

say, "at fourteen shillings a week, breakfast, boots, and firing included—candles extra; but as he only burnt a dip, there was little to be said about lights. I soon found that his appetite was really ferocious, and that he ate more at one breakfast than I did at six. It did not matter the nature of the provisions, he had no fancies, and I do believe he could have eaten tuppenny balls, like the pillion of the wilderness I saw in Wombwell's menagerie. So I told him I couldn't do it at the money, and after a deal of haggling I got him to fifteen and six; and at that price he's been stationary here six years." Mrs. Drury always spoke of this gentleman as "my parlor," but his name was Mr. David Thomas.

On the evening when the Ramsays were in their great perplexity Mr. Thomas had returned home to his wife, not being in the contract with Mrs. Drury, was usually weak—in fact, watery. He had just settled down to reading the newspaper, borrowed from the neighboring public-house, when he was startled by hearing the voices of women in mingled tones of supplication and anger. He rose and opened the door.

"For mercy sake, forgive me! Do not expose me! Do not ruin me!" It was Martha Ramsay who was speaking.

"You ungratefully, you deceitful thing!"—and in a louder voice, "You, ma'am, to whom I have done no end of kindness without charging you a penny, to be robbed in this way! I'll send for the police!"

"Oh, pray do not! We are starving! Do not ruin us!" cried the Ramsays, speaking together.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Thomas.

"What's the matter, sir?" replied Mrs. Drury, descending the stairs, and carrying a bundle. "A pair of sheets, and I don't know what besides. I shall find the room stripped."

"No, no, ma'am, nothing else, on my word of honor!" said Martha, convulsed with grief.

"Your word of honor!" replied Mrs. Drury; and then turning to Mr. Thomas, she added, "Sir, we are all disgraced by those two women up stairs. For this fortnight past we have noticed that this young deceitful hussey left the house at dusk—a thing she never did before—always contriving to avoid me, until at last I made up my mind to watch her. Two evenings ago I saw her go into the parlor, and I followed her. I shall find the room stripped."

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has made them forgetful of its promises. Many, many more are as ignorant of all that concerns their immortality as the dogs in the street. Think of that, dear ladies and gentlemen, who thrust your little missionary boxes under your neighbours' nose, and plead for our black brothers, far, far away in Timbuctoo. Good and true Christian men have devoted themselves to the missionary's perilous work, I know, and gladly laid down their lives for his sake. Doubtless they will have their reward.

But should not blood be thicker than water? Should not our own pariahs be our first care? Should not the State drag into the light the wretched beings whose faces, if cleaned, would be as white as our own? whose confused collocation of words is surely our own language? who are subject to the same laws as ourselves—except that they know them only as punishments? Why are these English freemen and freewomen ever to be a curse and scandal to their country? Why is the baby of the thief to be so piteously unmoored for that it must become a thief as soon almost as it can run alone?

To face this hydra requires a Christian's courage. To conquer it will need an unselfish endurance, which springs only from a sense of duty to God and man. We all admit the existence of the evil. How few of us have the courage and the self-denial to attempt to subvert it!

There are, however, good men and women moving about in the midst of this wretchedness, teaching some the value of order and cleanliness, and how to make their raggedness apparent, until the Book, which it is their mission to sell, becomes a desire. These missionaries are called Bible Men and Bible Women.

It is the Bible woman, Martha, who is talking so gently to a ragged woman on the landing of the filthy house to which I have introduced you.

The little basket Martha Ramsay carries contains medicine and some other comfort for a sick man who lives in one of the attics. He has lived there two years or more. Quite alone; no living thing with him, neither bird nor cat. He rarely stirred abroad, except at the dusk of the evening, and then seemingly only to purchase food. He does such cleaning of his room as he permits himself, never quitting it without locking the door, and he has a key which he keeps under his door. It was on the preceding day—Christmas Day—that Martha, going about her duty, found this wretched man seated on the stairs of the second floor, apparently in great pain, or he might have been drinking.

"What ails you, my poor man?" asked Martha, gently, "are you ill?"

"Yes, very ill. Are you strong enough to help me to my room?"

"I'll try," replied Martha, cheerfully; "I'm not a very strong woman; but there—which is your room?"

"Up higher—the attic on the left," said the man; and then step by step, aided by Martha, he reached the door of his room.

"Thanks, my good woman," said the man; "I can manage now."

"Not you," said Martha; "I must see you safely settled."

"No—I won't have it. I allow no one to enter my room," exclaimed the man; but a paroxysm of pain made him cling to the doorpost and drop the key.

Martha did not hesitate a moment, but unlatching the door, led the now nursing man to his miserable pallet, and laid him on it.

When the pain ceased the man looked towards Martha, and the expression of thankfulness which came into his face seemed to quicken her memory, and she started as she looked at him.

"Surely I must be deceived? and yet I do I speak to Mr. Thomas?" she asked.

The man turned quickly to her and said, "Who are you that—I never saw you before to-day?"

"Yes, yes! I am sure I am not mistaken. You were my benefactor years ago; but I am not mistaken—I am Martha Ramsay, the poor creature."

"Is it so?" cried the man, "is it so?" and then his head fell upon his pillow. The almost fleshless hand with which he covered his eyes seemed to tell of long privation—hunger, cruel hunger.

