ARTHUR TIMOTHY SHAY

WOMAN'S TRIALS; OR, TALES AND SKETCHES FROM THE LIFE AROUND US

Timothy Arthur

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Содержание

T. S. Arthur
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PREFACE

THE title of this volume sufficiently indicates its purpose. The stories of which it is composed have been mainly written with the end of creating for woman, in the various life-trials through which she has to pass, sympathy and true consideration, as well in her own sex as in ours. We are all too much engrossed in what concerns ourselves—in our own peculiar wants, trials, and sufferings—to give that thought to others which true humanity should inspire. To the creator of fictitious histories is, therefore, left the task of reminding us of our duty, by presenting pictures from the world of life around us—moving pictures, in which we may not only see the effect of our actions upon others, but also the relations of others to society, and thus learn to sympathize with the tried and the tempted, the suffering and the oppressed, the grief-stricken and the mourner. It is good for us, at times, to forget ourselves; to think of others and feel a heart-warm interest

in all that concerns them. If the perusal of this volume has such an effect upon the reader's mind, it will accomplish all that its author desires; for right feeling is but the prompter to right action.

This book is to be followed, immediately, by other volumes, to the number of twelve, printed in uniform style: the series, when complete, to be called, "ARTHUR'S LIBRARY FOR THE HOUSEHOLD."

"MARRIED LIFE," the volume to come after this, is passing through the press, and will be ready for publication in a few days.

A LESSON OF PATIENCE

I WAS very unhappy, from a variety of causes, definable and undefinable. My chambermaid had been cross for a week, and, by talking to my cook, had made her dissatisfied with her place. The mother of five little children, I felt that I had a weight of care and responsibility greater than I could support. I was unequal to the task. My spirits fell under its bare contemplation. Then I had been disappointed in a seamstress, and my children were, as the saying is, "in rags." While brooding over these and other disheartening circumstances, Netty, my chambermaid, opened the door of the room where I was sitting, (it was Monday morning,) and said—

"Harriet has just sent word that she is sick, and can't come to-day."

"Then you and Agnes will have to do the washing," I replied, in a fretful voice; this new source of trouble completely breaking me down.

"Indeed, ma'am," replied Netty, tossing her head and speaking with some pertness, "*I* can't do the washing. I didn't engage for any thing but chamber-work."

And so saying she left me to my own reflections. I must own to feeling exceedingly angry, and rose to ring the bell for Netty to return, in order to tell her that she could go to washing or leave the house, as best suited her fancy. But the sudden recollection

of a somewhat similar collision with a former chambermaid, in which I was worsted, and compelled to do my own chamber-work for a week, caused me to hesitate, and, finally, to sit down and indulge in a hearty fit of crying.

When my husband came home at dinnertime, things did not seem very pleasant for him, I must own. I had on a long, a very long face—much longer than it was when he went away in the morning.

"Still in trouble, I see, Jane," said he. "I wish you would try and take things a little more cheerfully. To be unhappy about what is not exactly agreeable doesn't help the matter any, but really makes it worse."

"If you had to contend with what I have to contend with, you wouldn't talk about things being *exactly agreeable,*" I replied to this. "It is easy enough to talk. I only wish you had a little of my trouble; you wouldn't think so lightly of it."

"What is the great trouble now, Jane?" said my husband, without being at all fretted with my unamiable temper. "Let us hear. Perhaps I can suggest a remedy."

"If you will get me a washerwoman, you will exceedingly oblige me," said I.

"Where is Harriet?" he asked.

"She is sick, or pretends to be, I don't know which."

"Perhaps she will be well enough to do your washing to-morrow," suggested my husband.

"Perhaps is a poor dependence."

I said this with a tartness that ill repaid my husband's effort to comfort me. I saw that he felt the unkindness of my manner, in the slight shade that passed over his face.

"Can't you get some one else to do your washing this week?"

I made no reply. The question was easily asked. After that, my husband was silent,—silent in that peculiar way that I understood, too well, as the effect of my words, or tones, or state of mind. Here was another cause for unhappiness, in the reflection that I had disturbed my husband's peace.

I am sure that I did not much look like a loving wife and mother as I presided at the dinner table that day. The children never seemed so restless and hard to manage; and I could not help speaking to them, every now and then, "as if I would take their heads off;" but to little good effect.

After my husband went away on finishing his dinner, I went to bed, and cried for more than half the afternoon. Oh! how wretched I felt! Life seemed an almost intolerable burden.

Then my mind grew more composed, and I tried to think about what was to be done. The necessity for having the clothes washed was absolute; and this roused me, at length, as the most pressing domestic duty, into thinking so earnestly, that I presently rang the bell for Netty, who came in her own good time.

"Tell Agnes that I want to see her," said I, not in a very good-natured way.

The effect was that Netty left the chamber without replying, and slammed the door hard after her, which mark of disrespect

set my blood to boiling. In a little while my cook made her appearance.

"Agnes," said I, "do you know of any one that can get to do the washing this week?"

Agnes thought for a few moments, and then replied—

"There's a poor woman who lives near my mother's. I think she goes out to wash sometimes."

"I wish you would step round and see if she can't come here to-morrow."

Agnes said that she would do so.

"Tell her she must come," said I.

"Very well, ma'am."

And Agnes withdrew.

In an hour she tame back, and said that she had seen the woman, who promised to come.

"What is her name?" I asked.

"Mrs. Partridge," was answered.

"You think she won't disappoint me?"

"Oh, no, ma'am. I don't think Mrs. Partridge is the kind of a woman to promise and then disappoint a person."

It was some relief to think I was going to get my washing done; but the idea of having the ironing about all the week fretted my mind. And no sooner was this leading trouble set aside, than I began to worry about the children's clothes, and the prospect of losing my cook, who had managed my kitchen more to my satisfaction than any one had ever done before.

The promise for a pleasant hour at home was but little more flattering to my husband, when he returned in the evening, than it had been at dinner time. I was still in a sombre mood.

In the morning Mrs. Partridge came early and commenced the washing. There was something in this woman's appearance that interested me, and something in her face that reminded me of somebody I had seen before; but when and where I could not tell. Although her clothes were poor and faded, there was nothing common about her, and she struck me as being superior to her class. Several times during the morning I had to go into the kitchen where she was at work, and each time her appearance impressed me more and more. An emotion of pity arose in my bosom, as I saw her bending over the washing tub, and remembered that, for this hard labour during a whole day, the pay was to be but seventy-five cents. And yet there was an air of meek patience, if not contentment, in her face; while I, who had every thing from which I ought to have derived happiness, was dissatisfied and full of trouble. While in her presence I felt rebuked for my complaining spirit.

