# ARTHUR TIMOTHY SHAY

## THE IRON RULE; OR, TYRANNY IN THE HOUSEHOLD

**Timothy Arthur**

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# Содержание

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## CHAPTER I

ANDREW HOWLAND belonged to that class of rigid moralists who can tolerate in others no wanderings from the right way. His children were forced into the straight jacket of external consistency from their earliest infancy; and if they deviated from the right line in which they were required to walk, punishment was sure to follow.

A child loves his parent naturally. The latter may be harsh, and unreasonable; still the child will look up to him in weak dependence, while love mingles, like golden threads in a dark fabric, amid the fear and respect with which he regards him. Thus it was with the children of Andrew Howland. Their mother was a gentle, retiring woman, with a heart full of the best affections. When the sunshine fell upon her golden locks in the early days of innocence, it was in a home where the ringing laugh, the merry shout, and the wild exuberance of feeling ever bursting from the heart of childhood were rarely checked; or, if repressed, with a hand that wounded not in its firm contraction. She had grown

up to womanhood amid all that was gentle, kind and loving. Transplanted, then, like a tender flower from a sunny border, to the cold and formal home of her husband, she drooped in the uncongenial soil, down into which her heart-fibres penetrated in search of nutrition. And yet, while drooping thus, she tenderly loved her husband, and earnestly sought to overcome in herself many true impulses of nature to which he gave the false name of weaknesses. It was less painful thus to repress them herself, than to have them crushed in the iron hand with which he was ever ready to grasp them.

Let it not be thought that Andrew Howland was an evil minded man. In the beginning we have intimated that this was not so. He purposed wrong to no one. Honest he was in all his dealings with the world; honest even to the division of a penny. The radical fault of his character was coldness and intolerance. Toward wrong-doing and wrong-doers, he had no forbearance whatever; and to him that strayed from the right path, whether child or man, he meted out, if in his power, the full measure of consequences. Unfortunately for those who came within the circle of his authority, his ideas of right and wrong were based on warped and narrow views, the result of a defective religious education. He, therefore, often called things wrong, from prejudice, that were not wrong in themselves; and sternly reacted upon others, and drove them away from him, when he might have led and guided them into the paths of virtue.

The first year of Andrew Howland's married life was one of

deep trial to the loving young creature he had taken from her sunny home to cherish in his bosom—a bosom too cold to warm into vigorous life new shoots of affection. And yet he loved his wife; loved her wisely, as he thought, not weakly, nor blindly. He saw her faults, and, true to his character, laid his hands upon them. Alas! how much of good was crushed in the rigid pressure!

To Mr. Howland life was indeed a stern reality. Duties and responsibilities were ever in his thoughts. Pleasure was but another name for sin, and a weakness of character an evil not to be tolerated.

Enough, for our present purpose, can be seen of the character of Andrew Howland in this brief outline. As our story advances, it will appear in minuter shades, and more varied aspects. Seven years from the day of his marriage we will introduce him to the reader.

"What *shall* I do with this boy?" said Mr. Howland. He spoke sternly, yet in a perplexed voice, while he walked the floor of the room with a quickness of tread unusual. "If something is not done to break him into obedience he will be ruined."

"He needs all our forbearance," Mrs. Howland ventured to remark, "as well as our care and solicitude."

"Forbearance! I have no forbearance toward wrong, Esther. You have forborne until the child is beyond your control."

"Not entirely," was meekly answered, as the mother's eyes drooped to the floor.

At this moment a servant, who had been sent for the child,

came in with him. A few doors away lived another child, about the same age, of whom little Andrew was very fond, and whose companionship he sought on every occasion. Against the father of this child Mr. Howland had imbibed a strong prejudice, which was permitted to extend itself to his family. Rigid and uncompromising in everything, he had observed that Andrew was frequently in company with the child of this neighbor, and felt impelled to lay a prohibition on their intercourse. But Andrew, a light-hearted, high-spirited boy, who inherited from his father a strong will, was by no means inclined to yield a ready obedience in this particular. He loved his little companion, and never was happier than when in her society. Naturally, therefore, he sought it on every occasion, and when the positive interdiction of their intercourse came, the child felt that a duty was imposed upon him that was impossible of fulfillment. Young as he was, he could endure punishment, but not give up his little friend. Advantage was therefore taken of every opportunity to be with her that offered. Punishments of various kinds were inflicted, but they acted only as temporary restraints.

