

Conscience

Eliza Lee Follen

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The short wintry days were beginning to lengthen, the sun rose earlier and staid up longer. Now and then a bluebird was heard twittering a welcome to the coming spring. As for the robins, they were as pert and busy as usual. The little streams were beginning to find their way out of their icy prison slowly and with trembling, as if they feared old winter might take a step and catch them, and pinch them all up again.

Frank and Harry were sorry to see their snow man growing smaller and smaller every day; from being a large, portly gentleman, he was shrunk into a thin, shabby, ugly-looking fellow. His strong arms were about falling to the ground; his fat nose had entirely disappeared, and his mouth had grown so big that you might look down his great throat, and see the place where one of the boys used to go in to make his snowship talk. Frank and Harry loved all their winter amusements, and were loath to give up skating, sliding, and coasting, and above all, snowballing. Yet the boys enjoyed the lengthening twilight –the hour their mother devoted to them.

"Will you please to give me two cents, Mother?" said Frank, one day.

"For what?"

"To buy a piece of chalk."

"And two for me, Mother," said Harry, "for I want a piece as well as Frank."

"What are you both going to do with chalk?" asked their mother. They were silent. She asked again, but they made no reply. "I cannot give you the money till you tell me what you want of the chalk. Why are you not willing that I should know?"

The boys continued silent for a short time, and then Frank said, "I am afraid that, if you know what we are going to do with the chalk, you will not let us have the money."

"Then," replied their mother, "you think what you want to do is wrong. I, perhaps, ought to insist upon your telling me what you want of the chalk. I love to give you every innocent pleasure, and what is right for you to do I think I may know about. However, if you will assure me it is for nothing wrong that you want the chalk, I will ask no more questions, and give you the money."

"We do not mean to do any great harm with it," said Harry. "Still I am afraid you will not quite like to have us do it, mothers are so much more particular than boys, you know."

"Try and see if we disagree about this matter," said their mother.

"Shall I tell?" said Harry to Frank.

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"Yes," he replied. "It is no such dreadful affair. Let's tell mother all about it. You know, she said the other day that she remembered when she was a boy."

They all laughed at this often quoted blunder, and Harry began: "You see, Mother, that yesterday John Green contrived, while we were in school, and engaged in doing our lessons, to make a great B on Frank's and my back, with a piece of chalk. John is a good hand at such things, and he did it so nicely, that the master did not see him, and neither of us saw the B on the other. When we went out to play, all the boys cried out, "B for blockhead, B for blunderbuss, B for booby," and so on, ever so many other names beginning with B, and kept pointing at us. At last, I saw Frank's mark, and he saw mine. I can tell you we were both angry enough. Now we want to be revenged on John Green, and have a capital plan. You see he will be on his guard, and we must be very cunning. To-morrow is exhibition day, and he will have on his best dark-green jacket, and Frank and I are to sit one on each side of him. You see he is really a dunce about every thing but playing tricks; and, when he is asked a question, he will be scared out of his senses, and not know what to say. Now Frank is going to pretend to help him, while I write Dunce in large letters on the stupid fellow's back. John will not know what I am doing, I am sure; and, as he is a real dunce, it will make a good laugh; every one will think he is well served, and the whole school will make fun of him."

"So," said Mrs. Chilton, "you acknowledge that you are planning a piece of revenge."

"Why, yes, Mother," replied Frank; "I suppose you would think it ought to be called revenge, but I don't see any great harm in it. Schoolboys always play such tricks, and no boy thinks the worse of another for such a thing."

"You think," said Mrs. Chilton, "that this schoolmate of yours will be so embarrassed at answering the questions that he will not know what he is about; you mean, one of you, to pretend to be his friend and help him, while the other makes him appear like a fool to the rest of the boys."

Frank and Harry looked a little troubled, and were silent a while. Then Frank said, "It is no more than what John would do; 'tis what he deserves, and it is true enough that he is a dunce."

"I will tell you, Frank, a better way of being revenged," replied his mother.

"What is it, Mother?"

"Sit by him, as you intended, and when he is troubled and perplexed, help him as well as you can, and be particularly kind to him."

