

The Mirror.

BY S. B. ROW.

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THE STRUGGLE OF LIFE.

"What is life, father?" "A battle, my child, where the strongest hand may fail. Where the wisest eye may be beguiled, and the stoutest heart may quail. Where the foes are gathered on every hand, and rest not day nor night, and the feeble little ones must stand in the thickest of the fight."

"What is death, father?" "The rest, my child. When the toil and strife are o'er; The angel of God who, calm and mild, Says we need fight no more. Who driveth away the demon band, Bids the din of battle cease, Takes the banner and spear from our failing hand, And proclaims an eternal peace."

"Let me die, father! I tremble, I fear To yield in that terrible strife." "The crown of life is won, dear, In the battle-field of life. Fear not, though thy foes be strong and tried, He loveth the weak and small; The angels of heaven are on thy side. And God is over all."

THE DEACON'S DINNER PARTY.

Deacon Goodwin was the very best man that ever lived. So at least said his friends and neighbors, who certainly ought to know, and for reasons, he had probably not one in the world. It is true, however, that the remark above quoted, was generally made as a sort of apologetic preface to something like the following: "But then he has such queer notions; he is so unlike anybody else, that we hardly know what to make of him." Perhaps these worthy people were oblivious of the fact that in order to be very good, it is often a painful necessity to be different from one's neighbors.

We cannot better illustrate Deacon Goodwin's peculiarities than by describing a little entertainment given by him at his country seat not long ago. For the Deacon, with all his unworldly goodness, is a prosperous merchant in New York, and the owner (by perfect fairness) not only of a brown stone front in the city, but of a charming suburban residence. The Deacon's wife, though a very good woman in her way, was a far less peculiar personage than her husband. She fell quite gracefully into an amiable conformity with the ways of the world, and is not to be distinguished from the thousands of good women of the wealthy class—who through our city churches. Their two daughters, Adelaide and Miss Ellen, had just left the restraints of their fashionable school, and enjoyed the prospect of "coming out" another winter, as full-fledged members of society.

"Husband," said Mrs. Deacon one May morning, soon after the family migration to the country, "Husband, you know we did not give that dinner that we were proposing last winter; what do you say to having it here instead? We are so convenient to the city that they can easily come in to dine."

"You gave a large party, did you not, which included all that should have been your dinner-guests?"

"Dear me, yes! but that was quite a different thing. Now at this little affair I am speaking of, I should want only our most particular friends."

"Oh! if that is the plan, I like it well," rejoined the warm-hearted Deacon. "But why not ask them to pass a week with us?"

"Well, your brother John's family first; the children would enjoy it—and then—"

"Oh! you don't understand me at all! I mean only a few of the best families, whose acquaintance it is most desirable to cultivate."

"Really, wife, it does not seem quite honorable to invite guests for our own selfish purposes. I can sell hardware with a clear conscience, but the hospitalities of my house—"

"He wants to sell the hospitalities of your house. No, no, my dear; that is one of your odd notions. Everybody in society does just as I am proposing. And after all, this inviting is only doing as we would be done by."

"True, true," said the Deacon, with a merry laugh, "but why not do this favor to some one who will value it; to whom it will be a real kindness? There are hundreds, now, whom I could name, to whom a day spent among these green trees, in the fresh, sweet air of the country, would be an event to remember for a year."

"Oh, if you mean a charitable visit, that is very good in its place, but very different from the matter I have in hand. For our children's sake, my dear, it really is a duty to hold our place in good society."

The Deacon was always accessible to considerations of duty. He merely said: "I will, name your day, and give me the list. I will have the invitations sent from my office."

"A capital thought; your accountant there is such a splendid penman; and as to the names, you know the families to whom we are under the greatest obligations. I would have the company as select as possible, and I will try to make the whole affair pass off finely," said the worthy lady, beaming already with amiable complacency upon her prospective guests.

The expected day arrived. Mrs. Goodwin and daughters, their elegant toilets at last perfected, were seated in the drawing room, whose long windows looked across a cool verandah, and commanded the way of approach from the city. Though the fingers were occupied with light tancy work, expectant eyes were glancing continually down the road to meet the first arrival.

"No one will come for an hour yet, you may be sure," said Mrs. G. "Your father has sent a horrid lot of late hours, that he wanted us to be dressed and waiting by 4 o'clock."

"I never saw an omnibus on this road before," said Miss Ellen as one of those plebeian vehicles made its appearance over the brow of the hill.

"Chartered for some special purpose," said her mother absently, as she adumored upon the dinner.

"There is another," said Adelaide.

"And another," added Ellen.

"There is quite a procession of them," said the mother.

"And the first one is stopping at our gate," exclaimed Ellen.

"What in the world can all these forlorn looking creatures want here?" cried Adelaide in consternation.

"Do go and send them away before our company comes," said Miss Goodwin.

"I have seen some of them at the Industrial School," said Ellen with a sudden gleam of enlightenment; "can this be one of father's curious tricks?"

