

A MODERN INSTANCE.*

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XXIII.

WHEN the spring opened, Bartley pushed Flavia about the sunny pavements in a baby-carriage, while Marcia paced alongside, looking in under the calash top from time to time, arranging the bright afghan, and twitching the little one's lace hood into place. They never noticed that other perambulators were pushed by Irish nurse-girls, or French *bonnes*; they had paid somewhat more than they ought for theirs, and they were proud of it merely as a piece of property. It was rather Bartley's ideal, as it is that of most young American fathers, to go out with his wife and baby in that way; he liked to have his friends see him; and he went out every afternoon he could spare. When he could not go, Marcia went alone. Mrs. Halleck had given her a key to the garden, and on pleasant mornings she always found some of the family there, when she pushed the perambulator up the path, to let the baby sleep in the warmth and silence of the sheltered place. She chatted with Olive or the elder sisters, while Mrs. Halleck drove Cyrus on to the work of tying up the vines and trimming the shrubs, with the pitiless rigor of women when they get a man about some outdoor labor. Sometimes, Ben Halleck was briefly of the party; and one morning when Marcia opened the gate, she found him there alone with Cyrus, who was busy at some belated tasks of horticulture. The young man turned at the unlocking of the gate, and saw Marcia lifting the front wheels of the perambulator to get it over the steps of the pavement outside. He limped hastily down the walk to help her, but she had the carriage in the path before he could reach her, and he had nothing to do but to walk back at its side, as she propelled it toward the house. "You see what a useless creature a cripple is," he said.

Marcia did not seem to have heard him. "Is your mother at home?" she asked.

"I think she is," said Halleck. "Cyrus, go in and tell mother that Mrs. Hubbard is here, wont you?"

Cyrus went, after a moment of self-respectful delay, and Marcia sat down on a bench

under a pear-tree beside the walk. Its narrow young leaves and blossoms sprinkled her with shade shot with vivid sunshine, and in her light dress, she looked like a bright, fresh figure from some painter's study of spring. She breathed quickly from her exertion, and her cheeks had a rich, dewy bloom. She had pulled the perambulator round so that she might see her baby while she waited, and she looked at the baby now, and not at Halleck, as she said:

"It is quite hot in the sun to-day."

She had a way of closing her lips, after speaking, in that sweet smile of hers, and then of glancing sidelong at the person to whom she spoke.

"I suppose it is," said Halleck, who remained on foot. "But I haven't been out yet. I gave myself a day off from the law-school, and I hadn't quite decided what to do with it."

Marcia leaned forward, and brushed a tangle of the baby's hair out of its eye.

"She's the greatest little sleeper that ever was when she gets into her carriage," she half mused, leaning back with her hands folded in her lap, and setting her head on one side for the effect of the baby without the stray ringlet. "She's getting so fat," she said, proudly.

Halleck smiled.

"Do you find it makes a difference in pushing her carriage, from day to day?"

Marcia took his question in earnest, as she must take anything but the most obvious pleasantry concerning her baby.

"The carriage runs very easily; we picked out the lightest one we could, and I never have any trouble with it, except getting up curb-stones and crossing Cambridge street. I don't like to cross Cambridge street; there are always so many horse-cars. But it's all down-hill coming here; that's one good thing."

"That makes it a very bad thing going home, though," said Halleck.

"Oh, I go round by Charles street and come up the hill from the other side; it isn't so steep there."

There was no more to be said upon this

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point, and in the lapse of their talk, Halleck broke off some boughs of the blooming pear, and dropped them on the baby's Afghan.

"Your mother won't like your spoiling her pear-tree," said Marcia, seriously.

"She will when she knows that I did it for Miss Hubbard."

"Miss Hubbard!" repeated the young mother, and she laughed in fond derision. "How funny to hear *you* saying that! I thought you hated babies."

Halleck looked at her with strong self-disgust, and he dropped the bough which he had in his hand upon the ground. There is something in a young man's ideal of women, at once passionate and ascetic, so fine that any words are too gross for it. The event which intensified the interest of his mother and sisters in Marcia, had abashed Halleck; when she came so proudly to show her baby to them all, it seemed to him like a mockery of his pity for her captivity to the love that profaned her. He went out of the room in angry impatience, which he could hardly hide when one of his sisters tried to make him take the baby. Little by little his compassion adjusted itself to the new conditions; it accepted the child as an element of her misery in the future, when she must realize the hideous deformity of her marriage. His prophetic sense of this, and of her inaccessibility to human help here and hereafter, made him sometimes afraid of her; but all the more severely he exacted of his ideal of her that she should not fall beneath the tragic dignity of her fate through any levity of her own. Now, at her innocent laugh, a subtle irreverence, which he was not able to exorcise, infused itself into his sense of her.

He stood looking at her, after he dropped the pear-bough, and seeing her mere beauty as he had never seen it before. The bees hummed in the blossoms, which gave out a dull, sweet smell; the sunshine had the luxurious, enervating warmth of spring. He started suddenly from his reverie: Marcia had said something.

"I beg your pardon?" he queried.

"Oh, nothing. I asked if you knew where I went to church yesterday?"

Halleck flushed, ashamed of the wrong his thoughts, or rather his emotions, had done.

"No, I don't," he answered.

"I was at your church."

"I ought to have been there myself," he returned, gravely, "and then I should have known."

She took his self-reproach literally.

"You couldn't have seen me. I was sitting pretty far back, and I went out before any

of your family saw me. Don't you go there?"

"Not always, I'm sorry to say. Or, rather, I'm sorry not to be sorry. What church do you generally go to?"

"Oh, I don't know. Sometimes to one, and sometimes to another. Bartley used to report the sermons and we went round to all the churches then. That is the way I did at home, and it came natural to me. But I don't like it very well. I want Flavia should belong to some particular church."

"There are enough to choose from," said Halleck, with pensive sarcasm.

"Yes, that's the difficulty. But I shall make up my mind to one of them, and then I shall always keep to it. What I mean is that I should like to find out where most of the good people belong, and then have her be with them," pursued Marcia. "I think it's best to belong to some church, don't you?"

There was something so bare, so spiritually poverty-stricken in these confessions and questions, that Halleck found nothing to say to them.

He was troubled, moreover, as to what the truth was in his own mind. He answered, with a sort of mechanical adhesion to the teachings of his youth: "I should be a recreant not to think so. But I'm not sure that I know what you mean by belonging to some church," he added. "I suppose you would want to believe in the creed of the church, whichever it was."

"I don't know that I should be particular," said Marcia, with perfect honesty.

Halleck laughed sadly.

"I'm afraid *they* would, then, unless you joined the Broad Church."

"What is that?"

He explained as well as he could. At the end she repeated, as if she had not followed him very closely:

"I should like her to belong to the church where most of the good people go. I think that would be the right one, if you could only find which it is."

Halleck laughed again.

"I suppose what I say must sound very queer to you; but I've been thinking a good deal about this lately."

"I beg your pardon," said Halleck. "I had no reason to laugh, either on your account or my own. It's a serious subject."

She did not reply, and he asked, as if she had left the subject:

"Do you intend to pass the summer in Boston?"

"No; I'm going down home pretty early, and I wanted to ask your mother what is the best way to put away my winter things."

"You'll find my mother very good authority on such matters," said Halleck. Through an obscure association with moths that corrupt, he added: "She's a good authority on church matters, too."

"I guess I shall talk with her about Flavia," said Marcia.

Cyrus came out of the house.

"Mis' Halleck will be here in a minute. She's got to get red of a lady that's calling, first," he explained.

"I will leave you, then," said Halleck, abruptly.

"Good-by," answered Marcia, tranquilly. The baby stirred; she pushed the carriage to and fro, without glancing after him as he walked away.

His mother came down the steps from the house, and kissed Marcia for welcome, and looked under the carriage-top at the sleeping baby.

"How she *does* sleep!" she whispered.

"Yes," said Marcia, with the proud humility of a mother who cannot deny the merit of her child, "and she sleeps the whole night through. I'm *never* up with her. Bartley says she's a perfect Seven Sleeper. It's a regular joke with him—her sleeping."

"Ben was a good baby for sleeping, too," said Mrs. Halleck, retrospectively emulous. "It's one of the best signs. It shows that the child is strong and healthy."

They went on to talk of their children, and in their community of motherhood, they spoke of the young man as if he were still an infant.

"He has never been a moment's care to me," said Mrs. Halleck. "A well baby will be well even in teething."

"And I had somehow thought of him as sickly!" said Marcia, in self-derision.

Tears of instant intelligence sprang into his mother's eyes.

"And did you suppose he was *always* lame?" she demanded with gentle indignation.