"And so reward him for making fools of us," said Frank, pettishly. "No, Mother, what you say may be very good, but I don't want to do such a thing as that."

"If you were to treat him in the way I propose, do you think he would ever treat you unkindly again? Would he not feel deeply ashamed of his conduct if you thus returned him good for evil?"

The boys were silent, but it was evident that they did not quite relish their mother's advice, nor feel at all disposed to help John Green say his lessons.

"I will tell you a story," said Mrs. Chilton, of a man who overcame evil with good. A gentleman was once travelling alone in a gig through a very unfrequented road. There was no house, no sign of human existence there. It was so still that the hills and rocks and deep woods gave back the echo of his horse's hoofs; the song of a bird or the chirping of a cricket seemed to fill a great space, and fell on the ear with a strange and almost startling effect. He was observing or rather feeling this extreme solitude and stillness, when suddenly at a turn in the road he came upon a man who placed himself directly before the horse's head. The man had a dark, bad expression in his face,

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and fixed his eye upon the traveller in such a way as to convince him that the man meant to stop and rob him.

The gentleman immediately drew up his reins, and said kindly, "Friend, if you are going my way, step into my gig, and let me take you on."

The man hesitated, and then got in. My friend, who was a clergyman, began immediately to talk earnestly about many interesting things, and kept up a lively conversation. At last, he mentioned the uncommon loneliness of the road, and observed that it would be a good place for a robbery. He then went on to speak of robbers, and then of criminals in general, and of what he thought was the right way to treat them. He said that society should try to instruct and reform them; that putting them to death was wicked; that, by patient love and kindness, we should win them back to virtue, that we should show them the way to peace and honor. He expressed his belief, that there was something good in the heart of the very worst man, and said that he believed God had placed a witness of Himself in every human heart. "I am a non-resistant" concluded the clergyman, "and I would rather die than take the life of my bitterest enemy."

The man listened very attentively. When they came to the next road, he asked to be allowed to get out, as he said his home lay that way. After bidding farewell, he added, "I thank you for taking me in, and for all you have said to me. I shall never forget it. You have saved me from a crime. When I met you, I meant to rob you. I could easily have done so; but your kind words put better thoughts into my heart. I think I shall never have such an evil purpose again. I thank God I met you. You have made me a better man."

"Now," said Mrs. Chilton, "I will give you, boys, the money you ask for, and leave you to do as you think best about John Green."

"But, Mother," said Harry, "I am sure chalking a boy's back is a very different thing from robbing a man; and chalking back again is not like keeping a poor fellow in prison all his life, or hanging him."

"Very true, Harry, but the principle of overcoming evil with good is the same for both cases. The evil purpose in the robber's heart was overcome by the love and kindness of the man he meant to injure. Think the whole matter over, boys, and let me know to-morrow what you have done. I leave you free to do as you think best."

The next day after school, she asked them what they had done about John Green, and whether they had spent their money for chalk to write dunce on his back.

"I bought a piece of chalk," said Frank, "for I thought I might want very much to pay him back for his trick upon us, but the poor fellow looked so frightened that I did not want to touch him."

"I did not buy any chalk," said Harry, "for I felt almost sure that, if I had a piece in my pocket, I should leave some mark on his back."

"Did you then do nothing to revenge yourselves?" asked their mother.

"Frank had such a revenge as you would approve of," said Harry.

"One of the examiners asked John where Athens was. The poor fellow could not tell, for he is a real dunce, though we did not chalk the word on his back. Well, he was just going to say that he did not know, when Frank whispered the answer very softly into his ear, and saved him from being disgraced. I did want, just then, to write dunce on John's back; but, on the whole, I pitied him, and, when I heard him, after the examination, thank Frank, and say, "I am sorry for what I did the other day," I did feel that it was better to overcome evil with good, though it comes hard, Mother, sometimes."

