

SEVERN'S TEMPTATION.

Arthur Severn raised his head from the book which he had been poring over the greater part of the afternoon and gazed despondently at the dingy walls of the room. Finally he rose, and, going to the window, peered out through the cracked and grimy panes of glass, now streaked with the rain which was driving violently from the east. From early morning the rain had been falling incessantly, and as darkness began to close around the village the wind blew more violently than ever and the rain fell in heavier torrents. A large brown patch appeared on the ceiling above and the water began to drip down and form little puddles on the uncarpeted floor. It was a melancholy day, and Severn felt that it accorded well with his own evil fortune. He occupied the only habitable room in a large, old, tumble-down house that stood off at one side of the village near the river and had been falling to decay for years.

Severn was striving to make his way through college, and when the landlord's agent suggested his taking a room in the "old Holloway house" at a much lower figure than he could obtain lodging for elsewhere, he felt constrained on account of his poverty to accept the offer. His parents were poor, and, moreover, averse to his taking a college course, so that he was unable to receive any aid from them. For sometime past he had found himself inextricably involved in financial embarrassments, and he had often been on the point of giving up the whole thing, but the letters which came from Mary Eldridge, full of encouragement and loving sympathy, always induced him to take a brighter view of the circumstances.

He had met Mary at the academy at Melville and a mutual admiration for each other's scholarly attainments had been the first step in the formation of a friendship that ripened into love. Mary had gone to Wellesley to complete her education and Severn was in his sophomore year at college. Miss Eldridge came of wealthy parents and had always been surrounded with the comforts of a well ordered home. Severn knew that her unselfish disposition would exact no conditions to their engagement, but he was fully determined never to let her share his lot until he had completed his education and secured a competent income.

During the last year a series of misfortunes had overtaken him. A friend, to whom he had loaned the money with which he expected to meet the bulk of his expenses, suddenly died, leaving his debts wholly unliquidated. Severn himself had undergone a severe illness during the fall, and to satisfy his numerous obligations he secured a few hundred dollars from Mr. Holloway, who was always ready to make loans at usurious interest but remorseless in exacting his claims. Finally he began to receive letters from home urging him to return to the farm. "Unless he could give some aid they would lose the old place," his mother wrote.

If duty called him home he would go, but he felt that if he did his prospects were gone. An idea struck him. If he could induce Mr. Holloway to give him time on his loan and trust him for his rent until he could get to earning something, he would send the money home which he had been accumulating for the payment of his debt. He went to see Mr. Holloway, but the response was so chilly that he felt almost guilty of some heinous crime.

"It is not business," said Mr. Holloway, "not business. Would like to oblige you, but must have some method."

A dunning letter from the agent, following conspicuously close upon his visit to Mr. Holloway, filled his soul with bitterness. The way out of his difficulties seemed as dark as the day on which we find him brooding over his evil fortune in the "old Holloway house." The water fell in torrents and the river in the rear was so swollen by the rain that it had overflowed its banks and was washing the foundation stones of the shaky old structure. The room was chilly and wet, but he built no fire, and though darkness came on early he hardly observed the change, but sat pondering over the hopeless outlook without even the ghostly light from the seams in the rickety stove to reveal the outlines of the room. The wind continued to rise and the rain to fall faster, until the old shell quivered and quaked, but Severn paid no attention. His soul was shaken by storm also. There was as much darkness within as without. He knew his own disposition too well to attempt to study until he could quiet his nerves, so he sat in the darkness until long after midnight listening to the howling wind and the roar of the swollen river.

Suddenly there came a crash; there was a heavy fall of plastering, and for a minute Severn thought that the old house was about to give way. To have its walls fall upon him he knew would be almost certain death, but with a thrill of melancholy pleasure he hoped for a moment that it might happen. The old building creaked and strained, but there came a lull in the storm, and it finally settled back to its normal condition.

Severn lighted the lamp to see if his books had been damaged and to investigate the injury to the room. A large patch of plastering had fallen from the wall and lay scattered over the floor. After the investigation he felt calmer and went to bed for the night.

The next morning, contrary to his usual neatness, he left the broom in its corner and the room continued to present a very dilapidated appearance. In the afternoon after returning from class he seated himself in his chair and gazed listlessly at the heap of rubbish on the floor. Stooping forward he took up a bit of broken plastering and slowly picked it to pieces, thinking of Mary and wondering if the days would ever brighten.