"It certainly is," replied Adelaide, "for there he comes himself out of the last omnibus."

And in fact the good Deacon was now seen making his way through the crowd of poor people, who stood humbly waiting near the gate, and offering his arm to a withered old lady, in rusty bombazine, who had been among the first arrivals. He presented her and the foremost of the guests to his lady, who stood all in a rustle of astonishment and stiff brocade on the verandah steps, and to his elegant daughters, who were half way between laughing and crying at the novelty of the scene before them. Mrs. Goodwin fortunately had the good sense or philosophy to perceive that a state of things which was manifestly not to be cured, had better be endured with the best grace possible; and her innocent guests, though somewhat awe-struck at such undreamed of magnificence of apparel, were all unconscious of the struggle—and triumph, too—of grace that was going on beneath the studied hospitality with which she received them.

There was the old lady in black, who proved to be a widow, and utterly alone in the world; about the supply of whose wants the Deacon knew more than any other man living. And there was an old man with one wooden leg; and a blight on his face, who was strongly suspected to have been seen at the way-side begging, until some benevolent individual—name unknown—had supplied him with a basket of saleable articles, by means of which he was now able to support himself and family. There were women, too, with wane faces, who seemed to have never enjoyed the freedom of God's blessed air, and puny children in the arms, whose heavy eyes brightened at the sight of green grass and waving trees. The older persons were seated in the house, or on the piazzas, while the children, under convoy of Miss Ellen, who entered heartily into the spirit of the occasion, scattered about in merry games on the green lawn. Never was such a play before; and to Ellen herself it seemed that the little birds never sung so sweetly, nor the fresh summer air breathed so softly, and never was it so delightful to have a home in the country as on this very day.

The company once disposed of, a sober second thought occurred to the lady hostess, more distressing doubtless than the first. An appealing look brought her husband to the corner. "What in the world am I to do," she said. "I have not half provision enough for them to eat."

"That is all right," replied the Deacon, pointing to a market wagon which was just unloading at the kitchen gate. "There is abundance for them all, and I have given directions to the cook."

Anxiety was needless; every arrangement had been completely made; and the entertainers devoted themselves again to their guests. Happily passed the hours of the golden afternoon. The ladies of the family recovered speedily from the shock of disappointment, and could not help admitting that they had never so thoroughly enjoyed a company before. It was only because the real delight of social life, that of conferring happiness on others, had never been so fully within their reach. It was a lesson worth the learning.

At six the company were assembled around the long tables, which by the Deacon's directions, had been spread upon the shady lawn; and never, probably, did guests more heartily unite in thanksgiving for the bounties of Providence. Before they rose from the banquet, there was a gorgeous sunset, and all in full view to be enjoyed by many who within their narrow walls, were almost as effectually excluded from God's free picture gallery in the heavens, as from man's aristocratic ones on earth. At the same time, the full moon was rising in the east, and then there was a delightful evening, with the glancing fire flies among the grass, and the cool breezes that never dreamed of brick wall and heated pavement—and by nine o'clock the whole party departed in their train of conveyances for home.

The lady hostess was too tired, too thoughtful to demand explanation now. When the children and servants had silently assembled in the sitting-room at the hour of prayer, the worthy father of the family read from the great Bible the story of a feast given of old at the house of a chief Pharisee; and his voice lingered with special emphasis on the following words:

"When thou makest a dinner or supper, call not thy friends and thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

From the instant the news arrived that the Seceders had nominated Breckinridge and Lane, everybody saw that it was a ticket "made to kill." In their desire to chastise Douglas for his revolt against Slavery Propaganda, they violated in this nomination, that clause of the Constitution which declares that "cruel and unusual punishments shall not be inflicted."

Douglas had a right to expect that they would select as the executioner of their purposes, a nominee for President who would combine in his character and conduct personal enmity to him, conspicuous hostility to Popular Sovereignty, and a repulsive advocacy of a Slave Code for the Territories. He has reason to complain of unusual cruelty in the selection of Breckinridge, the gentleman, the whilom friend, for the task of putting him to death. The headman of the scaffold was chosen not more for his unerring eye and vigorous arm, than for his hideous visage. The wielder of the guillotine decapitated his victims under the guise of a horrid mask. Jack Ketch was proverbially a vulgar miscreant in heart, garb, and manners. The condemned could feel the appropriateness of dying a felon's death by such hands.

If it be claimed that Douglas cannot properly be classed among criminals about to be put to death for offenses against his party, but that the fight precipitated upon him is more analogous to the duello, then we insist that the canons of the code required that an enemy who put upon him some peculiar indignity, or, at all events, a man who had not laid him under obligations by a great service, rendered at a critical period, should have been chosen to cross rapier with him. He had a right to require that his foes, though showing him no quarter, should give him an antagonist not only worthy of his steel, but whose hostility toward him was of such long-standing and so malignant a type, that the Little Giant, under all events, a man who had not laid him under obligations by a great service, rendered at a critical period, should have been chosen to cross rapier with him. 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