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"Very true," said Mrs. Chilton; "to do right is not always easy. At first, it is perhaps always hard, but it grows easier and easier, the more we try; till, at last, that which was painful becomes pleasant. Some good person, I forget who, said, "Whenever I want to get over a dislike of any person, I always try to find an opportunity to do him a service." Tell me, Frank, if you do not feel more kindly towards John Green, since you did him that kindness."

"I suppose I do," said Frank. "My anger is gone, at any rate."

"We don't want candles yet, do we, Mother," said Harry. "There is the moon just over the old pine tree, and there is a bright little star waiting upon her. Now is our story time. Can you not make up something to tell us?"

"I cannot think of any thing," said Mrs. Chilton. "I believe I spun all the cobwebs out of my brain when I told you about the old garret."

"Did you not say to us, the other day, Mother," said Frank, "that, when you were at uncle John's many years ago, before we were born, you wrote down some stories? I think you told aunt Susan that you meant, when we were old enough, to read them to us."

"I did, Frank, and when the light comes, I will read some of them. Meantime, I will tell you one or two little anecdotes. I was dining yesterday with a gentleman who told me this story. He was returning from England to Boston in one of the fine royal steamers. When not very far from the end of the voyage, he and some other gentlemen determined to indulge themselves with the pleasure of giving a dinner as good as they had every day to the sailors. I suppose you know that in these steamers the passengers pay a large price for the passage, and are feasted every day with luxuries. The gentleman asked the captain's leave to give this dinner, and wished him to order it; but the captain replied, "I will have nothing to do with such nonsense. I will give steward orders to do whatever you bid him; and I don't care what you do, only I must not appear in it." Accordingly, the gentleman gave the steward orders to provide the very best dinner that the ship could afford, telling him to prepare four courses, and adding that if the dinner was in any respect inferior to what the cabin passengers had it would not be paid for. The steward was desired to keep it a profound secret who ordered the dinner, and not to say any thing about it beforehand.

When the day came, the sailors were astonished that they did not have their dinner at the usual hour. Presently all hands were called on deck. This was such an unusual thing when all was quiet in the ship, that they were still more puzzled. The gentlemen meant to have them dine in the cabin; but the captain advised against this on the ground that sailors would feel confined in the cabin, and would not enjoy themselves. So the dinner was served on deck. When the sailors were assembled, and were ordered to take their places at the dinner before them, they obeyed, looking greatly astonished. They were first helped to soup then to meats of all sorts then puddings, pies, then nuts, oranges, raisins, figs, and wine. At first, they stared, as if they were in the land of dreams; but presently the enchanting realities before them were welcomed and consumed with the greatest relish. They were waited upon in the most respectful manner. Their feast had no drawback. All was good and agreeable as possible.

The gentleman said he had been at many grand dinners, but had never enjoyed one so much as this.

The sailors tried to find out their benefactor, but no one would tell them.

At last their suspicions fell upon the right man, him who told me the story.

They chose the oldest of their number to wait upon him in the name of the whole, to express their thanks. "When the old man approached me," said the gentleman to me, "he took off his hat and was going to speak, but the tears came in his eyes, and he could not. He went away, and presently returned; but again he lost his self-command, and turned away. At last, he recovered himself enough to speak, and these were his words: "'Tis the first time, sir,

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that we were ever treated like men."

The captain, who laughed at the whim of these gentlemen, said afterwards that he had never had such work from his sailors as he had from that time to the end of the voyage.

I will tell you yet another true story.

There was a poor girl who was ill of a consumption. She did not suffer much, yet was pretty certain that she should never get well. She was very happy, however, for she had many beautiful thoughts to keep her company in the sick room.

One day a good man came to visit her, and told her of a school in Canada, to teach colored people who had been slaves, and had run away from their masters. You know that in Canada American slaves become free English subjects.

He told her that he was trying to get money to pay teachers in this school.

