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The Rainy Day.

"Wife," said John Maynard, "we must begin, sometime, and save for a rainy day." But sometimes it rains; and there were so many good reasons why they should not begin just then.

And they didn't. And when the crisis came, and so many powerful friends tottered and went down, John Maynard was engaged in the vortex of general ruin; and after a few days of feverish, anxious suspense, emerged penniless, ruined.

Then—to his shame be it said—he forgot his manhood, and upbraided and taunted his gentle, childlike, weeping wife so bitterly, that she fell fainting at his feet. Seeing her there, he remembered how he had sworn to cherish and protect her; how she was not to blame for extravagance, since at first he had encouraged it, and had always kept her in ignorance of his business means and resources.

What woman would have been unrepenting? Not Amy Howard, at all events. She crept close to her husband's heart, and put up her lips for the kiss of reconciliation that blotted out all the cruel words he had spoken.

"But, oh, John!" cried she "why didn't you tell me? I would not have spent one dollar, and I could have helped you, I know."

The next few weeks were dreadful to them both. They gave up their pretty home, with all its dainty belongings, and moved into one small poorly-furnished room. Unknown to her husband, Amy went to some of her friends and begged them to buy her jewelry and dresses, and by that means obtained a sum of money, enough to keep them from want till John should find something to do.

But John's spirit seemed broken. After one or two rebuffs he gave up seeking employment, and took to his bed. Not ill—except at heart—but not all his wife's loving entreaties could rouse him.

Of course, the old story: Wine and dainties, when even the poorest and cheapest food would soon be beyond their reach.

It all most broke poor Amy's heart to see her husband suffering and not be able to relieve him; but she was such a helpless creature, there was nothing she could do. She wondered why parents would bring up their girls so uselessly, when boys were always taught ways to help themselves. To be sure, she knew did—and John had always praised the pretty songs she sang to him in her clear, sweet bird-like voice; and she could make wax flowers that looked almost real; and had wonderful inspirations in the way of titles. But all these were no good to her. What should she do to earn some money? She sat listless by the window, looking out into the quiet street, and wondering if any one was ever quite so wretched, when her attention was attracted by noises in the next room.

The partition was thin, the voices were raised, and she could hear quite distinctly. The speaker was Mrs. Becker—a kind, motherly woman, who often helped her take care of John—and her son, Tom.

Said Tom: "No school this week, mother; that last teacher is frightened off too. The boys are just outrageous; they say they won't have a woman teacher. I tell you it will be a big battle between us and the committee. They'll have to give in and go down in their pockets a little further, and pay for a good, square meal! We've made up our minds, and that's all about it."

"I'm ashamed of you, Tom," said Mrs. Becker. "Isn't your mother a woman and—"

"Yes, mamma," interrupted Tom, giving her a hearty kiss which was quite as distinct as the words, "and a good one. I'd like to have anyone deny it. But this is different; all the boys have got mothers, I guess; we've got nothing against mothers. If this was a day school, with a lot of girls to teach to, I don't believe we'd say a word; but a night school and a lot of fellows that work all day to be taught by a woman! It isn't mainly!"

"Isn't it more manly to frighten and torment a woman who is trying to earn enough money to keep her own boys from starving?" asked his mother, quietly.

Tom was silent a moment, and then said triumphantly: "They didn't have any boys; they were both cross old maids. So there now!"

And Tom, feeling doubtful that his case was settled, went out and slammed the door after him, thus effectually interposing a barrier to any further conversation.

By this time Amy's resolve was taken. She would go to the school committee (whom she knew well) and ask for the position of teacher of the "Hopetown Night School." John had fallen into an uneasy, restless sleep, so preparing herself she went out at once, tapping at Mrs. Becker's door in passing to beg her to look after the invalid if he awoke.

She was not long absent, and returned to find her husband still sleeping. Her face was very bright with the sunshine of hope; for she had been successful in her application, and was to begin her work that very evening. After much consideration she decided not to tell her husband, for the present at least, as she knew it would worry him.

She had an early tea, then kissed John, saying: "I am going out for a while, dear; but Mrs. Becker will take care of you, and I shall be home before you have time to miss me."

Then she went; and it seemed to John that the little room had suddenly grown darker and more comfortable than usual. It was something new for Amy to leave him in the evening; she had never done so since they left their pretty home for this wretched place, and he looked around him in disgust. Perhaps she was growing tired of it, and of him, and had gone to visit some of her gay friends. He remembered how fond she had always been of gazing; how she was once the life of all the merry parties in the town; and it would be no wonder if she should hate this miserable life. These thoughts drove out for a time the intensely selfish ones that had so long held control of John Maynard's mind, and he pitied his poor young wife, doomed to such poverty and sorrow; but soon the old selfishness resumed its sway, and he pitied himself, Amy at least had her health; he was a helpless invalid. She was cruel to leave him.