At dinner time Mrs. Partridge came to my room, and with a gentle, patient smile on her face, said—

"If you have no objections, ma'am, I would like to run home for a few minutes to nurse my baby and give the children something to eat. I'll make up the time."

"Go by all means," I replied, with an effort to speak calmly.

The woman turned, and went quickly away.

"Run home to nurse the baby and give the children something to eat!" The words went through and through me. So unexpected a request, revealing, as it did, the existence of such biting poverty in one who was evidently bearing her hard lot without a murmur, made me feel ashamed of myself for complaining at things which I ought to have borne with a cheerful spirit. I had a comfortable, in fact a luxurious, home, a kind and provident husband, and servants to do every thing in my house. There was no lack of the means for procuring every natural good I might reasonably desire. But, between the means and the attainment of the natural blessings I sought, there were many obstacles; and, instead of going to work in a cheerful, confident spirit to remove those obstacles, I suffered their interposition to make me unhappy; and not me alone, but my husband and all around me. But here was a poor woman, compelled to labour hard with her hands before she could obtain even the means for supplying nature's most pressing wants, doing her duty with an earnest, resigned, and hopeful spirit!

"It is wicked in me to feel as I do," I could not help saying, as I made an effort to turn away from the picture that was before me.

When Mrs. Partridge came back, which was in about half an hour, I said to her—

"Did you find all safe at home?"

"Yes, ma'am, thank you," she answered cheerfully.

"How old is your baby?"

"Eleven months old, ma'am."

"Is your husband living?"

"No, ma'am; he died more than a year ago."

"How many children have you?"

"Four."

"All young?"

"Yes, ma'am. The oldest is only in her tenth year, but she is a good little girl, and takes care of the baby for me almost as well as a grown person. I don't know what I would do without her."

"But ain't you afraid to leave them all at home alone, for so long a time?"

"No, ma'am. Jane takes excellent care of them, and she is so kind that they will obey her as well as they do me. I don't know what in the world I would do without her. I am certainly blessed in having so good a child."

"And only in her tenth year!" said I—the image of my Alice coming before my mind, with the thought of the little use she would be as a nurse and care-taker of her younger brothers and sisters.

"She is young, I know," returned the washerwoman—"too young to be confined down as much as she is. But then she is a very patient child, and knows that her mother has a great deal to do. I often wish it was easier for her; though, as it can't be helped, I don't let it fret me, for you know that would do no good."

"But how in the world, Mrs. Partridge," said I, "do you manage to provide for four children, and do for them at the same time?"

"I find it hard work," she replied; "and sometimes I feel

discouraged for a little while; but by patience and perseverance I manage to get along."

Mrs. Partridge went to her washing, and I sat down in my comfortable room, having a servant in every department of my family, and ample means for the supply of every comfort and luxury I could reasonably desire.

"If she can get along by patience and perseverance," said I to myself, "it's a shame for me that I can't." Still, for all this, when I thought of losing my cook through the bad influence of Netty, the chambermaid, I felt worried; and thinking about this, and what I should do for another cook, and the trouble always attendant upon bringing a new domestic into the house, made me, after a while, feel almost as unhappy as before. It was not long before Netty came into my room, saying, as she did so—

"Mrs. Smith, what frock shall I put on Alice?"

"The one with a blue sprig," I replied.

"That's in the wash," was answered.

"In the wash!" said I, in a fretful tone. "How came it in the wash?"

"It was dirty."

"No, it wasn't any such thing. It would have done very well for her to put on as a change to-day and to-morrow."

"Well, ma'am, it's in the wash, and no help for it now," said Netty, quite pertly.

I was dreadfully provoked with her, and had it on my tongue to order her to leave my presence instantly. But I choked down

my rising indignation.

"Take the red and white one, then," said I.

"The sleeve's nearly torn off of that. There isn't any one that she can wear except her white muslin."

"Oh dear! It's too bad! What shall I do? The children are all in rags and tatters!"

And in this style I fretted away for three or four minutes, while Netty stood waiting for my decision as to what Alice was to wear.

"Shall she put on the white muslin?" she at length asked.

"No, indeed! Certainly not! A pretty condition she'd have it in before night! Go and get me the red and white frock, and I will mend it. You aught to have told me it was torn this morning. You knew there was nothing for the child to put on ut this. I never saw such a set as you are!"

Netty flirted away, grumbling to herself. When she came in, she threw the frock into my lap with manner so insolent and provoking that I could hardly keep from breaking out upon her and rating her soundly. One thing that helped to restrain me was the recollection of sundry ebullitions of a like nature that had neither produced good effects nor left my mind in a state of much self-respect or tranquillity.

I repaired the torn sleeve, while Netty stood by. It was the work of but five minutes.

"Be sure," said I, as I handed the garment to Netty, "to see that one of Alice's frocks is ironed first thing to-morrow morning."

The girl heard, of course, but she made no answer. That was

rather more of a condescension than she was willing to make just then.

Instead of thinking how easily the difficulty of the clean frock for Alice had been gotten over, I began fretting myself because I had not been able to procure a seamstress, although the children were "all in rags and tatters."

"What is to be done?" I said, half crying, as I began to rock myself backward and forward in the great rocking-chair. "I am out of all heart." For an hour I continued to rock and fret myself, and then came to the desperate resolution to go to work and try what I could do with my own hands. But where was I to begin? What was I to take hold of first? All the children were in rags.

"Not one of them has a decent garment to his back," said I.

So, after worrying for a whole hour about what I should do, and where I should begin, I abandoned the idea of attempting any thing myself, in despair, and concluded the perplexing debate by taking another hearty crying-spell. The poor washerwoman was forgotten during most of this afternoon. My own troubles were too near the axis of vision, and shut out all other objects.

The dusky twilight had begun to fall, and I was still sitting idly in my chamber, and as unhappy as I could be. I felt completely discouraged. How *was* I to get along? I had been trying for weeks, in vain, to get a good seamstress; and yet had no prospect of obtaining one. I was going to lose my cook, and, in all probability, my chambermaid. What would I do? No light broke in through the cloudy veil that overhung my mind. The door opened, and

Agnes, who had come up to my room, said—

"Mrs. Partridge is done."

I took out my purse, and had selected therefrom the change necessary to pay the washerwoman, when a thought of her caused me to say—

"Tell Mrs. Partridge to come up and see me."