The poor girl was very much interested, wished much to contribute something, and felt grieved at her poverty. Presently her face lighted up with a sad smile. "I have," said she, "one thing of value which I could give you, but," (and she looked very sad,) "it would be hard parting with it. My mother gave it to me." She went to a drawer, and took out of it a gold necklace. Then, as if she were talking to herself, she said, "How sweetly my mother smiled upon me when she put this around my neck! I cannot wear it now, my neck is so thin, and is always covered up. She would wish me to give it for this purpose, I know. Yes, she would like I should do it. But then I cannot bear to give it away. It was hers; she wore it herself. I shall not keep it a great while longer, at any rate. I can desire my uncle to give it to the school when I am gone." She covered her face with her hands, but you could see her tears through her thin, emaciated fingers.

Her friend, who had told her about the school, simply to please and interest her, begged her not to think any more of giving away the necklace, and spoke to her of something else.

"No," said she, "I cannot keep it, now that it has come into my mind that I ought to give it to you for the school. You must take it. Forgive my weakness; the thought of my dear departed mother brings the tears to my eyes."

"Think again, then, before you give away this precious necklace," said the good man.

She put the necklace into his hand, and said, as she did so, "I have thought of it again, and I have decided to give it."

He took it, and left the generous-hearted girl, praying that she might recover, but fearing that he should never see her again.

Not long after this, in a steamboat, he met a gentleman with whom he had much conversation upon various subjects; among others the institution for the instruction of the poor runaways. He mentioned among other things this poor girl's gift, and her grief at parting with her mother's gold necklace. "I hated," said he, "to take it. She will not stay here long, and her pleasures are very few." He mentioned also the name of the town in New Hampshire where she lived.

"That is my native place," said the gentleman to whom he was relating the story. "Will you let me see the necklace?"

"Certainly," said the missionary, and he took it from his pocket.

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"What sum of money shall you obtain for this necklace?"

"I have had it weighed," said he, "and I shall get so much money for it," naming the sum.

"Are you willing to sell it to me for that sum?"

"Certainly; that is all I can obtain for it."

The bargain was concluded. The stranger paid the sum. Then, putting the necklace into his own pocket, he said, "She shall have it for a new year's gift."

Now let us, on the first of January, visit the poor sick girl again. Early in the morning, some one hands her a little parcel she opens it, and there is her precious necklace, the gift of her dear mother in the heavenly land. It is accompanied by a short note in which the writer begs her not to part with the necklace again while she lives, but to consider it her own to do as she pleases with it at her death.

The stranger, who had purchased the necklace, and sent it back to the poor girl, knew the true value of riches, and understood and enjoyed the luxury of doing good, of making the poor and the sorrowful rejoice. He was the same man who planned the dinner."

After tea, Mrs. Chilton took out her manuscript book.

"The story I shall read," said she, "is a very painful one, but sadly true. If it makes you very unhappy, you must try to let it save you from committing the fault which was so severely punished. All the essential facts are true, as I shall read them to you.

"IT IS ONLY A TRIFLE."

"Be sure, my son," said Mr. Pratt, as he left his counting room, in Philadelphia, "be sure that you send that money to Mr. Reid to-day; direct it carefully, and see that all is done in proper form and order."

"Yes, sir," replied George, "I will."

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"Yes, sir," replied George, "I will."

George fully intended to obey implicitly. He was, in the main, desirous to do right; but he had one great fault. When he had a small duty to perform, he was apt to say and think, "O, that is only a trifle. Why should we lay so much stress on trifles?" He would often say, when any one found fault with him for the neglect of a small duty, "I am sure it is only a trifle."

George, as soon as he had finished something he was about, wrote the letter according to the directions given him, carefully enclosed the money in it, nicely folded and sealed it. Just as he was preparing to direct it, a young man opened the door of the counting room in great haste, and begged him to go with him that moment, to speak to some one who was then passing.

"I can direct and carry the letter," said George's younger brother; "I know to whom it is to go, and I can send it just as well as you."

George had a slight feeling in his heart that he ought not to leave this letter to any one to direct; but his brother again said, "I should think I could do such a trifling thing as that; I can surely direct a letter, though I cannot write one yet."

Frank was the younger apprentice, and was anxious to get forward and do what George did.

"Well," said George, "you may do it, but be sure you do it right. John Reid, you know, is the name;" and he went with his companion. "It is only a trifle," he said to himself, as he remembered his father's charge. "I have done all that is really important. It is of little consequence who directs and carries the letter." So he chased away the slight cloud that hung over his mind as he left the counting room with his friend.