"He was the brightest and strongest boy that ever was, till he was twelve years old. That's what makes it so hard to bear; that's what makes me wonder at the way the child bears it! Did you never hear how it happened? One of the big boys, as he called him, tripped him up at school, and he fell on his hip. It kept him in bed for a year, and he's never been the same since; he will always be a cripple," grieved the mother. She wiped her eyes; she never could think of her boy's infirmity without weeping. "And what seemed the worst of all," she continued, "was that the boy who did it, never expressed any regret for it, or acknowledged it by word or deed, though he must

have known that Ben knew who hurt him. He's a man, here, now; and sometimes Ben meets him. But Ben always says that he can stand it if the other one can. He was always just so from the first! He wouldn't let us blame the boy; he said that he didn't mean any harm, and that all was fair in play. And now he says he knows the man is sorry, and would own to what he did, if he didn't have to own to what came of it. Ben says that very few of us have the courage to face the consequences of the injuries we do, and that's what makes people seem hard and indifferent when they are really not so. There!" cried Mrs. Halleck. "I don't know as I ought to have told you about it; I know Ben wouldn't like it. But I can't bear to have any one think he was always lame, though I don't know why I shouldn't: I'm prouder of him since it happened than ever I was before. I thought he was here with you," she added.

"He went out just before you came," said Marcia, nodding toward the gate. She sat listening to Mrs. Halleck's talk about Ben; Mrs. Halleck took herself to task from time to time, but only to go on talking about him again. Sometimes Marcia commented on his characteristics, and compared them with Bartley's, or with Flavia's, according to the period of Ben's life under consideration. At the end Mrs. Halleck said: "I haven't let you get in a word! Now you must talk about *your* baby. Dear little thing! I feel that she's been neglected. But I'm always just so selfish when I get to running on about Ben. They all laugh at me."

"Oh, I like to hear about other children," said Marcia, turning the perambulator round. "I don't think any one can know too much that has the care of children of their own." She added, as if it followed from something they had been saying of vaccination: "Mrs. Halleck, I want to talk with you about getting Flavia christened. You know I never was christened."

"Weren't you?" said Mrs. Halleck, with a dismay which she struggled to conceal.

"No," said Marcia, "father doesn't believe in any of those things, and mother had got to letting them go, because he didn't take any interest in them. They did have the first children christened, but I was the last."

"I didn't speak with your father on the subject," faltered Mrs. Halleck. "I didn't know what his persuasion was."

"Why, father doesn't belong to *any* church! He believes in a God, but he doesn't believe in the Bible." Mrs. Halleck sank down on the garden-seat too much shocked to speak, and Marcia continued: "I don't know whether the Bible is true or not; but I've often wished that I belonged to church."

"You couldn't, unless you believed in the Bible," said Mrs. Halleck.

"Yes, I know that. Perhaps I should, if anybody proved it to me. I presume it could be explained. I never talked much with any one about it. There must be a good many people who don't belong to church, although they believe in the Bible. I should be perfectly willing to try, if I only knew how to begin."

In view of this ruinous open-mindedness, Mrs. Halleck could only say,

"The way to begin is to read it."

"Well, I will try. How do you know, after you've become so that you believe the Bible, whether you're fit to join the church?"

"It's hard to tell you, my dear. You have to feel first that you have a Saviour,—that you've given your whole heart to him,—that he can save you, and that no one else can; that all you can do yourself wont help you. It's an experience."

Marcia looked at her attentively, as if this were all a very hard saying.

"Yes, I've heard of that. Some of the girls had it at school. But I never did. Well," she said at last, "I don't feel so anxious about myself, just at present, as I do about Flavia. I want to do everything I can for Flavia, Mrs. Halleck. I want her to be christened,—I want her to be baptized into some church. I think a good deal about it. I think sometimes, what if she should die, and I hadn't done that for her, when may be it was one of the most important things"—Her voice shook, and she pressed her lips together.

"Of course," said Mrs. Halleck, tenderly. "I think it is the *most* important thing."

"But there are so many churches," Marcia resumed. "And I don't know about any of them. I told Mr. Halleck, just now, that I should like her to belong to the church where the best people go, if I could find it out. Of course, it was a ridiculous way to talk; I knew he thought so. But what I meant was that I wanted she should be with good people all her life; and I didn't care what she believed."

"It's very important to believe the truth, my dear," said Mrs. Halleck.

"But the truth is so hard to be certain of, and you know goodness as soon as you see it. Mrs. Halleck, I'll tell you what I want: I want Flavia should be baptized into your church. Will you let her?"

"Let her? Oh, my dear child, we shall be humbly thankful that it has been put into your heart to choose for her what *we* think is the true church," said Mrs. Halleck, fervently.

"I don't know about that," returned Marcia. "I can't tell whether it's the true church or not, and I don't know that I ever could;

but I shall be satisfied, if it's made you what you are," she added simply.

Mrs. Halleck did not try to turn away her praise with vain affectations of humility. "We try to do right, Marcia," she said. "Whenever we do it, we must be helped to it by some power outside of ourselves. I can't tell you whether it's our church; I'm not so sure of that as I used to be. I once thought that there could be no real good out of it; but I *can't* think that, any more: Olive and Ben are as good children as ever lived; I *know* they wont be lost; but neither of them belongs to our church."

"Why, what church does he belong to?"

"He doesn't belong to any, my dear," said Mrs. Halleck, sorrowfully.

Marcia looked at her absently.

"I knew Olive was a Unitarian; but I thought—I thought he —"

"No, he doesn't," returned Mrs. Halleck. "It has been a great cross to his father and me. He is a good boy; but we think the *truth* is in our church!"

Marcia was silent a moment. Then she said, decisively:

"Well, I should like Flavia to belong to your church."

"She couldn't belong to it now," Mrs. Halleck explained. "That would have to come later, when she could understand. But she could be christened in it—dear little thing!"

"Well, christened, then. It must be the training he got in it. I've thought a great deal about it, and I think my worst trouble is that I've been left too free in everything. One mustn't be left too free. I've never had any one to control me, and now I can't control myself at the very times when I need to do it the most, with—with—when I'm in danger of vexing—when Bartley and I——"

"Yes," said Mrs. Halleck, sympathetically.

"And Bartley is just so, too. He's always been left to himself. And Flavia will need all the control we can give her—I know she will. And I shall have her christened in your church, and I shall teach her all about it. She shall go to the Sunday-school, and I will go to church, so that she can have an example. I told father I should do it when he was up here, and he said there couldn't be any harm in it. And I've told Bartley, and *he* doesn't care."

They were both far too single-minded and too serious to find anything droll in the terms of the adhesion of Marcia's family to her plan, and Mrs. Halleck entered into its execution with affectionate zeal.

"Ben, dear," she said, tenderly, that evening, when they were all talking it over in family council, "I hope you didn't drop anything,

when that poor creature spoke to you about it this morning, that could unsettle her mind in any way?"

"No, mother," said Halleck, gently.

"I was sure you didn't," returned his mother, repentantly.

They had been talking a long time of the matter, and Halleck now left the room.

"Mother! How could you say such a thing to Ben?" cried Olive, in a quiver of indignant sympathy. "Ben say anything to unsettle anybody's religious purposes! He's got more religion now than all the rest of the family put together!"

"Speak for yourself, Olive," said one of the intermediary sisters.

"Why, Olive, I spoke because I thought she seemed to place more importance on Ben's belonging to the church than anything else, and she seemed so surprised when I told her he didn't belong to any."

"I dare say she thinks Ben is good when she compares him with that mass of selfishness of a husband of hers," said Olive. "But I will thank her," she added, hotly, "not to compare Ben with Bartley Hubbard, even to Bartley Hubbard's disadvantage. I don't feel flattered by it."

"Of course, she thinks all the world of her husband," said Mrs. Halleck. "And I know Ben is good; and as you say, he is religious; I feel that, though I don't understand how, exactly. I wouldn't hurt his feelings for the world, Olive, you know well enough. But it was a stumbling-block when I had to tell that poor, pretty young thing that Ben didn't belong to church; and I could see that it puzzled her. I couldn't have believed," continued Mrs. Halleck, "that there was any person in a Christian land, except among the very lowest, that seemed to understand so little about the Christian religion, or any scheme of salvation. Really, she talked to me like a pagan. She sat there much better dressed and better educated than I was; but I felt like a missionary talking to a South Sea Islander."

"I wonder the old Bartlett pear didn't burst into a palm-tree over your heads," said Olive. Mrs. Halleck looked grieved at her levity, and she hastened to add:

"Don't put up your lip, mother. I understood just what you meant, and I can imagine just how shocking Mrs. Hubbard's heathen remarks must have been. We should all be shocked if we knew how many people there are just like her, and we should all try to deny it, and so would they. I guess Christianity is about as uncommon as civilization—and that's *very* uncommon. If her poor, feeble mind was such a chaos, what do you suppose her husband's is?"

This would certainly not have been easy for Mrs. Halleck to say, then, or to say afterward, when Bartley walked up to the font in her church, with Marcia at his side, and Flavia in his arms, and a faintly ironical smile on his face, as if he had never expected to be got in for this, but was going to see it through now. He had, in fact, said, "Well, let's go the whole figure," when Marcia had expressed a preference for having the rite performed in church, instead of in their own house.