My thoughts and feelings were changing. By the time the washerwoman came in, my interest in her was alive again.

"Sit down," said I, to the tired-looking creature who sank into a chair, evidently much wearied.

"It's hard work, Mrs. Partridge," said I.

"Yes, ma'am, it is rather hard. But I am thankful for health and strength to enable me to go through with it. I know some poor women who have to work as hard as I do, and yet do not know what it is to feel well for an hour at a time."

"Poor creatures!" said I. "It is very hard! How in the world can they do it?"

"We can do a great deal, ma'am, when it comes the pinch; and it is much pleasanter to do, I find, than to think about it. If I were to think much I should give up in despair. But I pray the Lord each morning to give me my daily bread, and thus far he has done it, and will, I am sure, continue to do it to the end."

"Happy it is for you that you can so think and feel," I replied. "But I am sure I could not be as you are, Mrs. Partridge. It would kill me."

"I sincerely trust, ma'am, that you will never be called to pass

through what I have," said Mrs. Partridge. "And yet there are those who have it still harder. There was a time when the thought of being as poor as I now am, and of having to work so hard, would have been terrible to me; and yet I do not know that I was so very much happier then than I am now, though I confess I ought to have been. I had full and plenty of every thing brought into the house by my husband, and had only to dispense in my family the blessings of God sent to us. But I let things annoy me then more than they do now."

"But how can you help being worried, Mrs. Partridge? To be away from my children as you have been away from yours all day would set me wild. I would be sure some of them would be killed or dreadfully hurt."

"Children are wonderfully protected," said Mrs. Partridge, in a confident voice.

"So they are. But to think of four little children, the youngest eleven months and the oldest not ten years old, left all alone, for a whole day!"

"It is bad when we think about it, I know," returned Mrs. Partridge. "It looks very bad! But I try and put that view of it out of my mind. When I leave them in the morning they say they will be good children. At dinner time I sometimes find them all fast asleep or playing about. I never find them crying, or at all unhappy. Jane loves the younger ones, and keeps them pleased all the time. In the evening, when I get back from my work, there is generally no one awake but Jane. She has given them the bread

and milk I left for their suppers, and undressed and put them to bed."

"Dear little girl! What a treasure she must be!" I could not help saying.

"She is, indeed. I don't see how I could get along without her."

"You could not get along at all."

"Oh, yes, ma'am, I could. Some way would be provided for me," was the confident reply.

I looked into the poor woman's face with wonder and admiration. So patient, so trustful, and yet so very poor. The expression of her countenance was beautiful in its calm religious hope, and it struck me more than ever as familiar.

"Did I ever see you before, Mrs. Partridge?" I asked.

"Indeed, ma'am, I don't know. I am sure I have seen you somewhere. No, now I recollect; it is your likeness to a young schoolmate that makes your face so familiar. How much you do favour her, now I look at you more closely."

"What was her name?" I asked.

"Her name was Flora S–."

"Indeed! Why, that was my name!"

"Your name! Did you go to Madame Martier's school?"

"I did."

"And can you indeed be my old schoolmate, Flora S–?"

"My maiden name was Flora S–, and I went to Madame Martier's. Your face is also familiar, but how to place you I do not know."

"Don't you remember Helen Sprague?"

"Helen Sprague! This can't be Helen Sprague, surely! Yes! I remember now. Why, Helen?" and I stepped forward and grasped her hand. "I am both glad and sorry to see you. To think that, after the lapse of fifteen years, we should meet thus! How in the world is it that fortune has been so unkind to you? I remember hearing it said that you had married very well."

"I certainly never had cause to regret my marriage," replied Mrs. Partridge, with more feeling than she had yet shown. "While my husband lived I had every external blessing that I could ask. But, just before he died, somehow or other he got behind-hand in his business, and after his death, there being no one to see to things, what he left was seized upon and sold, leaving me friendless and almost penniless. Since then, the effort to get food and clothes for my children has been so constant and earnest, that I have scarcely had time to sit down and grieve over my losses and sufferings. It is one perpetual struggle for life. And yet, though I cannot now keep the tears from my eyes, I will not say that I am unhappy. Thus far, all things necessary for me have come. I yet have my little flock together, and a place that bears the sacred name of home."

I looked into Helen's face, over which tears were falling, and wondered if I were not dreaming. At school she had been the favourite of all, she was so full of good humour, and had such a cheerful, peace-loving spirit. Her parents were poor, but respectable people, who died when Helen was fifteen years old.

She was then taken from school, and I never saw her afterward until she came to my house in the capacity of a washerwoman, hundreds of miles away from the scenes of our early years.

"But can't you find easier work than washing?" I asked. "Are you not handy with your needle?"

"The only work I have been able to get has been from the clothing men, and they pay so little that I can't live on it."

"Can you do fine sewing?" I asked.

"Yes, I call myself handy with my needle."

"Can you make children's clothes?"

"Boy's clothes?"

"No. Girl's clothing."

"Oh, yes."

"I'm very much in want of some one. My children are all in"—rags and tatters I was going to say, but I checked myself—"are all in need of clothes, and so far I have not been able to get anybody to sew for me. If you like, I will give you three or four weeks' sewing at least."

"I shall be very glad to have it, and very thankful for your kindness in offering it to me," returned Mrs. Partridge, rising from her chair, and adding as she did so—

"But I must be getting home. It is nearly dark, and Jane will be anxious to see me back again."

I handed her the seventy-five cents she had earned for washing for me during a whole day. Promising to come over and see me early in the morning about the sewing, she withdrew, and I was

left again to my own reflections.

"If ever a murmurer and complainer received a severe rebuke, it is I!" was the first almost audible thought that passed through my mind. "To think that I, with my cup full and running over with blessings, should make myself and all around me unhappy, because a few minor things are not just to my satisfaction, while this woman, who toils like a slave from morning until night, and who can hardly procure food and clothing for her children, from whom she is almost constantly separated, is patient and hopeful, makes me feel as if I deserved to lose what I have refused to enjoy."

