doesn't it? Well, perhaps I did get left. But Carroll isn't the only—"

"'Pebble'? You were going to say it, Mr. Lecturer-on-slang. Confess it now. But you haven't told me."

"Told you what? About Paul? Well, he did now and then make slips like the rest of us poor mortals. My loss is Mack's gain, so there it is."

Katharine did not get much farther with this expert in dissemblance, and was obliged to content herself with guessing that Mr. Mack had lured Paul away by a larger offer.

But having found a way to meet Paul without seeming to be too forward about the matter, this independent girl dropped into Mack's store again, of course. She was wise enough to understand that Paul would not make any advances toward acquaintance and friendship himself, because she was socially above him, in the ordinary estimates. As he had been her father's clerk, and they both were workers in the same church, she

felt nothing of indelicacy in seeking his acquaintance, especially as she liked him over well.

But she was not independent enough, or she was too diplomatic, not to have some natural feminine artifices to divert attention from the real purpose of her visits to the new store. She went with some friend, or she had some purchase to make, or the church business had some point needing a consultation—anyway, she went to Mr. Mack's whenever she felt disposed, and Paul might have justly felt himself encouraged by her cordial manner when she met him there and elsewhere.

But the progress of this little affair between the young people was accompanied by discoveries on Katharine's part. She was not long in finding out where her oldtime friends and acquaintance and the "best people" whom she knew were doing their shopping. This astonished and grieved her more than she showed. She wondered how Mr. Mack had been able to entice them away from her father's great establishment. There must have been something unfair in the competition, she said at first. It seemed to her a good deal ungrateful in Mr. Mack to set up a rival business and beat the old and respectable house of Lithgow Brothers in this fashion.

Katharine reflected on the matter for a time and then went to her father about it.

"Why, he seems to have all the cream of the people with taste and money in town, papa," she said in a dismayed tone. "Why have they left your place to trade there? I don't understand it."

Lithgow, beset thus by this decisive young woman, could not long evade her inquiries.

"I have studied the matter a good deal, dear," he said to her, "and I am not any nearer to understanding it. We have had a good little fight over it, and so far Mack comes out ahead. I attribute it to his personal popularity. I never thought he had it in him. Then Paul is liked, too. It was a mistake to let him go."

"I mean to find out, then," said this resolute young person, with a frown. "There is nobody at the store now but the vulgarest of the town. That's all right in its way; but the store isn't what it was—and I don't like it. I'll ask—"

She stopped, smiled, colored a trifle and tossed her head slightly to finish the sentence. Then for fear her father would inquire about her half-expressed intention she abruptly fell to talking about the Paris galleries.

"I want you to tell me everything about it now,

Paul Carroll," she said with a seraphic smile, when the next day she went to the new store.

"Certainly! I know everything," said Paul with a little laugh. "Ask me and see."

"It is about papa. Tell me first why you left the store."

"There was more help than was needed," said Paul, casting down his eyes.

"Well! What else?"

She knew there was more, and Paul knew it too, and he only fidgeted with his hands among some dress goods that he was showing her, and said nothing.

"I don't see why you should—should—treat me that way," said Miss Cunning with almost a little whimper.

Paul felt like a criminal when she talked to him that way, and wondered if he really ought to tell her.

"But you needn't confide in me unless you choose, of course," she went on, with a little show of offense in her manner, and beginning to draw on her glove as if she would go.

That settled it with this sensitive young adorer.

"I had a little trouble about a cloak, if you must know," he blurted out, feeling that he had now driven her entirely out of his acquaintance.

"Oh! But you needn't be so chary about telling me," she said, warming up again and laying down the glove. "I think we are friends enough for that."

After that delicious speech, sent home with a smile and a flash of her eyes that made Paul feel as if the sun had just broken out of a storm cloud, he would have told her anything she might have demanded. It was not so easy to make her understand, and he sedulously refrained from telling the whole truth, even then. She got the impression that Paul had made a bad break about selling Mrs. Pendleton a cloak.

"I wonder if you would come back?" she asked dubiously.

"I couldn't do that, honorably, and leave Mr. Mack. But I have little reason to think I would be invited back."

"But suppose you were," persisted Katharine.

"It would not be possible — under the circumstances."

"Then you don't believe in forgiving and letting bygones go—perhaps?"

"It isn't that, but it would be using Mr. Mack badly. I hope you see that."

"What was it that Mr. Mack didn't like, or that papa didn't like—when they separated, I mean?"

"I think—it was something about the—the—advertising," answered Paul, not able to evade her persistence, but not sure that he ought to talk.

But Katharine had made a good beginning this time, and after that, while she remained she talked about other matters, greatly to Paul's relief.

But on this hint about the advertising she went to work on her problem. She had set herself to the task of finding out why Mr. Mack had taken away the custom from her father's store. Her reasoning led her to the plain inference that if it were the advertising, then doubtless Mack's advertising would be on some other plan. It was easy to find out.

The next day Mr. Mark Donnelly, at the office of the principal daily of the city, was charmed to receive a call from this gracious clue-hunter who, after various other things on account of which she did not call, but which seemed to be the real reason, came to the thing which she was after as if it were a mere incidental. It was to see the file—a privilege accorded to anybody who asked, and that had no significance at all at the office, so that she need not have been so circumspect.

But thanking him very graciously Katharine dived into the columns of the well-managed daily.

Several times she might have been heard to make such observations as "Hm!" "Oh!" "Is that it?" and "I see," all to herself, that indicated that she was getting light on her subject.

She got red in the face before she was through, and when she went off at last she had a troubled little frown on her fine face.

But now she was on the scent she grew absolutely secretive, and talked to nobody about stores and such things. But on her own account she began to be at the store—her father's first—a great deal, and took observations. Nobody could say what she was doing exactly, but as she had free run there she was able to examine to her heart's content. When she wished to see a box or a brand she did so. She had a small magnifying glass, and this she used a great deal among the fabrics. Sometimes she asked questions too, but with such a simple air that none of the clerks and counter girls could have imagined her reason. And in a little note-book that she carried along she jotted down a great quantity of things that she carried away and digested at her leisure.

After a time she transferred her operations to the new store. Here she had a little different plan. She bought various articles that she did not need, and managed to go shopping also with several friends. During these spying expeditions she was in the way of learning some things she had never known before. The way cleared amazingly before her. The shams and cheats of the ordinary trade, and especially of the Lithgow trade, were exposed in all their nakedness in contrast with the methods of the new store. Brands and labels and trade marks stared out at her their tell-tale evidence. The difference between clerks that would confidently recommend a spurious article, and those that were rigidly instructed as to their duty to state exactly the quality of the thing sold, was impressed in a dozen ways. In one store there was a taint of fraud, all in the regular run of the world's business, over every article and every transaction. In the other, truth was stamped wherever she turned her eyes.

It was her own father that suffered by this contrast and it almost made her sick as she went on. But she no longer had any doubt about the merits of the competition. A new standard of business had come to

the front, and it had succeeded. How, she could not tell. How it had been aided by Mrs. Pendleton and those who followed her, how it had been fortunately assisted by various discoveries of the tricks at the other store, all the steps of it, were history now, not easily to be learned. But Katharine came to an end of her investigations and sat down one day to cast up and inquire of herself what she should do. With all her heart she was with the new method. She was a Christian, and had learned her Christian principles under the really valuable and intelligent training of her father. Yet here she was at the end of this investigation, face to face with a system of business in which her father had been brought up from his youth, by means of which the money that had given her all the luxuries of wealth had been gained, and it was all a travesty and a stigma on Christian honesty. And her father, whom she had been actually proud of as the most sagacious and able business man in all the state, and as a man whose business standing was above reproach—her father—had been no better than the system, had bowed down to it and believed in it.

But Katharine did not shrink from facing this situation. She felt that it was all because he was in

the trade. He was not consciously dishonest. He was doing what all business men felt obliged to do. It was ordinary competition, and no one spoke against it. The best of men did it.

Thus while, with the best of judgment and with rare charity for her father, she tried to understand the case, she settled down to rigid determination that she would change the methods of the Lithgow house,

"Or know why not," she said with a resolute setting of her white teeth together.

CHAPTER VII.

THE REFORMATION.

PAUL CARROLL hardly knew how he drifted into the practice of going so much in Katharine's company. It was a most natural affair, that he seemed not able to avoid. Katharine must be escorted home from evenings by somebody, and Paul was the only one likely to offer, since everybody but Paul saw plainly enough Katharine's preference and gave him a clear field. And when he found out that the matter was serious, he nevertheless allowed the happy days to drift without any definite attempt to take himself in hand.

Then, after a time, when his feelings were betrayed one day, as they were conversing in the store, Katharine took his inadvertent betrayal as a matter of course, and astonished him so much by her manner that he could no longer avoid believing that his love was returned. And after that the matter amounted to an "understanding," and Katharine did not refuse to

wear Paul's ring, and consider herself an engaged young lady.

When this stage of their acquaintance had been reached, Katharine took Paul into her confidence, and induced him to tell all he knew about the meetings, the competition between the stores, and the methods by which her father had been left behind in the rivalry.

Paul was averse, naturally, to saying anything unpleasant about his possible father-in-law, and Katharine appreciated his delicacy, nevertheless persisting until she had the whole story so far as he was able to enlighten her. He listened with interest to her announcement that she had determined upon the task of converting her father; and, compelled by the resolute arts of this irresistible fascinator, he engaged to lend his assistance.

Lithgow was too wise in his knowledge of character in general, and of his daughter's disposition in particular, to interpose any obstacles in the way of this intimacy. He was confident that Paul had in him the elements that would make him successful, though he had made the mistake of telling the truth to the spoiling of a cloak trade. Lithgow had never been able to

replace him in the store by any one of half his knowledge in fabrics, which was Paul's specialty, and he would have doubled his former salary to have him back. When he learned from Katharine about the "understanding," he kissed her and cordially approved her choice. He added that there was no finer young fellow in Jacques City than Paul.

Lithgow, in fact, hoped that this affair would bring Paul back to the store eventually, and partly restore the equilibrium that began to be upset the day he was discharged.

Katharine, with the gentle arts of a born fascinator, wound this young lover about her fingers, so to speak, and soon had him committed to her project. When she announced to him that she had resolved to convert her father to the new business standards, he smiled a little incredulously, whereat she accused him of a deadly affront, and played on his fears and his affections, and afterward plied him with enough flattery and argument to convince him that Lithgow must be the most malleable of men and the easiest imaginable case to persuade. She began with a deeply plotted skill:

"I wonder," she said to her father in the store one

day, carrying him a box of bead trmming, "I wonder why this box is marked 'Geneva'? Paul says this is made in Attleboro, Massachusetts."

Lithgow, casting up some items of an auction purchase, looked up with a little frown.

"Paul didn't buy that, though. Take what you want. I'll have another case opened."

"I don't want any. But I want to make a few changes. May I?"

"Change whatever you please. Labels, do you mean?"

"Yes, papa."

"All right, only don't destroy the buying mark."

Katharine said: "Thank you," and went off with a cunning smile on her face. She found the clerk at the head of the notions counter and showed him the box.

"These are genuine Geneva goods aren't they, Mr. Clark?"

Clark, with the usual business evasiveness, said promptly:

"We import a great deal of it. Shall I wrap it up for you?"

"Where is that which you import?" asked Katharine with a twinkle of her eye. "Show me some."

"Why, this—I thought—but perhaps you meant to see the whole invoice. It is up stairs."

"Now, Mr. Clark, don't you know that this never came from Geneva? It isn't imported, is it?"

Clark hesitated, colored and then said slowly:

"We only sell it as we are instructed. You know where the orders come from, Miss Lithgow."

"Yes. Tell me how you like this—this—falsifying, Mr. Clark."

"It is the ordinary business," said Clark, a little doggedly.

"But it isn't honest, is it?"

"Very far from it. But it is trade. If trade were honest we would soon go down, I fancy."

"And I don't fancy. All right. I am not blaming anybody, Mr. Clark. You have to obey orders or go. I understand that. But I have a little liberty from father. Please take the label off, Mr. Clark."

"Take it off?"

"I will, then, if you don't care to take the responsibility."

Accordingly she took her little pocket knife, and deftly split the foreign label out of the end of the box. Then she carried the box to the marker and borrowed

some "black-pot," with which she wrote plainly on the box:

"Best American. Made in Attleboro, Mass."

She carried the box back to Mr. Clark.

"It is a good work to kill a lie, Mr. Clark. When you open another box I wish you to take out the goods, and sell them from this box. Either do this or mark the other boxes. And hereafter they are Attleboro goods not Geneva. You understand?"

"If you have consulted Mr. Lithgow—yes, I suppose it is all right. I should suppose it would not hurt the sale to tell the truth."

"Never mind if it does—this goes. If anybody asks about it you have only to tell the whole business. You understand?"

"Very well," answered Clark smiling. He had heard about the methods at Mack's, and wondered if they were to have them here.

Katharine, with a red spot on either cheek and her eyes burning with triumphant excitement, went back to the office.

"I have been looking over some things in the store, papa. I think I know what is the matter here. Mr. Mack is beating you. I think it is because of the way

he advertises. I wish you should let me write an advertisement for you."

"A la Mack, I suppose," said Lithgow, smiling at her. "I suppose young ladies have to be amused, though. Advertising is a delicate business. You might do the store a great amount of mischief in a very short time."

"Pshaw! I won't hurt anything. Let me try now."

"Try all you please, then. I can stand it. Perhaps you may prove to be a genius at it. Get Paul to help you."

Lithgow was indulgent, and cared very little what she might do. He suspected that she had been imbibing some of the new ideas that prevailed at Mack's.

Katharine was too wise to delay or argue after she had gained her point. She went off triumphant, and the next morning her advertisement appeared. It was an announcement in small black type of a special sale of genuine American bead trimmings, guaranteed to be the manufacture of Blank & Co., Attleboro, Mass. A fine line underneath stated that these trimmings had heretofore been sold as imported Geneva wares.

"But we haven't any Attleboro goods," said Lith-

gow to her when she came to the store next day. "At least, I don't know where these were made."

"They are not Geneva. Paul says they are Attleboro goods."

"That settles it, then. Paul knows, of course. But why do you do such a Quixotic thing, dear?"

"The other isn't honest," said Katharine, quietly, and with a note of pain in her voice that was not lost on her father.

"It is the ordinary business," said Lithgow, repeating the platitude of Clark. "The standards of business cannot be disregarded. Either it amounts to going out of business entirely, or of conformity to the great laws that govern all trade."

"Not if they are laws of falsehood. That is the reason Mr. Mack has beaten you. People know that when they buy there they never get cheated."

Lithgow made no answer and Katharine went away.

But the next day she came and changed some more labels and inquired after her bead sale. It had not met her expectations. The advertisement had done something to incite trade, but not all she had hoped.

But there were effects that she knew nothing about. The first of these was on certain people in the First

Church. Pastor Foss, who had watched all these movements carefully, saw the advertisement.

"That looks like one of Mack's announcements," he said to his wife at dinner that evening. "I wonder if Lithgow means to take that tack, too. He has been losing trade. Perhaps that has waked him up."

Mr. Foss, in all the months since Mr. Ray's visit, had been himself forced to observe as never before the things that hitherto had not impressed him in the least. Business, and its methods, had come before him in a hundred ways, and the truth of what Mr. Ray had taught had been forced home upon him almost every day. He was one of those who had taken to trading more or less with Mr. Mack, and who in his heart had hoped that his daring but righteous experiment would succeed.

Mrs. Pendleton pointed out the advertisement to her husband. He laughed at it.

"Ben is a good imitator. I thought he used to have a faculty for originating, but he seems to have declined. I reckon it is a case of 'the devil was sick.'"

Paul saw the advertisement and asked Katharine about it.

She blushed hotly, and told him that he and Mr.

Mack needn't think they had a monoply of high-class advertising. She laughed and refused to talk any more. But she asked no end of questions about labels and brands and trade-marks that Paul answered with delight. It was tonic to have her in the store, and he would have answered any number of conundrums for her to keep her there.

But the chief effect, after all, was upon Lithgow. It was produced, however, not so much by the advertisement as by Katharine's words. For the first time he began to have doubts of the excusableness of his business methods. Alcott might talk, and Mack might fool with any number of new ideas—all that had little effect; but Katharine—it was different when she spoke. She was the apple of his eye, the one altogether lovely among human beings to him. Besides, she had corroborated the judgment of his brother. She had plainly told him that he was being beaten in business by using the old methods.

It would be unjust to say that this was the motive that moved him most. But, on the other hand, it would be less than truth to say that it was an unimportant consideration. When Alcott had said it he refused to believe. But now Katharine had said it.

And soon there was awakened in Lithgow a whole train of reflections that at last brought up with the preaching of the evangelist. As he lay awake that night, thinking, until the sun crept in at his window, the plain convicting passion of the preacher's words came back to him. He had never forgotten them, but he had always hitherto remembered them to resent them.

Now that picture of Christ in the background—Christ whom he had professed to serve, Christ whom he had essayed to present to young men, the picture that Mr. Ray had drawn of Christ walking through his store —it would not leave him. He thought of it all day. It was with him waking or sleeping for the whole week, while Katharine was experimenting with the labels and making more advertisements.

Ben Lithgow was a man who had the theory of Christianity completely worked out for himself. He knew what to teach to others. Now he began to feel it all go to pieces. He began to feel that he had built his building without a foundation. The something that had been left out, somehow left unjointed and chaotic his whole scheme of faith.

He must begin again. And he had the courage to

begin again. He was not in the least intentionally a dishonest man. It only needed that he should see his methods in the light of a clear conviction of their essential disharmony with his Master's demands.

"Come into the office, Katharine," he said one day, when this struggle had been waged and finished within him.

His eyes were dark with haggard strain of weariness, and the conflict had left him weak and pale as if he had fought with a fever.

"I have come to your way of thinking. And I have decided to close up the store for awhile."