While he is indulging in these thoughts let us follow Amy. The school-bell, pealing out in the night air, startled the young gentlemen who were anticipating a holiday; and brought them in full force to the school-room doors. Several members of the committee were seated on the platform; beside them a little lady who a Tom recognized at once.

"Why! it's Mrs. Maynard, our next door neighbor!" exclaimed he. "She can't be going to try it!"

But she was. And as the boys, following Tom's lead, took their seats, staring the while mightily at her, she rose and stepped to the front of the platform. Mr. Thompson, one of the committee, who had his mouth open, ready to make an introductory speech, shut it and sat down again. Then Amy spoke in a clear, sweet voice that trembled a little, and was all the more effective on that account.

"Boys," she said: "I am here as your teacher. I shall do my utmost to advance your studies and interests; and I hope you will—I hope—Oh! Tom! do be good!" she said entreatingly; breaking down altogether in her little speech, and looking at Tom as if all her hope was in him.

Tom—who was fifteen, and carried up Mrs. Maynard's coal, and did all her errands for her, and in his innermost heart worshipped her sunny curls and merry, laughing eyes, as boys will do—Tom stood up boldly and said:

"We'll all be good for you, Mrs. Maynard. I'd like to see the boy that goes back on that!" and he looked around so fiercely that more than one rebellious spirit quailed before his glance, for Tom was the acknowledged leader of the school.

That settled matters; and I may as well say now that never in the history of Hopetown had there been a more orderly, progressive school than under Amy Maynard's gentle rule that winter.

relative to her outgoings. A little cloud rose between them, which grew day by day, till in John's mind it blotted out all Amy's tender, self-sacrificing care, and made her appear to him a very monster of selfishness.

One day she came in, bringing him wine and fruits, and other dainties. He refused to touch them and looked at her so angrily that she shrank back as if from a blow. Just then the doctor came in, and seeing the things, said heartily:

"Ha! Just what you've needed so long; we will soon have you well now."

Then John Maynard's blood flamed, and rising up in bed, with unexpected strength, he said: "Never, if my health is to be restored at the price of my wife's good name! Does she think, because I have been silent, that I cared nothing for what she did? Let her tell if she dare, how her evenings are spent, and where; how she has procured this money, which I, her husband, have not given her!"

"No! you miserable, suspicious man," interrupted the good doctor, angrily, "you did not give it to her. You lay there weakly, selfishly, and let your wife work for you; you shifted all the care and burden you should have borne like a man, on her poor shoulders, and well for you that she did not fall you as you did her."

He would have said more, but a look at Amy silenced him. She knelt at the bedside and taking her husband's hand, said:

"Forgive me, dear, for keeping a secret from you. I wanted to help you, and there was no other way of doing it, so I've been teaching the night school. It was all for you, dear love; I could not let you suffer, and we were so poor. I tried to tell you, but you were so—so cold to me. I feared you were tiring of your poor little wife. Do forgive me, I pray, and the sweet face flashed deeply, and the loving eyes filled with tears.

For a moment the silence was almost painful. The old doctor went out softly, but they did not miss him. At last John spoke, in a voice broken by strong sobs.

"Oh, good, true wife," he said, "forgive me. I have been so weak and selfish, so cruel to you, I never can forgive myself. You have made me ashamed of myself, darling; but I'll show you I am a man yet, and, please God, I will make you forget all this dreadful time."

His excitement gave him strength; he rose and dressed himself. He had only needed something to rouse him, and it had done him good. They had a long comforting talk that brought them closer to each other than they had been before; and when evening came, and it was time for Amy to go, John kissed her good-bye with a lighter heart than he had thought possible.

Two or three days did wonders for him in the way of strength. He was soon able to go out; then he too had his secret. Every evening, as soon as Amy went out he did likewise, returning sometimes only a few moments before her. A fortnight went by; then he said to her one day:

"Come and take a walk with me, dear wife."

She went gladly, and he led her to a pretty little cottage in a quiet street, unlocked the door, and they entered. He meant to have made a little speech; in fact, had planned quite an affecting scene to be rehearsed on this occasion, but he forgot it all now, and taking his wife in his arms, kissed her tenderly, saying:

"It's all ours, dear—all ours. The rainy day is over forever. I hope, and the sunshine has come back to us again."

Then gradually he told her how he had gone to his old friend, the president of the bank, who, having suspicions of his present bookkeeper, had employed him (John) to overlook his books; and had finally given him the position, with the little cottage rent free, and he was to begin his work on the morrow.

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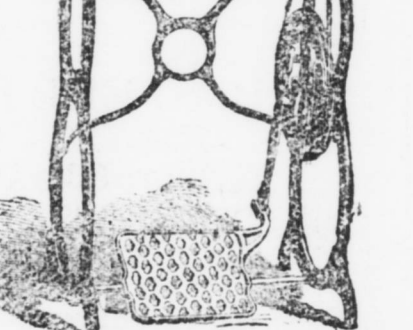
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