On the next morning Mrs. Partridge called quite early. She cut and fitted several frocks for the children, at which work she seemed very handy, and then took them home to make. She sewed for me five weeks, and then got work in another family where I recommended her. Since then, she has been kept constantly employed in sewing, at good prices, by about six families. In all of these I have spoken of her and created an interest in her favour. The mere wages that she earns is much less than what she really receives. All her children's clothes are given to her, and she receives many a bag of meal and load of coal without knowing from whence it comes. In fact, her condition is more comfortable in every way than it was, and, in fact, so is mine. The lesson of patience I learned from Mrs. Partridge in my first, and in many subsequent interviews, impressed itself deeply upon my mind, and caused me to look at and value the

good I had, rather than fret over the few occurrences that were not altogether to my wishes. I saw, too, how the small trouble to me had been the means of working out a great good to her. My need of a washerwoman, about which I had been so annoyed, and the temporary want of a seamstress which I had experienced—light things as they should have been—led me to search about for aid, and, providentially, to fall upon Mrs. Partridge, who needed just what it was in my power to do for her.

Whenever I find myself falling into my old habit, which I am sorry to say is too frequently the case, I turn my thoughts to this poor woman, who is still toiling on under heavy life-burdens, yet with meekness and patience, and bowing my head in shame, say —

"If *she* is thankful for the good she has, how deep should be *my* gratitude!"

I DIDN'T THINK OF THAT!

MR. LAWSON, the tailor, was considered a very good member of society. He was industrious, paid what he owed, was a kind husband and father and a pleasant and considerate neighbour. He was, moreover, attached to the church, and, by his brethren in the faith, considered a pious and good man. And, to say the truth, Mr. Lawson would compare favourably with most people.

One day as Mr. Lawson stood at his cutting board, shears in hand, a poorly dressed young woman entered his shop, and approaching him, asked, with some embarrassment and timidity, if he had any work to give out.

"What can you do?" asked the tailor, looking rather coldly upon his visitor.

"I can make pantaloons and vests," replied the girl.

"Have you ever worked for the merchant tailors?"

"Yes, sir, I worked for Mr. Wright."

"Hasn't he any thing for you to do?"

"No, not just now. He has regular hands who always get the preference."

"Did your work suit him?"

"He never found fault with it."

"Where do you live?"

"In Cherry street," replied the young woman.

"At No.—."

Mr. Lawson stood and mused for a short time.

"I have a vest here," he at length said, taking a small bundle from a shelf, "which I want by tomorrow evening at the latest. If you think you can make it very neatly, and have it done in time, you can take it."

"It shall be done in time," said the young woman, reaching out eagerly for the bundle.

"And remember, I shall expect it made well. If I like your work, I will give you more."

"I will try to please you," returned the girl, in a low voice.

"To-morrow evening, recollect."

"Yes, sir. I will have it done."

The girl turned and went quickly away. As she walked along hurriedly, her slender form bent forward, and there was an unsteadiness in her steps, as if from weakness. She did not linger a moment, nor heed any thing that was passing in the street.

A back room in the third story of an old house in Cherry street was the home of the poor sewing girl. As she entered, she said, in a cheerful voice, to a person who was lying upon a bed which the room contained—

"I have got work, sister. It is a vest, and it must be done by to-morrow evening."

"Can you finish it in time?" inquired the invalid in a faint voice.

"Oh, yes, easily;" and as she spoke, she laid off her bonnet and

shawl hurriedly and sat down to unroll the work she had obtained.

The vest proved to be of white Marseilles. As soon as the invalid sister saw this, she said—

"I'm afraid you won't be able to get that done in time, Ellen; it is very particular work. To stitch the edges well will alone take you many hours."

"I will sit up late, and get a fair start to-night, Mary. Then I can easily finish it in time. You know a vest is only a day's work for a good sewer, and I have nearly a day and a half before me."

"Yes; but you must remember, Ellen, that you are not very fast with your needle, and are, besides, far from being well. The work, too, is of the most particular kind, and cannot be hurried."

"Don't fear for me in the least, Mary. I will do all I have engaged to do," and the young woman, who had already arranged the cut-out garment, took a portion of it in her lap and commenced her task.

The two sisters, here introduced, were poor, in bad health, and without friends. Mary, the older, had declined rapidly within a few months, and become so much exhausted as to be obliged to keep her bed most of the time. The task of providing for the wants of both fell, consequently, upon Ellen. Increased exertion was more than her delicate frame could well endure. Daily were the vital energies of her system becoming more and more exhausted, a fact of which she was painfully conscious, and which she, with studious care, sought to conceal from Mary.

When, through loss of friends and change of circumstances,

the two sisters were thrown entirely dependent upon their own exertions for a livelihood, they, with prudent forethought, immediately applied themselves to the learning of a trade in order to have the means of support. Confinement for twelve or fourteen hours a day, sitting in one position—a great change for them—could not long be endured without producing ill effects on frail young creatures at best. Mary, the older, failed first; and, at the time of which we are writing, had so far declined as to be little more than the shadow of any thing earthly.

With her own unaided hands, Ellen found it impossible to earn enough for even their most simple need. Often Mary was without medicine, because there was no money left after food and fuel were bought. More and more earnestly did Ellen apply herself as want came in more varied shapes; but the returns of her labour became daily less and less adequate to meet the demands of nature.

The busy season had passed, and trade was dull. Ellen worked for only two merchant tailors, and with them she was considered an extra hand. When business fell off, as the season approached towards mid-summer, she was the first to receive notice that no more work could be given out for the present. With a disheartened feeling she returned home on receiving this intelligence. Mary saw that something was wrong the moment she entered, and tenderly inquired the cause of her trouble. On learning what it was, she endeavoured to comfort and assure her, but to little purpose.

As soon as Ellen could regain sufficient composure of mind, she went forth in search of work at other shops. To one of her peculiar, timid, and shrinking disposition this was a severe trial. But there was no passing it by. Three days elapsed, during which every effort to get work proved unsuccessful. Even the clothing stores had nothing to give out to extra hands.

Reduced to their last penny, Ellen was almost in despair, when she called upon Mr. Lawson. The garment he gave her to make seemed to her like help sent from heaven. Cheerfully did she work upon it until a late hour at night, and she was ready to resume her labour with the rising sun. But, as Mary had feared, the work did not progress altogether to her satisfaction. She had never made over one or two white Marseilles vests, and found that she was not so well skilled in the art of neat and accurate stitching as was required to give the garment a beautiful and workmanlike appearance. The stitches did not impress themselves along the edges with the accuracy that her eye told her was required, and she was troubled to find that, be as careful as she would, the pure white fabric grew soiled beneath her fingers. Mary, to whom she frequently submitted the work, tried to encourage her; but her eyes were not deceived.

