

FOR THE BLOOMFIELD TIMES.

## THE PAWNBROKER'S BIBLE.

"I WISH," said a young man, petulantly, "that I had not a friend in the world! Fathers and mothers and sisters are only a check upon one's movements, and a bar to one's comfort!"

"Are those your candid opinions?" asked a bystander.

The young man turned at the voice, and attentively regarded the speaker.—He was surprised that any stranger should have mingled in the conversation, and was not disposed to be pleased, or to answer the question. The mien and appearance of the speaker commanded, however, his involuntary respect. Perhaps "respect" is not the term. "Interest" would better express the sentiment which was felt by the dashing and well, but carelessly, dressed Harry Baker toward the poverty-stricken stranger. The person who had spoken to him was a foreigner, and, as his accents betrayed him, an Englishman. If Harry Baker had been disposed to quarrel with him—as was evidently his first impulse—he would have been restrained by the cadaverous and unhappy look of the Englishman, and his appearance of entire friendliness and desertion. So he thought better of his anger and dismissed it. But instead of answering his question, he said:

"We are just going to drink, will you join us?" The conversation was in a public house.

"Thank you; no, sir," said the other. "But as you appear disposed to be friendly, I will trespass on your kindness for a breakfast."

There was something in the ready frankness of the man which pleased Harry in spite of himself. He was a young man of impulses, and, turning to his companions, said:

"Drink you, fellows—I won't. I'll take some breakfast instead with this gentleman, if he'll allow me."

"I could not think of refusing my host a seat at his own table," said the other, with a smile. "Besides, the honor of his company is something I am only too proud of."

Harry ordered breakfast. The waiter speedily opened one of the boxes, dusted off the crumbs of the last customer, and the Englishman took his seat. He was soon joined by Harry, but not until the young man's friends had taken him aside, and whispered a caution against "thimble rigs," "watch stuffing," and various other practices in small knavery. Harry assured them he could take care of himself, and sat down by his new friend, while his companions retired in unconcealed disgust.

"You see, sir," said the Englishman, "one of the inconveniences of having no friends, no vouchers for our character, and nobody to endorse you. I am in that predicament exactly, and do not wonder at the suspicions of your companions."

"Did you overhear them?"

"O, there was no need of overhearing to know the subject of their conversation, and the tenor of it, too. Destitution is quick-witted. I am perfectly sensible of what feelings my presence inspires. But I am neither surprised nor angry. It is a natural and unavoidable consequence."

"You are a mystery."

"O, no; there are plenty such. I am just discharged, convalescent, from the hospital at the almshouse, and, like thousands of others who come from that place, have neither home nor occupation. I have both to seek, and under sad discouragements, too. My best efforts may only result in getting back to my old quarters, for my present appearance does not carry a letter of recommendation."

"Go to the St. George's Society."

"And ask alms? No, no; I am in strong hopes to do better; and if it comes to that, I may as well take my fare with the multitude at Blockley.—There I have no need to make interest, or to expose myself by declaring my connexions. I hope to find employment, and am ready to attempt anything honest. Meanwhile, I must eat, and you must pardon the freedom with which I addressed you this morning, and my strange request. There was something so sadly wrong in your exclamation—so like my own former perverseness—and I have so completely proved its folly, that I could not forbear speaking. Never desire to cast off the guardianship of your friends, young man, whatever you do."

Breakfast was now served. The manner in which men feed is the best test of their breeding, and Harry Baker was convinced that he was entertaining a gentleman. He burned with curiosity to know more of him, but could not presume upon any questioning of a beggar so dignified. The Englishman, for a wonder, was not reserved, and volunteered so much information as furnished him the following sketch of his adventures.

He had come to America with the

same sentiment practically guiding his steps, as Harry Baker had uttered in his hearing. And this feeling is far from being uncommon among young men. The desires and wishes of youth are so world-wide, and they are so ready to fly off in pursuit of the first whim, that the peremptory checks which their young ambition so often receives from the authority of parents, and the gentle but firm dissuaves which they meet in the affection of sisters, becomes a sad burden.

Arthur Melton—for so the young Englishman called himself—had been educated to a profession, that of medicine. But he was restive under the slow progress which the conservative customs of the old world impose upon a "rising young man." He wished to bound at once to a high position; and finding it impossible, was irked by the sage advice of his father, and rebelled. He changed his residence repeatedly, at each change making his prospects worse, which increased the difference between himself and friends; until at last he determined to free himself entirely from their interference, and expended his last funds in procuring a passage across the Atlantic. His hopes were high and sanguine as to what he could effect when once beyond the reach of interruption from ill-judged kindness; and he landed in New York with a gloomy pleasure that there were none among the thousands of that city who might presume to offer him advice, or to control his conduct.