As to this little girl herself, let it be understood, Mr. Howland had no personal objection. He had never seen anything that was wrong in her, and had never heard a word of evil spoken against her. The simple, yet all-embracing defect that appertained to her was his dislike of her father; and this dislike had its chief foundation in a wrong estimate of his character, the result of his own narrow prejudices. Somewhat hastily, we will admit,

did Mr. Howland utter the word that was to separate the little friends, and the word was half-repented of as soon as spoken. But once uttered, it was a law to which he required the most implicit obedience. He thought not of the wrong the separation might do his child; he thought only of enforcing obedience—of breaking a stubborn will. Obedience in children was, in his eyes, everything—and he visited, with the sternest displeasure, every deviation therefrom. The consequence was, that his little ones, in their nest at home, rarely saw in the face of their father a smile of affection; rarely heard his voice in words of tenderness. Something, in their conduct was ever displeasing to him, and he attempted its correction by coldness, repulsion, harsh words, or cruel punishment. He never sought to lead, but to force them into the right way.

The word of interdiction was uttered, but Andrew could not give up his sweet little friend; and the word was therefore disregarded. Stealthily, to avoid punishment, he went to her but watchful eyes were upon him, and he was soon brought back. Gently and earnestly his mother would chide his disobedience; harshly his father would punish it—but all was of no avail.

"Where is Andrew?" asked Mr. Howland, on returning home one evening from his store, and not seeing the bright little fellow in the room with his mother. This was on the occasion of his introduction to the reader.

"I don't know. He was here just now," replied Mrs. Howland.

"I saw him a little while ago playing on the steps with Emily

Winters," said the nurse, who had come recently into the family, and was not aware of the prohibition that existed in regard to the child she had mentioned.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Mr. Howland, angrily. Then he added in an excited voice, "go and bring him home immediately!"

The nurse left the room and soon returned with the child. In his face was a look of blended fear, anger and resolution.

"Where have you been, sir?" sternly asked Mr. Howland.

The child made no answer.

"Do you hear me, sir?"

A slight motion of shrinking and alarm might have been seen in the little fellow as the angry voice of his father fell upon his ears. But he did not look up or make a reply.

"Will you answer me? Stubborn boy!" exclaimed Mr. Howland, now catching hold tightly of Andrew's arm.

"Why don't you answer your father, my child?" said the mother, in a voice that was tender and appealing. The tone reached the boy's heart, and he lifted his large blue eyes from the floor and fixed them on his father's threatening countenance.

"Say! Where have you been?" repeated Mr. Howland.

"To see Emily," returned Andrew.

"Haven't I forbidden you to go there?"

The child's eyes sunk again to the floor.

"Say! Haven't I forbidden you to go there?"

But there was no answer.

"Do you hear me?"

"Andrew! Andrew! why don't you answer your father?" came in distressed and tremulous tones from his mother's lips.

Mr. Howland was about turning to chide sharply his wife for this interference, when Andrew again raised his eyes and said—

"Yes, sir."

"Then why have you disobeyed me?"

The boy's eyes fell again, and he remained silent.

"I'll break you of this if I break your heart!" said Mr. Howland severely, and, as he spoke, he almost lifted the child from the floor with his strong arm as he led him from the room. A groan issued from the mother's heart and she covered her face and wept.

By the time Mr. Howland reached the chamber above, to which he repaired with Andrew, the excitement of his anger had subsided; but not his stern purpose in regard to his child, who had again disobeyed him. The absolute necessity of obedience in children he recognized in all its length and breadth. He saw no hope for them in the future unless obedience were constrained at every cost. Happy both for them and himself would it have been if he had been wiser in his modes of securing obedience, and more cautious about exacting from his children things almost impossible for them to perform. Without a law there is no sin. Careful, then, should every parent be how he enacts a law, the very existence of which insures its violation.

Mr. Howland had sought, by various modes of punishment, other than chastisement, to enforce obedience in this particular

case. Now he was resolved to try the severer remedy. Andrew had expected nothing farther than to be shut up, alone, in the room, and to go, perhaps, supperless to bed, and he was nerved to bear this without a murmur. But when the rod became suddenly visible, and was lifted above him in the air, his little heart was filled with terror.

"Oh, father!" he exclaimed, in a voice of fear, while his upturned, appealing face became ashy pale.

"You have disobeyed me again, my son," said Mr. Howland, coldly and sternly, "and I must whip you for it. Disobedient children have to be punished."

"Oh, father! Don't whip me! Don't!" came huskily from the lips of the terrified child. But even while he thus pleaded, the smarting strokes began to fall.

"Now, sir!" at length said Mr. Howland, pausing with the rod uplifted, "will you go into Mr. Winters' again?"

The child hesitated, and down came a blow upon his tender limbs, followed by the words—

"Say! Will you go in there any more?"

Still there was a reluctance to make this promise, and another and harder stroke was given. The father was resolved to conquer, and he did conquer. A promise was extorted from the child's lips, while, his heart yielded nothing.

"Very well, sir! See that you keep your word," said Mr. Howland, as he released the writhing sufferer from his firm grasp. "If you disobey me again in this thing, I will give five times

as much."

And he turned from the chamber leaving the wronged and suffering child alone.

"I've begun now, and I'll go through with it," muttered Mr. Howland, as he reentered the room where his wife was sitting. "I never saw so perverse and self-willed a child in my life. If he is not subdued now, and forced to obey, his ultimate destruction is inevitable."