It was after dark when Ellen finished the garment. She was weary and faint; for she had taken no food since morning, and had been bending over her work, with very little intermission, the whole day; and she had no hope of receiving any thing more to do, for Mr. Lawson, she was sure, would not be pleased with the

way the vest was made. But, want of every thing, and particularly food for herself and sister, made the sum of seventy-five cents, to be received for the garment, a little treasure in her eyes; and she hurried off with the vest the moment it was finished.

"I will bring home a little tea, sister," she said, as she was about leaving; "I am sure a cup of tea will do you good; and I feel as if it would revive and strengthen me."

Mary looked at Ellen with a tender, pitying expression, while her large bright eyes shone glassy in the dim rays sent forth by a poor lamp; but she did not reply. She had a gnawing in her stomach, that made her feel faint, and a most earnest craving for nourishing and even stimulating food, the consequence of long abstinence as well as from the peculiarity of her disease. But she did not breathe a word of this to Ellen, who would, she knew, expend for her every cent of the money she was about to receive, if she was aware of the morbid appetite from which she was suffering.

"I will be back soon," added Ellen, as she retired from the room.

Mary sighed deeply when alone. She raised her eyes upwards for a few moments, then closing them and clasping her hands tightly together, she lay with her white face turned towards the light, more the image of death than of life.

"Here it is past eight o'clock, and that vest is not yet in," said Mr. Lawson, in a fretful tone. "I had my doubts about the girl when I gave it to her. But she looked so poor, and seemed so

earnest about work, that I was weak enough to intrust her with the garment. But I will take care, another time, how I let my feeling get the better of my judgment."

Before the individual had time to reply, Ellen came in with the vest, and laid it on the counter, at which the tailor was standing. She said nothing, neither did the tailor make any remark; but the latter unfolded the vest in the way that plainly showed him not to be in a very placid frame of mind.

"Goodness!" he ejaculated, after glancing hurriedly at the garment.

The girl shrunk back from the counter, and looked frightened.

"Well, this is a pretty job for one to bring in!" said the tailor, in an excited tone of voice. "A pretty job, indeed! It looks as if it had been dragged through a duck puddle. And such work!"

He tossed the garment from him in angry contempt, and walked away to the back part of the shop, leaving Ellen standing almost as still as a statue.

"That vest was to have been home to-night," he said, as he threw himself into a chair. "Of course, the customer will be disappointed and angry, and I shall lose him. But I don't care half so much for that, as I do for not being able to keep my word with him. It is too much!"

Ellen would have instantly retired, but the thought of her sick sister forced her to remain. She felt that she could not go until she had received the price of making the vest, for their money was all gone, and they had no food in the house. She had lingered

for a little while, when the tailor called out to her, and said—

"You needn't stand there, Miss! thinking that I am going to pay you for ruining the job. It's bad enough to lose my material, and customer into the bargain. In justice you should be made to pay for the vest. But there is no hope for that. So take yourself away as quickly as possible, and never let me set eyes on you again."

Ellen did not reply, but turned away slowly, and, with her eyes upon the floor and her form drooping, retired from the shop. After she had gone, Mr. Lawson returned to the front part of the store, and taking up the vest, brought it back to where an elderly man was sitting, and holding it towards him, said, by way of apology for the part he had taken in the little scene:

"That's a beautiful article for a gentleman to wear—isn't it?"

The man made no reply, and the tailor, after a pause, added—

"I refused to pay her, as a matter of principle. She knew she couldn't make the garment when she took it away. She will be more careful how she tries again to impose herself upon customer tailors as a good vest maker."

"Perhaps," said the old gentleman, in a mild way, "necessity drove her to you for work, and tempted her to undertake a job that required greater skill than she possessed. She certainly looked very poor."

"It was because she appeared so poor and miserable that I was weak enough to place the vest in her hands," replied Mr. Lawson, in a less severe tone of voice. "But it was an imposition in her to

ask for work that she did not know how to make."

"Brother Lawson," said the old gentleman, who was a fellow member of the church, "we should not blame, with too much severity, the person who, in extreme want, undertakes to perform work for which he does not possess the requisite skill. The fact that a young girl, like the one who was just here, is willing, in her extreme poverty, to labour, instead of sinking into vice and idleness, shows her to possess both virtue and integrity of character, and these we should be willing to encourage, even at some sacrifice. Work is slack now, as you are aware, and there is but little doubt that she had been to many places seeking employment before she came to you. It may be—and this is a very probable suggestion—that she did not come to you for work until she, and those who may be dependent upon the meagre returns of her labour, were reduced to the utmost extremity. And, it may be, that even their next meal was dependent upon the receipt of the money that was expected to be paid for making the vest you hold in your hand. The expression of her face as she turned away, and her slow, lingering step and drooping form, as she left the shop, had in them a language which told me of all this, and even more."

A great change came over the tailor's countenance.

"I didn't think of that," fell in a low tone from his lips.

"I didn't suppose you did, brother Lawson," said his monitor. "We are all more apt to think of ourselves than of others. The girl promised you the vest this evening?"

"Yes."

"And, so far as that was concerned, performed her contract. Is the vest made so very badly?"

Mr. Lawson took up the garment, and examined it more carefully.

"Well, I can't say that the work is so very badly done. But it is dreadfully soiled and rumpled, and is not as neat a job as it should be, nor at all such as I wished it. The customer for whom it is intended is very particular, and I was anxious to please him."

"All this is very annoying, of course; but still we should always be ready to make some excuse for the short-comings of others. There is no telling under how many disadvantages the poor girl may have laboured in making this vest. She may have had a sick mother, or a father, or sister to attend to, which constantly interfered with and interrupted her. She may have been compelled, from this cause, to work through a greater part of the night, in order to keep her promise to you. Under such circumstances, even you could hardly wonder if the garment were not made well, or if it came soiled from her hands. And even you could hardly find it in your heart to speak unkindly to the poor creature, much less turn her away angrily, and without the money she had toiled for so earnestly."

"I didn't think of that," was murmured in a low abstracted voice.

"Who could wonder," continued the old man, "if that unhappy girl, deprived of the reward of honest labour, and driven angrily

away as you drove her just now, should in despair step aside into ruin, thus sacrificing herself, body and soul, in order to save from want and deprivation those she could not sustain by virtuous toil?"

"I didn't think of that," fell quick and in an agitated voice from the tailor's lips, as, dropping the garment he held in his hand, he hurried around his counter and left the shop.

Ellen was not tempted as the friend of Mr. Lawson had supposed; but there are hundreds who, under like circumstances, would have turned aside. From the shop of the tailor she went slowly homeward; at her heart was a feeling of utter despondency. She had struggled long, in weariness and pain, with her lot; but now she felt that the struggle was over. The hope of the hour had failed, and it seemed to her the last hope.

