

# THE COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT.

I have sworn upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of Tyranny over the Mind of Man.—Thomas Jefferson.

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## MISCELLANEOUS.

### BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE.

BY T. S. ARTHUR.

"If I saw any reason in your objection Mr. Howard, I would not hesitate to comply with your wishes, but as you have yet given me none that seems to me to have any weight, I must decline subjecting myself to your humor, this morning; and call as I intended, upon Mrs. Jervis."

"I am sorry, Emily, that an expressed wish of mine, should have so little influence over you. There was a time——," but he paused, and was silent.

"Mr. Howard, this is unkind. I understand what you would have said. But remember, that a wife's affection is not proof against unreasonableness and mystery.—You tell me that you don't want me to visit Mrs. Jervis this morning, and yet you assign no reason for your objection. I must say that, in this, you do not act towards me with the frankness a wife has a right to expect."

"It seems to me, Emily, that a wife should have so much confidence in her husband, and so much affection for him, as at once to be willing, cheerfully, to comply with an expressed wish, even though the reason for a desired action be not given. I, of course, have a reason for asking you not to visit Mrs. Jervis this morning—that reason I do not wish now to give. But I will not urge you. I see that I have miscalculated my influence."

"You seem strangely moved this morning, Henry," said his young and beautiful wife, who loved him with a pure affection. "This is the first time you have spoken so coldly and so unreasonably to me. What have I done to forfeit your confidence? Surely——" but her feelings, which had, since the last cutting remark of her husband, been struggling to overcome her assumed indifference, now became too strong for her, and she burst into tears.

Her husband, who now saw that he had not approached her in the right way, was grieved at the effect his unexplained request, urged in a way that might be called unkind, had produced upon her. He soothed her agitated feelings in the kindest manner, still, however, leaving untouched the main question, the reason of his disapproval of her visit to Mrs. Jervis.

"But may I not go to see my friend Mrs. Jervis, Henry," said she with a smile, that was brighter from shining through her still tearful eyes. "Say yes, dear, for I don't want to go against your will!"

It was a sore trial for Henry Howard to say "no," to the loving and lovely creature who stood looking him in the face so expectantly. A momentary struggle ensued, as powerful as it was brief, but right prevailed.

"I cannot say yes, love; thought I would almost sacrifice my life to make you happy. But I leave you in perfect freedom." He kissed her glowing cheek, and left, in the next moment, for his counting room.

Henry Howard was a young merchant, but a few years in business. He was one of the clear-headed school, and always knew the exact state of his affairs. He

aimed less at sudden and large profits, than at a steady and healthy increase of his business. His capital was not large, but so invested as to ensure early, and moderately profitable returns. His father, who was a sturdy old sea captain, had early placed him in the counting room of his employers, who inducted him in all the art and mystery of merchandizing. Henry proved to be a lad of industrious habits, and to have an early and clear perception of the true principles of trade. His employers, perceiving this, took great pains to give him a thorough mercantile education, not neglecting to impress his mind with the fact that no state of a man's worldly prospects in after life, would justify unnecessary extravagance in any thing.

Henry had been of age but a few months when his father died, leaving him ten thousand dollars in cash. As he felt no disposition to begin business in a hurry, he invested the money in such a way as to make it accessible whenever he wanted it, and waited until a fair prospect of going into business safely should offer.

Such a prospect offered in the course of the next two years, and Henry Howard opened a wholesale dry goods store in Philadelphia. Before doing so, he had entered as salesman one of the largest jobbing houses in the city, and remained a year without salary. By this means he acquired a general idea of the business, and became aware of the locality of the best customers.

With a general and particular eye to his business, and a thorough devotion to it, he found himself gradually gaining ground. In the meantime he had become acquainted with Emily Justin, the daughter of a shipping merchant, reputed to be immensely rich. With a lovely face, winning manners, a good heart and accomplished mind, Emily soon won upon the feelings of Henry Howard: nor were the inroads which Howard's manly form and pure elevation of character made upon the affections of Emily, less rapid. Mutual acknowledgments of affection were, in the end made, and the rich and beautiful Miss Justin became affianced to Henry Howard.

The wedding passed off with the usual accompaniment of brilliant parties and fashionable dissipation, into which the young bride entered with the liveliest enjoyment. When all was over, and Henry Howard found himself quietly seated down in the elegantly furnished mansion, provided for them by Mr. Justin, he began to breathe more freely again. The artificial atmosphere of fashionable life was one in which he could not be said to exist. He could not live, in the broader acceptance of the term, in such a sphere.

It was impossible for him to conceal from himself a regret, that Emily seemed to take such delight in the parade, show, and empty vanities with which they had been surrounded for some months; but he hoped that she would soon discover, that in the quiet, healthful joys of home, there was a charm superior to all that could attract the affections abroad. He had, however, to learn the painful truth, that the artificial life which she had lived for years had perverted her moral vision, and given her false perceptions. The continual theme of her conversation was the light vanities which engage so much the attention of fashionable people, and which to Henry Howard were peculiarly irksome. By many gentle means he endeavored to win her from what he conceived to be a dangerous folly, and to check, in a way that she would feel, but not understand, a disposition to indulge in wild extravagance. But in all his efforts, he was pained to find himself misconceived.