But he soon discovered that there are greater evils in the world than the partiality of one's family, and more troublesome obstacles to encounter than the control of father and mother.—While his little stock of ready money lasted, he enjoyed the selfish pleasure of the "welcome of an inn," and delighted in the mercenary politeness and subservience of those who knew no other rule than to follow his directions so long as he could pay them for so doing. His small capital, however, was soon exhausted. And then he found that there are eyes more prying and jealous than a mother's or a sister's. The first indications of a narrow purse were the occasions of wise looks from those who had abridged its circumference; and Arthur Melton was enraged to discover that certain "agreeable fellows" cooled down to zero in their friendship, when he attempted to obtain a "trifling loan."

The need of money was something entirely new to him. He had anticipated in the new world such a demand for his medical skill, as would leave him neither want nor leisure; but he was met with the disagreeable fact that the professions are overstocked here as well as elsewhere. He could find abundance of gratuitous practice, but this neither paid his board nor his office rent, and he was compelled to give up both board and office, by the pertinacious manner in which demands were pressed upon him. He had no home to fall back upon; he felt the oppressive solitude of a man entirely alone amid thousands.—What could he do? What but emigrate again?

A wise man in his predicament would have remained in New York. But even in his short stay there he had made some acquaintances to whom he did not like to betray his poverty—as if they had not already suspected it. So he came to Philadelphia. He came with the determination—graduate of Oxford though he was—to accept any employment that he could find, however humble. He tried several advertisements in the "want" columns of the newspapers. He would be teacher of languages, clerk, book-keeper, anything; but to none of these public applications did he receive a syllable of answer. No letters came to "X," "Q," to "Oxford," or "M. D." He applied personally to every drug store which he passed to obtain employment; but alas! the "wretched conventionalisms" of an "old, worn-out world" were in his way in the new.—Nobody had employment for a man who could give no references. His valuables had been pawned or disposed of one by one, till he was left at last without money, or the means of procuring any, and was compelled to leave the house where he lodged, cheap as it was, and find accommodations still cheaper. A slight blush passed over his face as he acknowledged that the first remunerative pursuit to which he brought his talents was to the wiggling of a broom in the street-sweepers' corps. In this occupation sickness interrupted him.

They write that such reverses are common in California and Australia.—We need not go to the ends of the earth to find the depressions and make-shifts of poverty and obscurity, however.—Arthur Melton's was not an uncommon case in our large Atlantic cities. Misery, which makes men acquainted with strange bedfellows, makes us familiar with strange employments. Here was a man of good parts and address, without, it would seem, any glaring vices, reduced to a condition to which he would have thought it impossible to descend.

"What will you do?" inquired Harry, as he finished his story.

"Return to Liverpool."

"But you have no funds."

"Very little will suffice me, and certainly I can find some mode of earning it."

"Permit me to advance it to you," said Harry.

"I beg your pardon—no. I have breakfasted at your expense, and though I am very much obliged for the brief opportunity that it has given me to forget that I am an outcast, still it has cost you only the same courtesy that you are ready to extend to any acquaintance who can readily breakfast without your assistance. Consider me one of those gentlemen, and do not tempt me to put myself in the attitude of a canting beggar."

"Shall I never see you again?"

"I don't know. Look hard at the broom corps when you meet them, but if you see me, don't speak! Character is something to a street-sweeper; and, if I am suspected of being a broken-down gentleman, there is no knowing that I may not lose my situation!"

"But, my dear sir," said Harry, with much earnestness, "you do not intend that this, our first, shall be our last meeting?"

"Here," said Melton, pointing to the advertising columns of a daily paper, which had just attracted his attention, "if you really wish to serve me, as no doubt you do, attend to-day this sale of 'forfeited collaterals.' In your Quaker city that is another phrase for unredeemed pledges at a pawnbroker's.—There is among those goods, perhaps, a Bible which my sister gave me. Her name and mine are erased; but you will find in the book, if it be mine, those familiar lines, commencing

"Within this sacred volume lies  
The mystery of mysteries."

If you see a small Oxford Bible with that mark, buy and preserve it. Give me your address, and when I can, I will call for it. If I never call, keep it as a memorial of this meeting. Good morning, sir, and think of me as a friend who will never forget the kindness which, trifling as it may seem to you, has given me new hope; since I find that I have not yet forgotten how to meet a gentleman."