He was unquestionably growing stout, and even Mrs. Halleck noticed that his blonde face was unpleasantly red that day. He was, of course, not intemperate. He always had beer with his lunch, which he had begun to take down town, since the warm weather had come on and made the walk up the hill to Clover street irksome: and he drank beer at his dinner—he liked a late dinner, and they dined at six, now—because it washed away the fatigues of the day and freshened you up. He was rather particular about his beer, which he had sent in by the gross—it came cheaper that way; after trying both the Cincinnati and the Milwaukee lagers, and making a cursory test of the Boston brand, he had settled down upon the American Tivoli; it was cheap, and you could drink a couple of bottles without feeling it. Freshened up by his two bottles, he was apt to spend the evening in an amiable drowse and get early to bed, when he did not go out on newspaper duty. He joked about the three fingers of fat on his ribs, and frankly guessed it was the beer that did it; at such times he said that perhaps he should have to cut down on his Tivoli.

Marcia and he had not so much time together as they used to have; she was a great deal taken up with the baby, and he found it dull at home, not doing anything or saying anything; and, when he did not feel sleepy, he sometimes invented work that took him out at night. But he always came upstairs after putting his hat on, and asked Marcia if he could help her about anything.

He usually met other newspaper men on these excursions, and talked newspaper with them, airing his favorite theories. He liked to wander about with reporters who were working up cases; to look in at the police stations, and go to the fires; and he was often able to give the "Events" men points that had escaped the other reporters. If asked to drink, he always said, "Thanks, no; I don't do anything in that way. But if you'll make it beer, I don't mind." He took nothing but beer when he hurried out of the theater into one of the neighboring resorts, just as the great platters of stewed kidneys and *lyonnaise* potatoes came steaming up out of the kitchen, prompt

to the drop of the curtain on the last act. Here, sometimes, he met a friend, and shared with him his dish of kidneys and his schooner of beer; and he once suffered himself to be lured by the click of the balls into the back room. He believed that he played a very good game of billiards; but he was badly beaten that night. He came home at daylight fifty dollars out. But he had lost like a gentleman in a game with gentlemen; and he never played again.

By day he worked hard, and since his expenses had been increased by Flavia's coming, he had undertaken more work for more pay. He still performed all the routine labor of a managing editor, and he now wrote the literary notices of "The Events," and sometimes, especially if there was anything new, the dramatic criticisms; he brought to the latter task all the freshness of a man who, till the year before, had not been half a dozen times inside a theater.

He attributed the fat on his ribs to the Tivoli; perhaps it was also owing in some degree to a good conscience, which is a much easier thing to keep than people imagine. At any rate, he now led a tranquil, industrious, and regular life, and a life which suited him so well that he was reluctant to interrupt it by the visit to Equity which he and Marcia had talked of in the early spring. He put it off from time to time, and one day, when she was pressing him to fix some date for it, he said:

"Why can't you go, Marcia?"

"Alone?" she faltered.

"Well, no; take the baby, of course. And I'll run down for a day or two when I get a chance."

Marcia seemed in these days to be schooling herself against the impulses that once brought on her quarrels with Bartley.

"A day or two ——" she began, and then stopped and added gravely, "I thought you said you were going to have several weeks' vacation."

"Oh, don't tell me what I *said*!" cried Bartley. "That was before I undertook this extra work, or before I knew what a grind it was going to be. Equity is a good deal of a dose for me, anyway. It's all well enough for you, and I guess the change from Boston will do you good, and do the baby good, but I shouldn't look forward to three weeks in Equity with unmitigated hilarity."

"I know it will be stupid for you. But you need the rest. And the Hallecks are going to be at North Conway; and they said they would come over," urged Marcia. "I know we should have a good time."

Bartley grinned.

"Is that your idea of a good time, Marsh? Three weeks of Equity, relieved by a visit from such heavy weights as Ben Halleck and his sisters? Not any in mine, thank you."

"How can you—how *dare* you speak so of them!" cried Marcia, lightening upon him. "Such good friends of yours—such good people ——"

Her voice shook with indignation and wounded feeling.

Bartley rose and took a turn about the room, pulling down his waistcoat and contemplating its outward slope with a smile.

"Oh, I've got more friends than I can shake a stick at. And with pleasure at the helm, goodness is a drug in the market—if you'll excuse the mixed metaphor. Look here, Marcia," he added, severely. "If you like the Hallecks, all well and good; I shan't interfere with you; but they bore me. I outgrew Ben Halleck years ago. He's duller than death. As for the old people, there's no harm in them,—though *they're* bores, too,—nor in the old girls; but Olive Halleck doesn't treat me decently. I suppose that just suits you: I've noticed that you never like the women that *do* treat me decently."

"They don't treat me decently!" retorted Marcia.

"Oh, Miss Kingsbury treated you very well that night. She couldn't imagine your being jealous of her politeness to me."

Marcia's temper fired at his treacherous recurrence to a grievance which he had once so sacredly and sweetly ignored.

"If you wish to take up by-gones, why don't you go back to Sally Morrison at once? She treated you even better than Miss Kingsbury."

"I should have been very willing to do that," said Bartley, "but I thought it might remind you of a disagreeable little episode in your own life, when you flung me away, and had to go down on your knees to pick me up again."

These thrusts which they dealt each other in their quarrels, however blind and misdirected, always reached their hearts: it was the wicked will that hurt, rather than the words. Marcia rose, bleeding inwardly, and her husband felt the remorse of a man who gets the best of it in such an encounter.

"Oh, I'm sorry I said that, Marcia! I didn't mean it; indeed I!"—She disdained to heed him as she swept out of the room and up the stairs; and his anger flamed out again.

"I give you fair warning," he called after her, "not to try that trick of locking the door, or I will smash it in."

Her answer was to turn the key in the door with a click which he could not fail to hear.

The peace in which they had been living of late was very comfortable to Bartley; he liked it; he hated to have it broken; he was willing to do what he could to restore it at once. If he had no better motive than this,

he still had this motive; and he choked down his wrath, and followed Marcia softly upstairs. He intended to reason with her, and he began, "I say, Marsh," as he turned the door-knob. But you cannot reason through a keyhole, and before he knew he found himself saying, "Will you open this?" in a tone whose quiet was deadly. She did not answer; he heard her stop in her movements about the room, and wait, as if she expected him to ask again. He hesitated a moment whether to keep his threat of breaking the door in; but he turned away and went down-stairs, and so into the street. Once outside, he experienced the sense of release that comes to a man from the violation of his better impulses; but he did not know what to do or where to go. He walked rapidly away; but Marcia's eyes and voice seemed to follow him, and plead with him for his forbearance. He answered his conscience, as if it had been some such presence, that he had forborne too much already, and that now he should not humble himself: that he was right and should stand upon his right. There was not much comfort in it, and he had to brace himself again and again with vindictive resolution.

XXIV.

BARTLEY walked about the streets for a long time, without purpose or direction, brooding fiercely on his wrongs, and reminding himself how Marcia had determined to have him, and had indeed flung herself upon his mercy, with all sorts of good promises; and had then at once taken the whiphand, and goaded and tormented him ever since. All the kindness of their common life counted for nothing in this furious reverie, or rather it was never once thought of; he cursed himself for a fool that he had ever asked her to marry him, and for doubly a fool that he had married her when she had as good as asked him. He was glad, now, that he had taunted her with that; he only regretted that he had told her he was sorry. He was presently aware of being so tired that he could scarcely pull one leg after another; and yet he felt hopelessly wide awake. It was in simple despair of anything else to do that he climbed the stairs to Ricker's lofty perch in the "Chronicle-Abstract" office. Ricker turned about as he entered, and stared up at him from beneath the green pasteboard visor with which he was shielding his eyes from the gas; his hair, which was of the harshness and color of hay, was stiffly poked up and strewn about on his skull, as if it were some foreign product.

"Hello!" he said. "Going to issue a morning edition of the 'Events'?"

"What makes you think so?"

"Oh, I supposed you evening paper gents went to bed with the hens. What has kept you up, esteemed contemporary?"

He went on working over some dispatches which lay upon his table.

"Don't you want to come out and have some oysters?" asked Bartley.

"Why this princely hospitality? I'll come with you in half a minute," Ricker said, going to the slide that carried up the copy to the composing-room, and thrusting his manuscript into the box.

"Where are you going?" he asked, when they found themselves out in the soft starlit autumnal air; and Bartley answered with the name of an oyster-house, obscure, but of singular excellence.

"Yes, that's the best place," Ricker commented. "What I continually wonder at in you is the rapidity with which you've taken on the city. You were quite in the green wood when you came here, and now you know your Boston like a little man. I suppose it's your newspaper work that's familiarized you with the place. Well, how do you like friend Witherby, as far as you've gone?"

"Oh, we shall get along, I guess," said Bartley. "He still keeps me in the background, and plays at being editor himself, but he pays me pretty well."

"Not too well, I hope."

"I should like to see him try it."

"I shouldn't," said Ricker. "He'd expect certain things of you, if he did. You'll have to look out for Witherby."

"You mean that he's a scamp?"