Martha was greatly moved. As soon as she could speak freely she reminded David Thomas of his former goodness. She told him that her means were very small, but it would be her duty, her happiness, to help him who had rescued her when her life was at its worst. At first he rejected her kindly offers of help, but after a time he seemed to yield. Martha had some skill in housewife pharmacy, and succeeded in allaying the pain which returned at intervals, for the next hour or so.

"And now," she said, "I can leave you; but I shall come back very shortly with a doctor."

"No, no! I'll have no doctor! D—extortionate soundrels! Half flogs—half knives!" Martha, gently.

"I won't see any one—any one but you!" replied Thomas, sharply, adding, "that is, if you like to come on your own account. I know what's the matter with me; I had some brandy-and-water—too much—on Christmas Eve—and sat down on a doorstep and went to sleep. Of course I caught cold."

"No doubt you are right," said Martha; "so I shall come by-and-by and bring you some gruel."

"No charity stuff!" cried Thomas, "I won't touch it."

"No, it shall be my own; and you must refuse that, my dear friend and benefactor!" said Martha, coaxingly.

Mr. Thomas only gave a grunt.

"Why, bless me!" said Martha, "you have no fire, and—"

"I hate fire—I can't breathe if the room's hot. If you're cold you had better stay away," replied Mr. Thomas.

Martha only smiled, and threw over her patient the old Scotch rognelaine which had left her respectable abode to find itself in such queer lodgings. Mr. Thomas seemed to resent this considerate conduct, but he was really endeavoring to get up to lock the door. He was too weak.

"What's the matter with me?" he muttered; "I am not paralyzed, am I? Why can't I get up?"

Martha begged of him to be quiet; that she would only be away for a short time.

"Well, then, lock me in," said Mr. Thomas. "It's double lock—turn the key twice."

Martha said yes, and then rapidly left the room.

When Martha returned with such small comforts as she could collect in the neighborhood, she saw such a change in her patient that she became alarmed for him, and instantly, without saying a word, went for a doctor. In less than a quarter of an hour she returned, bringing with her a medical friend, requesting him, however, to wait outside the door until she had prepared her patient.

Notwithstanding the care with which Martha tried to introduce the doctor, Mr. Thomas

was as resistant as his prostration permitted him to be.

"My dear friend," said Martha, firmly but softly, "we are forbidden to do self-murder; and by refusing to use the means within our reach to preserve the life which has been lent to us, we do commit self-murder."

"But I am not likely to die!" interrupted Mr. Thomas.

"I believe otherwise, and I dare not be silent. You are in great danger!"

Mr. Thomas by a sudden effort raised himself on his arms, and stared fixedly at Martha.

"I have brought a gentleman with me who will confirm or contradict my fears," said Martha. "Dear friend, you must see him."

The fear of death seemed to be a new terror to David Thomas, and he lay silent, his chest heaving quickly. The examination of the doctor was conclusive. Inflammation of some vital part—I shan't talk shop—had set in, and the case was hopeless. It would be out of place to repeat now the words in which this was conveyed to David Thomas by Martha Ramsay, or by which he was urged to lose his hold upon the world. He clung closely to his idol!

Martha watched and prayed beside him throughout the night. When the doctor came again (which he did very early in the morning), he pronounced his worst fears approaching, and that death was rapidly approaching. David Thomas tried to beat back the shadow which advanced slowly—slowly, but at last it came, too defined not to be known that it was Death.

"I have much to say—much to do—and the time you tell me is so short. Send some one to Mrs. Gregory, in Bedford square. Tell her to come instantly—I am dying."

My mother was greatly terrified when this message reached her, but my father urged her to go at once, and volunteered to accompany her.

In a great state of alarm my mother stood by the bedside of her old acquaintance.

"Mrs. Gregory," he said with difficulty, "you wonder, I dare say, to see me in this miserable plight."

My mother made a grimace, by which she meant to say the id.

"Do you guess what brought me to it? No, you can't, I know. It was love!"

"Oh! Mr. Thomas!"

"Yes, love of money. I began to love money when I was a boy; to save money I lived sparingly and lonely; I grew fonder and fonder of putting by, until I became frightened at myself. I tried every now and then to break from my master. I thought if I could have married Mrs. Maxwell—I thought of her money too—I might have been brought to spend, and not have been always afraid to lose or to waste. But it was not to be. When she—"

Bank broke I lost two thousand pounds. It nearly killed me. I got together all I possessed—I could trust no one with it. Good securities—Ah! what pain is that that almost blinds me? For old time's sake, you and this woman, Martha Ramsay, take what is beneath my pillow—what I have lived and died for. Yes, for I have starved—Again that pain! Darkness—darkness!"

After one deep sigh, his head fell upon his bosom, and David Thomas was dead.

And now, said the doctor, comes the strange part of this rambling story; and had it not been within my own knowledge, I would not have mentioned it.

The reference which David Thomas had made to his pillow was not forgotten, and on search being made, no less a sum than twelve thousand pounds was found wrapped up in all sorts of coverings. The doctor's opinion was that the owner's death was accelerated by starvation. Neither my mother nor Martha Ramsay derived any advantages from what had evidently been intended as a deed of gift from David Thomas, as he died intestate, and his next of kin came into possession of all the money.

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