When Ellen entered the room where her sister lay, the sight of her expectant face (for the desire for nourishing, refreshing food had been stronger than usual with Mary, and her fancy had been dwelling upon the pleasant repast that was soon to be spread before her) made the task of communicating the cruel repulse she had received tenfold more painful. Without uttering a word, she threw herself upon the bed beside her sister, and, burying her face in a pillow, endeavoured to smother the sobs that came up convulsively from her bosom. Mary asked no question. She understood the meaning of Ellen's agitation well; it told her that she had been disappointed in the expectation of receiving the money for her work.

Deep silence followed. Mary clasped her hands together and raised her eyes upward, while Ellen lay motionless with her face hidden where she had first concealed it. There was a knock at the door, but no voice bade the applicant for admission enter. It was repeated; but, if heard, it met no response. Then the latch was lifted, the door swung open, and the tailor stepped into the room. The sound of his feet aroused the passive sisters. The white face of Mary was to him, at first, a startling image of death; but her large bright eyes opened and turned upon him with an assurance that life still lingered in its earthly tenement.

"Ellen, Ellen," said the sick girl, faintly.

Ellen, too, had heard the sound of footsteps on the floor, and she now raised up slowly, and presented to Lawson her sad, tearful countenance.

"I was wrong to speak to you as I did," said the tailor without preface, advancing towards the bed and holding out to Ellen the money she had earned. "There is the price of the vest; it is better made than I at first thought it was. To-morrow I will send you more work. Try and cheer up. Are you so very poor?"

The last two sentences were uttered in a voice of encouragement and sympathy. Ellen looked her thankfulness, but did not venture a reply. Her heart was too full to trust her lips with utterance.

Feeling that his presence, under all circumstances, could not but be embarrassing, Mr. Lawson, after taking two or three dollars from his pocket and placing them on the table with the

remark—"Take this in advance for work," retired and left the poor sisters in a different frame of mind from what they were in when he entered. Shortly after they received a basket, in which was a supply of nourishing food. Though no one's name was sent with it, they were not in doubt as to whence it came.

Mr. Lawson was not an unfeeling man, but, like too many others in the world, he did not always "think."

TAKING BOARDERS

CHAPTER I

A LADY, past the prime of life, sat thoughtful, as twilight fell duskily around her, in a room furnished with great elegance. That her thoughts were far from being pleasant, the sober, even sad expression of her countenance too clearly testified. She was dressed in deep mourning. A faint sigh parted her lips as she looked up, on hearing the door of the apartment in which she was sitting open. The person who entered, a tall and beautiful girl, also in mourning, came and sat down by her side, and leaned her head, with a pensive, troubled air, down upon her shoulder.

"We must decide upon something, Edith, and that with as little delay as possible," said the elder of the two ladies, soon after the younger one entered. This was said in a tone of great despondency.

"Upon what shall we decide, mother?" and the young lady raised her head from its reclining position, and looked earnestly into the eyes of her parent.

"We must decide to do something by which the family can be sustained. Your father's death has left us, unfortunately and unexpectedly, as you already know, with scarcely a thousand dollars beyond the furniture of this house, instead of an

independence which we supposed him to possess. His death was sad and afflictive enough—more than it seemed I could bear. But to have this added!"

The voice of the speaker sank into a low moan, and was lost in a stifled sob.

"But what *can* we do, mother?" asked Edith, in an earnest tone, after pausing long enough for her mother to regain the control of her feelings.

"I have thought of but one thing that is at all respectable," replied the mother.

"What is that?"

"Taking boarders."

"Why, mother!" ejaculated Edith, evincing great surprise, "how can you think of such a thing?"

"Because driven to do so by the force of circumstances."

"Taking boarders! Keeping a boarding-house! Surely we have not come to this!"

An expression of distress blended with the look of astonishment in Edith's face.

"There is nothing disgraceful in keeping a boarding-house," returned the mother. "A great many very respectable ladies have been compelled to resort to it as a means of supporting their families."

"But to think of it, mother! To think of *your* keeping a boarding-house! I cannot bear it."

"Is there any thing else that can be done, Edith?"

"Don't ask *me* such a question."

"If, then, you cannot think for me, you must try and think with me, my child. Something will have to be done to create an income. In less than twelve months, every dollar I have will be expended; and then what are we to do? Now, Edith, is the time for us to look at the matter earnestly, and to determine the course we will take. There is no use to look away from it. A good house in a central situation, large enough for the purpose, can no doubt be obtained; and I think there will be no difficulty about our getting boarders enough to fill it. The income or profit from these will enable us still to live comfortably, and keep Edward and Ellen at school."

"It is hard," was the only remark Edith made to this.

"It is hard, my daughter; very hard! I have thought and thought about it until my whole mind has been thrown into confusion. But it will not do to think for ever; there must be action. Can I see want stealing in upon my children, and sit and fold my hands supinely? No! And to you, Edith, my oldest child, I look for aid and for counsel. Stand up bravely by my side."

"And you are in earnest in all this?" said Edith, whose mind seemed hardly able to realize the truth of their position. From her earliest days, all the blessings that money could procure had been freely scattered around her feet. As she grew up and advanced towards womanhood, she had moved in the most fashionable circles, and there acquired the habit of estimating people according to their wealth and social standing, rather than

by qualities of mind. In her view, it appeared degrading in a woman to enter upon any kind of employment for money; and with the keeper of a boarding-house, particularly, she had always associated something low, vulgar, and ungenteel. At the thought of her mother's engaging in such an occupation, when the suggestion was made her mind instantly revolted. It appeared to her as if disgrace would be the inevitable consequence.

"And you are in earnest in all this?" was an expression mingling her clear conviction of the truth of what at first appeared so strange a proposition, and her astonishment that the necessities of their situation were such as to drive them to so humiliating a resource.

"Deeply in earnest," was the mother's reply.

"We are left alone in the world. He who cared for us and provided for us so liberally has been taken away, and we have nowhere to look for aid but to the resources that are in ourselves. These well applied, will give us, I feel strongly assured, all that we need. The thing to decide is, what we ought to do. If we choose aright, all will doubtless come out right. To choose aright is, therefore, of the first importance; and to do this, we must not suffer distorting suggestions nor the appeals of a false pride to influence our minds in the least. You are my oldest child, Edith; and, as such, I cannot but look upon you as, to some extent, jointly with me, the guardian of your younger brothers and sisters. True, Miriam is of age, and Henry nearly so; but still you are the eldest—your mind is more matured, and in your

judgment I have the most confidence. Try and forget, Edith, all but the fact that, unless we make an exertion, one home for all cannot be retained. Are you willing that we should be scattered like leaves in the autumn wind? No! you would consider that one of the greatest calamities that could befall us—an evil to prevent which we should use every effort in our power. Do you, not see this clearly?"