He had been pursuing this senseless oc-

cupation for some time, when suddenly he observed that the face of the piece which he held in his hand was less discolored than that which surrounded the edge of the broken patch. He drew his chair closer to the wall, and in examining found that a hole had once been made through the lathing about a foot square. The pieces had afterward been spliced and a new coat of plastering overlaid. His curiosity was now excited to know the object of the opening, and so he brought a hammer from a chest and proceeded to draw the nails. After removing the pieces he reached in and began to explore. There was nothing to be found, however, so he washed his hands and began to clear away the debris.

As he was about to replace the pieces of lath he thought he saw a string hanging down into the cavity. He reached his hand again into the opening, took hold of the filament and pulled, but it promptly broke. He examined the fibers and discovered that it was an old piece of silk cord, now extremely rotten and discolored. He became more curious and resolved to trace the mystery to its source. He reached his hand into the cavity as far as he could, following the cord. Again he pulled, and this time it resisted and he felt something at the other end move slightly. He gave a stronger pull, but the cord broke, this time at the point of attachment.

He improvised a hook by driving a nail into the end of a piece of board, and with this succeeded in drawing something toward him. Finally he was able to reach the object. He drew it in front of the opening, and with both hands lifted an old mahogany box out upon the floor. For some time he sat staring at it in curious suspense.

"Well, you are a queer fish in queer waters," said Severn to himself with suppressed excitement. "I guess you must have lost your bearings or you would never have been swallowed by this shark of a wall. I'll find out what's inside of you at any rate," and taking up a hammer he struck the old lock a heavy blow. He struck it again and again, but finally it broke and the lid flew open.

Severn drew back in astonishment and wonder, for his eyes rested upon a large leather bag and beside it were two bars of gold. With trembling hands he loosened the strings of the sack and opened it, to find it full of gold coins. There were several compartments in the chest. In one he found a sparkling row of rings, and as he held them up to the light he saw by their brilliancy that they were diamonds of rare value. He found some papers that purported possession of a large amount of English property in one Cyrus Holloway, great-grandfather of his present landlord. There was an inventory of the contents of the box and the amount counted up into the hundreds of thousands.

He was overwhelmed by the discovery and sat down to collect his thoughts. He remembered now of having once heard that Mr. Holloway had come of wealthy ancestry, but that during the revolutionary war the largest part of the property had been lost, and that the fortune of the present Mr. Holloway was mostly of his own acquisition. There could be no doubt that the box belonged by right to his landlord, but the temptation was terrible. There was no chance of discovery if he kept it himself, and besides it could add no material happiness to the legitimate owner, for he already had a sufficiency.

To Severn it represented all the comforts of life. He could pay all his debts, free his father's farm from the mortgage, complete his education and afterward provide a home for Mary.

The perspiration stood in beads on his forehead as he struggled against the tempter. Finally he arose and with compressed lips donned his hat, and locking the door behind him he turned his steps toward Mr. Holloway's.

"Of course it's mine, every cent of it," said Mr. Holloway, when an hour later he stood before the opened box. His eyes gleamed with satisfaction as he beheld the contents. He tucked the box under his coat and left the house, with an admonition to Severn to keep quiet for a few weeks.

Severn felt intensely relieved. "I have been saved from a worse fate than poverty," he thought, as he sat down to his book.

That evening Mr. Holloway's agent called to announce that Severn would be allowed time on his loan, and that he might have a much better room in one of his new houses, with unlimited time for the payment of rent.

Severn was overjoyed; he sent the money to his mother, moved into his new quarters and afterward, by mysterious good luck, secured lucrative work, by means of which he completed his course in college very comfortably. On the day of graduation Mr. Holloway met him at the door of the church, and, after granting a congratulation, invited him to call the next morning at his office.

At the appointed time he was on hand. "I need an honest man to attend to my business, and if you wish to take the position I offer you will be able to pay what you owe me," said Mr. Holloway.

A year later Severn went away for a few weeks and when he returned Mary came with him. Mr. Holloway proved a good friend in his way, and when he died a goodly share of the proceeds of the old chest passed as a legacy to Mr. Arthur Severn.—Chicago News.

The Queen of Denmark is particularly clever in millinery, a talent which has been inherited by her three daughters—the Empress of Russia, the Princess of Wales and the Duchess of Cumberland.

BAD COINS.

Methods of Detection Followed at the United States Treasury.