"No; there isn't a better conscience than Witherby carries in the whole city. He's perfectly honest. He not only believes that he has a right to run the 'Events' in his way, but he sincerely believes that he is right in doing it. There's where he has the advantage of you, if you doubt him. I don't suppose he ever did a wrong thing in his life; he'd persuade himself that the thing was right before he did it."

"That's a common phenomenon, isn't it?" sneered Bartley. "Nobody sins."

"You're right, partly. But some of us sinners have our misgivings, and Witherby never has. You know he offered me your place?"

"No, I didn't," said Bartley, astonished and not pleased.

"I thought he might have told you. He made me inducements; but I was afraid of him: Witherby is the counting-room incarnate. I talked you into him for some place or other; but he didn't seem to wake up to the value of my advice at once. Then I couldn't tell what he was going to offer you."

"Thank you for letting me in for a thing you were afraid of!"

"I didn't believe he would get you under his thumb, as he would me. You've got more backbone than I have. I have to keep out of temptation; you have noticed that I never drink, and I would rather not look upon Witherby when he is red and giveth his color in the cup. I'm sorry if I've let you in for anything that you regret. But Witherby's sincerity makes him dangerous—I own that."

"I think he has some very good ideas about newspapers," said Bartley, rather sulkily.

"Oh, very," assented Ricker. "Some of the very best going. He believes that the press is a great moral engine, and that it ought to be run in the interest of the engineer."

"And I suppose you believe that it ought to be run in the interest of the public?"

"Exactly—after the public has paid."

"Well, I don't; and I never did. A newspaper is a private enterprise."

"It's private property, but it isn't a private enterprise, and in its very nature it can't be. You know I never talk 'journalism' and stuff; it amuses me to hear the young fellows at it, though I think they might be doing something worse than magnifying their office; they might be decrying it. But I've got a few ideas and principles of my own in my back pantaloons-pocket."

"Haul them out," said Bartley.

"I don't know that they're very well formulated," returned Ricker, "and I don't contend that they're very new. But I consider a newspaper a public enterprise, with certain distinct duties to the public. It's sacredly bound not to do anything to deprave or debauch its readers; and it's sacredly bound not to mislead or betray them, not merely as to questions of morals and politics, but as to questions of what we may lump as 'advertising.' Has friend Witherby developed his great ideas of advertisers' rights to you?" Bartley did not answer, and Ricker went on: "Well, then, you can understand my position, when I say it's exactly the contrary."

"You ought to be on a religious newspaper, Ricker," said Bartley, with a scornful laugh.

"Thank you, a secular paper is bad enough for me."

"Well, I don't pretend that I make the 'Events' just what I want," said Bartley. "At present the most I can do is to indulge in a few cheap dreams of what I should do, if I had a paper of my own."

"What are your dreams? Haul out, as you say."

"I should make it pay, to begin with; and I should make it pay by making it such a thorough newspaper, that every class of people *must* have it. I should cater to the lowest class first, and as long as I was poor, I would have the fullest and best reports of every local accident and crime; that would take *all* the rabble. Then, as I could afford it, I'd rise a little, and give first-class non-partisan reports of local political affairs; that would fetch the next largest class, the ward politicians of all parties. I'd lay for the local religious world, after that—religion comes right after politics in the popular mind, and it interests the women like murder: I'd give the minutest religious intelligence, and not only that, but the religious gossip, and the religious scandal. Then I'd go in for fashion and society—that comes next. I'd have the most reliable and thorough-going financial reports that money could buy. When I'd got my local ground perfectly covered, I'd begin to ramify. Every fellow that could spell, in any part of the country, should understand that if he sent me an account of a suicide, or an elopement, or a murder, or an accident, he should be well paid for it; and I'd rise on the same scale through all the departments. I'd add art criticisms, dramatic and sporting news, and book-reviews, more for the looks of the thing than for anything else; they don't any of 'em appeal to a large class. I'd get my paper into such a shape that people of every kind and degree would have to say, no matter what particular objection was made to it, 'Yes, that's so; but it's the best newspaper in the world, *and we can't get along without it.*'"

"And then," said Ricker, "you'd begin to clean up, little by little—let up on your murders and scandals, and purge and live cleanly like a gentleman? The trick's been tried before."

They had arrived at the oyster-house, and were sitting at their table, waiting for the oysters to be brought to them. Bartley tilted his chair back. "I don't know about the cleaning up. I should want to keep all my audience. If I cleaned up, the dirty fellows would go off to some one else; and the fellows that pretended to be clean would be disappointed."

"Why don't you get Witherby to put your ideas in force?" asked Ricker, dryly.

Bartley dropped his chair to all fours, and said with a smile, "He belongs to church."

"Ah, he has his limitations. What a pity! He has the money to establish this great moral engine of yours, and you haven't. It's a loss to civilization."

"One thing, I know," said Bartley, with a certain effect of virtue, "nobody should buy or sell me; and the advertising element shouldn't spread beyond the advertising page."

"Isn't that rather high ground?" inquired Ricker.

Bartley did not think it worth while to answer. "I don't believe that a newspaper is obliged to be superior in tone to the community," he said.

"I quite agree with you."

"And if the community is full of vice and crime, a newspaper can't do better than reflect its condition."

"Ah, there I should distinguish, esteemed contemporary. There are several tones in every community, and it will keep any newspaper scratching to rise above the highest. But if it keeps out of the mud at all it can't help rising above the lowest. And no community is full of vice and crime any more than it is full of virtue and good works. Why not let your model newspaper mirror these?"

"They're not snappy."

"No, that's true."

"You must give the people what they want."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Yes, I am."

"Well, it's a beautiful dream," said Ricker, "nourished on a youth sublime. Why do not these lofty imaginings visit us later in life? You make me quite ashamed of my own ideal newspaper. Before you began to talk I had been fancying that the vice of our journalism was its intense localism. I have doubted a good while whether a drunken Irishman who breaks his wife's head, or a child who falls into a tub of hot water, has really established a claim on the public interest. Why should I be told by telegraph how three negroes died on the gallows in North Carolina? Why should an accurate correspondent inform me of the elopement of a married man with his maid-servant in East Machias? Why should I sup on all the horrors of a railroad accident, and have the bleeding fragments hashed up for me at breakfast? Why should my newspaper give a succession of shocks to my nervous system, as I pass from column to column, and poultice me between shocks with the nastiness of a distant or local scandal? You reply, because I like spice. But I don't. I am sick of spice; and I believe that most of our readers are."

"Cater to them with milk-toast, then," said Bartley.

Ricker laughed with him, and they fell to upon their oysters.

When they parted, Bartley still found himself wakeful. He knew that he should not sleep if he went home, and he said to himself that he could not walk about all night. He turned into a gayly lighted basement, and asked for something in the way of a night-cap.

The bar-keeper said there was nothing like a hot-sotch to make you sleep; and a small man, with his hat on, who had been talking with the bar-keeper, and coming up to the counter occasionally to eat a bit of cracker or a bit of cheese out of the two bowls full of such fragments that stood at the end of the counter, said that this was so.

It was very cheerful in the bar-room, with the light glittering on the rows of decanters behind the bar-keeper, a large, stout, clean, pale man in his shirt-sleeves, after the manner of his kind; and Bartley made up his mind to stay there till he was drowsy, and to drink as many hot-sotches as were necessary to the result. He had his drink put on a little table and sat down to it easily, stirring it to cool it a little, and feeling its flattery in his brain from the first sip.

The man who was munching cheese and crackers wore a hat rather large for him, pulled down over his eyes. He now said that he did not care if he took a gin-sling, and the bar-keeper promptly set it before him on the counter, and saluted with "Good evening, Colonel," a large man who came in, carrying a small dog in his arms. Bartley recognized him as the manager of a variety combination playing at one of the theaters, and the manager recognized the little man with the gin-sling as Tommy. He did not return the bar-keeper's salutation, but he asked, as he sat down at a table:

"What do I want for supper, Charley?"

The bar-keeper said, oracularly, as he leaned forward to wipe his counter with a napkin:

"Fricasee chicken."

"Fricassee devil," returned the manager. "Get me a Welsh rabbit."

The bar-keeper, unperturbed by this rejection, called into the tube behind him:

"One Welsh rabbit!"

"I want some cold chicken for my dog," said the manager.

"One cold chicken," repeated the bar-keeper, in his tube.

"White meat," said the manager.

"White meat," repeated the bar-keeper.

"I went into the Parker House one night about midnight, and I saw four doctors there eating lobster salad, and deviled crab, and washing it down with champagne; and I made up my mind that the doctors needn't talk to me any more about what was wholesome. I was going in for what was *good*. And there aint anything better for supper than Welsh rabbit in *this* world."

As the manager addressed this philosophy to the company at large, no one commented upon it, which seemed quite the same to the manager, who hitched one elbow over the

back of his chair, and caressed with the other hand the dog lying in his lap.

The little man in the large hat continued to walk up and down, leaving his gin-sling on the counter, and drinking it between his visits to the cracker and cheese.

"What's that new piece of yours, Colonel?" he asked, after awhile. "I aint seen it yet."

"Legs, principally," sighed the manager. "That's what the public wants. I give the public what it wants. I don't pretend to be any better than the public. Nor any worse," he added, stroking his dog.