"Oh! Close up the store?" said Katharine, with a sympathetic pain in her voice.

"Yes. Only for a while. When I open it again the falsehoods will all be cleaned out of it—forever."

Katharine cried at this, and hung on his neck with soothing words of mingled pity and gratitude. It was heart-rending to her to see his strong pride broken like this. Yet she felt that it would be a new day for them both.

The store was closed. The clerks were retained on half pay, and then the reformation began. Ben himself, silent and haggard, but with a new light in his

eyes, went about superintending the alterations in the great stock. Every lie in the place was discovered and removed. Brands were erased and new brands made. Boxes were relabeled and piece marks replaced. The cheaper goods were largely stored away in a department by themselves, and marked down for a special sale under the honest tags.

* * * * * * *

When the house of Lithgow had been operated for a year or so under the new standards of business, an arrangement was completed whereby it was consolidated with the new store. Mr. Mack's interest was now equal to that of the Lithgows' and Paul became the business manager. Katharine thought this a position to be proud of, and became in due time the business manager's wife.

The following February, three years from the time of Mr. Ray's visit, matters at the First Church became interesting enough to warrant the planning of another series of meetings.

"I hope they will be more successful than the last were," said Mr. Foss, as the leading brethren were discussing the matter together at the pastor's house.

"It all depends on the man," suggested Deacon Park,

who had not yet seen the harm of business methods of the ordinary kind.

"There is but one man to be thought of," said Mr. Lithgow with a little ring of joy in his voice. "We never have had more than one really successful revival since I was a member here."

"That was in 1878," said Deacon Park.

"No," said Lithgow earnestly. "It was three years ago. I move that we ask Mr. Ray to return."

And when, in spite of the opposition of Deacon Park, Mr. Ray was recalled, the first man he chose to assist him was Ben Lithgow. And this time there was a revival such as had not been seen in Jacques City in many years.

One night when the interest seemed to have culminated, and a great number of men young and old had committed themselves to a Christian life, Mr. Ray preached again on business methods. There was a profound sensation, and many knew the instances that he had guardedly pointed out in his address. But when he was done, perhaps the most remarkable incident of the whole proceeding occurred.

A man arose in the back part of the church and began to speak.

"I have watched this church from the outside," he said, "for a good many years. My wife has prayed for me, and Mr. Foss has reasoned with me. But all that didn't move me. But when I bought a pair of American gloves one day at Theodore Mack's store, I began to be converted. Brethren, there is something in a religion that makes a man tell the truth about gloves. I have thought it all over, and I have made up my mind that a religion that goes into the business of false labels and spurious tags, is a kind I want. Yesterday, I swept the last lie out of my factory. To-day I want to confess the religion of Jesus Christ."

Mr. Pendleton sat down. His wife was weeping. The house was still.

Then in a far corner of the gallery a soft musical voice began to sing. The great congregation joined in:

"Where He leads me I will follow,
Where He leads me I will follow,
Where He leads me I will follow,
I'll go with Him, with Him, all the way."

THE END.

ON THE WHOLE.

ON THE WHOLE.

CHAPTER I.

"THIS IS VERY GOOD ORE."

"ON the whole'—it is a large thing to say. But haven't we to look at everything so? 'On the whole.' Yes; it takes patience and it takes faith, but God does justify himself on the whole."

Pastor Tellgood laid his hand almost caressingly upon Dalton's shoulder as he spoke. He loved the young man, and felt how good a thing it was to lead him along truth's plain road. The sunshine fell softly through the gently whispering elms that shaded the green where they had seated themselves in quiet converse.

Dalton was a modest bank clerk, and a member of the East Church where pastor Tellgood preached to his small village flock.

"I have some faith that it is so, Mr. Tellgood,"

said Dalton seriously. "But, as you say, 'on the whole' is such a large phrase. If we could only see the whole now. But what do we see? It is all around us, it is in every experience. 'Wrong forever on the throne'; 'God on the side of the heaviest artillery' to all appearances. The inequality of things, the prosperity of men who are merely sharp, and have no hearts—it is a constant strain of faith to know it all."

The preacher looked half sadly at his companion. He saw that Dalton at twenty-five was beginning to wear the look of a man of cares. He knew the story of his heroic struggles, of his support of an aged mother, his long hours of private study to get through a course and take a degree without going to college. And he remembered the examples that Dalton was thinking about in the town, of men who had grown rich and arrogant merely through selfish grasping for gain.

"I understand it, Dalton," he said sympathetically. "Nevertheless I should not fear to offer, if it were in my power, the privilege to you of changing places with any of the men whose money we might either of us like to have. To be such men, is it worth trying for?"

"Does that meet the case, sir? What if such a

man as I am or, better far, such a man as you—what if such men in the ordering of the world, had the money? How much better use they would make of it."

"Sometimes such men do. It is not always the unworthy men who prosper. Mr. Winslow is rich, and Mr. Edwards is rich."

"True. I do not by any means think that things are all out of joint. But you will allow that there is no assurance that a man will have the good things of this world on account of his virtue."

"That, or something better. Indeed, his virtue itself is something better. And then, as I said, it is 'on the whole.' We do not see the whole lives of men. If we did we should be much nearer to believing that even temporal blessings accompany righteousness."

"I suppose we get all the good we deserve, and I am such a long way from being righteous that I have no basis for a personal complaint; and yet I sometimes wonder if I shall ever be able to support a wife. I work rather hard, as you know."

"Why do you two wait any longer? If Julia is the girl I think her, she will be a helpmeet, not a burden."

"I know that. But I can never take the risk. I haven't enough to keep a house. I must wait."

They had talked this matter over a great many times. The relation between them was closely confidential, and Dalton had often found comfort in pouring out his troubles into the sympathetic ears of his pastor. Not that Dalton was a misanthrope. He rarely complained of his adversity and kept a cheerful manner that made him well liked by all the town. But people had come to understand that he did not get on, and the more prosperous and thoughtless of his acquaintances thought it was some lack of natural faculty. They did not simply know the circumstances.

"If I had Uncle Dodge's money, I should be married before sundown. But I am little likely to see a penny of that."

"Do you desire to?"

There was something peculiar in the minister's tone that caused Dalton to look at him.

"No. I couldn't feel sure after all whose money I might be spending. That's my confidential opinion of Uncle Dodge."

"He is a case in point, I suppose, to illustrate your view of the world," laughed Mr. Tellgood.

"Yes. Uncle Dodge stands in the town as a man against whom nobody can bring charges, but he is sharp. He does as a hundred other men all about here do; only he is rather more successful. He gets the better in the bargain. That is business, I suppose."

"I understand you. It is the way of the world and I am not disposed to deny it. Mr. Dodge is a pewholder in the church and his wife is one of our members. Nevertheless, I cannot approve his methods of getting his money. Such men as Mr. Dodge give occasion for things that the worldly say about the church."

As they sat thus conversing two strangers walked up the street and across the green. Dalton and the minister saw that they were strangers. They had the unmistakable air of the city about them which Dalton recognized.

"Beg pardon, gentlemen, but we are looking for the residence of Mr. Benjamin Dodge. They said at the hotel that it is in this direction. Can you direct us?"

The speaker was a man of middle age, with a very sharp and somewhat shifting eye and a very smooth and insinuating voice. Dalton in his mind at once framed the word "crook."

"Mr. Dodge is my uncle," he said rather coldly. He did not like the strangers. He wondered what they wanted with his Uncle Dodge. "The house is the large yellow house—you can see the wing just beyond the fringe of trees," he added, pointing with his hand.

The men thanked him with almost ceremonious politeness and walked on towards their destination.

"I wonder who they are. I do not remember to have seen them before. I'll ask Uncle Dodge, I think."

The two men resumed their discussion and soon forgot the strangers.

Mr. Benjamin Dodge, standing on his lawn to supervise the work of some men who were removing a picket fence, was presently accosted by the two strangers. Mr. Dodge was an almost benevolent looking man of fifty years and accounted one of the well-to-do citizens of Collodion. The country was still new and Mr. Dodge's opportunities for land speculation were numerous. He was agent for various Eastern owners, and had the name of a sharp intermediary, who could put virtues into his tracts of land that they did not always possess, and drive sharp bargains with intending settlers. It was well known nevertheless, that Mr. Dodge had overdone the land business so far

as his own purchases were concerned. He was, in fact, in a deeply mortgaged condition, and his seeming prosperity might easily collapse upon any general run upon his credit.

The two strangers introduced themselves to Mr. Dodge as prospectors from Denver.

After a long time of gentle beating around the bush, they asked Mr. Dodge to suggest a price on a certain piece of land a half mile from the town on the lower slope of a rocky hill. It was about as worthless a tract as Mr. Dodge controlled. It was mortgaged for all that it was worth, and he paid a costly rate of interest.

"Who wishes to buy?" asked Mr. Dodge. "I might sell if I got my price."

Mr. Sinks, who did the talking, dropped his eyes for a little as if in deep thought. Then he said slowly:

"Perhaps you might like to make an arrangement to sell us some undivided part of it,—say one-fourth."

Mr. Dodge was puzzled at this and looked at the speaker fixedly.

Mr. Sinks hesitated for a moment and then diving into a small hand-bag that he carried, he brought out a piece of grayish-blue stone. Mr. Dodge saw instantly

that it was ore. There was a shine of yellow gold flecking the mineral that made it sparkle in the sun. Mr. Dodge almost caught his breath. He thought of the rocky tract of land at once.

"This is very good ore, Mr. Dodge. We have been prospecting a very little on the hill tract. The rock there is a good deal like this. Here is more of it."

"I suppose you had no right to bring it away," said Mr. Dodge, shutting his lips a little unpleasantly. He did not look so benevolent when he had this expression.

"Bless you, this did not come from your land! I only suggest that, if it had, you could probably realize a very good price for the hill. It is very fair ore."

Mr. Sinks paused and eyed his man sharply. He did not know how fast nor how far he could go with Mr. Dodge. He was a rather shrewd reader of the face, and had heard enough to convince him that he could undertake his game without much risk.

"What's that? You mean that there is a good chance of gold in that lot? I shouldn't wonder. How much are you offering for it?"

"Well—if we give you—say—half of the best price it will bring and take the other half—you would still make a big thing," said Sinks mysteriously.

"I don't understand. Give you half? Half of what?"

"Why, if anybody should find gold there in some quantity, it would be worth—the land would sell for—a good price of course. It wouldn't be so strange. Hickson's lode is two miles away on the other divide. That pays rich, I am told."

"True, but if you have found gold on my land—well, I should be willing to make it right. Point it out and I will pay something for the trouble, of course. It would save all the expense of prospecting again. It has been all looked up once or twice and nothing found. Still, if you have found what the prospectors missed—"

"If we had do you think we would be likely to come here first with the news?"

Sinks laughed at the simplicity of the proposition and eyed Mr. Dodge with a sly look.

"What is your object, then, in mentioning the matter?" asked Mr. Dodge, certain that there was some deal intended.

"Well, we are old California prospectors, myself and Cobb here. We have been known to find gold where there wasn't any. We sold a tract about three months ago for a man down in the lower counties—

never mind where—for eighty thousand dollars. The land before that had been offered for fifteen. To be sure the gold didn't pan out as good as it looked on our showing, but the purchaser is dead sure he will strike it yet. Maybe he will. Maybe he won't."

Dodge whistled and Sinks smiled.

"I see," said Mr. Dodge slowly, and growing red in the face. The sly, significant tone of Sinks had enlightened him more than the words themselves. Mr. Dodge had heard of the mine salting process.

Now here was a man who stood fairly well in his community, and hitherto had done nothing worse, probably, than drive over-sharp bargains, such as half the real estate speculators do as a matter of common practice. But his mind was all ready to contemplate a sharper thing. He would not do this thing alone of himself, but the devil will find the soil ready when his agents come to sow the seed of suggestion.

"How much will it cost to sell my land, Mr. Sinks?"

"Value of these bits of rock—say a thousand dollars. The thing must be done so skillfully that the fellow who gets bitten won't ever be certain. We can do a thing of that kind, can't we, Mr. Cobb?"

"Up there we can," said Cobb with a laugh. "That

rock is about as near gold rock as you see it even where there is gold. It is to plant a little at the best spots, and then wait for a good rain."

Mr. Benjamin Dodge looked all about in the sunshine. His soul seemed to be urging him to get out of the sun. It was too bright.

"Come into the parlor," he said.

CHAPTER II.

A CHANCE TO BE RICH.

JOHN DALTON had been as little prosperous in his love affairs as in his efforts to make money. Julia Gordon loved John with a genuine affection, and would not long have withstood him had he thought it wise to urge her into marriage. But Julia's parents were a good deal influenced by Dalton's comparative poverty, and did whatever they could in indirect ways to discourage his suit. John had reckoned the matter over carefully again and again. He knew how uncertain even his situation at the bank might be. Several times he had saved money enough to make a good beginning. Once it was swept away by sickness. Once a bank failure and connected rascality had robbed him of a sum that represented the economizing of two years. Now again he had slowly gained a little. A fortunate trade had turned him a small profit, and he now had laid by in the bank where he worked nearly a thousand

dollars. But in John's view of the matter this was nothing with which to begin married life. Julia had been accustomed to circumstances of comparative luxury, and John was proud. He could not think of dragging her down. He must wait.

A few days after the episode recorded in the previous chapter, John, walking home from his bank in the afternoon, met Julia. She was more radiant and smiling than usual.

"Oh, you sober fellow! Good afternoon," she said cheerily. "Turn about and walk home with me now. I have such good news. Congratulate me, can't you?"

"Yes, sure. I do. What is it?" laughed John. He thought he had never seen Julia's eyes shine so beautifully. And he had long known that she had also a shining soul. Julia was a type of the cheerful Christian, in fact, and a good angel generally in Collodion. But for the fact that John was poor, it would have seemed to everybody that these two fine young people were made especially for each other.

"Money—money—I tell you. You never heard of such a thing."

"Guess I never did. It is about the strangest thing in my experience. Whose money—what money?"

"Mine of course. Aren't you glad now? I don't despise money—not I. I don't believe in the 'poor but honest' idea. Why not be 'rich but honest'? Well, you never could guess. Think of it. They wanted my lots in Denver for a public building and Uncle Raymond sold them for eighteen thousand dollars. Think of that, you discouraged fellow! Eighteen thousand dollars! Here's Uncle Raymond's check."

"Whew! That's a fortune! I do congratulate you."

But there was something in his tone that Julia could not quite fathom. She looked at him sharply, her face aglow.

"You don't do it exactly as I like, though," she said softly. "I suppose you won't have to wait now, will you?" She laughed and dropped her eyes, slowing down in the walk.

"It isn't my money," said John with a sigh.

"Don't be a foolish boy, now," said Julia, tightening her grasp on John's arm and looking up with a confident smile. "It is our money—which is a thousand times better. I'm twenty-two, am I not? What are you sighing for, I wonder?"

"You are an angel," said John slowly. "I suppose I'll have to take you."

"Wretch! But it's good enough for you. I'm glad you are sensible, though. I wonder when?"

"Oh! I am to name the day, am I?" laughed John. "Suppose we say to-morrow then?"

"Or this afternoon? You are so slow. Let's go right up to the parsonage now."

She looked up at him and laughed like a child.

"I'm agreed to that. Come on."

"Stop, stop, you previous fellow! I actually believe you would."

"Of course I would. I am mercenary. If I am to marry you for that eighteen thousand, I ought to do it quick."

"That's a slander and a shame. If anybody says that, it will be real mean. Well—if you want to call it Christmas then—that is only five months away,—"

"Thanksgiving is only four," said John.

Suffice it to say that they came to an agreement about it, though John still felt an uneasy sense of humiliation that he was to be more or less pecuniarily dependent upon Julia. But he walked back to his home happier than he had ever been before in his life.

As he entered the cheery sitting-room where the afternoon sun made all the walls and curtains bright,

he felt something unpleasant and incongruous in the presence of a figure that sat by the table and who rose up as he entered.

"Mr. Dalton?" asked the stranger. He was a rugged and rather dark-browed man, with deep-set and beady eyes, his face well-bearded and his hair worn shaggy in his neck.

"Yes. Do you wish to see me?" answered Dalton with his usual directness. He was taking in the stranger with mental notes.

He bade him be seated and, going out to greet his mother and attend to a few small matters, he soon returned, proffering the stranger a glass of iced lemonade. The stranger was nervous apparently, and shifted about a good deal on the edge of his chair.

"I am a stranger in the town. I heard of a trout stream up in the hills. I have a few days here. Somebody told me you fish a little. I came over to see if you could fit me out, and show me the water. Perhaps you could take an hour yourself."

John thought of the matter a little. He saw no reason why he should not accommodate the man. He was respectful and evidently had no ulterior designs.

He explained to Dalton farther that he was doing some prospecting not far away for Denver parties.

John got out his flies and some rods and reels; and lent the stranger, who called himself Mr. Bell, some gum boots and a cap, and they started off together.

"I hear of some large trout that a man down at the hotel took from a brook in Dodge's tract near a hill they call Crowfoot. Is that where we are going?" asked the stranger as they left the house. John knew that there were trout in the brook named.

"I was going to another stream, but the one you name is nearer. We'll try if you like."

Now this stream ran through the rocky slope, a tract of some three hundred acres, which had been the subject of conversation between Mr. Dodge and Mr. Sinks.

They reached it two hours before sundown, and soon had landed some of the speckled beauties that abound in the Colorado streams. By and by Mr. Bell paused from fishing and John saw him bending over to dislodge a boulder that lay in the bed of the brook, but well out of the water. Being curious to see what he might have found, John went forward over the stones to get nearer.

"See here, Mr. Dalton!" cried Bell with a low exclamation of satisfaction. He held up a small piece of ore sparkling with yellow particles.

"That's the genuine stuff, or I'm no prospector," he said in a tone of apparently suppressed excitement.

"If it is, Uncle Dodge will be in luck again," replied Dalton taking the ore in his hand. "Where did it come from?"

