

A Family Secret.

“WHO is this Mr. Stuart, who is to deliver the lecture to-night?” asked Ella Jarvis of her friend, Flora Lawton, as they rode together in the latter's splendid carriage to the lecture hall.

“I scarcely know much about him,” returned Flora. “I only heard father say he was once a professor in some college, and is on a lecturing tour for the sake of diversion. We do not know him at all—in fact, I think father said he never saw him; but he has invited him to stay at our house. What a bore it will be to have to entertain an entire stranger! I do wish father wouldn't take so many things upon himself when there is no occasion for it.”

“Who do I see before me? The same, same family of deceived, deluded mortals! Ah! I pity you. I've travelled far; I've lectured often; I've seen many assemblies of people, but they are all the same; all the same. You appear to be the best of friends—but you are at heart something else, or you are friends only from one selfish motive. Many a man who sits so peaceably by another, distrusts him; and while he smiles upon him, is inwardly thinking how he may circumvent him. You don't like to hear me say this? But it's the truth. I'm going to prove it to be the truth, whether you stay to hear me or not. So much for my prologue, now for some plain talk about—Man as a failure, except in villainy—for that is my subject now and ever.”

“I don't care how you understand it!” replied Mr. Lawton, with a fresh assumption of bravery. “Do you defy me?” asked the other, calmly, looking straight into his face. “I do,” answered Mr. Lawton.

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“Yes,” replied the young man she addressed. “Father and I met him at the station, and they are in the ante-room now. And how is my darling?” he added, as he helped Miss Ella, his promised wife to alight.

“You needn't think he can do it in the way you indirectly hint,” returned Flora petulantly. “If he can do it any other way he is welcome to. But here we are at the hall, and there is brother George waiting for us. Hallo! George; has the lecturer arrived?” she said from the carriage window.

“But now I'll give you something more than a suspicion. Listen to me: You gambled with me, before you was married; you have been in this town twenty years. When you came here you were not worth anything to speak of. For the past fifteen years you have not done a day's work, and yet you are now living in a style which could not be maintained with a less income than ten thousand dollars a year. You think it a big story, do you? Well, I'll make it bigger before I am through, and give you a chance to deny it if you can. Now, I'll tell you how you got rich; it will be like sweet music in your ears, won't it? Ha, ha! Your wife died soon after you came here. Previous to her death, her bachelor brother who had always idolized her, died in a foreign land, leaving her a large fortune of which she never knew, as she died before the news came. In the event of her death this fortune was to go to her children, and you were appointed to see the will executed. These children are today utterly ignorant of all this, and do not dream of all they rightfully possess. You have appropriated the whole to yourself. I am not going to moralize upon what the heart of a father must be, who can act thus by his children—but I will go on to delight you with more solid truth.”

“I don't see what business all this is of yours; or why you are so interested in following me about. I can manage my own affairs without your assistance.” Then he seemed to recover a little more confidence, and continued in a louder tone: “Supposing all to be true, which you have said (and you can't prove it); you cannot hurt me; I am well known here and you are despised for your miserable lecture, and no one would listen to you.”

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SUNDAY READING.

As a contemplative and learned man was strolling one day by the banks of a river he came to a fall and stately elder tree, which suggested the following thoughts to him: “This tree supplies us with the softest kind of timber, as well as that which is the most easily split, and yet experience shows us that in the water it is the most enduring of all. But soft as it is, it sustains the greater part of the city of Venice, for the beautiful and massive buildings stand upon piles of elder, which have been for ages sunk in the sea. No other timber could have endured so long under the great burden and the rotting power of the water, and formed such a sure and lasting foundation for that noble city. It is just the same with meek hearts, which we are told in Scripture are of great price in the sight of God. It is on them that the most enduring monuments of His grace and truth are built. Moses was the meekest man that had been upon the earth up to his day, and Christ has left us a pattern of meekness that has not been since successfully imitated. It is also to the meekest and most patient minds that we are most indebted for civilization, scientific progress, and moral science; for the greatest minds of the Pagan, as well as the Christian world, have been noted for meekness and patience. Socrates, with his spirit sorely tried by a scolding wife has done his share, Columbus owes his fame to his patience and meekness; Sir Isaac Newton was so meek, that when his dog destroyed a manuscript upon which he had labored for years, he merely said, ‘Poor creature, you cannot know how much harm you have done.’ And who in the history of our country has left a nobler example of meekness and gentleness than its father? There can, therefore, be no better foundation for a life of usefulness and success than a meek and modest spirit; for these two are always allied, or rather meekness grows from the roots of modesty. No great undertaking of private or public importance can be successfully accomplished without that intelligent modesty which is meek and yielding, as far as principle will allow.—Weak and vain minds are never meek: their self-will and conceit will assert themselves in everything; they will quarrel over trifles every hour in the day, and consider having their own way in all things a matter of primary importance. With great minds it is not so; they meekly yield in everything that conscience will permit them; they do not consider it of any importance whether another shall seem to dictate to them or not, so long as the final result will be the same, and truth and principle do not suffer from it; but where these are involved, and they feel that there is a responsibility resting upon them, they are as firm as the mountains, and continue sound and stable against all the floods of opposition.”

Stray Thoughts.

“You don't suspect; you know, like a man. But stop; you couldn't do that; there is no part of a man's character about you?” “Well, then; I suppose I know who you are. But why do you come to torment me now?” pleaded the timid man. “Ah! sure enough, why do I? You have no suspicion, probably?” mocked the tormenter.

Curbing the Temper.

Both a philosophy and a moral may be found in the following, which we heard fall from the lips of the very learned Rev. Dr. Schaff, of this city. It was at a meeting of ministers of the Reformed Church, gathered in the lecture room of the church which until recently stood at the corner of William and Fulton streets. There was a running discussion on the delicate point how far we might judge a man's piety.—The learned divine took a sensible ground, viz., that a large margin of charity should be given, as some men, because of different constitutional temperament, might do things that in them would be less sinful than in others more favorably constituted. He said that a certain minister of the Reformed church was presiding at a meeting of the consistory of his church when one of the officers considered it his duty to differ from his minister on a point of church polity. The pastor at this, lost his temper and advancing to the elder delivered himself in violent language, whereat another elder ventured a remonstrance: “Dominie, you should restrain your temper.” “Restrain my temper?” reiterated the old man. “I'd have you to know, sir, that I restrain more temper in five minutes than you do in five years.”

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