"His fault was not a very great one," Mrs. Howland ventured to suggest.

"Do you call disobedience a little fault?" asked Mr. Howland, his brow contracting as he spoke.

"I did not mean that," quickly answered Mrs. Howland. "I meant his going in to see Emily Winters. The children are very fond of each other."

"But I have told him not to go in there, haven't I?"

"Yes."

"Very well. That settles the matter. If he goes, he disobeys me; and if he disobeys me, he must be punished."

"But, Andrew—"

"It is useless to argue about this with me, Esther. Entirely useless. In your weakness you would indulge and ruin the boy. But I know my duty better."

Mrs. Howland sighed deeply and remained silent. Some ten minutes afterwards, seeing her husband engaged with a book, she arose and left the room. As soon as she closed the door,

every movement was suddenly quickened, and she sprung up the stairway to the chamber from which had come down to her the screams of her boy, as he shrunk under the cruel strokes inflicted by the hand of his father. Entering, she saw Andrew sitting on the floor, with his arms resting on a low chair, and his face buried in them. He raised his head slowly, and turned to see who had come in. The instant he saw that it was his mother, a flush came into his pale face, and tears dimmed the light of his beautiful, tender, loving eyes. In another moment he was sobbing on her bosom.

"Dear Andrew must not be disobedient again," said the mother, so soon as her child had grown calm, bending close to his cheek as she spoke, and letting her breath fall warmly over it.

"Emily is a good little girl, and I love her. She ain't bad, mother. She is better than I am," quickly returned the child, raising himself up, and lifting his eyes earnestly to his mother's face.

"But your father has forbidden you to go to her house, Andrew."

"Won't he let Emily come to see me?" urged the child.

"No, dear. He wants you to play with some one else."

"But I don't want to play with any one else. Emily is a good girl, and I like her so much. Indeed she ain't bad, mother. She's good."

"I know, dear," answered the perplexed mother. "I know that Emily is a good girl. But—"

"Then why won't father let me play with her?" was Andrew's

quick interrogation.

"He doesn't wish you to do so, my child, and you must be an obedient, good little boy, and then your father will love you."

"He don't love me!" said Andrew in a tone and with an emphasis that startled his mother.

"Oh yes, he does! He loves you very much. Isn't he your father?" replied Mrs. Howland in an earnest voice.

"He wouldn't have whipped me so hard if he had loved me! I'm sure he wouldn't, mother."

And tears gushed from the eyes of the child at the remembrance of his father's stern face, and the pain he had suffered.

"Andrew musn't speak so of his father," said Mrs. Howland in a chiding voice. "Andrew was disobedient; that was the reason why his father punished him. Andrew must be a good boy."

"I ain't bad, mother," sobbed the child. "I'm sure it ain't bad to play with Emily. She never does anything naughty."

"It is bad if your father forbids your doing so," replied Mrs. Howland.

"No—it can't be bad to play with Emily," said the little fellow, speaking half to himself. "She's so good, and I love her."

All in vain proved the mother's effort to make her boy see that it was wrong to play with Emily. He wanted a reason beyond the command of his father, and that she was not able to give. The more she talked with him, the more plainly did she see that rebellion was in his young heart, and that he would act it out in

the face of all consequences. Deeply saddened was she at this conviction, for she well knew that obedience to parents is the good ground into which the seeds of civil and religious obedience in manhood must be sown.

As for herself, Mrs. Howland had no objection to little Emily Winters as the companion of Andrew. She was, as the boy said, a good girl, and her influence over him was for good. But the stern prejudice of Mr. Howland had come in to break up the friendship formed between the children, and his inflexible will would brook no opposition. All must bend to him, even at the risk of breaking.

Nearly half an hour did Mrs. Howland pass alone with her boy, striving to awaken the better impulses of his heart, and as they became active, seeking to implant in his mind a willingness to deny himself, in order to obey his father. But the father asked too much. There was no charge of evil against Emily as a reason for this interdiction. All the mother could say, was—

"It is your father's wish and command, my child, and you must obey him."

But this could not satisfy the boy's mind in a case where his feelings were so deeply interested. At length, Mrs. Howland turned to leave the room. Andrew followed her to the door, and looking up with a sad light in his large eyes, murmured—

"I do love you, mother!"

A tear fell upon his face as his mother stooped to kiss him. A little while after, and he was alone.

"I'm afraid," said Mrs. Howland, joining her husband soon

after, "that we have done wrong in prohibiting all intercourse between Andrew and little Emily Winters."

"Why so?" was quickly asked, and in no very pleasant tone of voice.

"The children are very much attached to each other."

"That is no reason."

"It would be no reason if there was anything bad about Emily. But there is not. She is a very good little girl."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Mr. Howland.

"I never saw anything out of the way in her."