"Come from? Why, man, look all around you. Did anybody ever see more signs of gold anywhere. If this isn't a clue that leads to a lode not far above here I'm no prospector. See here—and there!"

Mr. Bell, speaking thus, with great excitement in his manner that could not be detected as simulated, proceeded to turn up from the bed of the brook two or three more of the ore fragments.

"These are detached bits that have worked down the stream. This is placer business, and there may be more of it deeper in this bed. But the chances are that the gold is mostly in the rock farther up. If it is half as good as these pieces the man that owns this claim is rich—rich."

Dalton was soon excited himself, and wondered if

his uncle might not think this information valuable enough to sell him a small interest in the find.

"If your Uncle Dodge doesn't catch on to this too quick, I don't know why we shouldn't make a spec' ourselves. Let's go down and talk it over. I can't fish after this."

Dalton wanted to remain and search a little longer, but Mr. Bell seemed more inclined to go, and together they went back talking over the find as they went.

Before they parted for the night, Mr. Bell promised to come the next day and go with Dalton to the hill, when they could make a more thorough inspection of the ore and dig a little for samples.

Within three days the skillful agent of the salting scheme—for that was the true character of Bell—had fired Dalton to a fever about the discovery. But Dalton, after a long struggle with the temptation, conquered his desire to take advantage of his Uncle Dodge's ignorance.

"It is only what he would do in the same circumstances," Dalton said to himself again and again. But he remembered his professions to his Lord, and his character, that must not be stained by the suspicion

of sharpness, and at last cautiously approached his uncle with the matter.

"Pish!" said Dodge, pretending to make little of it. "I have heard all about that hill. They do find some ore there, but I have no faith in it. Sometime we may strike something, but I have had it prospected thoroughly. Still, I wouldn't care to sell it cheap. We all live in hope, John."

"But Mr. Bell declares it is a bonanza, Uncle."

"Why doesn't he buy it then?"

"He would buy half, I think."

"Well, if anybody wanted it for forty thousand dollars I would let it go. Otherwise I will keep it. If there really is a lode up there I shall run on it some day."

Dalton carried this to Bell. Bell swore at him mildly for giving the find away to Dodge.

"He will put the price up now, of course, until it will be a risk to buy. If your bank president now, Mr. Ross, would put in that fifty thousand, or forty thousand, for you—can't you get him up to see the ore?"

The bank president! This was the reason for working Dalton. The sharpers well knew John had no money but if they could use him as the decoy for turn-

ing in the money they knew Mr. Ross had, there was success in store for them.

But Dalton had revolving in his head a different scheme. He was, however, too well-balanced to run into anything actually blindfold. He sent to Denver on his own account for a prospector. Mr. Sampson was a good prospector, but a bad neglecter of affairs. Bell got hold of him and hoodwinked him. He at last told Dalton that the hill was as full of gold as it could stick. He took John up and dug out before his eyes some more of the "salt."

To Mr. Sampson's credit it may be said that he did not know that it was "salt," and he really thought he saw every sign of gold rock.

John carried the ore down to Julia, and told how the affair stood to date.

"If I had forty thousand dollars," he said gloomily,,I have no doubt whatever that my fortune would be made."

They talked it over together a long time. They got still another prospector to look the hill over, and this one told them that though he had found one or two pieces of gold ore, and these evidently foreign, there was a good chance always of striking gold in that kind of rock.

Meanwhile Dodge willing to hasten matters by a little lie came down and announced that he had probably closed a deal to sell the land to parties from Pueblo.

John Dalton groaned. He felt that the opportunity of his lifetime was about to slip away. He suggested to his uncle that he might find a way to do something himself if he had a little time. At last Mr. Dodge promised not to close with the Pueblo parties for another three days, but added that their offer was good enough so that it would take fifty thousand instead of forty to buy the land. John went home still groaming. In the evening he went up to consult with his pastor.

"It is the way of this world, Mr. Tellgood," said John. "Uncle Dodge has money enough, therefore he can get fifty thousand dollars for a lot of rocks. I have nothing, therefore I cannot take a sure chance of making a fortune."

"Is it so absolutely sure?"

John showed him some of the ore and told him what the prospectors had said.

"Nevertheless, I would not myself take the risk of paying fifty thousand dollars for unknown chances of gold that is still mostly to be unearthed."

Dalton thought Mr. Tellgood too cautious. He broached the matter next day to Mr. Ross. The bank president was interested in John, and he put considerable faith at once in the gold story. In a day or two John had him sufficiently excited to visit the stream where, sure enough, they found two or three pieces of Sink's salt. Dalton introduced Bell, and the latter soon showed his knowledge of prospecting, and convinced Mr. Ross that the hill was rich in ore. It sometimes takes but little to fool even the shrewdest of business men. Mr. Ross went back, and the day after called Dalton to him and offered to advance one-half to buy the land. He did not wish to speculate in mining claims himself, but he would lend the money to Dalton and take a mortgage back at low interest.

John told Julia of this with tears in his eyes. Still he was as far as ever from being able to grasp this fortune. But Julia, hearing that Mr. Ross had actually endorsed the scheme and would put money into it, remembered that she had eighteen thousand dollars herself. In fact, with money she had in the bank in her own name, she had more than that sum. Dalton shrank from this, but in the end he came to it. Within three weeks of the time when Bell came upon the scene,

John Dalton, with the money of Mr. Ross and Julia Gordon, had bought the salted mine. Mr. Dodge took the money without despising himself, and reflected that it was not his fault if folks did not know what they were buying.

CHAPTER III.

SALT.

JOHN'S land was partly timbered, and would have sold on the day he went fishing with Bell for a possible five thousand dollars. As a matter of fact, no gold had thus far been taken from it except that which Sinks and Cobb had skillfully placed there. The rascality had succeeded apparently without a hitch. The rascals divided the proceeds, confident that Dalton could never expose them. Mr. Benjamin Dodge went to his pew in the church on the following Sunday in a comfortable frame of mind, and enjoyed the service very well except some parts of the sermon. He knew that he had made a clear thirty thousand dollars out of a piece of business that would not have stood long in the light, but he even consoled his remnants of a conscience by the reflection he had not actually done the salting, and that any way it was the business of a purchaser to look up things for himself. He knew pretty

well the sources of the money. He guessed that the greater part probably came from Mr. Ross who could afford the loss, and that his nephew, who had little to lose, would only learn a lesson in business from the affair.

Mr. Tellgood's conversations recently with Dalton had given the minister some thoughts on the prosperity of the wicked, and several times the reflections from the pulpit made Mr. Dodge inwardly squirm. But he only smiled incredulously when the preacher declared that sharpness and false dealing were continually overreaching themselves, and reacting against the guilty. He pitied Mr. Tellgood as a very impracticable man who did not know the ways and doings of the business world. In Mr. Dodge's opinion, sharpness was the chief virtue of the business life. He regarded the minesalting experiment as a mere trick of the trade.

John Dalton was sobered and made anxiously thoughtful by the realization that he had actually completed his investment. He was at once assailed with some horrible fear that after all he might have led his friends into a disastrous speculation. But again and again he consoled himself by recalling the earnest manner of Mr. Bell and the confidence of Mr. Ross af-

ter seeing the gold for himself. There could be no doubt after all, reasonably, that he had a rich property. He alternated between the high hopes of an enthusiast and the fears of natural caution for several days, while he was preparing to begin his mining in earnest. Julia shared with him in both his hopes and fears, though with her the fear came soon to be uppermost. She did not like it that Bell had left the town almost immediately after the bargain had been closed. There was a vague intuition of some underhand business in her mind, such as fine-natured women are sure to entertain when there is a ground for it.

The mining began. It was at first an attempt to trace the placer gold up the stream where the prospectors believed a shaft might reveal a rich lode in the hill. They found in this way several small pieces of Sink's salt. Every time they struck one of these a certain old miner, Mr. Reed, who was employed in the work, examined it closely, and looked puzzled. At last, when no more of these were found, he called Dalton aside one day and asked him who sold him the land.

Dalton told him the whole story.

"It looks to me," said Reed hesitatingly, "as if you had been fooled. But I can't be sure."

"Fooled? What do you mean?" Dalton stopped work and stared at Reed with a growing horror in his heart.

"Well, as I said, I can't be sure. This gold may be indigenous, but it may not be. The rock is a good deal like the native rock—that's so. But some of these pieces are in queer places. This one now—well—if it had been here thousands or even hundreds of years where I found it, it would have rested either on a clay bed or a rock bottom. There is gold enough in it to carry it down until it would strike one or the other. See? Very well. Where did I find it? Why, about half way down through that sand layer, under a small boulder. Besides, the sand is not made from this kind of rock, and this sort of ore would not get into the midst of it naturally. At least that is the way I look at it."

"What do you mean?" asked Dalton, his face drawn now, and his lips pale with dread.

"Salt," said Reed in a low tone.

Dalton groaned and laid down his measuring-rod. He had been marking out some calculations along the stream.

"But it doesn't follow that there is no gold here," said Reed, with a twinkle of his eye. "I wouldn't give

it up yet. This is a good place. Let's keep on looking, say I."

But Dalton's heart was gone for that day, and he went home and spent the afternoon in misery in his own room.

For ten days more his three men worked along the brook, but not an atom of ore was found. Then Dalton was obliged to tell Mr. Ross what Reed had said.

"And the deviltry can't be proved either, I suppose," he said. "I am to blame for losing your money. It is bitter as death." And he thought how exceedingly greater yet was the bitterness of having lost Julia's money also.

But Julia came now to the front like the heroine she was. She consoled Dalton in a hundred ways, and laughed at the loss of her money.

"We weren't meant to be rich, dear," she said to John. "And now when we are married at Thanksgiving you won't be tempted to accuse yourself again of marrying me for my money."

She would not give him the least chance to suggest any postponement of their wedding, although when Gordon, pater, learned of the failure of the min-

ing and the loss of his daughter's money he made it very uncomfortable for the young people.

John Dalton felt that his misfortunes were almost more than he could bear, notwithstanding the sympathy of the community. He refused point blank to recognize his uncle any longer, and this had its effect. Somehow the atmosphere became different in Collodion, to the speculator. Things grew perceptibly chilly, and even there was a sound, hardly suppressed, from the small boys when he passed by. He knew they were saying 'salt' to him. The trick could not be proved—nobody would ever prosecute him—but Collodion would have its way of inflicting punishment.

About three days before John and Julia were to be married, John was sitting gloomily at home, thinking that with all his approaching happiness in the love of Julia it would be a season of mingled fortune after all, in which the bitter would be almost as great as the sweet, when the door opened and, without ringing to warn of his appearance, Bell the prospector came in upon him.

Dalton rose up with a frown on seeing this man whom he now believed to be one of the swindlers who had robbed him.

"Good evening, Mr. Dalton. Sorry to find you so down at the mouth. Like to talk with you a little."

"I do not know that I have anything to say to you," said John freezingly.

"I understand how you feel, Mr. Dalton. Would feel the same myself. But I've been haunted a deal by that mine matter. I saw plainly that you are a likely young fellow, and thought it too bad to have you beaten in that way. But I've come to help you most likely. Can't say how it will turn, but I think I'm on the right track."

Dalton looked at him curiously. He observed that Bell seemed to be suffering from some physical ailment. His dark eyes were more sunken than ever, and he was sallow and thin.

"Yes," he went on slowly; "fact is, I've been sick, and it made me think. In the fever I saw you a thousand times. I saw something else, too, and I couldn't rest until I came back here and found out. I think I have found out."

"Found out what?" asked John more kindly. The man's condition made him sympathetic. Even an enemy in suffering was to be kindly treated.

"Found out that probably you are the richest man

in this region. I don't charge anything for letting you know it. It's the mine. Those that tried to fool you were fools themselves. If you can get me a horse saddled I will show you."

John Dalton started up in hot excitement.

"Do you mean—?" he paused, remembering that Bell was one of the men who had fooled him before.

"Yes. It's there, or I don't know gold. Get me the horse."

Dalton, dazed and almost dizzy, walked to the nearest stable and returned soon with a horse, saddled for Mr. Bell's use.

He could say nothing while together they went along through the pleasant November sunshine, up the rough road leading to Dalton's land.

"I was up here yesterday," said Bell, as they came to the bank of the trout stream where they had fished together on their first visit. "It was all exactly as it appeared to me in my fever. I had to come now—if I hadn't I would have to die condemned. That is what I heard all the time I was getting out of the fever, 'die condemned!' But if it is all right here I shall get peace, now."

He smiled wanly and weakly, but his eyes burned

with a new light as he went on. Dalton saw there was power in the spiritual realities that had taken hold of this sick man's conscience. He could not answer, but followed Bell up the gorge of the stream. At length they reached a lateral valley where a tiny rivulet flowed down a steep, ledgy slope, splashing over the rock and emptying itself into the larger water at their feet. Here they turned abruptly, and followed up the course of the rivulet, until they came to a level, sandy plateau. Along the edge of this where it lay thinly above the rock, there were marks where the sand had recently been turned up.

"I dug these holes," said Bell, his eyes sparkling. Look at the rock here."

CHAPTER IV.

"ON THE WHOLE."

WHEN Mr. Benjamin Dodge had paid off the mortgage under his agreement, the land that had been worth about five thousand dollars, netted him besides over twenty-five thousand. The remainder of the ill-gotten money went to the confederates, Bell getting a few hundred for his share as a hired accessory. This money was not immediately required by Mr. Dodge, and so he thought that he might use it in certain speculations. The Cripple Creek gold craze was at that time beginning to rage, and Mr. Dodge went across the mountains to examine into certain stocks that were offered for sale. He fell in there with a builder from Chicago, who showed him that he could buy houses in such a way as to make an enormous percentage on his money. After investigating a little he sank his whole available fund in the new houses that the builder showed him. There were thirty small cottages, renting at a fabulous

figure. This investment pleased him so much that he went home and raised all the money he could borrow on his property here and there, to buy more real estate in Cripple Creek. He was so busy for three months completing these transactions that he forgot the insurance.

But he reckoned that his sharp trick upon his nephew and upon those who had backed him, had been about the most fortunate transaction of his whole speculative career. He believed that the feeling against him in Collodion would abate after awhile, and meantime he carried his head as high as he could.

He heard that the wedding of his nephew to Julia Gordon had taken place on Thanksgiving, and wondered what they expected to live on. He remarked, now and then as he had opportunity, that Dalton was "a good fellow but not much for getting along." But a few days after the wedding, to which, it is needless to say, he received no invitation, Mr. Dodge happened to have occasion to pass across Dalton's land. To his surprise he heard sounds from the new mining operations and went up to see what was going on. He came upon Dalton presently, sitting on a rock and directing

his superintendent about getting some machine drills in position.

"What's up now, John? Found the stuff have you?"

John had not spoken to his uncle for weeks, but Mr. Dodge affected a good deal of cordiality, willing to renew friendly relations for his own benefit if he could. He believed that John had set the town against him, and hoped his nephew would feel better by this time.

John slowly rose to his feet and faced Dodge. He felt that he must be a Christian, even in his aversion that rose up against this man, who had tried to ruin him.

"I am working the claim, sir," he answered with considerable coldness in his manner. "We are finding some ore."

"Want ter know! I always thought there was some. You stick to it well. There was talk, I heard, that you had about give up. Hope you are not sinking money for small hopes. As I told you at the first, I never had the faith to work the thing myself. You took your own risk when you bought. I had half a notion those fellows that thought there was so much in it were settin' up a story. Still, the land was about wuth what you give, for the chances in it, and the timber."

"I find no fault," said John. "I think I shall see my money back eventually."

"You will?" exclaimed Dodge, with evident incredulity, and a good deal of curiosity in his tones.

"The prospectors who deceived me are not to be thanked for that though," says John. "I've an idea you know something about that, sir."

"They deceived you, did they? Well I allow they were slick. I didn't take all the stock in the world in their story, as I plainly told you. But if Ross was bent on believing them, why shouldn't I get my price? Of course I knew 'twas Ross at the bottom."

This barefaced manner of turning away his guilt disgusted John, and made him a trifle angry. But he controlled himself and said gently:

"If anybody did wrong in the matter, it is not for me to sit in judgment. But the gold I bought was salt, put there to deceive."

"You don't tell! Ef I'd a known that, like enough I'd a prosecuted the whole lot of 'em. So you an' Ross got bit, did ye? It's rough I allow."

"On the contrary, I expect to be the richest man in Collodion, on account of this mine."

"You do? Well, its a good thing to have sand, John.

I hope you'll get there. Why don't you dig down in the gulch along the brook. The prospectors all have said that's where the gold'll be struck if there is any."

Dodge had no faith at all in the large forecast of John. His nephew was so calm, and seemingly unconcerned in his talk about the claim that Dodge thought he knew the case. John was merely digging away with the hope of finding something some day. He reasoned it out that Ross was sinking some more money after his first investment, in the bare hope of taking out something in the end.

While they were talking, John's foreman, who had been overseeing some last washing in a sluice that had been built on the main stream, came up with a fine sieve in his hand and accosted John.

"Anything new?" asked John, seeing perhaps a chance to strike his little blow, that the human nature in him suggested.

"Yes, Mr. Dalton. That streak that Mr. Bell pointed out this morning is a stunner. Look here."

Dodge bent over the sieve. It did not require any experience with sluice mining to enable him to see. There, all over the bottom of the sieve, lay like gleam-

ing jewels the yellow ore that the men had washed out of the surface soil of the plateau.

Dodge gave a little groan and sat down.

"You can see for yourself," said John. "This is what I have been doing every day for some weeks. It is my land. You meant to swindle me, Uncle Dodge. You merely cheated yourself. I was offered two hundred thousand dollars for this claim, this very morning."

There could not have been a harder way to strike Mr. Dodge. Until he dies it will rankle in him—this realization that he lost this fortune by his own treachery.

He stammered, stared, said something about looking into the papers, and finally went away.