These ideas struck Bartley in their accordance with his own ideas of journalism as he had propounded them to Ricker. He had drunk half of his hot-scotch.

"That's what I say," assented the little man. "All that a theater has got to do is to keep even with the public."

"That's so, Tommy," said the manager of a school of morals, with wisdom that impressed more and more the manager of a great moral engine.

"The same principle runs through everything," observed Bartley, speaking for the first time.

The drink had stiffened his tongue somewhat, but it did not incommode his utterance; it rather gave dignity to it, and his head was singularly clear. He lifted his empty glass from the table, and, catching the bar-keeper's eye, said, "Do it again." The man brought it back full.

"It runs through the churches as well as the theaters. As long as the public wanted hell-fire, the ministers gave them hell-fire. But you couldn't get hell-fire—not the pure, old-fashioned brimstone article—out of a popular preacher now, for love or money."

The little man said, "I guess you've got about the size of it there;" and the manager laughed.

"It's just so with the newspapers, too," said Bartley. "Some newspapers used to stand out against publishing murders, and personal gossip, and divorce trials. There aint a newspaper that pretends to keep anyways up with the times, now, that don't do it! The public want spice, and they will have it!"

"Well, sir," said the manager, "that's my way of looking at it. I say if the public don't want Shakspeare, give 'em burlesque till they're sick of it. I believe in what Grant said: 'The quickest way to get rid of a bad law is to enforce it.'"

"That's so," said the little man, "every time."

He added to the bar-keeper that he guessed he would have some brandy and soda, and Bartley found himself at the bottom of his second tumbler. He ordered it replenished.

The little man seemed to be getting further away. He said, from the distance to which he had withdrawn:

"You want to go to bed with three night-caps on, like an old-clothes-man."

Bartley felt like resenting the freedom, but he was anxious to pour his ideas of journalism into the manager's sympathetic ear, and he began to talk, with an impression that it behooved him to talk fast. His brain was still very clear, but his tongue was getting stiffer. The manager now had his Welsh rabbit before him; but Bartley could not make out how it had got there, nor when. He was talking fast, and he knew by the way everybody was listening, that he was talking well. Sometimes he left his table, glass in hand, and went and laid down the law to the manager, who smilingly assented to all he said. Once he heard a low growling at his feet, and looking down, he saw the dog with his plate of cold chicken, that had also been conjured into the room somehow.

"Look out," said the manager, "he'll nip you in the leg."

"Curse the dog! he seems to be on all sides of you," said Bartley. "I can't stand anywhere."

"Better sit down then," suggested the manager.

"Good idea," said the little man, who was still walking up and down. It appeared as if he had not spoken for several hours; his hat was further over his eyes. Bartley had thought he was gone.

"What business is it of yours?" he demanded fiercely, moving toward the little man.

"Come, none of that," said the bar-keeper, steadily.

Bartley looked at him in amazement.

"Where's your hat?" he asked.

The others laughed; the bar-keeper smiled.

"Are you a married man?"

"Never mind!" said the bar-keeper, severely.

Bartley turned to the little man:

"You married?"

"Not *much*," replied the other. He was now topping off with a whisky-straight.

Bartley referred himself to the manager:

"You?"

"*Pas si bête*," said the manager, who did his own adapting from the French.

"Well, you're scholar, and you're gentleman," said Bartley. The indefinite articles would drop out, in spite of all his efforts to keep them in. "'N' I want ask you what you do—to—ask—you—what—would—you—do," he repeated with painful exactness, but he failed to make the rest of the sentence perfect, and he pronounced it all in a word, "'fyourwifelockyouout."

"I'd take a walk," said the manager.

"I'd bu'st the door in," said the little man.

Bartley turned and gazed at him as if the little man were a much more estimable person than he had supposed. He passed his arm through the little man's, which the other had just crooked to lift his whisky to his mouth.

"Look here," said Bartley, "tha's jus' what I told her. I want you to go home 'th me; I want t' introduce you to my wife."

"All right," answered the little man. "Don't care if I do." He dropped his tumbler to the floor. "Hang it up, Charley, glass and all. Hang up this gentleman's night-caps—my account. Gentleman asks me home to his house, I'll hang him—I'll get him hung—well, fix it to suit yourself—every time!"

They got themselves out of the door, and the manager said to the bar-keeper, who came round to gather up the fragments of the broken tumbler,

"Think his wife will be glad to see 'em, Charley?"

"Oh, they'll be taken care of before they reach his house."

XXV.

WHEN they were once out under the stars, Bartley, who still felt his brain clear, said that he would not take his friend home at once, but would show him where he visited when he first came to Boston. The other agreed to the indulgence of this sentiment, and they set out to find Rumford street together.

"You've heard of old man Halleck—Lessor Neather Interest? Tha's place—there's where I staid. His son's my frien'—damn stuck-up supercilious beast he is, too. I do' care f'r him! I'll show you place, so's't you'll know it when you come to it,—f I can ever find it."

They walked up and down the street, looking, while Bartley poured his sorrows into the ear of his friend, who grew less and less responsive, and at last ceased from his side altogether. Bartley then dimly perceived that he was himself sitting on a doorstep, and that his head was hanging far down between his knees, as if he had been sleeping in that posture.

"Locked out—locked out of my own door, and by my own wife!" He shed tears, and fell asleep again. From time to time he woke, and bewailed himself to Ricker as a poor boy who had fought his own way; he owned that he had made mistakes, as who had not? Again he was trying to convince Squire Gaylord that they ought to issue a daily edition of the "Equity Free Press," and at the same time persuading Mr. Halleck to buy the "Events" for him, and let him put it on a paying basis. He shivered, sighed, hiccupped,

and was dozing off again, when Henry Bird knocked him down, and he fell with a cry, which at last brought to the door the uneasy sleeper who had been listening to him within, and trying to realize his presence, catching his voice in waking intervals, doubting it, drowsing when it ceased, and then catching it and losing it again.

"Hallo, here! What do you want? Hubbard! Is it you? What in the world are you doing here?"

"Halleck," said Bartley, who was unsteadily straightening himself upon his feet, "glad to find you at home. Been looking for your house all night. Want to introduce you to partic-ic-ular friend of mine. Mr. Halleck, Mr. ——. Curse me if I know your name —"

"Hold on a minute," said Halleck.

He ran into the house for his hat and coat, and came out again, closing the door softly after him. He found Bartley in the grip of a policeman, whom he was asking his name that he might introduce him to his friend Halleck.

"Do you know this man, Mr. Halleck?" asked the policeman.

"Yes—yes, I know him," said Ben, in a low voice. "Let's get him away quietly, please. He's all right. It's the first time I ever saw him so. Will you help me with him up to Johnson's stable? I'll get a carriage there and take him home."

They had begun walking Bartley along between them; he dozed and paid no attention to their talk.

The policeman laughed.

"I was just going to run him in, when you came out. You didn't come a minute too soon."

They got Bartley to the stable, and he slept heavily in one of the chairs in the office, while the hostlers were putting the horses to the carriage. The policeman remained at the office-door, looking in at Bartley, and philosophizing the situation to Halleck.

"Your speakin' about it's bein' the first time you ever saw him so made me think 't I rather help take home a regular habitual drunk to his family, any day, than a case like this. They always seem to take it so much harder the first time. Boards with his mother, I presume?"

"He's married," said Halleck, sadly. "He has a house of his own."

"Well!" said the policeman.

Bartley slept all the way to Clover street, and when the carriage stopped at his door, they had difficulty in waking him sufficiently to get him out.

"Don't come in, please," said Halleck, to the policeman, when this was done. "The

man will carry you back to your beat. Thank you, ever so much!"

"All right, Mr. Halleck. Don't mention it," said the policeman, and he leaned back in the hack with an air of luxury, as it rumbled softly away.

Halleck remained on the pavement with Bartley falling limply against him in the dim light of the dawn.

"What you want? What you doing with me?" he demanded with sullen stupidity.

"I've got you home, Hubbard. Here we are at your house."

He pulled him across the pavement, to the threshold, and put his hand on the bell, but the door was thrown open before he could ring, and Marcia stood there, with her face white, and her eyes red with watching and crying.

"Oh, Bartley, oh, Bartley!" she sobbed. "Oh, Mr. Halleck, what is it? Is he hurt? I did it—yes, I did it! It's my fault! Oh, will he die? Is he sick?"

"He isn't very well. He'd better go to bed," said Halleck.

"Yes, yes! I will help you upstairs with him."

"Do' need any help," said Bartley, sulkily. "Go upstairs myself."

He actually did so, with the help of the hand-rail, Marcia running before, to open the door, and smooth the pillows which her head had not touched, and Halleck following him to catch him if he should fall. She unlaced his shoes and got them off, while Halleck removed his coat.

"Oh, Bartley, where do you feel badly, dear? Oh, what shall I do?" she moaned, as he tumbled himself on the bed, and lapsed into a drunken stupor.

"Better—better come out, Mrs. Hubbard," said Halleck. "Better let him alone, now. You only make him worse, talking to him."