"It's more than I can say of her father, then," was replied. "There lies my chief objection. I want no intercourse between the families, and do not mean to have any. In this I am entirely in earnest. Andrew must seek another playfellow."

"I'm afraid we will have a great deal of trouble," sighed Mrs. Howland.

"I am not, then. Let me know whenever he disobeys in this matter, and I'll apply the remedy in a way to cure him. His will has to be broken, and the present occasion is as good as any other for effecting so all-important an object. The stronger he is tempted to disobey, the more effectual will be the subjugation of his will, when the conquest is made."

It was useless for Mrs. Howland to argue with her husband. He never yielded the smallest assent to any reasons she might bring, nor to any position she might assume. So, with a pressure on her heart, and a clear perception in her mind that he was wrong, she

heard these last words in silence.

"Shall I call Andrew down?" asked the mother, as the tea-bell rung, soon after.

"No," replied Mr. Howland, firmly; "I wish him to understand that I am in earnest."

"Don't you think he has been punished sufficiently?" said Mrs. Howland, timidly.

"Of course I do not, or I would remit the penalty of transgression," coldly returned her husband. "He's a stubborn, self-willed boy, and must be made to feel that he has a master."

"Kindness and persuasion often does—"

"I will hear no more of that!" quickly returned Mr. Howland; "and I wish you, once for all, to understand, Esther, that I will not consent to an interference on your part with what I believe to be my duty. Thousands of children have been ruined by this weak kindness and persuasion, but this shall never be the case with mine."

Mr. Howland did not observe that his wife caught her breath, as he uttered the first few words of his harsh report. She made no further answer, but passed on with her husband to the tea-room. But she ate nothing. Dreamily rested her eyes on vacancy, as she sat at the table. Her mind took no note of images pictured on the retina, for her thoughts were in another place, and with her inner vision she saw the sad form of her wronged and suffering child shrinking in the lone chamber where he had been banished.

"Shall I take Andrew some supper?" she asked, as she arose,

at length, from the table.

"He can have some bread and water," was coldly and briefly answered.

Will any one blame the mother, that she went beyond this? A few minutes afterward she entered the room in which Andrew had been punished, bearing in her hands a small tray, on which was a cup of milk and water, some toast, and a piece of cake. The twilight had already fallen, and dusky shadows had gathered so thickly that the eyes of Mrs. Howland failed to see her child on first entering the room.

"Andrew!" she called, in a low, tender voice.

But there was no reply.

"Andrew!"

Still all remained silent.

More accustomed to the feeble light that pervaded the chamber, Mrs. Howland now perceived her boy in a corner, sitting upon the floor, with his head reclining upon a low ottoman. He was asleep. Placing the tray she had brought upon a table, Mrs. Howland lifted the child in her arms, and as she did so, he murmured in a sad voice—

"Don't, papa! oh, don't strike so hard!"

Unable to repress her feelings, the mother's tears gushed over her cheeks, and her bosom heaved with emotions that spent themselves in sobs and moans.

For many minutes she sat thus. But the child slept on. Once or twice she tried to awake him, that he might get the supper she

had brought; but he slept on soundly, and she refrained, unwilling to call him back to the grief of mind she felt that consciousness would restore. Undressing him, at length, she laid him in his bed, and bending over his precious form in the deeper darkness that had now fallen, lifted her heart, and prayed that God would keep him from evil. For a long time did she bend thus over her boy, and longer still would she have remained near him, for her heart was affected with an unusual tenderness, had not the cries of her younger child summoned her from the room.

# CHAPTER II

THE tears of childhood are soon dried. Grief is but as the summer rain. On the next morning, little Andrew's voice was heard singing over the house, as merrily as ever. But the sound did not affect, pleasantly, the mind of his father. He had not forgotten the scene of the previous evening, and was far from having forgiven the disobedience he had punished so severely. Had Andrew come forth from his chamber silent and with a sober, abashed, and fearful countenance, as if he still bore the weight of his father's displeasure, Mr. Howland would have felt that he had made some progress in the work of breaking the will of his child. But to see him moving about and singing as gaily as a bird, discouraged him.

"Have I made no impression on the boy?" he asked himself.

"Father!" said Andrew, running up, with a happy smile upon his face, as these thoughts were passing through the mind of Mr. Howland, "won't you buy me a pretty book? Oh! I want one—"

"Naughty, disobedient boy!"

These were the words, uttered sternly, and with a forbidding aspect of countenance, that met this affectionate state of mind, and threw the child rudely from his father.

Andrew looked frightened for a moment or two, and then shrunk away. From that time until his father left the house, his voice was still. During the morning, he amused himself with his

playthings and his little sister, and seemed well contented. But after dinner he became restless, and often exclaimed—

"Oh! I wish I had somebody to play with!"

At length, after sitting by the window and looking out for a long time, he turned to his mother, and said—

"Mother, can't I go and see Emily Winters?"

"No, Andrew, of course not," replied Mrs. Howland.