When Cripple Creek went up in flames the uninsured houses of Mr. Dodge went with it, a total loss. He came home from the smoking ruins, confronted by overdue mortgages that he had made to raise money for these investments, and in a few weeks it was known in Collodion that Benjamin Dodge was a ruined man.

But the ruin of his fortune was nothing at all compared with his pitiable condition in Collodion opinion. There was not one friend left to pity him. The uni-

versal voice of the town was to the effect that he had deserved all his ill fortune. Religious people did not hesitate to call it the justice of God.

John Dalton alone offered his uncle assistance, and this he was not above taking. He even reminded Dalton that on one occasion he had lent his nephew a small sum to help him out. Dalton remembered both the security and the usury that the speculator had exacted, but said nothing.

"I have tried to be a Christian, Mr. Tellgood," John said to his pastor, when in the springtime they again sat one day under the elms. "But I have not succeeded. In the first place I complained of divine providence, and for awhile also I laid up a mean grudge against Uncle Dodge."

"But you have learned the way of the Lord," said the minister. "And besides, the experiment is not finished yet. You, who thought that the money ought to be in better hands than it often is—you have a chance to show what you can do with money."

It is a pleasure to record that John Dalton stood this hard test. The salted mine was the source of continual streams of benevolence in Collodion, where Dal-

ton and his wife became very shortly the leaders in every good work.

"The world isn't ordered so very unjustly after all, John," said his pastor to Dalton as they walked home from church one day. Mr. Tellgood had just been preaching on Life's Inequalities, with various pointed allusions that his hearers applied with considerable acuteness.

"It is all right 'on the whole,'" answered John.

THE END.

THE AVENGING BROOK.

THE AVENGING BROOK.

CHAPTER I.

BY PROCESS OF FRAUD.

IT still flows on with a song, babbling and murmuring and splashing against the rocks that rear above its rippling level, telling over and over to me the story that I now tell to you. The leafy branches reflect themselves in the still pool at the foot of the hill, where the shy trout darts and hides when the approaching stranger casts a footfall on the bank. It flows through the shade of wooded slopes, leaping and dashing down the hillside to the lower lands, over a rocky bed and confined between rough and craggy banks. Then, beyond the pool, it creeps out into the wide green meadows, where it winds its crooked course down into the other forests far away, and is lost to our view and acquaintance in the mysterious distances beyond the hazy

horizon. In the springtime, when the snows melt, it becomes a wild torrent that roars fiercely along with a foamy face, showing its tumult angrily until stilled in the level of the wide pool below. All summer it grows milder and more caressing in its melody, liquid and slumbrous, until its murmur is merged with the rustle of the sere leaves that fall from the whispering oaks and lie on its dark bosom. And when the winter frosts seize its waters, it makes strange gleaming shapes on the sides of the rocks in its bed, and a fringe of ragged ice fantastically moulded by the contour of the banks skirts either side, until it spreads across the pool below, to form a solid black surface where the village boys glide in their winter sport until the deeper snows bury it from sight and sound.

Years ago the dwellers in Penesee called this babbling stream Sweetwater Brook. Its waters then were fed from many springs that welled out from the swampy hollow, fringed by hills that lay farther up, beyond the forest. The hamlet of Penesee, lying a half mile to the east of Sweetwater Brook, was a little straggling neighborhood by courtesy called a village, where was a white spired church, a post office and several little stores, not to name the smithy, and the card-

ing mill whose wheels were turned in spring time only by the swollen current of Penesee Brook, that flows into the same meadows where Sweetwater meanders along, and where after many approaches, curving along in separate channels like coquetting lovers, the two streams flow together before entering the far away forest.

A dusty country highway passes over the ridge from Penesee and leads down the slope to Sweetwater where, a little way below the pool, a rustic bridge spans the stream. Continuing thence the road climbs the other slope and winds up a long rise of the land until it tips over the crest and is lost to view towards the setting sun.

Upon this bridge two men stood on a summer day many years ago, conversing together in the sunshine.

"'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof' the Book says. And he promises it to his people, doesn't he?"

Matthew Rand, looking down into the calm water that flowed sluggishly under the bridge, spoke with earnestness, and there was a certain ring in his tones that relieved it of every trace of cant. He was a young man, full of vigorous health, and sturdy as one of the

young oaks that cast its shadows in the water near him.

"The parson is a good preacher," said the other, "and it's all right enough for them that's prosperous. But things are not all smooth for the Lord's people. Then, when you look at the other side of it—well—I can't say as I agree with him there either. He said that a man's sins are sure to bring their own judgment. It's all right fer a theory, Matt, but it doesn't work out."

George Haley, smoking away at a brown clay pipe that was in very fair correspondence with his coarse farmer's attire, blew out a cloud of smoke from his lips and watched it curl up into the sun contentedly. George's farm adjoined Matthew's, and both lay along the eastern side of Sweetwater Brook. They were close friends, and on this Sunday afternoon they were talking together as they often did, upon the morning sermon at the little Penesee meeting-house. They were both religious men, but Haley's religiousness had a shrewd practical side that accounted for his general prosperity perhaps.

"I stick by the Book," said Matthew sturdily. "When it says that a man's sin will find him out, I

like to think it will. It may not all at once but there is many a case where it has. The parson only preached what is there, plain and true, George. But I admit that God's ways are past finding out. You remember the hymn we sing:

> God moves in a mysterious way,
> His wonders to perform.

"But mysterious or not, somehow he fixes it so that the bad will come to bad ends. If they don't seem to, to us, that's because we don't know all about it, I fancy."

"Doesn't many a rich man die in his bed all safe? It's likely he'll get his deserts in 'tother world—but not in this, Matthew, not in this. It ain't the way of the world."

"It's because we are blind then and don't see it, I say. There are a million ways in which God works out his judgment that are hidden from our eyes, as the preacher showed us. The very stones are against those that do evil, and the trees and the earth and the running brooks. I couldn't tell how it is done, but it is done. If I had Elder Down's language I might get nearer to the thing. He says that God makes even nature and society and everything

around us work to judge us, and that, not in some other world, but in this. The more I think about that the more I am convinced that it is so."

"P'raps 'tis, Matt, but I'm mighty hard to catch on then. Looks to me as if the rocks and the pests were as hard against me over there on my rocky old farm as if I was the worst fellow on the ridge. Mebbe I am, though."

Matthew laughed at this close application of his theology, and assured George that he could rest in the judgment of his neighbors safely, who by no means regarded him as a desperate character. George laughed too, a little, and then silence fell for a time between them save for the low murmur of the water and the piping of sparrows in the trees around them.

Looking up presently, Matthew saw emerging from the trees on the hillside two men, who came slowly down towards the bridge through the rocky pasture. One of these both men recognized presently as Wilson Carter, a farmer who had not many years before removed to the neighborhood and who had purchased the land that lay to the westward of Sweetwater. The person with him seemed to them to be a stranger.

"They have been fishing farther up, I suppose," said

George. "That man Carter has no more regard for Sunday than a heathen."

"They seem to be looking about a good deal. I wonder what they are up to."

Indeed Carter and his companion had now turned and ascended a small bluff that overlooked the brook, and standing on this they were evidently surveying the stream up and down. Carter seemed to be pointing out the surroundings to the stranger, his arm raised now and then, while faint sounds of their conversation came down to the bridge.

"It might be somebody looking at the water power," said George thoughtfully. "I've often heard Carter talk about the value of it. It seems to be a standing theme with him."

"I've thought a good deal about that too," replied Matthew. "When father was living he used to say that the brook ought to be worth all the rest of the farm. That's the reason he reserved it when he sold to Carter, I suppose. But it's worth something only when you find a purchaser. It would run a half dozen mills if it were dammed back properly."

"That might help me a trifle too," said George. "My land would get the flow back and that would be

worth something. You remember I sold Carter the upper part of his farm opposite my west pasture. I made the same arrangements. I run the line four rods west of the brook, so as to be sure it is reserved."

"It is a chance for dreaming anyhow, George. Meanwhile I mean to make that farm of mine the best one in the county. Father was a hard worker, but the new ideas didn't take hold of him. I mean to improve on all that. But they are coming down here, I see. Perhaps we'll find out who Carter's company may be."

As Matthew spoke, Carter and his companion started to walk down the hill. There was a rough cart road leading down along the stream, and following this the two men came on towards the bridge. But all at once Carter saw Matthew and George and stopped in his tracks. Then, saying something in a low tone to his companion, a well dressed man of middle age whom they did not recognize, Carter turned aside, and followed by the other, struck off through the pasture towards his own house farther up the road.

"That's a little queer," said George, looking after them. "Carter is quite unsocial to-day I guess. That fellow with him I don't ever remember seeing before."

"Looks as if he didn't want to introduce him, at

all events. But Carter always had freaks of his own. He's a queer fish."

"He's an old gouge," responded George. "The way he works his men and the way he feeds 'em is a shame to human nature."

"It isn't for me to judge my neighbor," said Matthew softly.

George whistled a bar of a hymn tune and made no answer. He knew that Matthew was utterly sincere, and that he was trying to live the actual life of a sanctified Christian. Matthew had been a tough case to reach through all his early young manhood. He had lived a life, before, that was wholly above reproach, as people said, and always attended and supported the church. But about a year prior to the events of this story, Matthew had passed through the throes of a memorable repentance. There was no revival to incite him. It all came in the course of his sober, solitary thought and experience. And then he had cast himself out unreservedly upon a Christian life. He gave up his pipe, and took up a course of systematic giving. These were about all the reforms that his neighbors knew anything about, and yet everybody by and by began to say that a marvelous change had come over Matthew. No-

body could tell what it was. He was no more honest and kind than before. He was no more constant to his church. But he was changed. It may have been a new softness in his voice and manner, a new unction in his friendliness. But no one doubted that something had happened.

Now, with Matthew, there was a great peace of life, and the flow of it was not disturbed even by the pests and frosts and vicissitudes of his great hard New England farm, where everyday nature showed to him her rugged and vexatious resistance. He ploughed and reaped with a smile on his face and content in his heart.

"I reckon," said George after a little, "that I ain't got the grace you have. When I see a man like Carter, and above all, see him prosper at it and get rich like he has, it makes me feel wicked. And it's all from his skinning every fellow he deals with, too. There's only one thing about him that's decent, and that's the blind boy. They say he sets his eyes by that boy."

"There is good in everybody," replied Matthew. "There is in Carter, of course. Maybe his affection for Paul may lead him out into better things yet."

Paul Carter was the only son and only child of Wil-

son Carter, and blind since his birth. Carter, who was a cold, hard man to every other living thing, was soft as sunshine to this blind son. If there was a chance of redemption for his character and his soul it might be as Matthew had suggested, through this boy.

While Matthew and George conversed, Carter and his stranger companion were walking up the road to Carter's house, also conversing as they went.

"Yes, sir," Carter was saying, "I bought the lots, one of them three years ago, and one four years ago, thinking they might be of some use for pasturing. I have so many cattle I don't know what to do with them. They overrun me."

Carter was a smooth-faced, thin-lipped man of uncertain age, rather under-statured, with light, shifting, blue-gray eyes and a rather heavy, resolute jaw. His face was finely wrinkled and had an almost cruel cast, accented by his hooked nose and rather high cheek bones. His hands were hardened by his early toil on the farm, and he still worked a good deal with his men. People who knew him very well said that he did this because he wished to be near enough to get all the work he could out of them.

The stranger who had driven over from the town

of Stanford, five miles down the railroad, had introduced himself as Isaac Richly. He was known by reputation to Carter as a manufacturer from one of the larger towns across the country. He had come purposely to inspect the water power of Sweetwater Brook. Some one had told him that Carter was interested in that subject.

"I suppose you could give a clear title," said Mr. Richly.

"I don't give no other kind," answered Carter shortly. "But I won't agree to keep it any length of time. I am having talk with other parties."

"It looks like the very thing I may want, if the price wasn't high. It was rather queer of the former owners to sell that way to you. But the deeds are all right that you showed me. I will look them up at the court house when I get back."

"Look them up all you choose. They are recorded all right."

"They could hardly have known the value of the water power I should think. But of course its value depends on some one wanting it. The level down below opposite the pool would be a grand place for a mill and for cottages. Perhaps I could arrange with you, if I

buy, to build a few houses. They would pay. They could be built all the way to the bridge."

"If there were anything in it, p'raps."

"Well, I'll take the option for thirty days at ten thousand and think it over. Perhaps it is as well as I am likely to do."

"Suit yourself, Mr. Richly."

Carter knew, with all the awakened instinct of the money getter, that Mr. Richly meant to buy. He regretted that he had not placed a higher price on his land.

"That four rods on the east side is of no use," said Richly, "except to control the water. The bank is too steep and rocky for building. You are sure there is no hitch in the matter?"

"There's the deeds. They speak for themselves, don't they? It says, 'Thence to a point four rods east of Sweetwater Brook to stake and stone.' "

"That seems all right. I'll glance at it again to be sure when we get to your house, I think."

"Do so. I don't object. There's nothing like bein' certain."

They reached the house, a low, red brick structure rather poorly furnished, and flanked by two very large

barns, where Carter's great herds were sheltered in winter.

Mr. Richly examined the deeds again that Carter had once shown him a few hours earlier in the day.

"You observe it says 'east of Sweetwater Brook,' Mr. Richly. And then it goes on: 'Thence by a generally southwest course on a line of the brook as it runs, and four rods to the east of the same to the highway, etc.' That is clear, isn't it?"

And Carter, flushing a little, and with a strange glitter in his eyes, was exulting to remember that both George Haley and Thomas Rand, the father of Matthew Rand, when they signed these deeds, believed that they were signing another writing. And the other writing in each case was a duplicate of these, except that the land boundaries had stopped on the west side instead of the east side of Sweetwater Brook.

Wilson Carter one day, in his own house, had perpetrated a fraud. The next year he had repeated it. In each case on a sudden pretext of going for a blotter, he had left the room long enough to change the documents that had been carefully read over by his victims, for those that he had waiting in the other apartment. And these deeds had been signed

sealed and recorded, while those which the victims supposed they had signed had been consigned to the fire in Carter's fireplace. And by this foul trick he expected now to gain the price of the valuable water power of Sweetwater Brook.

"You'll find the deeds all right. But when the thirty days are up I'll be free to deal elsewhere; that's understood I hope. It's a fair agreement."

Mr. Richly assented, and after a little more talk went away.

Carter watched him out of sight beyond the brook, and then turning inside he said to himself grimly:

"Those fellows will kick. All right, let 'em."

CHAPTER II.

WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION.

IF ever a sin were committed slickly it was this which Wilson Carter had done. The original deeds were long since consumed to ashes and blown to the winds. No one on earth had seen. There was no way to detect him unless he should be foolish enough to betray his secret. The deeds that were really signed were legal and complete. The boundaries specified in them were too clear to leave any doubt as to the limits of the property conveyed. They had never been tampered with, and they had each of them two good and reliable witnesses. Neither of the victims of the fraud would even be able to remember a circumstance so slight as Carter's absence from the room with the deed in his hand for less than a minute in search of a blotter. And under the lapse of many months, and in the secret chambers of the sinner's heart this transaction was buried beyond all human probability of ever being punished or even betrayed.

Can God judge a sin like that? Has God any way to bring it shrieking out into light for a warning to men?

Wilson Carter had for himself only complete satisfaction at the absolutely skillful manner in which he had outwitted the two neighbors of whom he had bought the land. He never regretted it while he went about his farming, leaving them in ignorance for the time being of the trick. When Thomas Rand died he reflected that the way was made that much easier for him whenever he should be ready to declare his ownership of the land. He had seen to it that the stake and stones marking the boundary intended were well removed. By night, long ago, he had himself, unseen by mortal eye, conveyed them across the brook and placed them at the exact spot specified in the fraudulent deeds. And he never failed to excuse the whole matter when it came into his mind, with the mental affirmation that Thomas Rand and George Haley were to blame for their own loss if they failed to read the papers that they signed.

The noon sun was beating down on the hay fields, and making the shortest of shadows under the fences of Carter's farm. The workmen who had been wielding

the scythes and forks along the wide slope of fields above the house, heard the welcome sound of the hoarse dinner horn, and dropped their implements to follow its invitation. Wilson Carter unhitched his horse from a tree under whose shade he had left it while he supervised the "hands," and without inviting anybody to ride with him, drove off to the house.

"Samuel has sent down for you," said Mrs. Carter as he came into the house with the usual hard frown on his face.

He glanced at the table and around the room, making no answer. Mrs. Carter, a prim, sad, small woman, with a continuous look of apprehension on her face and in her attitude, ventured to repeat the announcement, and added:

"He's worse, Wilson. Hadn't you ought to go up?"

"He needn't be sending in haying," said Carter, seating himself before the viands. "It's all I can do to keep a lazy set of men doing something if I 'tend to 'em. Who came?"

"Alice. She looks dragged out. I wish we could help them a little—if we only could afford it."

"I ain't to blame if Samuel was shiftless, I guess. You were always snivelling about him and his. I'd

like to know if I'm obleeged to support 'em. Alice can work, same's I have to. I ain't got any money to waste on 'em. I wish you'd please to understand that, and once fer all."

He cast a look out of his sharp eyes at his wife that made her shrink back and drop the subject.

Samuel Carter was a half brother to Wilson and a hopeless cripple. He was supported by his daughter Alice, a girl of sweet disposition, who had hitherto been able to leave him during the day, while she went to do sewing for any one who might be willing to employ her. They lived in one of Wilson Carter's houses, an old, tumble-down cottage not worth in money more than a year's rental which they paid for its use. Samuel, the invalid was able up to this time to wheel himself about in a chair in and out of the cottage and around the rooms. He had many times sent for his brother to come and see him in his loneliness and feebleness, but Wilson Carter had in his heart no sympathy nor love for the sick man, and rarely came to the cottage except to collect the monthly rent. On these occasions he sometimes inquired coldly for his brother's health, and occasionally expressed the hope that he would improve. Samuel, who was a rather garrulous

and affectionate person, felt greatly hurt at this brusque treatment, and Alice noticed that Wilson's visits were invariably followed by a lower state of her father's health.