Quelled by the mystery of his manner, she followed him out and down the stairs.

"Oh, *do* tell me what it is," she implored, in a low voice, "or I shall go wild! But tell me and I can bear it! I can bear anything if I know what it is!" She came close to him in her entreaty, and fixed her eyes beseechingly on his, while she caught his hand in both of hers. "Is he—is he insane?"

"He isn't quite in his right mind, Mrs. Hubbard," Halleck began, softly releasing himself, and retreating a little from her, but she pursued him, and put her hand on his arm.

"Oh, then go for the doctor—go instantly! Don't lose a minute! I shall not be afraid to stay alone. Or if you think I'd better not, I will go for the doctor myself."

"No, no," said Halleck, smiling, sadly: the case certainly had its ludicrous side. "He doesn't need a doctor. You mustn't think of

calling a doctor. Indeed you mustn't. He'll come out all right of himself. If you sent for a doctor, it would make him very angry."

She burst into tears. "Well, I will do what you say," she cried. "It would never have happened, if it hadn't been for me. I want to tell you what I did," she went on wildly. "I want to tell ——"

"Please don't tell me anything, Mrs. Hubbard! It will all come right—and very soon. It isn't anything to be alarmed about. He'll be well in a few hours. I—ah—Good-by!" He had found his cane, and he made a limp toward the door, but she swiftly interposed herself.

"Why," she panted in mixed reproach and terror, "you're not going away? You're not going to leave me before Bartley is well? He may get worse—he may die! You mustn't go, Mr. Halleck!"

"Yes, I must,—I can't stay,—I oughtn't to stay—it won't do! He won't get worse, he won't die—" The perspiration broke out on Halleck's face, which he lifted to hers with a distress as great as her own.

She only answered, "I can't let you go. It would kill me. I wonder at your wanting to go."

There was something ghastly comical in it all, and Halleck stood in fear of its absurdity hardly less than of its tragedy. He rapidly revolved in his mind the possibilities of the case. He thought at first that it might be well to call a doctor, and having explained the situation to him, pay him to remain in charge; but he reflected that it would be insulting to ask a doctor to see a man in Hubbard's condition. He took out his watch, and saw that it was six o'clock; and he said desperately: "You can send for me, if you get anxious ——"

"I can't let you go!"

"I must really get my breakfast ——"

"The girl will get something for you here. Oh, *don't* go away!" Her lip began to quiver again, and her bosom to rise.

He could not bear it. "Mrs. Hubbard, will you believe what I say?"

"Yes," she faltered, reluctantly.

"Well, I tell you that Mr. Hubbard is in no sort of danger; and I know that it would be extremely offensive to him if I staid."

"Then you must go," she answered promptly, and opened the door, which she had closed for fear he might escape. "I will send for a doctor."

"No, *don't* send for a doctor, don't send for anybody; don't speak of the matter to any one: it would be very mortifying to him. It's merely a—a—kind of—seizure, that a great many people—men—are subject to; but he wouldn't like to have it known." He saw that his words were making an impression

upon her; perhaps her innocence was beginning to divine the truth. "Will you do what I say?"

"Yes," she murmured.

Her head began to droop, and her face to turn away in a dawning shame too cruel for him to see.

"I—I will come back as soon as I get my breakfast, to make sure that everything is right."

She let him find his own way out, and Halleck issued upon the street, as miserable as if the disgrace were his own. It was easy enough for him to get back into his own room without alarming the family. He ate his breakfast absently, and then went out while the others were still at table.

"I don't think Ben seems very well," said his mother, anxiously, and she looked to her husband for the denial he always gave.

"Oh, I guess he's all right. What's the matter with him?"

"It's nothing but his ridiculous, romantic way of taking the world to heart," Olive interposed. "You may be sure he's troubled about something that doesn't concern him in the least. It's what comes of the life-long conscientiousness of his parents. If Ben doesn't turn out a philanthropist of the deepest dye yet, you'll have me to thank for it. I see more and more every day that I was providentially born wicked, so as to keep this besottedly righteous family's head above water."

She feigned an angry impatience with the condition of things; but, when her father went out, she joined her mother in earnest conjectures as to what Ben had on his mind.

Halleck wandered about till nearly ten o'clock, and then he went to the little house on Clover street. The servant-girl answered his ring, and when he asked for Mrs. Hubbard, she said that Mr. Hubbard wished to see him, and please would he step upstairs.

He found Bartley seated at the window, with a wet towel round his head and his face pale with headache.

"Well, old man," he said, with an assumption of comradery that was nauseous to Halleck, "you've done the handsome thing by me. I know all about it. I knew something about it all the time." He held out his hand, without rising, and Halleck forced himself to touch it. "I appreciate your delicacy in not telling my wife. Of course you *couldn't* tell," he said, with depraved enjoyment of what he conceived of Halleck's embarrassment. "But I guess she must have smelt a rat. As the fellows say," he added, seeing the disgust that Halleck could not keep out of his face, "I shall make a clean breast of it, as soon as she can bear it. She's pretty high-strung.

Lying down, now," he explained. "You see I went out to get something to make me sleep, and the first thing I knew I had got too much. Good thing I turned up on your door-step; might have been waltzing into the police-court about now. How did you happen to hear me?"

Halleck briefly explained, with an air of abhorrence for the facts.

"Yes, I remember most of it," said Bartley. "Well, I want to thank you, Halleck. You've saved me from disgrace—from ruin, for all I know. Whew, how my head aches!" he said, making an appeal to Halleck's pity, with closed eyes. "Halleck," he murmured, feebly, "I wish you would do me a favor."

"Yes? What is it?" asked Halleck, dryly.

"Go round to the 'Events' office and tell old Witherby that I sha'n't be able to put in an appearance to-day. I'm not up to writing a note, even, and he'd feel flattered at your coming personally. It would make it all right for me."

"Of course, I will go," said Halleck.

"Thanks," returned Bartley plaintively, with his eyes closed.

XXVI.

BARTLEY would willingly have passed this affair over with Marcia, like some of their quarrels, and allowed a reconciliation to effect itself through mere lapse of time and daily custom. But there were difficulties in the way to such an end; his shameful escapade had given the quarrel a character of its own, which could not be ignored. He must keep his word about making a clean breast of it to Marcia, whether he liked or not; but she facilitated his confession by the meek and dependent fashion in which she hovered about, anxious to do something or anything for him. If, as he suggested to Halleck, she had divined the truth, she evidently did not hold him wholly to blame for what had happened, and he was not without a self-righteous sense of having given her a useful and necessary lesson. He was inclined to a severity to which his rasped and shaken nerves contributed, when he spoke to her that night, as they sat together after tea; she had some sewing in her lap, little mysteries of soft muslin for the baby, which she was edging with lace, and her head drooped over her work, as if she could not confront him with her swollen eyes.

"Look here, Marcia," he said, "do you know what was the matter with me this morning?"

She did not answer in words; her hands quivered a moment; then she caught up

the things out of her lap, and sobbed into them. The sight unmanned Bartley; he hated to see any one cry, even his wife, to whose tears he was accustomed. He dropped down beside her on the sofa, and pulled her head over on his shoulder.

"It was my fault, it was my fault, Bartley!" she sobbed. "Oh, how can I ever get over it?"

"Well, don't cry, don't cry! It wasn't altogether your fault," returned Bartley. "We were both to blame."

"No! I began it. If I hadn't broken my promise about speaking of Sally Morrison, it never would have happened." This was so true that Bartley could not gainsay it. "But I couldn't seem to help it; and you were—you were—so quick with me; you didn't give me time to think; you—— But I was the one to blame, I was to blame!"

"Oh, well, never mind about it; don't take on so," coaxed Bartley. "It's all over now, and it can't be helped. And I can promise you," he added, "that it shall never happen again, no matter what you do," and in making this promise, he felt the glow of virtuous performance. "I think we've both had a lesson. I suppose," he continued sadly, as one might from impersonal reflection upon the temptations and depravity of large cities, "that it's *common* enough. I dare say it isn't the first time Ben Halleck has taken a fellow home in a hack." Bartley got so much comfort from the conjecture he had thrown out for Marcia's advantage, that he felt a sort of self-approval in the fact with which he followed it up. "And there's this consolation about it, if there isn't any other: that it wouldn't have happened now, if it had ever happened before."

Marcia lifted her head and looked into his face:

"What—what do you mean, Bartley?"

"I mean that I never was overcome before in my life by—wine." He delicately avoided saying whisky.

"Well?" she demanded.

"Why, don't you see? If I'd had the habit of drinking, I shouldn't have been affected by it."

"I don't understand," she said, anxiously.

"Why, I knew I shouldn't be able to sleep, I was so mad at you——"

"Oh!"

"And I dropped into the hotel bar-room for a night-cap—for something to make me sleep."

"Yes, yes!" she urged, eagerly.

"I took what wouldn't have touched a man that was in the habit of it."

"Poor Bartley!"

"And the first thing I knew I had got too much. I was drunk—wild drunk," he said, with magnanimous frankness.