"Why, mother? I like her, and she's good."

"Because your father doesn't wish you go to her house. Didn't he punish you last evening for going there?"

At this the child grew impatient, and threw himself about with angry gestures. Then he sat down and cried for a time bitterly, while his mother strove, but in vain, to soothe him. For hours his thoughts had been on his little friend, and now he cared for nothing but to see her. Denied this privilege from mere arbitrary authority, his mind had become fretted beyond his weak ability to control himself.

It was, perhaps, an hour after this, that Mrs. Howland missed Andrew, and fearful that he might have been tempted to disobey the command laid upon him, raised the window and looked into the street. Just as she did so, she saw him running back toward his home from the house of Mr. Winters, on the steps of which sat Emily. Entering quickly, she heard him close the street-door with a slight jar, as if he designed making as little noise as possible.

"Where have you been, Andrew?" asked Mrs. Howland as soon as he came up to her room, which he did soon after.

"Down in the kitchen with Jane," was replied without hesitation.

"Have you been nowhere else?" Mrs. Howland repented having asked this question the moment it passed her lips, and still more when the child answered as unhesitatingly as before, "No, ma'am."

Here was falsehood added to disobedience! Poor Mrs. Howland turned her face away to grieve and ponder. She found herself in a narrow path, and doubtful as to the steps to be taken. She said nothing more, for she could not see clearly what it was best for her to say; and she did nothing, for she could not see what it was best for her to do. But she resolved to be watchful over her boy, lest he should again be tempted into disobedience.

The mother's watchfulness, however, availed not. Ere night-fall Andrew was with his little friend again. Unfortunately for him, the pleasure he derived from her society caused him to forget the passing of time, and his stolen delight was, in the end, suddenly dispelled by the stern voice of his father, who passed the door of Mr. Winters on his way homeward.

Slowly and in fear did the child obey the angry command to return home. He knew that he would be punished with great severity, and he was not mistaken. He was so punished. But did this avail anything? No! On the next day he asked his mother to let him sit at the front door.

"I'm afraid you'll go into Mr. Winters," said Mrs. Howland, in reply.

"Oh, no; indeed I won't, mother," was the ready answer.

"If you disobey me, I can't let you go to the door again."

"Oh, I won't disobey you," replied the child.

"Very well, Andrew, I'll trust you. Now, don't deceive me."

The child promised over and over again, and Mrs. Howland trusted him. Ten minutes afterward she looked out, but he was nowhere to be seen. A domestic was sent to the house of Mr. Winters, where Andrew was found, as happy as a child could be, playing with his little friend Emily. On being reproved by his mother for this act of disobedience, he looked earnestly in her face and said—

"You won't tell father, will you? He'll whip me so, and I don't like to be whipped."

"But why did you go in there?" said Mrs. Howland. "Haven't we forbidden you? And didn't you promise me that if I'd let you go to the front door, you would stay there?"

"I couldn't help it, mother," replied Andrew.

"Oh, yes, you could."

"Indeed I couldn't, mother. I saw Emily, and then I couldn't help it."

There was an expression in the child's voice as he said this, that thrilled the feelings of his mother. She felt that he spoke only the simple truth—that he could not help doing as he had done.

"But Andrew must help it," she was constrained to reply. "Mother can't let him go to the front door again."

"You won't tell father, will you?" urged the child, lifting,

earnestly, his large, bright, innocent eyes to his mother's face. "Say, you won't tell him?"

Grieved, perplexed, and troubled, Mrs. Howland knew not what to say, nor how to act.

"Dear mother!" urged the boy, "you won't tell father? Say you won't?" And tears began to glisten beneath his eyelids.

"Andrew has been disobedient," said the mother, trying to assume an offended tone. "Will he be so anymore?"

"If you won't tell father, I'll be good."

The mother sighed, and fixed her gaze musingly on the floor. Her thoughts were still more confused, and her mind in still greater perplexity. Ah, if she only knew what was right!

"I will not tell your father this time," she at length said, "but don't ask me, if you are again disobedient."

But of what avail was the child's promises. He had strong feelings, a strong will, and, though so very young, much endurance. A law, at variance almost with a law of his nature, had been arbitrarily enacted, and he could not obey it. As well might his father have shut him up, hungry, in a room filled with tempting food, and commanded him not to touch or taste it. Had an allegation of evil conduct been brought against Emily Winters; had any right reason for the interdiction been given, then Mr. Howland might have had some power over the strong will and stronger inclinations of the child. But into the mind of Andrew, young as he was, came a sense of injustice and wrong on the part of his father, and there was no willingness, from filial duty, to

yield obedience in a case where every feeling of his heart was at variance with the command.