Wilson Carter ate his midday meal, which was half done when his men came to join him, in silence. He usually ate so, unless he had some cross word of fault-finding to utter. When he was through himself he always contrived to have some sly word for the benefit of his employes about the necessity of hurrying the work. It was known by everybody who worked for him that he was a hard task-master. Every minute of daylight in which work was not briskly progressing he begrudged, and did not hesitate to use his sharp tongue when he thought any man was doing less than his share in the field.

When he had started them off and had satisfied himself that they were all at work, he returned to the house to take his customary mid-day nap. He did not disdain to favor himself to this extent, especially as it rendered him fresh enough to enable him to go out later into his hayfield and outwork his laborers, as a spur to them.

On this day as he came back to the house he noticed

the doctor's gig at the door, and presently saw Doctor Haswell himself coming out of the front gate.

"Get in and drive up with me," said the doctor. "Samuel is sinking fast. He can't live a great while, I fear."

Carter fidgeted and hesitated.

"I can't very well," he said sulkily. "But you drive on, and mebbe I'll get up there a little later."

The doctor sniffed and left him abruptly without another word. He thought he did not remember any such instance of cold-blooded indifference.

Carter went into the house, muttering and frowning.

"It is about Samuel," he said to his wife. "But I'll take my nap, and then if I feel like it—. I hope he won't die in the midst of my haying though."

And while he took his nap, up in the little cottage there waited a feeble, dying man, who now and then turned a little on his pillow and asked with a longing look in his eyes:

"Has Wilson come? He is the only relative in the world, 'cept you, Alice. Look out an' see if he's coming."

The thin hands lying on the cushioned arms of the

reclining chair moved slowly about as if searching for some grasp of comfort from a stronger hand.

"He'll be along soon, I guess, father. Take the cordial now and perhaps you will sleep some more."

Alice, a pale, slim, delicate girl with wide, wistful, blue eyes, gave her father the cordial, glancing through the half curtained window down the carriage lane hoping her uncle might be coming. She felt almost hatred in her gentle heart towards this hard-natured relative, who for years had allowed her father to live here in suffering without a word of sympathy or a single manifestation of helpfulness. For her part she almost wished he might not come.

"Perhaps he won't come at all," complained the sick man. "Perhaps he has forgotten me entirely. Can't you send again for him. I don't feel as if I could last a great while."

"The doctor said he would perhaps be up later," said Alice, evasively. She had caught something of the physician's skepticism as to the probability, and her father felt that she was uncertain.

But he turned a little towards the open window and said no more. He felt with keenest pain the utter de-

sertion of the only man who might have given him a brother's comfort in this hour of his extremity.

As the sun lowered westward it began to shine across the window sill and creep into the room. The sick man watched it dreamily as it fell upon the red petals of a bunch of roses that Alice had gathered in the morning and placed there for him to look at. As he lay thus looking out into the hazy afternoon sunshine, a shadow was suddenly interposed, and the sick man said feebly but hopefully:

"See if that isn't Wilson. I thought he would come."

But the firm quick step on the turf and then on the threshold was not his brother's. The comer stepped lightly inside.

"I heard Mr. Carter was worse. I hope it isn't true," said Matthew Rand, coming brightly into the room. Alice, with a pleased flush in her face, rose to meet him.

"Father is feeling a little poorly to-day," she said, dropping her eyes. Alice had her dreams, and in her secret heart there was one that for all the world she would not have suffered to come out into the light. It was of this sturdy, fine-looking young farmer, who had

many times shown her little attentions, and who, all unaware himself of what he had done, had awakened in her gentle, true heart a response that he had not tried to elicit.

Alice glanced towards the bed, and Matthew went forward and took the sick man's hand tenderly.

"I thought it might be Wilson," he murmured, but evidently felt pleased to be remembered by the young farmer. "But I am glad to see you. I shan't be here long to trouble anybody."

Then he fixed his eyes on Matthew a little, and then on Alice. He was thinking, perhaps, how strong and reliant the young farmer looked, and how well he would serve, if it could be, as a life support for the slim girl at the window.

"I don't know what Alice will do after I am gone," he said. "But it won't be any loss that way. She keeps two of us now, and she'll only miss me a little while. We're all soon forgotten, after we go."

"Don't say that, father," expostulated the girl gently. "You are only a little worse to-day. You will be better to-morrow."

"I'll go down and tell your brother," volunteered

Matthew. "I guess he doesn't know you are—are—not feeling so well."

Matthew saw at once that there would be little time to lose. So, answering the grateful look of the sick man with a cheerful word, he walked hastily to Wilson Carter's.

He found Carter in the hayfield, helping with the loading, and at once informed him of his errand.

"That again? I said I'd go up when I got along with the work. I can't afford to let good hay spoil, can I? Tell 'em I'll be along towards sundown mebbe."

"I think you would better come now," said Matthew, concealing his contempt for this heartlessness.

"I cal'late I know my own business best, young man. I believe in caring fer the living a little, too. Ef you ain't nothing to do you can stay up with 'em until I get clear of this work, I reckon."

"Mr. Carter, I think your brother is dying. But you know best whether you wish to go."

"We've all got to die, I s'pose."

Matthew turned away and went sadly back to the cottage.

"He will come later," was all he could say to com-

fort the sick man. But he exchanged with Alice a glance that told her the situation.

Then he sat down by the bedside and slowly read from the words of Jesus. The invalid's face was turned towards the window, and he lay very quiet, apparently listening. But after a little while they heard him whisper, and Alice bent to catch his words.

"He didn't come."

He was still thinking of Wilson, his brother. Matthew stopped reading and took the sick man's hand. He felt it grown cold and deathlike. As the sun sank lower the shadow of the dread angel drew nearer. He spoke no more.

About four o'clock there was a sound of wheels outside. This always meant that some one had come to the house, as the road ended there. Matthew, glancing from the window, saw Wilson Carter hitching his horse outside.

"He has come," he said cheerily to the sick man. But in a moment looking into the ghastly face on the cushion he saw that Samuel Carter was dead.

He took Alice by the hand and said solemnly: "He is gone. He is at peace."

The heavy feet of Wilson sounded on the wooden floor. Matthew met him at the door.

"Your brother is dead," said Matthew coldly.

"He is? I s'pose we'll all die," said Wilson, evidently vexed to hear that he had made his journey in vain. "I needn't have come just now, then. He owed a month's rent, but I s'pose I'm able to lose it."

Matthew looked in amazement at this burly, unfeeling figure, and said slowly:

"I trust you will not lose the rent."

Then, unable to stay any longer in his presence for fear he might forget his manners entirely, he turned on his heel and went back to Alice. Wilson called after him:

"I may get up again after sun down. I s'pose you'll stay and look out for things. I'll get somebody to set up with Samuel if I have time."

He remembered that one of the "hands" was a trifle out of health, and feared that advantage would be taken of his absence to shirk the work. He went off again without anything more in his soul than a feeling of regret that he had been nagged into leaving the haying inopportunely.

And Matthew Rand, taking Alice by the hand, said with a ring of anger in his voice:

"He's a brute, Alice." Then a little more softly: "I hope when he comes to his dying bed he will find more mercy, not to say decency, than he has shown to your poor father."

Alice wept gently by the couch, holding her dead father's hand.

"I will go down and send up some help. There are friends enough, when they know."

Alice thanked him, and he went off to the village on his errand. On the way he fell in with a neighbor who lived down the intervale, going to the village with a load of dairy products. This neighbor invited him to ride. About the first thing the man said, after Matthew was seated on the wagon, caused Matthew to open his eyes and utter a low whistle:

"I heard that Wilson has sold the water power."

"I guess not," said Matthew, smiling. "He couldn't very well, seeing that it belongs to me."

"Sho! Don't tell. But I had it straight. Leastwise he's given an option on it. Ten thousand dollars they say."

"That's mere talk, of course. Who told you?"

"I don't remember. It's all about the village."

Matthew grew very thoughtful. He reasoned that probably Carter was improving some chance to act as broker and sell the property for a profit after first buying it in. He thought to himself that he would see to it if there was any bargain to be made he would do the selling of his own property. After all, the rumor might have nothing at all behind it.

But his neighbor was very specific in retailing the story. It was now two weeks since the visit of Mr. Richly to Wilson Carter. Matthew heard again that day before he was through making arrangements in behalf of Alice, and from other sources, the same account of the sale of the water power. On going back with several friends of Alice, who had quickly volunteered to assist the afflicted girl and arrange for the funeral, he passed Carter's house, and happening to see him coming out of one of the great barns Matthew accosted him. He was curious to learn if there might not be something to his advantage in the affair. He had often thought of the water power, and meant to try to sell it some day.

"Is it true that somebody wants the brook, Mr. Carter?" he asked, going directly about his inquiry.

Carter dropped his eyes and turned a little red in the face. Then there was a grim, sinister shutting of his thin lips and he said slyly:

"So you have heard about the selling the brook, have you? But I don't have to give anybody any account, I guess. That's what I bought it for."

"Bought what?" asked Matthew in surprise. He began instantly to feel a suspicion of some rascality.

"The brook. That's the thing you asked about, ain't it? I get a handsome figure, too. I s'pose you've no objection, young man?"

"What do you mean? Of course you know very well the brook doesn't belong to you. That was especially reserved. I have heard my father say so frequently. The boundary is four rods to the west. I hope you haven't been selling my property."

"Don't you go too fast, Mr. Rand. I have the deeds and I know how they read. I don't sell anybody's property but my own."

Carter stood up defiantly, and looked doggedly at Matthew, but with some shifting of his eyes, that could not, after all, meet fully the frank, honest countenance of the young farmer.

"You don't deny that I own that brook, I suppose?"

said Matthew resolutely. "If you have sold it, of course your conveyances will not stand."

"Wall, some folks know a good deal, but they don't always get the better of Carter. Why do you think I should care to buy that old rocky pasture if it wasn't to get the brook? And I got it all right."

"Not unless you stole it," replied Matthew, beginning to get angry. "However, I'll not talk with you now. I am going up to attend to things that better belong to his brother to do—for a dead man and his daughter. I'll attend to this matter later."

"Especially the daughter, hey?" sneered Carter. He supposed that Matthew had some interest in Alice beyond his mere Christian neighborliness. Matthew flushed as he went off, remembering the lonely girl who was left in the world with only this brutal uncle to represent blood kinship to her.

"The deeds must be right, or else they have been foully altered," said Matthew to himself as he went on.

CHAPTER III.

LEFT WITH GOD.

WILSON CARTER was careful to incur no expenses in the matter of his brother's funeral, and appeared but once, for a few minutes, at the cottage on the evening of his brother's death. Matthew did not wait for this unnatural relative to act, but busied himself about the matter, employing the undertaker and making all the necessary arrangements, assisted by the friends of the young orphan, who had made many while sewing in various families in Penesee.

Matthew had no time until the afternoon of the next day to investigate the water power affair. Then he went to the county seat to investigate. He found out in short order that the sale was recorded, transferring the property from Wilson Carter to Mr. Richly, at the price of ten thousand dollars. There was no full transcript of the deeds, but the records specified land and water power definitely enough to satisfy Matthew

that Carter had actually undertaken to convey the brook.

He rode back with a flushed face, thinking what he should do. And all the way he was running over in his mind a text of Scripture that he had often quoted to himself.

"If thine enemy smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also, if he compel thee to go with him a mile go with him twain."

"I wonder if that means literal submission to Wilson Carter's villany? Of course it is villany. My father reserved the brook. That is without doubt. But I will sleep on it and then I must see his deeds."

Matthew had learned deliberation and self-control, and he had been thoroughly imbued with the patience of a Christian spirit. He did nothing more that night save to kneel at his bedside and pray for guidance, and then, with the impulse that Christ required even this hard thing of him, he prayed for Wilson Carter.

The next morning he arose with peace in his heart and went about his work with a little hymn in his mouth, that he sang softly while he was milking the cows and arranging for the day.

"I'll have to let the upper field go another day,

mother," he said, while he was eating breakfast. "Samuel Carter's funeral is at ten, you know, and I ought to go up and help a little more."

Mrs. Rand, a saintly, gentle-faced old lady who loved her stalwart boy as mothers ever do, kissed him and approved whatever he chose to do, saying she supposed the haying would turn out all right, and that there was a duty to be done to the neighbor as well as to one's self.

"Alice will be left all alone, Matthew," said she quietly. "I wonder who will take care of the poor girl?"

She looked at Matthew meaningly. Alice was rather nearer just at present to Mrs. Rand's sympathies than she was even to Matthew's.

"She is a capable girl, mother, and will get along. She could manage to support her father all through his sickness, so I reckon she can care for herself now he is gone."

Mrs. Rand sighed softly and watched Matthew drive away, wondering if he would not see sometime what she had already seen in Alice's eyes and manner. She thought how fitting it would be for these two Christian young people to be here together under the same roof with herself, while she was growing old.

Wilson Carter managed to forego his haying long enough to attend the funeral of his brother, evidently impatient at the length of the service, which he had not hesitated to mention to the minister beforehand, specifying that it should be very brief. He hurried off when all was over, glad to be relieved, while others returned with Alice, and cared for matters at the cottage.

As soon as he could find a spare moment Matthew went rather unwillingly to see Carter. He wished to examine the deeds given by his father and by George Haley.

"The deeds, is it? I suppose I'm not obleeged to show'em, am I? I s'pose you don't want to go to law about it."

Carter was evidently concerned on this point, and looked apprehensively at Matthew.

"I might," said Matthew.

"'Twouldn't do you no good," sneered Carter. "I guess you ain't got no powerful sight of money to back up a lawsuit. But you can look at the deeds, I s'pose."

He went rather sulkily to the house and fished out the documents in question from an old iron box. Matthew looked them through critically.

"I reckon you'll see they're all right, Mr. Rand. It's four rods to the east of the brook as it runs, you notice. I hain't cared to run any fence because my cattle can't get down the bank and across the brook."

"It should be four rods west of the brook as it runs," said Matthew looking keenly at Carter. "That is the way George understands it, and that is the way my father understood it. There has been some——" "foul play" he would have said, but checked himself, remembering that he would be wrong to accuse Carter without some better grounds than his own impression.

"I don't understand this," he continued, scrutinizing the deeds closely. "But if you have the deeds for it I am mistaken, and you had a right to sell. But there is something behind and I mean to find out what."

"You'll have a good time finding out anything at all," said Carter with an exultant little laugh. He felt how secure his fraud was, and rejoiced to observe that Matthew was nonplussed, and did not know what to do in the case.

But Matthew, without much farther conversation with Carter, whom he disliked so much that he felt in constant danger of saying un-Christian things in his

presence, went up the brook across lots, and over an upper bridge to George Haley's farm.

As he went on he was shaping in his mind the course he ought to pursue. Satisfied that he had been made the victim of a fraud, and smarting with the sense of having been robbed by Carter, nevertheless, in that short walk, his Christian principles serenely triumphed.

"HE never had any rights of his own to defend, why should a poor disciple like myself be better than Jesus? If they wronged him he suffered it and forgave. I wonder if he would dream of going to law with Wilson Carter if he were here in my place. The notion is absurd. It is only my regard for that water power that suggests it. And here am I, that promised to go wherever He might lead. Well, I will, if I see it clearly. Least of all will I demean myself by quarreling in court with a man like Wilson Carter. That would be distinctly worse than to lose my farm altogether and everything earthly I have. I simply am not going to do anything of the kind. I have lived without any benefit from that water power for a good many years, and father did the same before me, and now I can continue. If he gained it by some tricky fraud, he will be the sufferer in the end. Yes, he is the only

one really injured. 'What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' I wonder if I can't learn that Jesus was right about these things?"

Part of the time he spoke these thoughts aloud, as he walked on under the shade of the wooded pasture. The birds piped at him their innocent approval as he went by, and the squirrels even looked brightly out from the stumps and walls at him, and all the leaves whispered their rustlings of peaceful music in his ears. And with scarcely a struggle, during that calm walk Matthew submitted his soul to this keen insult and wicked fraud, and felt a happy delight in his triumph over his desire to resist it.

But he found George Haley in a different frame of mind. He had heard of the sale of the water power only that afternoon and Matthew found him on the point of starting to the village to consult the only lawyer the town boasted.

"You don't mean to fight the matter, George, do you?" said Matthew quietly.

"That's the very thing I do mean, Matt. And I'll teach that skunk a lesson too, or my name isn't Haley."

"But I've seen the deeds, George. There is some

error somewhere. The signatures are all right. It is father's handwriting, and yours too."

"'Tisn't any such thing, Matthew Rand! The deed I signed I read twice or three times. It said plain enough the west side of the brook. If he's got one that says east side, then it's a fraud and a forgery. I'll make him suffer for it too."

"What good would that do?"

George stared at Matthew and grew red in the face. There was something so calm, gentle and subdued in Matthew's tone and manner that it acted as a rebuke to George.

"You don't say that you mean to let that man run all over you like a——villain and not strike back, do you?"

"The Master had some reason to strike back. He didn't do it, George. Neither will I."

"You mean that you'll let him steal that water power of yours and not attempt to stop him, Matthew Rand?"

"That means a quarrel, a scandal, a standing out for mere rights, a law suit and all the abuse of the lawyers and all the ugliness of it. If I weren't a Christian at all I think I should hesitate about righting

myself that way. Besides I have no proof that Carter has committed a fraud."

George dropped his eyes and stood silent a long time.

"I guess I ain't Christian to that extent," he said at last. "I think a little fight and a little raking over would do that man more good than all your kindness."

"When a man loses faith in love and forbearance," replied Matthew, "he loses faith in the foundations."