The stranger was gone. Harry sat a few moments thoughtfully. He then went to the pawnbroker's, and without waiting for the book the stranger so much valued to be put up to form the subject of unfeeling jokes, redeemed and carried it away with him. The quotation to which Melton had referred was there; and it looked as if the page had been blistered with tears. Henry carefully placed the book away; for it seemed to him almost a profanation that any indifferent eye should see the memorial of his unknown friend.

Months passed away, and Harry had nearly forgotten the stranger. For a few weeks he had looked curiously at the street-sweepers, and scanned carefully every decayed or seedy gentleman whom he passed. But he did not encounter the stranger. For a while, the influence of his story checked young Baker in his follies; but his dissolute companions had regained their influence over him, and his friends verily believed that he was on the fast path to ruin. As he was one evening about turning aside to enter one of the places of evil rendezvous, where the scorner's seat is established, he felt a hand laid upon his arm. He followed the signal to a lamp and there stood Arthur Melton. The Englishman was restored in health, and if he was sad in countenance, it was more for his friend than himself. They stood a moment in silence.

"Excuse a friend's liberty," said Melton, "but I fear that you have found a mode of forgetting father and mother and true friends, without crossing the sea."

An angry answer sprang to Baker's lips, but the other had already gone.—He followed the footsteps for an instant, but Melton was lost in the crowd. Once diverted from his purpose, Baker's steps turned homeward, for he felt rebuked and ashamed in spite of himself.

"I am so glad you are here," said his sister, coming out of the parlor, and following him to his room. "We have, quite unexpectedly, visitors this evening, and you are just in time to entertain them."

At any other time, we are sorry to say, Harry Baker would have ungraciously refused; he hated "women gatherings," as he called them. But he was not unwilling this evening to have his thoughts diverted, and passively submitted, while his sister, as only a sister can, made him presentable. Her ready hands found his coat and cravat; and though there was the slightest suspicion of Havana in his hair, that is too common a nuisance among American gentlemen to be heeded.

He found in his parlor two friends of his sister whom he had met, and a lady whom he had never before seen. Nor had he ever heard of her—the graceless

fellow!—though, as the guest of his sister's friends, she had been for some weeks on familiar terms with his family. It is most wonderful how some young men of depraved associations will manage to ignore completely the better circles into which their sister's might lead them.

But Harry was pleased in spite of himself. The stranger was not beautiful, but she was accomplished. The piano, underskifful her touch, was a new instrument; and in conversation, she put him upon his recollections. The topics to which the discourse turned were so much above the slipshod small talk of too many young people, and she was evidently the life and soul of the party, that Harry would have been glad to listen—only that she would not suffer any one to be silent. With well-bred grace, she drew out all; and, as she talked, the young man was still further entranced by the tones of her voice, and a something in her manner, which made him half think that he had met and known her before, though he could not conceive when or where.

The beautiful volumes, often more elegant than useful, which ornament drawing-room tables, naturally passed under review. The stranger lady admired all that she saw, but declared that there was one parlor-book which she prized above all others.

"To say nothing of its value as a book," she said, "there is nothing more stately in its beauty, or more acceptable as a memorial, than a perfectly plain, but elegantly printed Bible."

"I have such an one," said Harry.

"Where?" asked his sisters. "Did you get it for me?"

"Or for me?" asked another

"For neither; it was a present—but not exactly a present, though it is a keepsake. I am to retain it till called for."

The two sisters pressed him with questions. He was not sorry to have this convenient opportunity of relating what had been freshly brought to his mind. He said nothing of it before, for it would have led to awkward suspicions about his bachelor life—that sometimes abominable life, of which mothers and sisters suspect much, and know too little.

"Come, Harry, we must know who gave you the Bible."

"Mordecai, the Jew," said Harry, smiling.

"Come now, that won't do," said his sisters. "The Hebrews are not Bible distributors."

"Well, if I must, I must," said Harry. "Thereby hangs a tale!" And he proceeded to relate, with such careful omissions as a young man at such family confessions know how to make, the story of his first interview with Arthur Melton, of his purchase of the book, and of his treasuring it away.—He was guardedly silent about that evening's meeting with the mysterious stranger.

While he talked, if the sisters and their friends had not been very intent upon listening, they might have seen the trembling of the prints which the stranger lady affected to be turning over; her back was turned to them, but not a word did she lose. And when he closed, all made some comment except her. She did not trust her lips with a word in relation to what he had been saying. But, as she turned from the table, her face betrayed the exceeding interest which she took in the narrative. Conversation flagged, and the ladies rose to depart.

"You must show us this young nobleman in disguise," said they all, except one, "when he calls for his book."

"I can't promise; he is all mystery. He may be another Bourbon lying *perdue*, or an undiscovered descendant of the Stuarts," the last hopes of the Jacobites. "I can't promise."