The struggle so early commenced between the father and his child, was an unceasing one. The will of Andrew, which by other treatment might have been bent to obedience, gained a vigor like the young oak amid storms, in the strife and reaction of his daily life. Instead of drawing his child to him, there was ever about Mr. Howland a sphere of repulsion. Andrew was always doing something to offend his father; and his father was in consequence always offended. A kind word from paternal lips rarely touched the ears of the boy, and, but for the love of his gentle mother, home would have been almost intolerable. Steadily, against all opposition, chidings, and punishment, Andrew would seek the company of his little friend Emily on every convenient occasion. To avoid the consequences he would practice deception, and utter direct falsehood without compunction or hesitation. At last, after a struggle of two years, even the father became wearied and discouraged at the perseverance of his child; and there came a suggestion to his mind, that probably, to continue as he had been going on for so long a time, would do more harm than good. It requires no little self-denial for a man like Andrew Howland to yield in such a contention, and let the will of his child remain unbroken. But, after a long debate with himself, his better conviction triumphed over prejudice and the tenacity of a mind fixed in its own opinions. He ceased to command obedience in the case of Emily Winters, and therefore ceased to

punish Andrew on her account. Nevertheless, he rarely saw him in her company that the displeasure he felt was not manifested by a frown, or some word that smote painfully upon the ear of his child.

Possessing an active, independent mind, Andrew failed not to excite the displeasure of his father in many ways. In fact he was always in disgrace from some cause or other and the subject of angry reproof, harsh judgment, or direct punishment. Often his conduct needed reproof and even punishment; but he was the victim of such frequent wrong judgment and unjust reproof and punishment, that by the time he was eleven years of age, he looked upon his father more as a persecuting tyrant than a kind parent, who sincerely desired his good. An instance of wrong judgment and unjust punishment we will here give.

As Andrew grew older and formed school boy associations, his impulsive and rather reckless character brought him frequently into collision with his companions, and he gained a reputation which was by no means good. Every now and then some one would complain to Mr. Howland of his bad conduct, when he, taking all for granted, would, without investigation, visit the offence with severe punishment.

One day, when in his twelfth year, as Andrew was at play during a recess in the school hour, a boy larger than himself made an angry attack upon a lad much below him in size, and was abusing him severely, when Andrew, acting from a brave and generous impulse, ran to the rescue of the smaller boy, and,

in a sudden onset, freed him from the hands of his assailant. Maddened at this interference, the larger boy turned fiercely upon him. But Andrew was active, and kept out of his way. Still the larger boy pursued him, using all the while the most violent threats. At length finding that he was likely to be caught and get roughly handled, Andrew took up a stone, and drawing back his hand, warned the boy not to approach. He continued to approach, however, vowing, as he did so, that he would beat the life half out of him. True to his word, and in self-defence, Andrew threw the stone, which struck the boy full on the forehead and knocked him down. For some minutes he lay stunned and half-insensible. Frightened at the consequences of his act, Andrew sprung to the side of the fallen lad and tried to raise him up. Failing in this he ran for the teacher, who was in the school-room. A little cold water thrown into the boy's face revived him, when he went home to his parents. The teacher made careful inquiries into the matter, which satisfied him that Andrew was not very greatly to blame.

A short time after this occurrence, a gentleman entered the store of Andrew's father, and said, with much excitement of manner,

"Mr. Howland! I've come to make complaint against that boy of yours."

"Against Andrew?"

"Yes, sir. He's nearly killed my son!"

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mr. Howland, in a distressed voice. "What has happened? How did he do it?"

"Why, sir! without the slightest provocation, he took up a large stone and struck my boy with it on the forehead, knocking him down senseless. I have had to send for the doctor. It may cost him his life."

"Oh dear! dear! What will become of that boy?" exclaimed Mr. Howland, wringing his hands, and moving up and down the floor uneasily. "Knocked him down with a stone, you say?"

"Yes sir And that without any provocation. I can't stand this. I must, at least, protect the lives of my children. Every week I have had some complaint against your son; but I didn't wish to have a difficulty, and so said nothing about it. But this is going a little too far. He must have a dreadful temper."

"There is something very perverse about him," remarked Mr. Howland, sadly. "Ah, me! What am I to do?"

"There may have been some slight provocation," said the man, a little modified by the manner in which his complaint was received, and departing from his first assertion.

"Nothing to justify an assault like this," replied Mr. Howland with promptness. "Nothing! Nothing! The boy will be the death of me."

"Caution him, if you please, Mr. Howland, against a repetition of such dangerous conduct. The result might be deplorable."

"I will do something more than caution him, you may be sure," was answered, and, as he spoke, the lips of Mr. Howland were drawn tightly across his teeth.

The man went away, and Mr. Howland dispatched a

messenger to the school for Andrew immediately, and then started for home. He had been there only a little while, when the boy came in with a frightened look. To his father's eyes conscious guilt was in his countenance.

"Go up stairs, sir!" was the stern salutation that met the lad's ears.

"Father, I—"

"Silence, sir! Don't let me hear a word out of your head!"

The boy shrunk away and went up to his own room in the third story, whither his angry father immediately followed him.