"Here's the way we test coins in the Treasury." And the expert quickly poised the dollar piece horizontally on the top of his forefinger, holding the thumb a quarter of an inch away from it and gave it a brisk tap with another coin. A clear, silvery ring sounded out. "Good, but here; listen," and he repeated the operation with another coin that gave out a dull, heavy clink that ceased almost as soon as it began. "Type metal and lead; molten, too. That is a wretched counterfeit." "How do you tell that it was molten?" He held the two coins so that the light struck on their edges. "Just compare the reading, will you, or mulling, as most people call it. In this genuine coin this is very clear and sharp cut; in the counterfeit it is coarse and dull. That is because molten instead of being stamped in cold metal, like the Government coins." "Why do the counterfeiters not use the same cold process?" "It costs too much and makes too much noise. With a mold, you see, a counterfeit can carry on his work in a garret, and if a policeman comes in he can shoo the whole outfit out of the window. But it takes great power to run a die. Still some high-flying counterfeiters do use them, and their work is usually harder to detect, though it is never so perfect as that of the Government Mint."

"What is the surest test for the counterfeit coin for popular use?" "The looks of the reading, as I was telling you—the mulling, by the way, is on the face of the coin, and not on the edge, as most people think. That's the surest and easiest thing, but of course other tests have to be used, especially for weight and thickness. A little scale for weight and measure is the handiest thing to settle that. Then, for plated coin a drop of acid squirted on the edge where the plating wears most will chew up the base metal in a hurry." "What acid do you use?" "For gold coin a mixture of strong nitric acid 64 grams, muriatic acid 15 drops, and water 5 drops, is used; for silver, 24 grains of nitrate of silver and 23 drops of nitric acid, with one ounce of water. One drop is sufficient. If the coin is heavily plated we scrape it a little before putting on the acid."—Springfield Republican.

American and Foreign Schools.

President Eliot of Harvard University has been severely criticised for some comments he made on the public schools of this country before an educational meeting in Hartford, Conn. He said: "We are all wrong in supposing that we have the best school system in the world. There is not a country in the North of Europe which has not a better system. The immigrants who come to our shores from abroad will be found to have a far better school training in what are denominated the common branches than the average of the rural population of this country. In democratic schools we close the gate to the scholar in all the interesting studies after the age of thirteen."

One of the men displeased with these statements is Commissioner of Education Straus, of New York city. He pronounced President Eliot's utterances as not only "extraordinary, but preposterous." He claims that "the average of our school children between eight and twelve years old are better, brighter, often know more and learn with greater facility, than the German children of the same age, whose school system is the best in Europe. Even in music our boys are away ahead of the foreigners. The pupils in Europe are given the merest idea of arithmetic and such branches, while they are filled with a knowledge of the ancient languages. Other critics have also dissented decidedly from President Eliot's position.

The views of the President of Harvard University may be somewhat radical, and they may have been stated in rather plain mannered language. But it will not do to dismiss them too curtly. It is probable that they have more foundation in fact than many people suspect. The American public school system has been lauded to the skies. It has been described as the foundation stone and the chief glory of the republic. A generation ago it probably deserved all that was said of it. It was then far ahead of any European school system, with the possible exception of the German. But within the past thirty years it is a question whether the public school system of this country has kept step with the advance of the people in other respects.—Philadelphia Press.

"The Editor's Easy Chair."
Editor—We can't use your poems now. Post—Why should you always delight in sitting on me in preference to others?
Editor—When I sit on a post, of course I prefer a spring poet.—Smith, Gray & Co's Monthly.

Not Well Said.
"I didn't see you in church last Sunday, Mr. Spiffles," said the dominie.
"No; I slept at home last Sunday morning," replied Mr. Spiffles.—Brooklyn Life.

Correct.
Leader of Vigilants—Come, now, over to this tree and put your head into this noose.
Horse-Thief (defiantly)—I'll be hanged if I do!—Brooklyn Life.

Just the Opposite.
Cabbage (meeting Lejjer on the Montreal train)—You are going to Canada for a rest, I suppose?
Lejjer—No; to avoid arrest.

Poverty is uncomfortable, but in nine times out of ten the best thing that can happen to a young man is to be tossed overboard and compelled to sink or swim for himself.

According to the census office we are all worth \$1,000 apiece. Some unreasonable people are calling on Uncle Sam to settle up now and call it square.—Boston Globe.

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