But Harry did secretly promise two things that evening. The first was to call upon the stranger lady the next morning and the second was to say nothing of his appointment, and to bring the Bible in his pocket. And we may as well add that he scarcely slept through the night. He dreamed of the Bible, and that it changed to a man, with the features of his unknown friend, and that those features changed again, and that the lady who wore them repeated the whole of the poetical quotation on the fly-leaf. We need hardly say that he awoke in the morning unrefreshed, and very much puzzled. He kept his appointment. The result of the conference was an advertisement in the papers appealing to "A. M.," who left Liverpool in the Columbia, in July 18—, to call at a place designated, and hear something in which he was deeply concerned.

What a world of hopes, fears, joys and sorrows are hidden from the uninitiated in the "want columns" of a daily paper! It is a world of wants, and its selfish inhabitants rushing past and over each other, for their own ends, glare coldly on their brethren in perplexity and suffering!

The reader divines the rest. But Harry Baker's sisters never knew from him the sequel of the story of the Pawnbroker's Bible. Nor did they ever see the book in question. Nor do they believe to this day that Harry's story was anything more than a tale, not true but well imagined, invented by him to keep that clever English girl from pushing him hard on divinity, as she had already done on belles-lettres and the classics.—In a few days she announced that she was hourly expecting her brother from New York. And he did come from New York, too, for thither his sister dispatched him to save (*entre nous*) other articles which he had pledged from a "sale of collaterals," or, as they say in plain, outspoken New York, a "pawnbroker's sale." It was vanity, but it was pardonable in the young man, that he did take pains to show his old friends in New York that he was still alive and in better case than ever. In due time the "brother" arrived in Philadelphia. If Harry's sisters could have been surprised at any of his movements, they might have been at the sudden intimacy which sprung up between the two young men, almost instantly upon their introduction. They had no cause, however, to regret it. The "brother," having been proved and established, acknowledged that a sister is of some real service, though sometimes straight in her ideas of what is proper and improper; and we are glad to say, that Harry Baker has become a convert to the same opinion, and that he is none the worse for it, in his morals or his manners.

A sister's love bore her over the Atlantic—no great task in these days of steam, it is true, but she would have walked as far over Arctic seas had it been necessary. She did not come without the proper protection and vouchers for her introduction among her equals. Providence guided her search, and the Bible, which was the gift of her affection, led her to the fugitive.

Now, to close, we should make one wedding, if not two. But we leave that to the future. Further this deponent saith not, except that the other day, as the young men walked up Chestnut Street, the Englishman, suddenly turned his companion down Sixth Street.

"I thought you were going to the Academy," expostulated Baker.

"Yes; but we'll go a square or two up Walnut Street. I can't abide the dust those fellows make!"

Harry looked up at the advancing brooms, and smiled—and so may you.—But if you don't wish to stack your future paths with beacons to be avoided, take care where you step—always. Never wander to-day in the confidence of finding your way back to-morrow.

## A Romance of Dimes and Dollars.

Wm. S. O'Brien, the California millionaire, declared on his death-bed that his only brother had passed from earth in the city of Baltimore as long ago as 1861. Nevertheless, the will of the bonanza king showed a bequest of \$300,000 to Pauline O'Brien, a beautiful girl whose undefined relations to the rich man, under whose roof she dwelt, had been a matter of gossip in San Francisco. Pauline had been accustomed to speak of the millionaire as Uncle William, and when it became known her share was the same as those received by the recognized nieces, the mystery deepened.

After the death of O'Brien, Pauline in company with an aged woman, who proved to be her mother, took a flying trip to Raleigh, N. C., returned thence to San Francisco with an old, decrepit man. Arrived again at the Golden Gate Pauline locked the old couple in rooms at the Palace Hotel and announcing to the O'Brien heirs that she had found her father, P. H. O'Brien, who had never been worth a dime, claimed for him \$1,000,000. Her lawyer furnished the trustees of the estate within undisputable proof that William S. and Patrick H. were brothers. Months passed and the matter had nearly reached the courts when a compromise was effected. Under the compromise the trustees paid over to Pauline and her mother \$600,000. This payment was made on last Wednesday week, but old Patrick never saw his thousands, he having died on Tuesday—the day before the payment.—*San Francisco Post.*

What a blessing to a household is a merry, cheerful woman, — one whose spirits are not affected by wet days and little disappointments, and whose milk of human kindness does not sour in the sunshine of human prosperity.

He who is false to present duty breaks a thread in the loom, and will see the defect when the weaving of a lifetime is unrolled.

Choose always the best course of life, and custom will soon make it the most pleasant.

Always leave home with loving words, for they may be the last.