"Now, sir, take off your jacket!" said Mr. Howland who had a long, thick rattan in his hand.

"Indeed father," pleaded the child, "I wasn't to blame. Bill Wilkins—"

"Silence, sir! I want none of your lying excuses! I know you! I've talked to you often enough about quarreling and throwing stones."

"But, father—"

"Off with your jacket, this instant! Do you hear me?

"Oh, father! Let me speak! I couldn't—"

"Not a word, I say! I know all about it!" silenced the pleading boy. His case was prejudged, and he was now in the hands of the executioner. Slowly, and with trembling hands, the poor child removed his outer garment, his pale face growing paler every moment, and then submitting himself to the cruel rod that checkered his back with smarting welts. Under a sense of wrong,

his proud spirit refused to his body a single cry of pain. Manfully he bore his unjust chastisement, while every stroke obliterated some yet remaining emotion of respect and love for his father, who, satisfied at length with strokes and upbraiding, threw the boy from him with the cutting words—

"I shall yet have to disown you!" and turning away left the apartment.

# CHAPTER III

WHILE Mr. Howland yet paced the floor in a perturbed state of mind, after the severe flogging he had given to Andrew, and while he meditated some further and long-continued punishment for the offences which had been committed, a servant handed him a note. It was from Andrew's teacher, and was to this effect —

"From careful inquiry, I am entirely satisfied that your son, when he threw the stone at William Wilkins, was acting in self-defence, and, therefore, is blameless. Wilkins is a quarrelsome, overbearing lad, and was abusing a smaller boy, when your son interfered to protect the latter. This drew upon him the anger of Wilkins, who would have beaten him severely if he had not protected himself in the way he did. Before throwing the stone, I learn that Andrew made every effort to get away; failing in this, he warned the other not to come near him. This warning being disregarded, he used the only means of self-protection left to him. I say this in justice to your son, and to save him from your displeasure. As for Wilkins, I do not intend to receive him back into my school."

For a long time Mr. Howland remained seated in the chair he had taken on receiving the teacher's note. His reflections were far from being agreeable. He had been both unjust and cruel to his child. But for him to make an acknowledgment of the fact

was out of the question. This would be too humiliating. This would be a triumph for the perverse boy, and a weakening of his authority over him. He had done wrong in not listening to his child's explanation; in not waiting until he had heard both sides. But, now that the wrong was done, the fact that he was conscious of having done wrong must not appear. In various ways he sought to justify his conduct. At length he said, half aloud—

"No matter. He deserved it for something else, and has received only his deserts. Let him behave himself properly, and he'll never be the subject of unjust censure."

It was thus that the cold-hearted father settled, with his own conscience, this question of wrong toward his child. And yet he was a man who prayed in his family, and regularly, with pious observance, attended upon the ordinances of the church. In society he was esteemed as a just and righteous man; in the church as one who lived near to heaven. As for himself, he believed that severity toward his boy, and intolerance of all the weaknesses, errors, and wayward tendencies of childhood, were absolutely needed for the due correction of evil impulses. Alas! that he, like too many of his class, permitted anger toward his children's faults to blind his better judgment, and to stifle the genuine appeals of nature. Instead of tenderness, forbearance, and a loving effort to lead them in right paths, and make those paths pleasant to their feet, he sternly sought to force them in the way he wished them to go. With what little success, in the case of Andrew, is already apparent.

Angry at the unjust punishment he had received, the boy remained alone in his room until summoned to dinner.

"He doesn't want anything to eat," said the servant, returning to the dining-room where the family were assembled at the table.

"Oh, very well," remarked the father, in a tone of indifference, "fasting will do him good."

"Go up, Anna," said Mr. Howland to the servant "and tell him that I want him to come down."

That word would have been effectual, for Andrew loved his mother; but Mr. Howland remarked instantly:

"No, no! Let him, remain. I never humor states of perverseness. If he wishes to fast he can be gratified."

Mrs. Howland said no more, but she took only a few mouthfuls of food while she sat at the table. Her appetite was gone. After dinner she went up to Andrew's room with a saucer of peaches and cream. The moment she opened the door the lad sprung toward her, and while tears gushed from his eyes, he said—

"Indeed, indeed, mother, I was not to blame! Bill Wilkins was going to beat me—and you know, he's a large boy."

"But you might have killed him, Andrew," replied the mother, with a gentle gravity that, in love, conveyed reproof. "It is dangerous to throw stones."

"I had to defend myself, mother. I couldn't let him beat me half to death. And I told him to keep off or I would strike him with the stone. I'm sure I wasn't to blame."

"Why, was he going to beat you, Andrew? What did you do

to him?" asked Mrs. Howland.