A man of system, and with the habits, confirmed by years of application, of knowing all about the practical operations of his business, he could not feel satisfied in observing, that his wife considered domestic affairs as something entirely below her attention. She had her housekeeper, her chamber maids, her cook and kitchen assistants, and her man-servant, to whom were resigned all the care and responsibility of

household affairs. She knew as little as did her husband, when he came home from his business, what was to be served up for dinner; and never thought of consulting any peculiarity in his appetite, or of busying herself in his absence in little arrangements for his comfort. Sometimes such thoughts as the following would force themselves into his mind:—"It is a little stranger that Emily should not reflect, that I devote myself to business from morning until night, with patient assiduity, and as much for her own sake as for my own; and that in her sphere of home, it is but right she too should perform the duties necessary to the regulation of her household, that home may be to her husband and a quiet retreat, full of the one most beloved."—But he would instantly endeavor to force the thoughts out of his mind, as unkind and ungenerous towards the delicately formed, and beautiful creature who welcomed his coming with smiles so full of warm affection.

Among the female friends of Mrs. Howard, was a Mrs. Jervis, the wife of a man who had grown rich, slowly at first, but of late years rapidly, through his sagacity in taking advantage of the right moment to speculate, at a time when one half of our business men were engaged in hazardous adventures, too often resulting in sudden ruin. This Mrs. Jervis was particularly extravagant, and was always inducing Mrs. Howard to indulge in some unnecessary expenditure. She was constantly in the habit of drawing comparisons between the dress or furniture of different individuals in the circle in which she moved, thus of exciting in the minds of those who could be influenced by her remarks, an envious desire to have something more costly, or more splendid. Mrs. Howard was weak enough to allow this woman to direct her taste, and to induce her to indulge in the most unnecessary extravagance.

Her husband was much pained at discovering the undue influence which Mrs. Jervis exercised over her. The more so, as he readily perceived that the indulgence in expensive dressing, and frequently costly changes of furniture, like every other indulgence continued to increase; and he knew would increase, unless checked, to an inordinate and ruinous degree. How to check this desire, now became a subject that occupied much of Mr. Howard's thoughts.

While revolving these things in his mind he was startled and alarmed, by a rumour that the credit of Mr. Justin, his wife's father, hitherto looked upon as among the richest merchants in the city, had received a powerful shock, in consequence of the failure of an extensive commission house in Lima, at a time when he had consignments to a large amount in their hands. This rumour soon assumed the form of certainty, for in a short time it became known that Mr. Justin's paper to the amount of twenty thousand dollars had been thrown out of bank, and that he was in consequence, obliged to make extraordinary sacrifices to sustain himself. In many of his recent money operations, he had requested the name of Mr. Howard, which was, of course cheerfully given, until he had become implicated in his father-in-law's transactions to an amount considerably beyond his own real capital.

Forced to contend with the disadvantages of a shattered credit, and not having so broad a foundation to stand upon as was generally supposed, he was compelled to yield to the circumstances that surrounded him. His failure of course, involved Mr. Howard in responsibilities which could not possibly be met without total ruin.

Mr. Howard was not a man to be disheartened by even the very worst aspect of affairs; and like a good seaman, his first thoughts were bent on preparing to meet the storm. In this mood of mind he came home on the evening previous to the morning on which, with his interesting wife he is introduced to the reader. He had, after a long interview with, and investigation of

the affairs of his father-in-law; ascertained that his business was in a very deranged state, and that, not over seventy-five cents in the dollar could be paid, unless the house in Lima proved solvent, which was extremely doubtful. As the notes loaned to, and endorsed for Mr. Justin, had all some time to run before maturity, he ascertained from a careful examination into his resources and liabilities for the next two months, that he could go on for about that time without difficulty. Beyond that period he did not permit himself to look.

Under the pressure of such circumstances, he came home at evening, but not to find a friend with whom he could share the burden that weighed heavy upon him. Conscious that a great change would be required in their style of living, and a great curtailment necessary in their expenses, he yet shrunk from even hinting it to one who seemed to take so much pleasure in mere show and useless expenditure.

"How glad I am that you have come home at last, Henry; why have you staid so late this evening?" said his wife as he came in.

"Business occupied me rather later than usual," said he, with a smile.

"O I am jealous of that business. It is always business—business, I declare, Henry, you will bend over your ledgers until you become a real drone. It won't do, dear, I must reform you," she continued affectionately twining an arm round his neck, as she stood beside the chair on which he had seated himself.

Howard looked up into the sweet face that bent down over him lit up with a ray of affection, with a quiet smile, though there was a chilliness about his heart—How could he make up his mind to rob her of a single delight.