She had been listening intensely, exculpating him at every point, and now his innocence all flashed upon her.

"I see—I see!" she cried. "And it was because you had never tasted it before——"

"Well, I had tasted it once or twice," interrupted Bartley, with heroic veracity.

"No matter! It was because you had never more than hardly tasted it that a very little overcame you in an instant. I see!" she repeated, contemplating him, in her ecstasy, as the one habitually sober man in a Boston full of inebriates. "And now I shall never regret it; I shall never care for it; I never shall think about it again! Or, yes! I shall always remember it, because it shows—because it *proves*—that you are always strictly temperance. It was worth happening for that. I am *glad* it happened!"

She rose from his side, and took her sewing nearer the lamp, and resumed her work upon it with shining eyes.

Bartley remained in his place on the sofa, feeling, and perhaps looking, rather sheepish. He had made a clean breast of it, and the confession had redounded only too much to his credit. To do him justice, he had not intended to bring the affair to quite such a triumphant conclusion; and perhaps something better than his sense of humor was also touched when he found himself not only exonerated but transformed into an exemplar of abstinence.

"Well," he said, "it isn't exactly a thing to be glad of, but it certainly isn't a thing to worry yourself about. You know the worst of it, and you know the best of it. It never happened before, and it never shall happen again; that's all. Don't lament over it, don't accuse yourself; just let it go, and we'll both see what we can do after this in the way of behaving better."

He rose from the sofa, and began to walk about the room.

"Does your head still ache?" she asked, fondly. "I *wish* I could do something for it!"

"Oh, I shall sleep it off," returned Bartley. She followed him with her eyes.

"Bartley!"

"Well?"

"Do you suppose—do you believe—that Mr. Halleck—that he was ever——"

"No, Marcia, I don't," said Bartley, stopping. "I *know* he never was. Ben Halleck is slow; but he's good. I couldn't imagine his being drunk any more than I could imagine your being so. I'd willingly sacrifice his reputation to console you," added Bartley, with a comical sense of his own regret that Halleck was not, for the occasion, an habitual drunkard, "but I cannot tell a lie."

He looked at her with a smile, and broke into a sudden laugh.

"No, my dear, the only person I think of just now, as having suffered similarly with myself, is the great and good Andrew Johnson. Did you ever hear of him?"

"Was he the one they impeached?" she faltered, not knowing what Bartley would be at, but smiling faintly in sympathy with his mirth.

"He was the one they impeached. He was the one who was overcome by wine on his inauguration day, because he had never been overcome before. It's a parallel case!"

Bartley got a great deal more enjoyment out of the parallel case than Marcia. The smile faded from her face, and, "Come, come," he coaxed, "be satisfied with Andrew Johnson, and let Halleck go. Ah, Marcia!" he added, seriously, "Ben Halleck is the kind of man you ought to have married! Don't you suppose that I know I'm not good enough for you? I'm pretty good by fits and starts; but he would have been good right straight along. I should never have had to bring *him* home in a hack to you!"

His generous admission had the just effect. "Hush, Bartley! Don't talk so! You know that you're better for me than the best man in the world, dear, and even if you were not, I should love you the best. Don't talk, please, that way, of any one else, or it will make me hate you!"

He liked that; and after all he was not without an obscure pride in his last night's adventure as a somewhat hazardous but decided assertion of manly supremacy. It was not a thing to be repeated; but for once in a way it was not wholly to be regretted, especially as he was so well out of it.

He pulled up a chair in front of her, and began to joke about the things she had in her lap; and the shameful and sorrowful day ended in the bliss of a more perfect peace between them than they had known since the troubles of their married life began.

"I tell you," said Bartley, "I shall stick to Tivoli after this, religiously."

It was several weeks later that Halleck limped into Atherton's lodgings, and dropped into one of his friend's easy chairs. The room had a bachelor comfort of aspect, and the shaded lamp on the table shed a mellow light on the green leather-covered furniture, wrinkled and creased, and worn full of such hospitable hollows as that which welcomed Halleck. Some packages of law papers were scattered about on the table; but the hour of the night had come when a lawyer permits himself a novel. Atherton looked up from his as Halleck entered, and stretched out a

hand, which the latter took on his way to the easy chair across the table.

"How do you do?" said Atherton, after allowing him to sit for a certain time in the frank silence which expressed better than words the familiarity that existed between them in spite of the lawyer's six or seven years of seniority.

Halleck leaned forward and tapped the floor with his stick; then he fell back again, and laid his cane across the arms of his chair, and drew a long breath.

"Atherton," he said, "if you had found a blackguard of your acquaintance drunk on your doorstep early one morning, and had taken him home to his wife, how would you have expected her to treat you the next time you saw her?"

The lawyer was too much used to the statement, direct and hypothetical, of all sorts of cases, to be startled at this. He smiled slightly, and said:

"That would depend a good deal upon the lady."

"Oh, but generalize! From what you know of women as Woman, what should you expect? Shouldn't you expect her to make you pay somehow for your privy to her disgrace, to revenge her misery upon you? Isn't there a theory that women forgive injuries, but never ignominies?"

"That's what the novelists teach, and we bachelors get most of our doctrine about women from them."

He closed his novel on the paper-cutter, and laying the book upon the table, clasped his hands together at the back of his head.

"We don't go to nature for our impressions; but neither do the novelists, for that matter. Now and then, however, in the way of business, I get a glimpse of realities that make me doubt my prophets. Who had this experience?"

"I did."

"I'm sorry for that," said Atherton.

"Yes," returned Halleck, with whimsical melancholy; "I'm not particularly adapted for it. But I don't know that it would be a very pleasant experience for anybody."

He paused drearily, and Atherton said:

"And how did she actually treat you?"

"I hardly know. I hadn't been at the pains to look them up since the thing happened, and I had been carrying their squalid secret round for a fortnight, and suffering from it as if it were all my own."

Atherton smiled at the touch of self-characterization.

"When I met her and her husband and her baby to-day—a family party—well, she made me ashamed of the melodramatic compassion I had been feeling for her: It seemed that I

had been going about unnecessarily, not to say impertinently, haggard with the recollection of her face as I saw it when she opened the door for her blackguard and me that morning. She looked as if nothing unusual had happened at our last meeting: I couldn't brace up all at once: I behaved like a sneak, in view of her serenity."

"Perhaps nothing unusual had happened," suggested Atherton.

"No, that theory isn't tenable," said Halleck. "It was the one fact in the blackguard's favor that she had evidently never seen him in that state before, and didn't know what was the matter. She was wild at first; she wanted to send for a doctor. I think towards the last she began to suspect. But I don't know how she looked *then*: I couldn't look at her."

He stopped, as if still in the presence of the pathetic figure, with its sidelong, drooping head.

Atherton respected his silence a moment before he again suggested, as lightly as before: "Perhaps she is magnanimous."

"No," said Halleck, with the effort of having also given that theory consideration. "She's not magnanimous, poor soul. I fancy she is rather a narrow-minded person, with strict limitations in regard to people who think ill—or too well—of her husband."

"Then perhaps," said Atherton, with the air of having exhausted conjecture, "she's obtuse."

"I have tried to think that too," replied Halleck, "but I can't manage it. No, there are only two ways out of it: the fellow has abused her innocence and made her believe it's a common and venial affair to be brought home in that state, or else she's playing a part. He's capable of telling her that neither you nor I, for example, ever go to bed sober. But she isn't obtuse: I fancy she's only too keen in all the sensibilities that women suffer through; and I'd rather think that he had deluded her in that way than that she was masquerading about it, for she strikes me as an uncommonly truthful person. I suppose you know whom I'm talking about, Atherton?" he said, with a sudden look at his friend's face, across the table.

"Yes, I know," said the lawyer. "I'm sorry it's come to this already. Though I suppose you're not altogether surprised."

"No, something of the kind was to be expected," Halleck sighed, and rolled his cane up and down on the arms of his chair. "I hope we know the worst."

"Perhaps we do. But I recollect a wise remark you made the first time we talked of these people," said Atherton, replying to the mood rather than the speech of his friend.

"You suggested that we rather liked to grieve over the pretty girls that other fellows marry, and that we never thought of the plain ones as suffering."

"Oh, I hadn't any data for my pity in this case, then," replied Halleck. "I'm willing to allow that a plain woman would suffer under the same circumstances; and I think I should be capable of pitying her. But I'll confess that the notion of a pretty woman's sorrow is more intolerable; there's no use denying a fact so universally recognized by the male consciousness. I take my share of shame for it. I wonder why it is? Pretty women always seem to appeal to us as more dependent and child-like. I dare say they're not."

"Some of them are quite able to take care of themselves," said Atherton. "I've known striking instances of the kind. How do you know but the object of your superfluous pity was cheerful because fate had delivered her husband, bound forever, into her hand, through this little escapade of his?"

"Isn't that rather a coarse suggestion?" asked Halleck.

"Very likely. I suggest it; I don't assert it. But I fancy that wives sometimes like a permanent grievance that is always at hand, no matter what the mere passing occasion of the particular disagreement is. It seems to me that I have detected obscure appeals to such a weapon in domestic interviews at which I've assisted in the way of business."