"I'll tell you, mother," replied the boy. "He was pounding with his fist a poor little fellow, not half his size, and I couldn't stand and see it if he was a bigger boy than me. So I took the little boy's part; and then he turned on me and said he'd beat the life out of me. I ran from him and tried to get away, but he could run the fastest, and so I took up a stone and told him to keep off. But he was mad, and wouldn't keep off. So I struck him with it, and, mother, I'd do it again to-morrow. No boy shall beat me if I can defend myself."

"Why didn't you tell your father of this?" asked Mrs. Howland.

"I tried to tell him, but he wouldn't listen to me," said the lad, with ill-concealed indignation in his voice. "And he never will listen to me, mother. He believes every word that is said against me, and flogs me whether I am guilty or not. I'm sure he hates me!"

"Hush! hush my boy! don't say that. Don't speak so of your father."

"Well, I'm sure he don't love me," persisted Andrew.

"Oh, yes, he does love you. He only dislikes what is wrong in you. My son must try to be a good boy."

"I do try, mother; I try almost every day. But somehow I do wrong things without thinking. I'm always sorry at first; sorry until father begins to scold or whip me, and then I don't seem to care anything about it. Oh, dear! I wish father wasn't always so cross!"

While Andrew thus talked, his tears had ceased to flow; but now they gushed over his cheeks again, and he leaned his face upon his mother's bosom. Mrs. Howland drew her arms closely around her unhappy boy, while her own eyes became wet. For many minutes there was silence. At last she said, in a kind, earnest voice—

"I've brought you a nice saucer of peaches and cream, Andrew."

"I don't want them, mother," replied the lad.

"You'll be hungry before night, dear. It's nearly school-time now, and you'll get nothing to eat until you come home again."

"I don't feel at all hungry, mother."

"Just eat them for my sake," urged Mrs. Howland.

Without a word more Andrew took the saucer.

"Ain't they nice?" asked Mrs. Howland, as she saw that her boy relished the fruit and cream.

"Yes, dear mother! they are very good," replied Andrew; "and you are good, too. Indeed I love you, mother!"

The last sentence was uttered with visible emotion.

"Then, for my sake, try and do right, Andrew," said Mrs. Howland, tenderly.

"I will try, mother," returned the boy. "I do try often; but I forget myself a great many times."

Soon after Andrew started for school. On arriving, his teacher called him up and said—

"Did your father get my note?"

"I don't know, sir," replied Andrew.

"What did he say to you?"

The boy's eyes sunk to the floor and he remained silent.

"I sent your father a note immediately," said the teacher, "telling him that you were not to blame."

Andrew looked up quickly into his teacher's face, while a shadow fell upon his countenance.

"You don't know whether he received it?"

"No sir."

The teacher called up another lad, and inquired if he had delivered the note given him at the dwelling of Mr. Howland, as directed. The boy replied that he had done so.

"Very, well. You can take your seat."

Then turning to Andrew, the teacher said—

"Was it about William Wilkins that your father sent for you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You told him how it was?"

The boy was silent.

"He didn't punish you, surely?"

Tears trembled on the closing lashes of the injured child; but he answered nothing. The teacher saw how it was, and questioned him no farther. From that time he was kinder toward his wayward and, too often, offending scholar, and gained a better influence over him.

Not for a moment, during the afternoon, was the thought that his father knew of his blamelessness absent from Andrew's

mind. And, when he returned home, his heart beat feverishly in anticipation of the meeting between him and his parent. He felt sure that the teacher's note had reached his father after the punishment had been inflicted; and he expected, from an innate sense of right and justice, that some acknowledgment, grateful to his injured feelings, of the wrong he had suffered, would be made. There was no thought of triumph or reaction against his father. He had been wrongly judged, and cruelly punished; and all he asked for or desired was that his father should speak kindly to him, and say that he had been blamed without a cause. How many a dark shadow would such a gleam of sunshine have dispelled from his heart. But no such gleam of light awaited his meeting with his father, who did not even raise his eyes to look at him as he came into his presence.

For awhile Andrew lingered in the room where his father sat reading, hoping for a word that would indicate a kinder state of feeling toward him. But no such word was uttered. At length he commenced playing with a younger brother, who, not being able to make him do just as he wished, screamed out some complaint against him, when Mr. Howland looked up, suddenly, with a lowering countenance, and said, harshly—

"Go out of the room, sir! I never saw such a boy! No one can have any peace where you are!"

Andrew started, and made an effort to explain and excuse himself, for he was very anxious not to be misunderstood again just at this time. But his father exclaimed, more severely than at

first.

"Do you hear me, sir! Leave this room instantly!"

The boy went out hopeless. He felt that he was unloved by his father. Oh! what would he not have given—what sacrifice would he not have made—to secure a word and a smile of affection from his stern parent, whom he had known from childhood only as one who reproved and punished.

# CHAPTER IV

WRONGED and repelled, Andrew left the presence of his father, sad, hopeless, yet with a sense of indignation in his heart against that father for the wrong he had suffered at his hands.

"It's no use for me to try to do right," he murmured to himself. "If I want to be good, they won't let me."

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.