"I take far more pleasure in attending to my business, Emily, than I should in neglecting it. It is as necessary to the health of my mind, as food is to the vigor of body."

"That savours too much of the old Dutch counting house principles, as Mrs. Jervis would say. The fact is, Henry, I think you are rather antiquated in your notions—a little behind the age. It is all word and no play with you. And now, I remember, you have not ridden out with me once in six months. The fact is, I must reform you. But where and how to begin puzzles me."

"Which would be best, do you think," he replied smiling, "for you to conform to my ideas of right and propriety, or me to conform to yours?"

"O, you to mine of course," she said, with a laugh less animated than usual, for she could not misunderstand the covert censures implied in his words.

"But I vote that too grave a subject, at least the turn you have given it, for this evening's conversation, so I will change it," continued Mrs. Howard. "Mrs. Jervis told me to-day that her husband had just made her a present of a new carriage and a span of beautiful horses, as a birthday gift. To-morrow I am going to ride out with her in it, for the first time. I expect to come home quiet dissatisfied with our own carriage and in case such an event should occur, I now engage you to attend me in the afternoon to Howell and Vandervoort's Repository for the purpose of choosing one a little more beautiful than even Mrs. Jervis'. Of course you will be at my service," she said laughingly tapping his cheek with her fingers.

"I cannot promise, Emily, for to-morrow," he replied, rather gravely—"I shall have much to do, and could not be away from the store without an injury to my business."

"There it is—business again. I believe you will soon have but one set of ideas, and they will all be included within the word business. Indeed, indeed, Henry you are doing yourself injustice by such an exclusive attention to business. Surely we live for something else besides the dull ploddings of business. Of course it must be attended to as a means of acquiring

wealth, but it is paying too dear for it to devote every hour of every day to its requisitions."

The supper bell here broke in upon their conversation. At the table Mrs. Howard renewed the subject of the carriage, and seemed delighted with the idea of having one that should eclipse even Mrs. Jervis' wedding gift. It was a painful trial for her husband to listen to the almost childish prattle of his young wife; conscious all the time, as he was, that in all human probability, a reverse so complete would come in a short time, as to make their condition one of privation and great self-denial—one, that he feared, would utterly destroy in Emily's mind every thing like contentment. How could the beautiful creature before him, who had never yet had a desire within the bounds of wealth to procure, ungratified; upon whose fragile form nothing but spring zephyrs had yet blown, endure the storms of adversity which were now gathering darkly in the horizon of his worldly prospects. Rallying his spirits with a strong effort, he maintained a cheerful temper, evading however, as much as possible any conversation which alluded to show and extravagance. In doing so, he could not but be painfully struck with the fact, that Emily's thoughts were interested in nothing so much as in dress, equipage, and appearance.

He found that sleep forsook him after retiring to bed on that night. If there had been only a total week of all his worldly prospects; it would not have driven sleep from him an hour. But the effect the disaster would have upon his wife, troubled him more than all, and drove slumber from his eye-lids. His imagination pictured her in the deepest distress; pale and weeping and refusing to be comforted and with this image ever present, how could his troubled spirit sink into quietude? Before morning he had determined to begin to check gradually her disposition to extravagance by gently opposing her intended visit to Mrs. Jervis—and thus awakening in her mind some degree of concern, that would engross it to the exclusion of worse than idle thoughts. He had another reason for wishing her to suspend her calls on Mrs. Jervis. That lady's husband was involved in a considerable loss by the failure of Mr. Justin; and although he had good reasons for keeping the failure as yet a secret from his wife, he knew that no such reasons could weigh with Mr. Jervis. To have his wife tantalized and her hopes excited by a woman who knew that they could be realized, was, was more than he desired to have occur. He wished the trouble, when it did come, to fall as lightly as possible upon the tender flower he would gladly shelter from the approaching tempest.

On the next morning the subject of the call upon Mrs. Jervis was again alluded to, when the rather embarrassing scene occurred which the reader has been made acquainted with in the opening of this sketch.

After Mr. Howard had gone, his wife sat for nearly an hour upon the sofa, in a state of mind that might be called painful, contrast with any other that she had ever experienced. In spite of her efforts to repress them, the tears would steal over her cheeks, and fall drop after drop, upon her folded hands. But as the hours stole away her interest in the new carriage of Mrs. Jervis gradually revived and at twelve o'clock she was ready to go out, dressed in a style of costly elegance, that but few of the circle in which she moved felt willing to imitate. Her own carriage was at the door, and she was soon whirled off at a rapid rate. Just as her beautiful equipage drove up to the elegant mansion of Mrs. Jervis, and while her servant was handing her out, the steps of a magnificent carriage were hastily put up, and in the next moment it dashed away drawn by a pair of splendid horses in rich and glittering harness. Her eye naturally turned towards the passing vehicle, and to her surprise and keen mortification, she saw her friend