Then with a sudden rising of a sort of native eloquence in his voice he suddenly broke out again:

"See here, George Haley. Does God rule this world or doesn't he? And if he does, what's the use of believing that half-way? I believe he does, and I don't mean to believe it half-way. Very well! If he does rule, he knows a great sight more about that water power than you or I. God rules, George. You and I needn't go about in our coarse, ignorant, fashion trying to work out his judgments for him. There isn't any principle at stake. It is merely a bare question of property between some human worms, not worth talking about on your dying day. If Carter stole that water power God knows how to punish Carter. So now, I say to you, George, you and I had better let God

alone and let him do that thing in his own way. Here's a clear case for him to work on, George, and he knows all about it. I'm a young man, and so are you. We've got time to see whether God approves the thing that has been done."

"I s'pose it won't do any good, Matt', for me to go it alone. I don't understand your way of looking at it very well, I guess, but if you think that way I'll have to stand it. I don't lose a great deal."

"Well, I put it to you whether it isn't the Christian way, George. I'm not authorized to pose as one of the Lord's prophets, but I tell you that brook will never benefit the man that has taken it wrongfully. The Lord will see to that."

He spoke as confidently as a man who had a revelation. George Haley was not as fine nor as religious as Matthew, but he could not but be impressed by the quiet earnestness of his neighbor. He wondered curiously how Matthew expected the Lord to work out this problem.

"I never'll be satisfied until that man gets his pay for this cheating," he said doggedly.

"Nor I. But that is the very thing I am predicting. He will get it to the last iota. He will, because the

Lord rules, and the Lord is a great deal more reliable than the county court, George. That brook has a voice, and it can tell the Lord all about the case. The day will come, George Haley, when Wilson Carter will discover that the worst thing he could do was to steal it. It will find a way to judge him, depend upon it."

"I know the minister said something of that kind about natural things,—and how they turn against wrong doers. I hope it'll turn out so."

"Give up your notion of going to law then, George, and wait. As true as the Lord rules he will make the brook its own justifier and God's justifier. Wait and see, George."

George Haley looked around in the pleasant sunshine, thinking of that proposition. He felt, dully, how hard it was to put away his rights in this fashion. He knew that he had meant to reserve his part of the brook, on which there was no water power but which would be enhanced in value by the damming of the stream for manufacturing. But the strong faith and confident tone and manner of Matthew turned the balance of his mind. He looked into Matthew's face and then reached out his hand.

"All right," he said with a smile. "I'm with you. We'll leave the brook with God."

The two men clasped hands in the sunset, their faces lighted, as they stood, by its glory, and Matthew said:

"It will be safe there, I reckon. God knows how to take care of it, and he will."

It was a strange theology of common life. Will God honor that kind of faith?

CHAPTER IV.

THE DAM.

NOTWITHSTANDING the agreement between them, Matthew and George Haley at the latter's suggestion examined carefully the boundaries specified in the fraudulent deeds. Finding the bounding marks all in the specified places and the deeds, which George also examined, apparently all right, George confessing that the signature to the one he had given was genuine, the two young farmers dropped the matter and allowed the fraud to stand.

A year passed away. Mr. Richly came upon the scene and made extensive arrangements for utilizing his purchase. George and Matthew, respecting the compact between them to leave the whole matter to God, did not inform anybody of their conviction about the ownership of the property. When George had thought it all over, and had a few more quiet talks with Matthew, he succeeded in putting away

his rancor and settled down to Matthew's view of the case.

Matthew's mother of course had to be told. When she knew that Carter had sold the brook, she remembered that Mr. Rand, when living, had frequently repeated to her the account of the sale to Carter, telling how he had saved out the brook with the hope some day of realizing a goodly sum for it.

"But your way is best in the end, my son," she said, without a murmur. "I have seen a good many mean things done, Matthew, and I never knew one of them to prosper in the end. The Lord knows best and he will bring this all right."

Matthew kissed her shining face and after that felt increased faith in the wisdom of his course. And if anybody asked about the matter, with the impression that Matthew must have sold the brook to Carter, he evaded direct answers, which evasions were attributed to his business reserve. He was known to be a carefully spoken young man, and no one was surprised by this reticence.

The first step towards the improvement of a water power is, of course, the making of a dam. The fall of Sweetwater Brook was continuous for more than a

half mile, and the volume of water in the spring was enough for several hundred horse power. By building the dam nearly up to the head of the rapids, besides taking advantage of the whole perpendicular descent, a long valley above could be filled, mostly lying in Wilson Carter's upper farm, together with the land of which he had defrauded Haley, thus forming a large pond, that would furnish storage for summer use. In the building of this dam Mr. Richly thought it would be advantageous to utilize the help of some of the farmers who, when the less busy season on their lands was over, might be hired at very low wages to assist. As he had bought the brook of Carter at a figure which he thought entirely satisfactory to himself, and as nothing had been said to him about the fraud, he naturally consulted that individual a good deal in the preliminary surveys and arrangements. Carter, playing his manners with as much shrewdness and courtesy as he knew how to assume, saw, as he thought, a chance to make yet a little more money out of his scheme. He had built a dam once in his life, and knew a good deal about the process. He mentioned to Mr. Richly that he thought he could build this one much more cheaply than a regular contractor from

the city, and just as good a dam for practical purposes.

"It will have to be built strong up there," said Richly, one day, while they were talking it over. "It wouldn't do to have a break-out. There'll be enough water behind it to flood the whole meadow when it is done."

"Stone is heavier than water," said Carter assuringly. "I can put them in so ten times the water can't stir 'em."

But before giving out any contracts Richly had the surveys carefully made and the specifications drawn up to suit the conditions and very thoroughly cover the necessities of the location. Among other things they specified that the stone borders of the dam should be sunk four feet below the bed level of the brook, and laid dry in caissons, and that they should extend at this depth a certain distance, imbedded in the rocky soil of the banks. Against these abutments the dam was to be built of timbers whose main support was to be the side walls thus bedded in the banks. It was apparent from this plan that the strength of the dam was dependent chiefly upon the secure and honest building of these abutting stays of stone.

Carter read the specifications over carefully. He was minute in praising especially this careful provision for making the side walls secure.

"And four feet ain't a bit too deep to lay them," he said heartily. "I reckon I can build the thing so it'll stand as long as the world does, Mr. Richly."

Richly left him the specifications to figure upon.

"What are they?" asked Mrs. Carter, meekly, when in the evening she saw him bending over the papers at his red table where he always did his writing.

"Don't concern a woman, I guess," he said, more good-naturedly than usual, however. "It's about the dam. I'm going to take the contract to build it. If I do, there'll be hands to board, so it might concern you after all. He wants it dug clear through the earth for the foundations. But I know how to slight a piece of work without injuring it, I guess."

"There's going to be houses down below, ain't there?"

"That's the idee. But I'll make it safe enough if I get the job, and not go to all that cost, either."

Mrs. Carter said no more then. But she had that moment a curious prejudice against the dam project that once or twice caused her to warn Carter against

anything that might leave it insecure. She could not herself then have told why. The day came when this premonition was brought to her mind in a moment, when its force seemed like a voice of warning from heaven.

Carter knew that Mr. Richly was a shrewd man of affairs who would canvass all the possibilities in letting his contracts. But he thought he, being on the ground, would be able to underbid any one from abroad in making the dam. He figured out several calculations that Mr. Richly had not contemplated. He was shrewd enough himself and knew enough about the probable cost of that kind of work to enable him to guess pretty near the minimum that would be reached by any one who might go strictly by the specifications. But Carter had heard Richly remark that it would be impossible for him to oversee all the details of the construction himself, and that he wanted to get the work into honest hands.

On the basis of these side calculations, that he did not mention even to his wife, Carter after several days of figuring and surveying made his bid for the contract. He was careful not to run his figures so low as to excite suspicion, but he felt confident that they were low enough to take the award.

Now here was a man cunningly planning his own ruin in order to make a few hundred dollars by cheating Mr. Richly. He did not intend to build the dam according to specifications. He had worked out a whole scheme of details in his mind whereby he could save nearly half the necessary expense of honestly doing the work as agreed. He had already been enriched by stealing the brook, and the success of this fraud only incited him to commit the next one. Whom the gods would destroy they first make blind.

Mr. Richly knew as much about Carter as his neighbors knew. He regarded him as a hard, shrewd man, but had no reason for thinking him a scoundrel. When he saw that Carter's figures were a little better than the next lowest bid, and had looked into some work of the sort built by Carter which seemed to be all right, he came up to Penesee and gave him the contract, under certain well-defined bonds which Carter was readily able to furnish.

Carter was surprised when he began to believe that neither Matthew nor George Haley intended to make any contest against his conveyance of the brook. He did not understand that kind of forbearance. Had he been the sufferer, he would have contested, even hope-

lessly, merely in order to make expense to the other party. The best he could make of the course of these young men was to attribute their self-restraint to a fear of being defeated. He was certain he would beat them in any court, and thought they were wise enough not to go to law for nothing. The idea that they were leaving their cause in the hands of the Lord with every confidence of seeing justice done in the end, could not enter the thought of such a man as Carter.

But he was set thinking a trifle in another way when, on going over to offer Matthew employment on the dam, the young farmer refused point blank to work for him a day.

"You may build dams, Mr. Carter, but the Lord will take care of my interests. I very well know that you have no right to the brook. Don't ask me to help you out in your transaction."

Carter went off astonished, wondering what Matthew could suppose the Lord had to do with building dams—to say nothing of stealing a water power. But when George Haley said very much the same thing to him, it went into his consciousness a little deeper. He had never been a believer in religion or in God. But he was intelligent enough to know that conscience has

a place somewhere in every man's breast. He believed in God without admitting it, too; that is, he believed superstitiously, and had a kind of moral cowardice in relation to things he could not plainly understand. Like many another atheist he never liked to stand under a tree in a thunder storm, and if he saw the moon over his left shoulder, or was crossed in his walk by the flight of a black crow, he experienced an uneasy feeling of apprehension. So now, when he went home from his interviews with Matthew and afterward with George, he was not able all day to shake off the haunting memory of their words. He said to himself that it would be just like those fellows to give him some sort of bad luck, with their talk about the water power. He even wondered if they were not praying against him, and if praying had any effect anywhere.

This was the first beginning of the work of coward conscience in Wilson Carter.

But he succeeded readily in securing help enough without Matthew and George, and then began his fraudulent work on the dam. He got everything ready so as to time the visits of Mr. Richly and make the work correspond outwardly with the contract. He first got all of his stone in readiness and hauled to the brook,

and then began digging on the day of Mr. Richly's expected visit. The manufacturer could come down not oftener than once in a week, usually on Saturday afternoon, returning Monday. As soon as he was out of town on Monday, early in October, Carter set his men at work. The wall that was to go down four feet for safety below the bed of the brook in caissons, went down that distance only at such points as might be liable to be inspected. It was imbedded in the bank so as to be beyond view, and not to be detected as violating the contract without a good deal of trouble. The work was all finished on one side before Mr. Richly came again. He was deceived, moreover, by noticing that on the other side the caisson that Carter had cunningly begun answered, so far as it went, to the specifications. Carter added to Mr. Richly's confidence a slyly-repeated account of the great labor it had been to put the wall down so far, and complained that, after all, he was likely to lose money on the job.

Mr. Richly went away satisfied; and the next week the other side was carried far enough along to be beyond suspicion when he came again. As a matter of record, the dam was imbedded in the bank far enough to hold the ordinary spring floods for some years. But

it was certain that the water, by its continuous pressure and slow motion, would some day work around the ends and under the foundations of the stone work. Then there was nothing but the weight of the stones left to keep back the weight of the pond that would be leashed behind it, waiting to break through.

But there was no one to betray him. None of the workmen knew what the specifications were. None of them could have said exactly how deep the foundations went nor how far they were imbedded in the bank. They had worked as they were directed, and would not have been able to enlighten Mr. Richly had he thought it worth while to examine them on the point.

The dam was built and finished. The timbers rested against the abutments, and the heavy planks were driven closely down to the bed and rested against their stone bases. And in a few days where the upper course of the brook had been, flanked by its sloping banks on either side, there now lay a black expanse of water that, rising higher and higher, at last over-ran the flush plank and formed a beautiful fall, sparkling in the sun and foaming into yeasty eddies before it swept on in the lower course.

A flume was made, as provided for in the construc-

tion of the dam, and Mr. Richly's carpenters began their plans for building his factory farther down the brook.

In the spring this was to be built, and with it various cottages for his workmen, a boarding house and store—in fact, a small manufacturing settlement that would transform the quiet valley into a scene of bustling activity and make money for its owner.

And Wilson Carter, gradually forgetting the rebuff given him by Matthew and George, calculated how much he might yet make out of the fortunate coming of the industry to this locality. He had already made a fortune by it. Ten thousand dollars, in the primitive and simple conditions of country New England life, was wealth, and Carter had his money safely laid away, congratulating himself that he had made it by a stroke of shrewdness that he never expected to regret. And he knew nothing at all about the compact of the two men whom he had wronged to leave their case with God. He settled down to the assurance that he had succeeded, and cared very little about what God might do.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST BLOW.

IN the midst of his work of carrying out his fraudulent projects, there was, however, all the time a load of intense anxiety upon the mind of Wilson Carter. It did not have any immediate relation to his wrong-doing, but it made him nervous, and often-times sleepless when, after his hard day's work, he sought his pillow for the night.

The cause of this anxiety was Paul, his blind boy. By the advice of the local physician, about the time the dam building began, Carter sent his unfortunate son to the city where he was to undergo a treatment for his sight that promised to be successful in removing the affliction. As George Haley had remarked, all of Carter's affectional interest centered in Paul. The boy was now fifteen years of age, and from his earliest childhood he had been the care and pride of his father. Though blind, he was possessed of unusual intelligence, and by his sweet disposition and sunny ways had endeared himself to all those who knew him.

Upon him Wilson Carter seemed to concentrate all the tenderness he had in his disposition, and while he was hard, grasping and unloving to everybody else, he had never been known to speak a harsh word to his boy. This doubtless showed that somewhere under his hard disposition there was the latency, at least, of a different grade of impulse. If it was not enough to regenerate him, it might be at least enough to make him susceptible to the pangs of regret and remorse.

At length Paul came back in charge of one of the hospital assistants.

"Tell me now—will he see?" burst out Carter, almost before he could shake hands with Paul, who stood quietly by the fire smiling at his father. His eyes were bandaged, but he bore little trace of the ordeal to which the operation in the hospital had subjected him.

"Yes, father. The doctor says in a month or two I will see as well as anybody. Isn't that good news now, father?"

"Thank the Lord!" said Carter, using, however, only the first expression of gratitude familiar to him. He patted Paul on the shoulder and inquired into all the particulars of the operation at the hospital.

"I feel as well as ever, father, now," said Paul, sitting down to his supper. "I was nervous at first, but when the time came for it, somehow I wasn't much afraid after all."

Carter paid the charges in the bill that the assistant had brought without even attempting, as he almost invariably did, to beat down the price, even though it was a heavy bill, to his thinking, for the service performed.

Paul seemed to renew his spirits at once when he got back to the sound of familiar voices and to the contact of familiar objects. He had a black and white Gordon setter that was overjoyed to greet him home again, and leaped and barked in his delight for an unusually long time before he could be induced to desist. This dog was Paul's constant companion, and together they went all over the farm and neighboring country, with which Paul was far more familiar than many would have been who can see. He knew every path that led through the various wood tracts, and every spring in the meadow, and every solitary tree or great rock or grassy hollow in all the near region. He was an active boy, rather delicate of build, but full of vital force. By the sense of touch alone he could tell

his surroundings and find his direction wherever he wished to go.

When his father knew that his idolized son would regain sight, his step grew light, and he thought more about this circumstance than about his money-making, even. He did not tire of hearing over and over the account of Paul's experience in the hospital, and the assurance of the doctors that he would be cured. And with a reserve that was curious, but which he had somehow always felt obliged to maintain, he could not bring himself even to mention the transactions of the past few months. He might cheat Matthew and George and Mr. Richly, but he would not have ventured to reveal his wrong-doing to Paul. He kept all these things as far from the boy as he could, feeling what a gulf there was between his love for Paul and his sins against those with whom he had dealt in business relations.

It happened that for some days Paul did not go near the brook. He was busy about many things, feeding his rabbits and hunting beechnuts in the wood on the hillside, and as he had not heard the matter mentioned, he knew nothing of the changes that had been made with the musical old friend which had sung to him so

many strange and beautiful songs in the past years. The brook was one of his great delights. Often he had sat on its bank and fished for the trout that he could catch where no one else could seem to induce them to bite. He knew all the trees where the woodpecker had his haunt, and every rock that sheltered a squirrel playing along its banks. And almost daily in the summer time he had crossed its course on a series of flat stones that had been placed in its bed to form a crossing where it was intersected by the path leading from the farm by a short cut to the village of Penesee.

But it was now November and the brook was not so inviting, and it happened therefore that Paul did not soon learn about the dam and the water power scheme.

But one day after he had been home for about a week, in the short afternoon when the sun was shining warmly with the haze of Indian summer lying on the land, Paul bethought him that he had not been to the village since he returned. It was time for the coming of the mail, and he had often made the journey with his dog for the purpose of bringing home the occasional letter or weekly newspaper to the family.

He would be gone from the house scarcely more than an hour, and so he did no more than tell his

mother hastily that he thought of going to the post-office.

Did God blind her eyes, too? Could she not have remembered that since last he went to the village a great, wide, deep lake, black with its tree shadows, had risen over the little path of flat stones, risen to cover them ten feet deep under its cold, pulseless bosom?

But Paul went along, light-hearted with the wonderment and delight of boyhood. How would it seem to see these things that hitherto he had only touched? And what was it to see? That wonderful world of color and light and shape and form—how absolutely it must remain unimagined even in his soul, until some day the miracle of his healing should be accomplished, and one by one these thick swathings be taken off. He knew that it was something strange and wonderful that was to happen then, but what it would be, how it would seem, he could not have the faintest realization. But he knew that it was to be so wonderful that two or three men of science were to come all the way from the city to observe him and take notes of what he did and of the way he acted.