"Don't, Atherton!" cried Halleck.

"Don't, how? In this particular case, or in regard to wives generally? We can't do women a greater injustice than not to account for a vast deal of human nature in them. You may be sure that things haven't come to the present pass with those people, without blame on both sides."

"Oh, do you defend a man for such beastliness by that stale old plea of blame on both sides?" demanded Halleck, indignantly.

"No; but I should like to know what she had said or done to provoke it before I excused her altogether."

"You would! Imagine the case reversed!"

"It isn't imaginable."

"You think there is a special code of morals for women; sins and shames for them that are no sins and shames for us!"

"No, I don't think that. I merely suggest that you don't idealize the victim in this instance. I dare say she hasn't suffered half as much as you have. Remember that she's a person of commonplace traditions, and probably took a simple view of the matter, and let it go as something that could not be helped."

"No, that would not do either," said Halleck.

"You're hard to please. Suppose we imagine her proud enough to face you down on the fact for his sake; too proud to revenge her disgrace on you —"

"Oh, you come back to your old plea of magnanimity! Atherton, it makes me sick at heart to think of that poor creature. That look of hers haunts me! I can't get rid of it!"

Atherton sat considering his friend with a curious smile.

"Well, I'm sorry this has happened to *you*, Halleck."

"Oh, why do you say that to me?" demanded Halleck, impatiently. "Am I a nervous woman, that I must be kept from unpleasant sights and disagreeable experiences? If there's anything of the man about me, you insult it! Why not be a little sorry for her?"

"I'm sorry enough for her; but I suspect that so far you have been the principal sufferer. She's simply accepted the fact and survived it."

"So much the worse, so much the worse!" groaned Halleck. "She'd better have died!"

"Well, perhaps. I dare say she thinks it will never happen again, and has dismissed the subject; while you've had it happening ever since, whenever you've thought of her."

Halleck struck the arms of his chair with his clenched hands.

"Confound the fellow! What business has he to come back into my way, and make me think about his wife? Oh, very likely, it's quite as you say! I dare say she's stupidly content with him; that she's forgiven it and forgotten all about it. Probably she's told him how I behaved, and they've laughed over me together. But does that make it any easier to bear?"

"It ought," said Atherton. "What did the husband do when you met them?"

"Everything but tip me the wink—everything but say in so many words: 'You see I've made it all right with her. Don't you wish you knew how?'"

Halleck dropped his head, with a wrathful groan.

"I fancy," said Atherton, thoughtfully, "that if we really knew how, it would surprise us. Married life is as much a mystery to us outsiders as the life to come, almost. The ordinary motives don't seem to count; it's the realm of unreason. If a man only makes his wife suffer enough, she finds out that she loves him so much she *must* forgive him. And then, there's a great deal in their being bound. They can't live together in enmity, and they must live together. I dare say

the offense had merely worn itself out between them."

"Oh, I dare say," Halleck assented, wearily. "That isn't my idea of marriage though."

"It's not mine, either," returned Atherton. "The question is whether it isn't often the fact in regard to such people's marriages."

"Then, they are so many hells," cried Halleck, "where self-respect perishes with resentment, and the husband and wife are enslaved to each other. They ought to be broken up!"

"I don't think so," said Atherton, soberly. "The sort of men and women that marriage enslaves would be vastly more wretched and mischievous, if they were set free. I believe that the hell people make for themselves isn't at all a bad place for them. It's the best place for them."

"Oh, I know your doctrine," said Halleck, rising. "It's horrible. How a man with any kindness in his heart can harbor such a cold-blooded philosophy, I don't understand. I wish you joy of it. Good-night," he added, gloomily, taking his hat from the table. "It serves me right for coming to you with a matter that I ought to have been man enough to keep to myself."

Atherton followed him toward the door.

"It won't do you any harm to consider your perplexity in the light of my philosophy. An unhappy marriage isn't the only hell, nor the worst."

Halleck turned.

"What could be a worse hell than marriage without love?" he demanded, fiercely.

"Love without marriage," said Atherton.

Halleck looked sharply at his friend. Then he shrugged his shoulders as he turned again and swung out of the door.

"You're too esoteric for me. It's quite time I was gone."

The way through Clover street was not the shortest way home; but he climbed the hill and passed the little house. He wished to rehabilitate in its pathetic beauty the image which his friend's conjectures had jarred, distorted, insulted; and he lingered for a moment before the door where this vision had claimed his pity for anguish that no after serenity could repudiate. The silence in which the house was wrapt was like another fold of the mystery which involved him. The night wind rose in a sudden gust, and made the neighboring lamp flare, and his shadow wavered across the pavement like the figure of a drunken man. This and not that other was the image which he saw.

(To be continued.)

CARLYLE IN IRELAND.

REMINISCENCES OF MY IRISH JOURNEY. III.

Thursday 26 July.—Spent the morning, which was damp yet with sunshine, in lounging about the shrubberies and wooded alleys; expected Bourke would have been ready to set out before noon, instead of not till 2 p.m. or thereabouts, as it proved. Group of ragged solicitants, this morning and the last, hung about the front door, in silence for many hours, waiting “a word with his Honour”; tattered women, young and old; one ragged able man; his honor safe within doors, they silent sitting or standing without, waiting his Honor’s time, tacit bargain that no servant was to take notice of them, they not of him; that was the appearance of it. Sad enough to look upon; for the answer, at last, was sure to be “can’t; have no work, no &c. for you: sorry, but have none!” Similar expectants in small numbers I had seen about Sir W. Beecher’s: probably they wait about most gentlemen’s houses in Ireland in this sad time. Glanced over newspapers; at length out with young Bourke (who is taking the “management,” I find, his father surrendering as “too old”); went with him to the scene of Scotchman Meall’s operations; scouring a big ditch, several men up to the knees throwing out duckweed, and bog mud,—once a year. Wood around, and good crops, provided you *keep* the ditch scoured; all this region, by nature, execrable, drowned bog: let the cutting of turf by measure; turf once all cut away, attack the bottom with subsoil and other ploughs,—water carried off, prospers admirably. Meall a good solid Angus man; heavy Scotch qualities; getting excellent farm-house and offices set up. Infested by *rabbits*, which eat young green-crop, young hedges (?); must have ferrets or weasels, and how?, Meall’s labourers “do very well *if* there is one set to look at them;” Hasn’t yet got them trained to work faithfully alone, tho’ making progress in that direction. Home in haste from Meall’s farm and nice new gooseberry garden;—off actually at last, Limerick car long waiting.

Up the river; hills of Clare, hills in Limerick county; wide expanse, not without some savage beauty, far too *bare*, and too little of it absolutely green. Talk of Browne and his “blind farmers.” Assassination of a poor old soldier he had sent to watch a certain farm; ominous menace before hand, then deed done, “done with an axe,” no culprit discoverable. Killaloe, Bourke’s house across the river

among rather ragged woods. “City” (I think with some high old church towers) standing high at the other end of the bridge, in dry trim country, at the foot of the long lough, was pleasant enough from the *outside*,—one small skirt of it was all we travelled over. Lough now, with complex wooden and other apparatus for dispersing water; part of the questionable “Navigation of the Shannon.” Questionable; indeed everywhere in Ireland one finds that the “Government,” far from stinginess in public money towards Ireland, has erred rather on the other side; making, in all seasons, extensive *hives* for which the *bees* are not yet found. West side of Lough Derg: pleasant smooth-dry winding road. Clare hills stretching up, black-fretted, and with spots of culture, all treeless to perhaps 1500 or 2000 feet gradually enough, on the left. Greener high hills on the other side of lake with extensive slate quarries, *chief* trade hereabouts. One *Spaight* of Limerick, able active man heard of before, works them; resides here. “St. Patrick’s purgatory!” said Bourke, pointing out a flat island, with black tower and architectural ruins:—not *so*, (as I found afterwards: the Lough Derg of purgatory (still a place of pilgrimage, where Duffy with his mother had *been*) is in Donegal; smallish lough, some miles to right as we went from Sligo to town of Donegal. Hail shower, two policemen, on the terrace of the stony hills. A country that *might* all be very beautiful, but is not so, is bare, gnarled, craggy, and speaks to you of sloth and insolvency. “When every place was no place, and Dublin was a shaking bog;” Irish phrase for the beginning of time. “Sitting under de ditch, taking a *blast* of de pipe;” Scotch this too, all but *ditch*, which doesn’t as here mean *wall-fence* but *trench* for fence or drain.

Scariffe; straggling muddy avenues of wood begin to appear; woman in workhouse yard, fever-patient we suppose; had come flat, seemingly without pillow, on the bottom of a stone-cart; was lying now under blue cloaks and tatters, her long black hair streaming out beyond her—motionless, outcast, till they found some place for her in this hospital. Grimmiest of sights, with the long tattered cloud of black hair.—Procession next of workhouse young girls; healthy, clean in whole coarse clothes; the *only* well-guided group of children visible to us in these parts,