"I do, mother," was replied by Edith in a more rational tone of voice than that in which she had yet spoken.

"To open a store of any kind would involve five times the exposure of a boarding-house; and, moreover, I know nothing of business."

"Keeping a store? Oh, no! we couldn't do that. Think of the dreadful exposure!"

"But in taking boarders we only increase our family, and all goes on as usual. To my mind, it is the most genteel thing that we can do. Our style of living will be the same; our waiter and all our servants will be retained. In fact, to the eye there will be little change, and the world need never know how greatly reduced our circumstances have become."

This mode of argument tended to reconcile Edith to taking boarders. Something, she saw, had to be done. Opening a store was felt to be out of the question; and as to commencing a school, the thought was repulsed at the very first suggestion.

A few friends were consulted on the subject, and all agreed that the best thing for the widow to do was to take boarders.

Each one could point to some lady who had commenced the business with far less ability to make boarders comfortable, and who had yet got along very well. It was conceded on all hands that it was a very genteel business, and that some of the first ladies had been compelled to resort to it, without being any the less respected. Almost every one to whom the matter was referred spoke in favour of the thing, and but a single individual suggested difficulty; but what he said was not permitted to have much weight. This individual was a brother of the widow, who had always been looked upon as rather eccentric. He was a bachelor and without fortune, merely enjoying a moderate income as book-keeper in the office of an insurance company. But more of him hereafter.

CHAPTER II

MRS. DARLINGTON, the widow we have just introduced to the reader, had five children. Edith, the oldest daughter, was twenty-two years of age at the time of her father's death; and Henry, the oldest son, just twenty. Next to Henry was Miriam, eighteen years old. The ages of the two youngest children, Ellen and Edward, were ten and eight.

Mr. Darlington, while living, was a lawyer of distinguished ability, and his talents and reputation at the Philadelphia bar enabled him to accumulate a handsome fortune. Upon this he had lived for some years in a style of great elegance. About a year before his death, he had been induced to enter into some speculation that promised great results; but he found, when too late to retreat, that he had been greatly deceived. Heavy losses soon followed. In a struggle to recover himself, he became still further involved; and, ere the expiration of a twelvemonth, saw every thing falling from under him. The trouble brought on by this was the real cause of his death, which was sudden, and resulted from inflammation and congestion of the brain.

Henry Darlington, the oldest son, was a young man of promising talents. He remained at college until a few months before his father's death, when he returned home and commenced the study of law, in which he felt ambitious to distinguish himself.

Edith, the oldest daughter, possessed a fine mind, which had been well educated. She had some false views of life, natural to her position; but, apart from this, was a girl of sound sense and great force of character. Thus far in life she had not encountered circumstances of a nature calculated to develop what was in her. The time for that, however, was approaching. Miriam, her sister, was a quiet, gentle, retiring, almost timid girl. She went into company with reluctance, and then always shrunk as far from observation as it was possible to get; but, like most quiet, retiring persons, there were deep places in her mind and heart. She thought and felt more than was supposed. All who knew Miriam loved her. Of the younger children we need not here speak.

Mrs. Darlington knew comparatively nothing of the world beyond her own social circle. She was, perhaps, as little calculated for doing what she proposed to do as a woman could well be. She had no habits of economy, and had never in her life been called upon to make calculations of expense in household matters. There was a tendency to generosity rather than selfishness in her character, and she rarely thought evil of any one. But all that she was need not here be set forth, for it will appear as our narrative progresses.

Mr. Hiram Ellis, the brother of Mrs. Darlington to whom brief allusion has been made, was not a great favourite in the family —although Mr. Darlington understood his good qualities, and very highly respected him—because he had not much that was

prepossessing in his external appearance, and was thought to be a little eccentric. Moreover, he was not rich—merely holding the place of book-keeper in an insurance office, at a moderate salary. But as he had never married, and had only himself to support, his income supplied amply all his wants, and left him a small annual surplus.

After the death of Mr. Darlington, he visited his sister much more frequently than before. Of the exact condition of her affairs, he was much better acquainted than she supposed. The anxiety which she felt, some months after her husband's death, when the result of the settlement of his estate became known, led her to be rather more communicative. After determining to open a boarding-house, she said to him, on the occasion of his visiting her one evening—

"As it is necessary for me to do something, Hiram, I have concluded to move to a better location, and take a few boarders."

"Don't do any such thing, Margaret," her brother made answer. "Taking boarders! It's the last thing of which a woman should think."

"Why do you say that, Hiram?" asked Mrs. Darlington, evincing no little surprise at this unexpected reply.

"Because I think that a woman who has a living to make can hardly try a more doubtful experiment. Not one in ten ever succeeds in doing any thing."

"But why, Hiram? Why? I'm sure a great many ladies get a living in that way."

"What you will never do, Margaret, mark my words for it. It takes a woman of shrewdness, caution, and knowledge of the world, and one thoroughly versed in household economy, to get along in this pursuit. Even if you possessed all these prerequisites to success, you have just the family that ought not to come in contact with anybody and everybody that find their way into boarding-houses."

"I must do something, Hiram," said Mrs. Darlington, evincing impatience at the opposition of her brother.

"I perfectly agree with you in that, Margaret," replied Mr. Ellis. "The only doubt is as to your choice of occupation. You think that your best plan will be to take boarders; while I think you could not fall upon a worse expedient."

"Why do you think so?"

"Have I not just said?"

"What?"

"Why, that, in the first place, it takes a woman of great shrewdness, caution, and knowledge of the world, and one thoroughly versed in household economy, to succeed in the business."

"I'm not a fool, Hiram!" exclaimed Mrs. Darlington, losing her self-command.

"Perhaps you may alter your opinion on that head some time within the next twelve months," coolly returned Mr. Ellis, rising and beginning to button up his coat.

"Such language to me, at this time, is cruel!" said Mrs.

Darlington, putting her handkerchief to her eyes.

"No," calmly replied her brother, "not cruel, but kind. I wish to save you from trouble."

"What else can I do?" asked the widow, removing the handkerchief from her face.