But he was not thinking altogether of this as he went along. He had another matter on his mind. It

was the memory of his father's voice. For once, and for the first time that day, he had heard a different voice when his father spoke. He wondered what had gotten into his father's mouth to make him speak as he did. Paul had trembled at hearing him, and wished he might then know how his face felt—whether it was more wrinkled than usual at the moment. Paul, with a curious blind man's fancy, had come to associate harsh tones with wrinkles.

Paul had been talking about a man who had stolen some money at the hospital and who, after awhile, had been strangely betrayed by his own handwriting.

"The doctor told me the same thing that Miss Moffatt, my teacher, said at the Sunday-school, father. She said that 'everybody's sin is pretty sure to come out sometime.' "

His father did not answer and Paul wondered why.

"Do you think when anybody cheats and does wrong God will bring it to light, father?" persisted Paul.

"Don't talk, Paul!" said his father; and Paul, hearing this harsh tone that his father had never used before to him, trembled and thought of the wrinkles.

But the warm sun and the chattering squirrels and the whispering leaves, dry and sere on the beech trees,

soothed his spirit as he went along. The dog barked and whisked about in glee and scampered along the path, running back every half-minute to leap upon Paul, and lick his hand or rub his glossy side against his master's legs to show his affection.

Paul was acquainted with all the smells of the forest. He could tell whether he was under a beech tree, or a maple tree, or a pine tree, by a thousand signs that the ordinary boy could not have understood. Now and then he would stoop and fumble about until he found some savory nut that he knew he was likely to come upon at certain places. And in this way he went on up the wooded pasture, towards the crossing, where he expected to go over the brook as usual on the flat stones.

By and by he came in sound of a new noise that he had not heard before. It was the water falling over the new dam. He wondered what it could be. He had never heard a like sound, so far as he remembered. It was like the brook, but not like any voice of the brook that had ever greeted him before.

"Here, Jack! What's that? Seek 'em, Jack."

He thought somehow perhaps the dog could enlighten him about the noise. But Jack could not understand what was wanted, and after rushing about

a little, with sundry short barks, came back and stood quietly wagging his tail beside his young master.

Paul thought perhaps some one had been placing obstructions in the brook, and that this was merely the water rushing against them. But thinking he would ask his father about it when he reached home, he let the matter go out of mind and went slowly along his way.

As he became aware by familiar signs that he was drawing near the crossing of the brook, he listened for its ripple and sob among the stones and grasses where it flowed. He was surprised to miss these long familiar sounds. He stopped and felt all about for the familiar objects by which he guided himself. They were all there, the crooked tree at the end of the old stone fence, the low hollow through which the path ran, always damp and mouldy in autumn, with the odor of decaying vegetation, and, most tangible of all, the old log that lay directly across the path where it issued from the hollow, and which he had clambered over a thousand times.

"Brook must have gone dry," he said to himself. "It is very still to-day. I wonder what has stopped its singing. It always used to say as plainly as a voice to

me: 'Come down and cross me! Come down and cross me!' "

But to-day the brook seemed to say nothing at all. If he could have heard with a finer ear, perchance he would have caught the sound of the dark water that had taken the place of the babbling brook, inviting him to its chilly embrace. But how could he guess that there in his path lay no longer the brook but that black, still pool, reflecting the shadows of the November day and speaking no warning to his ears?

In his path there was a rise in the land, and at the top of this a ledge. Many a time he had climbed this ledge merely for the sport of running down its steep slope towards the brook. It was here that Jack always began to bark and leap, ready for the race down to the grassy bank.

But now, when he had climbed to the summit of the ledge, unable still to hear the brook in its course, he paused with a slight sense of uneasiness, wondering what change could have taken place in the water. There was a slight sob of water that seemed very near, but thinking that he knew there was none near him he could not interpret the sound.

But Jack did not bark this time. He came up

quietly to his master's side as if to ask what was to be done, wagging his tail, and ready, if he was sent, to plunge into the black water that lay directly below their feet.

"I'll run down the rock and find out what has happened to my brook anyhow," said Paul, speaking to Jack. "Come on, boy."

He ran down the slope, and the next instant was struggling in the cold water of the mill pond. Jack leaped in after him.

At half past four Wilson Carter came home from some farming work that he had been doing above the house.

"Where is Paul?" he asked, coming into the sitting-room where Mrs. Carter was mending by the window, taking advantage of the already waning sunlight that streamed in at the panes.

This was Carter's almost invariable question when he came from his work, unless Paul was in sight.

"He went to the post-office. It is past time for him to be back," answered Mrs. Carter, a little anxious herself at Paul's prolonged stay. It was now more than three hours since he started off.

Carter washed his hands at the sink and waited a

little for Paul to come. Then he went out and looked down the road leading to the bridge. It was farther to the village by the road, and he reasoned that it would take Paul longer than it used to, to go and return.

He went into the house, and as he crossed the threshold a thought struck him that made him hasten into the sitting-room, with a sudden fierce apprehension leaping into his mind.

"Which way did Paul go?" he asked huskily of his wife.

She looked up in astonishment at hearing him speak in this tone. His look was as alarming as his tone.

She got up, trembling and stared at her husband.

"Why he couldn't go but one way—that's by the bridge—could he?"

"My God!" cried Carter turning on his heel. He said nothing more but rushed out into the air. Again he looked down the white road towards the bridge. A wagon was coming down on the other side of the brook, and he hoped that some one had picked Paul up, as sometimes had been the case, to give him a lift on the way home. But he was soon able to see, by straining his eyes and with a horrible sinking in his heart, that there was but one person in the vehicle. It was a neighbor

who lived farther on over the hill, going home from the village.

As Carter watched, standing in the still October air, he heard a faint, far-off sound up the pasture, coming from the direction of the pond. It was barely audible at the distance, and sounded like a long wail of distress. He instantly thought of Jack.

"It's the dog. What does that mean, I wonder?" His knees felt weak under him and the sweat began to start on his forehead.

He ran to the stable, where he knew one of his hired men was working with some tools.

"Take a rope and come along," he cried, suddenly breaking in upon the man with a face so white and agonized that the workman needed nothing more by way of urgency; but getting hold of the first rope he could reach, started off after Carter. A rope was merely the first thing Carter thought of as likely to be serviceable in any case of danger at the pond. For he had remembered the pond!

He had made the pond—made it by a double fraud. The running brook that he had stolen now was sending into his soul shocks of fear and horror that he never had felt before.

The pond! He knew the familiar path where Paul had so many times crossed the little brook. He had not told him—nobody had told him. There was no reason why he should not have gone this way to-day.

And with this fear growing momentarily to a horrible conviction in his mind, Wilson Carter, like a man in a horrid delirium, rushed along the forest path towards the pond.

As he ran along, followed by the hired man, he heard from time to time, and increasingly plainer, the dismal howl of the dog.

At last he came in sight of the ledge where the path met the fatal brink over which Paul had gone to his death. On the rock was the dog, moving uneasily about and looking out over the water, across whose black spaces he was sending out from time to time his doleful note of grief, with head raised in the air and tail curled between his legs.

"Jack, Jack! Almighty God! Jack, where is he? Paul, Paul!"

And crying thus, Carter rushed up the rock and looked out over the pond. Then, groaning, he sank down on the rock and broke out into cursing like a mad man.

That night they dragged the pond and brought out its dead and ghastly prey. His pale and discolored face lay that midnight in the parlor of the farm house, touched, as it reposed upturned, by the streaming light of the moon, while a groaning figure walked up and down the house, bearing in his wretched soul the first stroke of judgment inflicted by the stolen brook.

CHAPTER IV.

MATTHEW AND ALICE.

THEY rode slowly back, while the laborers heaped up a fresh mound of mother earth above the fair body of Paul. Alice and the friends who did neighborly services with gentle kindness prepared an evening meal. Wilson Carter and Paul's stricken mother sat alone in the dim parlors of the farm-house, and refused to eat. The men, grouping outside, talked over the calamity in subdued tones, while the women within sat silent, or whispered to one another in subdued and sympathetic conversation. After the meal Matthew, feeling that he might perhaps take this occasion to show Carter that he held no rancor against him in this hour of disaster, went into the parlor.

"If there is nothing more I can do I will go now. It is growing dark, and mother must get home and so must I."

Carter looked at him doggedly, and his brows con-

tracted in a frown. But he answered not a word. Smitten, struck down by a blow that almost benumbed his power to feel, the one great burden of his thought was the brook. And the sight of the man whom chiefly he had wronged made him inwardly groan, and a feeling of horrible hatred against Matthew swept over him. Very likely it is this man's prayer that has brought this thing to pass.

Matthew, finding he could elicit nothing from Carter, went away carrying his mother and Alice, who now lived in the village, with him. They had busied themselves, preparing and clearing away the supper at Carter's, but had taken none of it themselves. Matthew could help his neighbor and return all good for the evil he had suffered, but he would not take bread in Carter's house. Alice noticed this and felt much the same way about it. So they went home without eating.

"But you must have supper with us, dear," said Mrs. Rand to Alice. "It has been a hard day with you, and Matthew says you haven't eaten a mouthful since morning. Come right in and get a good cup of tea now."

Alice was very tired and did not stand on ceremony in accepting this welcome invitation. Matthew stabled his horse and did the evening chores, while Alice and

Mrs. Rand went about together, setting the table and toasting bread, and making tea for supper.

When Matthew came in he saw Alice laying the cloth, and she looked so bright in the open firelight that was streaming from the fire place, and the whole picture of the house with her in it was so beautiful to him, that he had a little thrill of satisfaction that he could not explain entirely to himself.

Then at the table she sat down in his mother's accustomed place (perhaps that dear soul had so planned the effect) and poured the tea, and presided like a household matron at the table.

Matthew got flushed looking at her, and his thoughts grew confused. He found himself wondering if some things would not be better than some other things. Here he was, past thirty, and living as the good Book says it is not good for a man to live, and Alice was even more alone than he.

How bright her face was in the firelight! and how softly her eyes shone out upon him! She was a little shy in this strange place, but she evidently was pleased too; and the look of weariness was all out of her face now in this home-like, cheerful place.

Matthew grew silent as he thought, and his mother,

noticing his abstraction, attributed it to his being tired.

"A funeral is hard on the nerves, that's so," she said sympathetically. "Poor Carter! Poor Mrs. Carter!"

"Mother, does Alice know?"

"Not unless you have told her."

"It is about the brook," said Matthew, glad to turn the conversation where he would be relieved from his embarrassing speculations about the state of Alice's mind regarding himself. "The brook properly belongs to me. Your Uncle Wilson made that dam and the pond, after selling my property wrongfully and meanly. I don't mind telling it to you, but I wish it to go no farther. George Haley and I agreed to leave the matter with God. To-day we followed the body of poor little Paul to the grave yard. God knows whether that calamity is not his own way of judging Wilson Carter. The brook that he dammed has cursed him like a Nemesis."

Alice looked at him with appreciative sympathy.

"I believe it has," she said slowly. "Thank you for telling me. I remembered how he treated father when he was dying, and I didn't want to go there. But I remembered that we must not go by the eye-for-eye and tooth-for-tooth rule, and so I got my courage up and

went. I am glad I did—though he seems not to have appreciated it."

"No. But we have done what it seemed to be our duty to do," answered Matthew. "Sometime I will tell you the whole story about the brook."

"Perhaps you can to-night, my son," said Mrs. Rand softly. "It is raining and sleeting hard outside, and I can't think of letting you go home in it, Alice. After breakfast Matthew will drive you down to the village."

Alice made a little feeble demurrer, but yielded the point when Matthew seconded his mother's words by remarking that it would actually be dangerous to her health to go out in such a storm. She was very glad to be saved that necessity.

And so, after the table was cleared and the ever-recurring task of dish washing disposed of, they gathered around the brightly blazing fire and talked. That is to say, the ladies talked, while Matthew alternately watched Alice, studying the fair profile outlined in the firelight, or sat thinking how he had never happened to have noticed what a fine girl she was before, and if he wouldn't better change his shoes and "slick up" a little more.

He grew uncomfortable at last, thinking how his shoes looked, and went out and changed them. Before he was through this he thought some other changes might be desirable, and he at length came back in his best Sunday black, looking enough better, as Alice said to herself, to pay for the trouble.

Somehow, when Mrs. Rand slipped out of the room on some errand and did not come back, the young people did not stop talking, and it was eleven o'clock before they thought of her being away.

Well, in that evening Matthew began to love Alice. Her bright presence in his house and her lonely life as well, appealed to his imagination. But Matthew was one who acted slowly. Besides, he was a farmer, and unaccustomed to much female society.

So it went on, this slow love-making, for some weeks before he could summon the courage to speak. He could not tell what her mind might be. Perhaps she would say "No" after all. This possibility worried him greatly. But thinking divine guidance as important in choosing a wife as in any transaction of life, certainly, he made his courtship a subject of daily prayer. His mother saw how matters were shaping and wished he would confide in her. At length, one day, when she

found him standing abstractedly in the kitchen, she said with a gentle smile.

"It isn't good for a man to be alone, Matthew. When are you going to ask her?"

Matthew colored to the roots of his hair, and looked at his mother with shifting eyes, as if he had been detected in a crime.

"Do—do you think—?"

"Now don't ask me, you backward boy. Go and ask her."

"I will, then," blurted out Matthew, his face breaking into a smile. "After all, it isn't anything to be ashamed of, I suppose."

So the very next day he went down with his cutter, the sleighing being now very good, and invited Alice to ride with him. Alice thanked him with bright eyes, and was ready in a moment. It was the hardest task of his life. He never knew just how he accomplished it when it was done. But when he went home that evening he did not meet his mother's eyes very steadily.

"Well?" she asked, standing before him and putting her hand on his broad shoulders.

"She'll make you a good daughter, mother," said Matthew coloring again, and fidgeting.

"I wonder when?" said Mrs. Rand, curious and glad as a child.

"June. I suppose I'll have to have a new suit made, and slick up this old house, too. I'll make it shine—or I don't know myself—for her."

"And I'll help you, my dear boy. I love her already, Matthew."

She kissed him and released him, while he went off whistling a hymn tune to himself.

And in their new happiness it did not occur to either of these young people that Alice had become, by the death of blind little Paul, the nearest of kin and legal heiress of the wealth of Wilson Carter and his wife.

Matthew's farming began to prosper the following year. He was opening up some of the results of several years' patient trial of the best and newest methods, and from this time on he began to accumulate a competence. When Alice became his wife she brought with her for her dowry only her own sweet and faithful self, but her good sense and careful habits of house-wifery became a very substantial help to Matthew, and as the years glided by they found the bank account and the flocks and herds increasing, and people took to saying that Matthew was

the coming man of the town in the matter of thrift and prosperity.

Meanwhile Wilson Carter, slowly emerging from the shadows of the great calamity that had fallen upon him, seemed to grow harder and more grasping than ever. He had nobody to whom he could pour out his grief, and only wore it out by pursuing busily his schemes to increase his wealth. After Paul was gone, the lot of his sad-faced wife became increasingly harder. Her heart was really buried with her boy in the little graveyard, beyond which she had not cherished any hopes that make bright the sorrows of a Christian. All her life she had lived in the shadow of Wilson Carter's atheism, and when the hour came that there was need of comfort for her grief, she had lost the power to appreciate it. She was on too low a level to leap the gulf of distress, as they do who live higher up in the sunlight of faith. So she only shared the dull loneliness of her husband, between whom and herself there was no bond of sympathy to give cheer to either.

But Wilson Carter thrived on the wrong he had committed, as men count prosperity. He built small houses down the valley of the brook for Mr. Richly's workmen, and rented them at a high rate. He sold his wood from

several extensive wood lots to the factory for the boilers, and to the cottages for the fires of the workmen and their families. In various other ways he managed to gain and gain, until his neighbors knew that Carter was fast becoming a very rich man. And the richer he grew the poorer he lived. With the growing instincts of the miser or, perhaps, with the love of the fancied respect that men pay to wealth, he saved his money as carefully as he could, and ground his help and his tenants without mercy. When the factory had been built he saw an opportunity to sell his house, which the superintendent thought he could make over to suit his uses cheaper than he could build new, and so Carter sold and removed himself to one of the cottages in the meadow, which was quite large enough for his uses except in the busy season, when he could manage by getting some of his help boarded at the factory boarding house.

Here he lived three years, driving his hard bargains and reaping his abundant harvests, and no one could say whether God had not purged, punished, and forgotten his wrong-doing. Carter heard that Alice was to marry Matthew, and he scowled at this, and remarked to his wife that he didn't "cal'late" Matthew was so very simple and uncalculating as he professed, seeing he

doubtless had a far look to coming into Wilson Carter's property by the marriage some day.

"But I reckon I know a way to spoil that trick," he added with a grim look. So he had a will made bequeathing ten dollars to Alice, and the remainder, after the death of his wife, to a far distant cousin whom he had not seen for twenty years. He put the will away after it was drawn, intending to have it witnessed and signed whenever he thought best. He had a sort of infernal satisfaction in keeping the matter before his mind, as it kept up his hatred for Matthew. He knew that Matthew, who never spoke to him except when necessary, held in his heart the conviction of the wrong Carter had done him, and he chafed under this certainty that one man in the world despised and pitied him.

But the will still lay in his strong box five years after the dam was built. The brook had for him still another message from God. For his punishment had not yet brought him to repentance.

CHAPTER VII.

THE AVENGING BROOK.

THE great February thaw of 18—is still remembered and retold in the village of Penesee. Farmers reckoning back to it, still remark that such and such an event was the year of the February thaw. This thaw was deservedly memorable from being marked by the great catastrophe, relatively as important to the simple dwellers in the hamlet as the ancient Biblical flood to the Israelites.