These slight clouds that rise in the soul's horizon, so prophetic, so full of mercy or of terror as we regard or slight them! "Why do we not learn their meaning? Why are they not ever messengers of love and peace to us? Had George stopped and considered, perhaps he would not have done as he did, perhaps he would not have called this duty a trifle, and would not have left the counting room till he had performed every tittle of his father's command.

The letter was directed and sent. Frank did as well as he knew how.

When George returned, he asked, "Have you directed the letter to Mr. John Reid?"

"Yes, I have, and carried it to the office."

"Did you enclose that money to Mr. Reid, George?" asked his father, when he next saw him.

"Yes, sir," George replied, with a slight hesitation, which, however, he soon got over; "for," said he to himself, "I enclosed the money carefully; what does it matter whether Frank or I directed the letter?" So he spoke out freely to his father.

"All right, father; the letter is on its way to Ohio."

Unfortunately his father had not noticed his hesitation, was satisfied, and asked no further questions.

Again George checked the monitions of his conscience. Again he said to himself, "It's only a trifle." He had yet to learn that no duty is a trifle.

Weeks passed, and there was no acknowledgment of the money. At last a letter arrived from Mr. Reid to Mr. Pratt, requesting him, if convenient, to pay the two hundred dollars promised to him some weeks before.

Mr. Reid was a poor man, to whom two hundred dollars was an important sum.

Mr. Pratt again questioned his son, and was again assured that the money had been sent, and wrote to Mr. Reid accordingly, advising him to inquire at the post office.

There happened to be a young man in the office, by the name of Harry Brown, whose mother was a widow. She was poor, and a stranger in the town. Her son had obtained his place on account of his quick intelligence, and because he could also write a very good hand. Strong suspicions fell upon him. He was questioned about the letter, and at last Mr. Reid accused him of the theft.

The young man's indignation was uncontrollable; he turned white with anger; he could not speak; he stammered and clenched his fists, and at last burst into tears and left the office.

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All this was taken for the agony of detected guilt and neither the postmaster nor Mr. Reid attempted to stop him, for neither of them wished to have him punished, and they hoped to recover the money by gentler means.

We will now change the scene. Let us enter this small, neat cottage. There are but two rooms on the floor. One is kitchen and parlor, the other a bed room. A sort of ladder in one corner intimates that in the small attic is also a sleeping place. A small table is spread for two people; it is very clean and nice, but every thing that you see indicates poverty. An old woman, with a sweet but sorrowful countenance, sits by the small window, looking anxiously out of it for some one who you might suppose was to share her simple meal with her, which stood nicely covered up at the fire, awaiting his arrival. She is talking to herself.

"One treasure is yet left me in this world—my noble, beautiful, brave son. God bless him; for him I am willing to live. There he comes; how fast he runs! but how red and heated he looks! What is the matter, Harry? what has happened?" she exclaimed, as he entered; "are you sick?"

"Yes, Mother, and I shall never be well again. I have been accused of stealing, and Mr. Reid and the postmaster both believe it. I cannot live here any longer. I have just come from the recruiting office; I have enlisted for the Mexican war, and I hope I shall be shot; I go the day after to-morrow. I will never be seen here again. To think that any one should dare to accuse me of theft! Why did I not knock him down? I hate the world, I hate all mankind, I hate life, I want to die. If it were not for you, Mother, I believe I should kill myself. O Mother, Mother! how can I live?" And the poor fellow laid his head in his mother's lap and wept bitterly.

The poor mother—she spoke not, she did not weep; she laid her hands upon her son's head, and looked up through the thin roof of her poor cottage, far, far into the everlasting heavens, where alone are peace and hope to be found. In her deep agony she called upon the Almighty for aid. She looked like a marble image of despair.

"I must prepare to go," at last her son said; "I have enlisted, and I must be ready. "What will you do with yourself, Mother?"