"Many things, I was going to say," returned Mr. Ellis. "But, in truth, the choice of employment is not very great. Still, something with a fairer promise than taking boarders may be found."

"If you can point me to some better way, brother," said Mrs. Darlington, "I shall feel greatly indebted to you."

"Almost any thing is better. Suppose you and Edith were to open a school. Both of you are well—"

"Open a school!" exclaimed Mrs. Darlington, interrupting her brother, and exhibiting most profound astonishment. "*I* open a school! I didn't think *you* would take advantage of my grief and misfortune to offer me an insult."

Mr. Ellis buttoned the top button of his coat nervously, as his sister said this, and, partly turning himself towards the door, said —

"Teaching school is a far more useful, and, if you will, more respectable employment, than keeping a boarding-house. This you ought to see at a glance. As a teacher, you would be a minister of truth to the mind, and have it in your power to bend from evil and lead to good the young immortals committed to your care; while, as a boarding-house keeper, you would merely furnish

food for the natural body—a use below what you are capable of rendering to society."

But Mrs. Darlington was in no state of mind to feel the force of such an argument. From the thought of a school she shrunk as from something degrading, and turned from it with displeasure.

"Don't mention such a thing to me," said she fretfully, "I will not listen to the proposition."

"Oh, well, Margaret, as you please," replied her brother, now moving towards the door. "When you ask my advice, I will give it according to my best judgment, and with a sincere desire for your good. If, however, it conflicts with your views, reject it; but, in simple justice to me, do so in a better spirit than you manifest on the present occasion. Good evening!"

Mrs. Darlington was too much disturbed in mind to make a reply, and Mr. Hiram Ellis left the room without any attempt on the part of his sister to detain him. On both sides there had been the indulgence of rather more impatience and intolerance than was commendable.

CHAPTER III

IN due time, Mrs. Darlington removed to a house in Arch Street, the annual rent of which was six hundred dollars, and there began her experiment. The expense of a removal, and the cost of the additional chamber furniture required, exhausted about two hundred dollars of the widow's slender stock of money, and caused her, to feel a little troubled when she noticed the diminution.

She began her new business with two boarders, a gentleman and his wife by the name of Grimes, who had entered her house on the recommendation of a friend. They were to pay her the sum of eight dollars a week. A young man named Barling, clerk in a wholesale Market Street house, came next; and he introduced, soon after, a friend of his, a clerk in the same store, named Mason. They were room-mates, and paid three dollars and a half each. Three or four weeks elapsed before any further additions were made; then an advertisement brought several applications. One was from a gentleman who wanted two rooms for himself and wife, a nurse and four children. He wanted the second story front and back chambers, furnished, and was not willing to pay over sixteen dollars, although his oldest child was twelve and his youngest four years of age—seven good eaters and two of the best rooms in the house for sixteen dollars!

Mrs. Darlington demurred. The man said—

"Very well, ma'am," in a tone of indifference. "I can find plenty of accommodations quite as good as yours for the price I offer. It's all I pay now." Poor Mrs. Darlington sighed. She had but fifteen dollars yet in the house—that is, boarders who paid this amount weekly—and the rent alone amounted to twelve dollars. Sixteen dollars, she argued with herself, as she sat with her eyes upon the floor, would make a great difference in her income; would, in fact, meet all the expenses of the house. Two good rooms would still remain, and all that she received for these would be so much clear profit. Such was the hurried conclusion of Mrs. Darlington's mind.

"I suppose I will have to take you," said she, lifting her eyes to the man's hard features. "But those rooms ought to bring me twenty-four dollars."

"Sixteen is the utmost I will pay," replied the man. In fact, I did think of offering only fourteen dollars. "But the rooms are fine, and I like them. Sixteen is a liberal price. Your terms are considerably above the ordinary range."

The widow sighed again.

If the man heard this sound, it did not touch a single chord of feeling.

"Then it is understood that I am to have your rooms at sixteen dollars?" said he.

"Yes, sir. I will take you for that."

"Very well. My name is Scragg. We will be ready to come in on Monday next. You can have all prepared for us?"

"Yes, sir."

Scarcely had Mr. Scragg departed, when a gentleman called to know if Mrs. Darlington had a vacant front room in the second story.

"I had this morning; but it is taken," replied the widow.

"Ah! I'm sorry for that."

"Will not a third story front room suit you?" "No. My wife is not in very good health, and wishes a second story room. We pay twelve dollars a week, and would even give more, if necessary, to obtain just the accommodations we like. The situation of your house pleases me. I'm sorry that I happen to be too late."

"Will you look at the room?" said Mrs. Darlington, into whose mind came the desire to break the bad bargain she had just made.

"If you please," returned the man.

And both went up to the large and beautifully furnished chambers.

"Just the thing!" said the man, as he looked around, much pleased with the appearance of every thing. "But I understood you to say that it was taken."

"Why, yes," replied Mrs. Darlington, "I did partly engage it this morning; but, no doubt, I can arrange with the family to take the two rooms above, which will suit them just as well."

"If you can"—

"There'll be no difficulty, I presume. You'll pay twelve dollars a week?"

"Yes."

"Only yourself and lady?"

"That's all."

"Very well, sir; you can have the room."

"It's a bargain, then. My name is Ring. Our week is up to-day where we are; and, if it is agreeable, we will become your guests to-morrow."

"Perfectly agreeable, Mr. Ring."

The gentleman bowed politely and retired.

Now Mrs. Darlington did not feel very comfortable when she reflected on what she had done. The rooms in the second story were positively engaged to Mr. Scragg, and now one of them was as positively engaged to Mr. Ring. The face of Mr. Scragg she remembered very well. It was a hard, sinister face, just such a one as we rarely forget because of the disagreeable impression it makes. As it came up distinctly before the eyes of her mind, she was oppressed with a sense of coming trouble. Nor did she feel altogether satisfied with what she had done—satisfied in her own conscience.

On the next morning, Mr. and Mrs. Ring came and took possession of the room previously engaged to Mr. Scragg. They were pleasant people, and made a good first impression.

As day after day glided past, Mrs. Darlington felt more and more uneasy about Mr. Scragg, with whom, she had a decided presentiment, there would be trouble. Had she known where to find him, she would have sent him a note, saying that she had changed her mind about the rooms, and could not let him have

them. But she was ignorant of his address; and the only thing left for her was to wait until he came on Monday, and then get over the difficulty in the best way possible. She and Edith had talked over the matter frequently, and had come to the determination to offer Mr. Scragg the two chambers in the third story for fourteen dollars.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.