All winter long the white snow had heaped itself one storm upon another, until by Candelmas day it lay four feet deep on a level in the forests, and was piled in mammoth drifts where the wind whirled it, along every fence and shed and rock, burying the landscape in an almost unbroken shroud of whiteness. The fence lines were practically obliterated, and when the crusts formed on the surface the village boys coasted with their sleds over the tops of the stone walls and fence rails as if they had never been laid. The roads were reduced to

narrow tracks of sleighruts that ran here and there through the deep cuts in the drifts that flanked either side in banks higher than the passing teams of the farmers.

In the latter part of February there came several fine, warm days. Then, one night before sunset, the clouds banked dull in the south and the wind changed and began to rise in the same quarter. Just at dusk, as Matthew was driving home from the village he saw a flock of crows, the first seen since the severe weather began, fly over and settle down in the trees below the house. And about the same time a raindrop struck his hand, while the wind gusts swept up through the valley with a warmth in them that seemed almost spring-like.

"We'll have rain, sure enough," he said to Alice when he came in for supper. "It will make great havoc with this deep snow. Already these warm days have softened it so that I could hardly drive the horse through some of the drifts."

Matthew's stock was securely and warmly housed, and a storm could not prove much trouble at the farm. So when the rain was heard beating heavily against the panes, it only made the blazing firelight more cheerful by contrast, where Alice and Mrs. Rand sat at their

knitting and crocheting, while Matthew read to them from the fascinating pages of some good book, as his frequent custom was of winter evenings.

In the night Matthew remembered waking to hear the increased roar of the waterfall that was not far above the farm house. The sound was swelled by the rush of the waters of the brook in the gorge below, and mingled dully with the sound of the rain on roof and window. Matthew thought also of the dam and the pond, and of the cottages in the valley below. He had thought of these things before, but the dam had stood now for five years, and he thought it was doubtless safe to stand forever.

In the morning the rain still continued, and he was obliged to wade in watery slush half-way to his knees in places, to reach the great barn where his cattle were stalled.

"You'll have to stay inside to-day, mooley cows," he said as he dealt out to them their hay and corn stalks, and attended to his milking and other chores. "It is going to rain all day, old Dobbin. Eat your oats now and be content to have such a tight stall."

Dobbin rubbed his nose against Matthew's cheek, as a horse that knows when he is well used and appreciates

it, and Matthew made his way back to the house. He noticed that during the night the wind had drawn further to the east.

"And that is a pretty sure sign of a long storm," he said to Alice. "You won't get down to the sewing meeting to-day, I fear."

And all day long, practically without cessation, the rain fell, steadily, doggedly, drenchingly, upon the vast deep mass of snow, washing and melting and settling it, until when night again came on the fences were revealed and here and there a boulder in the fields and pastures had pushed up its black face into the drenching storm. For an hour or two about sunset the rain lulled and almost ceased, while in the west a rosy flush of the setting sun struggled to break through the misty clouds. But when the sun had set and darkness came on, the rain set in again, and for nearly the whole of another night poured incessantly down upon the fast disappearing snow. The roaring of the waterfall pouring over the dam, and of the swollen brook, now grown to a raging torrent and filling the gorge dangerously full, smote the still night and murky morning with ominous warning.

The water lay shining all over the meadow below

flooding to the very doors of the cottages, and filling many of the cellars. The unmelted snow in the meadow and gorge and in the forest below retarded the flow, and backed the water higher and higher above. But the force of the water was fast wearing a channel through the frozen meadow, sufficient to let the floods through, and as the day went on and the water got no higher, the anxiety of the cottagers abated. The busy mill kept on working as usual, and save for some grave remark of here and there a wise old man about the danger, it was not generally thought about. The sun came out about noon and the warm wind continuing from the south, sun and wind together cut down the snow and formed the flood even faster than the rain had been doing.

"If the dam holds all right," said Matthew to Alice as they retired that night, "there won't be any serious danger. But it beats all the thaws I have ever seen in this region."

"Uncle Wilson built the dam, dear. I have heard that he did it very thoroughly. They say it goes down four feet into the earth, and couldn't possibly be broken down."

"Not if it was honestly built," said Matthew. Now

Matthew had never suspected that the dam was not honestly built. He merely was uttering an instinctive word, called out by his knowledge of Wilson Carter's capabilities for wrong doing.

Carter himself, with the perverse blindness that commonly characterizes men of his blunt and hard sensibilities, remembered indeed his fraud by which he had saved several hundred dollars by cheapening the construction of the dam. But he argued that the frosts would hold it secure as yet, even if nothing else availed. Indeed, though he did not know it, the frosts had held it steady thus far in this winter flood. All the soil to a great depth was frozen solid around the stones, making the wall and the banks practically a solid concrete mass. But the floods had broken into the frosts now, and were eating them out with fearful rapidity. More than this, the cleaving and cracking that a mass suffers in thawing always leaves dangerous interstices into which the creeping water rushes to soften and wash yet more fatally the substance of the barrier.

But when on this February night Wilson Carter went to his bed, he said to himself, just as he was falling asleep, that there was no danger with the dam.

The next thing of which he was conscious was a

strange motion of the house, and a strange roar all around it.

He leaped from his bed, awakening Mrs. Carter as he did so. The sleeping-room was on the lower floor, and as he struck the carpet he found his feet buried in icy cold water. He gave a cry and groped about for a light. The next minute he felt the water rising about him, and with a horrible fear of death in his mind, he dashed for the door. Mrs. Carter, shrieking, followed him. Then, with a second thought, he remembered the chambers and, grasping his wife's arm, together they found the stairway and climbed up.

"My God! it is the dam!" he gasped, shivering in the darkness. And then they felt the little cottage swaying in the heavy rush of the waters—the mad avenging waters of the stolen brook.

"You built it, you built it!" said the woman suddenly. "You built it and now it will drown us. I shall die here now and you are my murderer, Wilson Carter."

It was the agonized speech of a woman who for years had suffered in the presence of his hardness and wickedness, and never had spoken before. Now she felt all the injustice of it, herself the victim of his wrong-doing. She knew that the dam had been fraudulently bulit. She

knew that he had done it to save money, that he never spent for her. And the words were driven from her now like a shock of newly-awakened anger and despair.

"Curse your tongue!" cried Carter, hoarsely. He flung her away from him and groped to find the skylight in the roof. He knew there was one, and while she was recovering herself and crouching in terror near by he found and opened it. The cottage was swaying and bending and creaking in the mad rush of the tide. Now and then was heard through the night the scream of some soul caught in the rushing flood. The dam had given way. The shadow abutments of stone had been melted out of their frosty bed, and the middle timbers had been torn out and swept from their fastenings. And down through the valley the mad waters, exultant to be released, were spreading like an unleashed lion, bearing away all obstacles in their path.

Carter climbed out upon his swaying roof. "Help—help me, too!" shrieked the voice of the woman in the space below. But he could not see the way to do it easily. He feared that if he returned to help her up the skylight, he would be caught inside himself when the house should be swept away. He hoped that it would be lifted, and go bodily down the current, giving him

some chance to be saved. In this moment of emergency like any other coward he thought only of saving his own miserable life.

He crept farther out on the roof. The night was light enough to enable him to see the cottages still standing farther up the slope and to get a confused idea of the devastation that was working around him. On either bank of the brook above the point reached by the flood, he could dimly discern the lights of lanterns moving about, and over the roar of the waters, voices, and now and then wild screams for help came floating to his ears. He knew in that moment that he himself had been the marplot chiefly accountable for this dreadful disaster. The dam was working its judgment, the stolen brook was roaring its note of justice and retribution in his ears.

But, coward that he was, he raised his voice hoarsely and called for help, called again and again. The roaring waters seemed to mock his voice and throw it back upon him without an answer. Now and then he heard the screams of his wife issue from the skylight. She was begging and entreating him to return and save her. She tried vainly to reach the opening. The floods had reached the upper floor and doom was creeping near.

The man upon the roof and the woman in the chamber felt the house creak and bend and then knew that they were being swept rapidly along on the bosom of the tide.

Desperate with the danger, the woman renewed her efforts. She managed to reach the skylight with her hands. Carter, creeping nearer, at last helped her up to the roof.

But it was an unstable place. The house was bending down to the flood and might topple over any moment. Carter clung to the roof board, and crept away from his helpless companion. It was again the coward's instinct that if the house tipped down at last, he, who knew how to swim, must not be impeded by her.

Then, all at once, the cottage, breaking slowly and twisting into a shapeless mass as it was hurled along, sank down on its side, and Carter was swept off into the water. He felt a crazed shriek that sounded in his ear, and a desperate hand clutching at his shoulder in the darkness. The icy water was all around him, and he was struggling in it. He shook off, with a rough curse, the feeble hand, and she went sweeping away from him into the darkness of the flood.

Carter clung to the timbers of the house. The chill of the waters was horrible, but with the wrecked cottage he swept on.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MILLS OF GOD.

"STEADY, men! There you are. Lay him on the straw. One of you attend to him while I drive up. I'll take him to my house."

Matthew Rand took the reins and carefully turned his double bob sled. The sled bore a ghastly burden. Matthew, at the first light of morning, having been out with a large number of others half the night, working to rescue the imperiled families in the cottages, had found Wilson Carter far down the meadow, lying face downward on the summit of a ledge where he had crept out of the icy waters that swept him away. He was not dead, but this had not yet been ascertained by the party that were conveying him to Matthew's house. He lay on the straw that had been strewn over the rough floor of the sled, and while Matthew drove up across the field as carefully as he could, through slush and water, and over rocks and hummocks to the road, George Haley and another neighbor rubbed and chafed the hands and

throat of the chilled and half-drowned man. When at Matthew's door they took him tenderly from the sled, Carter roused a trifle, and a low groan was breathed through his blue lips, proving him to be still alive. They took him into the warm dining-room, and there Mrs. Rand and Alice busied themselves restoring him to consciousness, with hot fluids and bricks at his feet and every other device they were able to think of.

He lived, came back to consciousness, knew the faces around him, and shuddered to remember what had happened. But when he could speak, the first words that came from his lips made Matthew leave the room with a sniff of contempt.

"I s'pose nobody found my money that was in the house, did they? It might have washed up."

No one answered, and looking about he caught even in his obtuse consciousness some idea of the aversion that his words produced. He scowled and said nothing more.

But by and by he remembered his wife.

"Did they find Marthy?" he asked, with a twitching of his lips. And as thought began to grow clearer, he felt again that death-clutch on his arm. He remem-

bered that wailing voice sweeping from him in the darkness. He recalled the words she had spoken in the flooded chamber. "Murderer!" That was the name she had called him, and he shuddered again when he remembered it.

After awhile he thought of the poor cottagers. "Were there many drowned?" he inquired slowly, looking around with shifting and uneasy glances.

"I am glad to say they were all saved except——"

Alice paused. She hated to tell him that his wife's body had not yet been found. But when Matthew had told her in the morning that a wonderful and curious thing had happened at the brook, she somehow felt certain that God's providence was in it. For of all the twenty cottages or more in the valley, where the flood of water had swept through, Wilson Carter's alone had yielded to the force of the waters and been swept away. In all the others the dwellers, climbing to the upper floors and some of them to the roofs had all escaped. In the same level of the valley, and side by side with Wilson Carter's house on either hand, two cottages built exactly like his own were standing on their foundations at daylight, while the water slowly subsided around them. In one of them, two new-born babies, twin chil-

dren of a weaver's family, had slept sweetly all the dread night through.

There was more of this manifest Providence. It was not decreed that Wilson Carter's wife should perish in this remarkable flood. While her husband was whirled away by the waters, she, floundering in the dreadful darkness, felt her feet on the land and, strange to say, made her way alone to the high ground, and at daylight to a house far down the meadow where, unknown to the people at the factory and at Matthew's she was cared for until communication could be had with her friends.

But before Wilson Carter could hear this piece of news, he was raving horribly in the delirium of a fever. Clutching at nothing, picking the bed coverings with his fingers, straining to see imaginary shapes in the candle light, moaning of dams and water powers, and fighting off the fever phantoms that clutched at his brain and terrified him into shrieking frenzy, he lived over, apparently a hundred times, the experiences of his fatal sins. The years rolled back. Paul more than others, but Paul reproaching him and haunting him sat on his pillow, stood at the angles of the room, showed him the pale, drowned face that had lain in its still coffin five years ago.

And the man whom he had wronged, Matthew, and Alice whose father he had slighted so on the death-bed, cared for him with tenderness that only the Christian, forgiving enemies, could feel. They thought no more of his sins in that hour. Mrs. Carter also was sick, and they watched over both incessantly. Night after night Matthew remained the long hours through by the sick man's bed, waiting for the fever to burn itself out. He felt no bitterness against this stricken soul, but only prayed God that Carter might not die impenitent.

"After all these centuries of Christian teaching," said Matthew to Alice one day, "it ought not to be so surprising that a man should love his enemy. It is, after all, only the simplest Christian thing we are doing when we care for him. One should take no pride at all in it, I fancy. If God will only soften his heart!"

"You couldn't be proud if you tried," said Alice with a smile of appreciation. "But you are quite right about it, Matthew. I only wonder if it will have any effect on him."

"I hope, and yet I fear. I fear when he gets well, if God restores his health, he will be the same Wilson Carter."

But when at last Carter did get well, he was not quite

the same. He said nothing but in his silence, now and then, he groaned, and walked about listless and dejected. He returned with his wife to the farm house. He said not a word of thanks to Matthew and Alice for their care. He seldom spoke to his wife.

But one day Matthew chanced to be crossing Carter's back lot on his way to drive home some cattle that had strayed. It was a bright, still, spring day, and a long walk had made him thirsty. He turned aside to go to a spring that he knew of in the direction of Carter's house. Before reaching it, while approaching a high stone fence that lay in his way, he heard sounds of a human voice on the other side of the wall. He was close to the wall before he was thus apprized that some one was on the other side. He stopped short. Then he heard Wilson Carter's voice, groaning, and uttering sentences. "Almighty God! Paul will overlook it if thou wilt," groaned Carter. Then there was a pause, during which it seemed as if the man were listening for some response. Then he broke out again: "He thought if I did wrong it would find me out. Matthew's prospered, and I've been damned——been——damned, ——been damned. Almighty God, 'twas the brook. It rose up in judgment! It rose up in judgment."

There was another long pause, and then again conscience spoke through the man's lips. "Matthew took care of me, and I let Samuel die like a dog. It's judgment—judgment—judgment. Almighty God, what shall a wretched man do to get rid of the judgment?"

"Repent," said Matthew, driven by the Spirit of God to speak.

There was a frightened cry, and a white haggard face came up and peered over the wall. Matthew, who had not seen Carter for some weeks, was shocked at the ghastly, drawn aspect of the man's face.

"Oh! it's you, then! Well, s'pose I do repent—— that won't bring him to life, will it?"

"Paul is in heaven, Mr. Carter. If you wish to see him, by and by——"

"Stop, for God's sake! I can't bear it. I do repent. It's the brook. Day and night I hear it, roaring and roaring as it did that night. And it drowned him. Can't you see I'm nigh worn out. If I could repent and take it all back——but it's too late. Do you think it's too late?"

Then Matthew Rand, with the light of an angel in his face, vaulted the wall, and began to speak to a helpless sinner crushed under the load of his sin. He told

him of the Christ, the suffering and dying One, for in that moment there was no other word for a lost man. And while he spoke, somehow, between the two, the halo of the sunshine fell more softly, as if the radiance of Christ's own face had come in. Alone together these two men seemed, but there was Another there, for after a little the hard, haggard look began to go out of Wilson Carter's face, and then, sobbing, with a broken heart, he went down on his face before the prayer of Matthew, who alone before his God poured out his very heart for this undone sinner.

* * * * * * * * * *

The mill was vacated, and one night a year later was burned to the ground. The cottages were moved away or torn down. Unvexed and unimpeded once more, the brook flowed on down its rocky gorge and through the meadow. Matthew's growing children play on its banks in the summer sunshine and skate or coast over the frozen pool in winter. At night it sings still its peaceful song, audible to Matthew in his chamber where he kneels to pray.

And for awhile, beside its babbling course there daily walked a sad-faced, stooping man, thinking evermore on the judgment and the mercy of God. His

wife went before him on the long journey by way of the old graveyard on the hill. But he remained to play with Matthew's children and to do good to the poor of the village.

And then one day they missed him, and searching the haunts where he more often walked, they found him with peace on his worn face, lying on the very spot where he had found the faithful dog howling on the day Paul was drowned.

The will he had destroyed in his repentance, and Alice inherited what remained of his property. The stolen brook had long since reverted to its rightful owners. Matthew liked the sound of its music, and after the experience he had had with the factory, he could not bring himself to build any more dams, and so the brook remains in its freedom to this very day. The birds are undisturbed that fly among the bending oaks, and the squirrels and the trout still shyly play in their long-accustomed haunts.

One sunshiny day when the church service was ended, it happened that again Matthew and George stood on the little bridge where we saw them first. Alice too was there, and their two children. Both Matthew and George remembered that former Sunday.

"I am perfectly satisfied, Matthew," said George, smiling down upon the placid brook. "It all worked out on your plan, and that's a fact. God does rule, after all."

"In his hands are the ways of men. We believe it because he was willing that we should see it actually worked out. But it would have been just as true if we had not. But of the dead we may speak no evil. It was God's judgment and it was God's mercy. Blessed be God!"

"The mercy of God is without limits, and his judgments are unsearchable," said Alice, smiling at her husband. "We ought to believe, after what we have seen, that he is not hidden in some past age. Has he not shown us himself—in the brook?"

"Yes," replied Matthew reverently. "And that reminds me that I have a suggestion. In the old Bible days when God's people came to some place where God wrought wonders for them, to that place they gave always a name. What good name shall we give to this brook, dear?"

"To others it may be always Sweetwater; but to us let it be——"

She paused and looked at Matthew reflectively.

"The Brook of Judgment," said Matthew.

"Of Judgment and Mercy," said Alice.

THE END.

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