"Go with you, my child. Wherever you go, there I go too. I can cook for the camp. You have done wrong, my son, in enlisting as a soldier; why not come first to me? Your innocence will yet be proved. Why were you so rash? All might have yet been well with us."

"I cannot bear it, Mother; I must go."

"Then I go with you; I will never desert you."

"But O, you will be killed with fatigue and exposure. Mother, dear Mother, stay till I can get you a new home."

"I go, my son, where you go," said his mother; "my only home is with you."

In two days their few possessions were sold, and they were gone.

We will now return to the counting room where our TRUE story began. Some months had passed; the father and son are there. "George," said Mr. Pratt, "I cannot but fear you made some mistake about that letter. Money is seldom stolen out of letters. Were you very particular about the name and place in your direction?"

"The truth is, Sir, that Frank directed the letter; I wrote and folded and sealed it; but just as I was going to direct it, Harry Flint called me to speak to some one, and I let Frank direct it; but I told him to be sure to direct it to Mr. John Reid, and I know he did so, just as well as if I had seen it."

The father looked much displeased. "You did wrong, George, after my particular orders."

"Why, Father, I am sure it was of no importance which of us did it. That was only a trifle, I am sure. I told Frank the name, and he knows where Mr. Reid lives. I should not think you would blame me for this——"

"I do blame you very much. You should not have left this to Frank. I charged you to be very careful. This was your own duty, and you should have performed it yourself. Your neglect will most likely cost me two hundred dollars, for I shall send the money to Mr. Reid; he of course is not to lose it. You cannot be sure that Frank directed the letter correctly; he is not used to the work."

George began to feel that it was not a trifle to leave another person to direct a letter of importance; he felt very sorry at the thought of losing his father's money. Poor fellow! he had a worse pain than this to endure.

The next morning, when the letters came from the post office, there was one from Mr. Reid. The missing letter had at last arrived, and the two hundred dollars were in it. The letter had been misdirected. There was a mistake in the name of the place. The letter had been sent to Washington, whence he had just received it, as the person whose office it is to read these letters knew him personally, and so could correct the mistake. He then related the sad story of the clerk and his poor mother. He added that he went to the poor woman's house the very day that he

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left the town, intending to satisfy his mind upon the question of her son's guilt, of which he began to doubt——intending, if he found the young man innocent, to take him back into the office, and if not, to try to induce him to restore the money, and go, to recover his character, to some other place, to which he would have helped him to remove. He was too late. He found the house empty. "I pity the person," he said, "who misdirected that letter——he was the unconscious cause of the ruin of two excellent beings. We may blame the young man's violence, and may call him foolish and passionate; yet it was a deep hatred of even the appearance of sin and shame that made him do so mad an action as to enlist in a wicked war."

Mr. Pratt now read this letter to his son. George covered his face to hide his shame and sorrow; his heart was ready to break with agony. He groaned aloud. He spoke not one word.

George was suffering in silence the bitterest of all pains which a good mind can endure,——that of being the cause of misery to others, through one's own wrong-doing. After a few moments, he started up and exclaimed, "I must send word to the poor fellow that the money is found and his innocence proved; let me do what I can to repair the evil I have caused. If I write to the postmaster and tell him the story, he will take the poor fellow back again. I have some money of my own, Father, to pay for the travelling expenses of the boy and his mother. All perhaps may yet be right. I can work. I will do any thing for them. Poor Harry Brown——so proud and so honest! O, Father! I hate myself. But how shall I send him word? the post is not certain; let me think. Bill Smith said he was going to the war, if he could get money enough for his journey. He would take my letter. I'll be after him, and get him off in no time."

Away flew George; he gave Bill Smith the money, told him the story, and sent him off for that very night, George then wrote to the postmaster, and implored him to write immediately to Harry, and offer him again the place in the office. George went to bed with a heavy heart, still with the hope that poor Harry had not been killed.

Now let us follow Harry and his old mother to Mexico. Many weeks have passed since we left George mourning his fault, and sending up prayers for the life of poor Harry. It is a few days after a battle. On the ground, in the corner of a small tent, lies a poor soldier. Bandages stained with blood are lying about. The poor sufferer is very pale, and his face shows marks of pain. An old woman, whose face is full of anxious love, sits by his side and holds his hand. The young man lifts the old withered hand to his lips and kisses it; he looks up through the thin canvas of his tent, and says, "Thank God, dear Mother, that you are here with me now to take care of me, else I think I should die. Forgive my rashness; if I live will yet be a good son to you. I knew was not a thief, and that ought to have been enough for me. I was wrong to be so angry, and to forget you, whom I ought to have staid by and taken care of, as I promised father I would. Forgive me, dear Mother. Perhaps I shall be a better man with one leg than I was with two."

While the poor fellow, who had lost his leg the first day he went to battle, was slowly uttering these words, the tears were running fast down the hollow cheeks of his old mother, but gentle, quiet tears, as though the heart of her who shed them was resigned and peaceful.

"I thank God for your life, my son. Your fighting days are over; they have been short; but usefulness and happiness are yet before you, though you go through life maimed. I shall yet see you smiling and happy again in our cottage, your innocence proved, your place restored, and friends all around you."

"How can that be?" said Harry; "there is only my word and character as evidence of my honesty. I cannot go back to the old place——never, never, Mother. What shall I do? Better die than live disgraced."

"Have no fear, Harry; I have none. I am sure all will be well, and your honesty proved. So go to sleep, as the surgeon directed. Have faith; you have shown courage." His mother smoothed the clothes over him, and gently stroked his hand, and he was silent, and fell asleep.

Presently, the surgeon looked in. He was a kind-hearted man, and knew their story. He said softly, "When the boy wakes I have some news for him that will do him more good than I can."

Harry, who was just waking, started and exclaimed, "What news? tell me this minute! is the money found?"

"Come, Mr. Gunpowder, keep quiet, if you please, or you'll not hear any thing from me."

"Yes, yes; I am as quiet as a lamb, only be quick. Tell me the news."

"Well, here are two letters that a great six foot chap has brought, not for your lambship, Mr. Harry, but for your good mother, who takes things like a rational being."

He gave the letters to the mother and left the tent, saying with a smile, "Don't be too happy."

The letter from the postmaster was to ask Harry's pardon for the injustice, and to offer the place in the office.

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"There is no one," it concluded, "I could trust as I can you."

The other was from George, as follows:—

"DEAR MR. BROWN: My neglect of my duty in directing a letter was the real cause of the suspicion that fell upon you. I can never forgive myself. I can hardly hope you can forgive me. If you will be generous enough to try to do so, you will make me less unhappy. If you accept the sum I enclose you to meet the expenses of your journey, I shall be less miserable. By taking it you will prove that you pity and forgive me,—the unintentional cause of so much evil to you and your excellent mother." George enclosed a check for five hundred dollars, all he had saved from his earnings as a clerk for the two years past.

"Thank Heaven, my innocence is proved!" said the honest fellow. "But, Mother, I don't want the money."

"It is kinder to take it," said the mother.

Harry submitted. Ere long, he was able to move on crutches. He and his mother were again in their little cottage. Harry received the heartiest welcome from his towns-people when he was seen again with his one leg in his place in the post-office.

George often went to the town. His first visit was always to Mrs. Brown. He treated her as if she were his mother, and her son was to him as a brother. He was often heard to say, "The sound of Harry Brown's crutches always reminds me sorrowfully that when there is a duty to perform involving the rights of others we should never say, It is only a trifle."

"It seems to me," said Frank, "that I should never have been happy again to have caused so much misery by the neglect of my duty; and yet, Mother, it did seem a trifle."

"My mother," replied Mrs. Chilton, "said to me, when I was a girl, Never consider any duty, ever so great, as too difficult, or any, ever so small, as too trifling. I have never forgotten her words, and though I have not always been faithful to this lesson, it has often saved me from wrong-doing and its consequent unhappiness."

After a short silence, Mrs. Chilton said to her boys, The next story is not so painful, but it illustrates the same truth—that, in matters of conscience, nothing is trifling. You shall now hear how happy a good conscience can make one even under the severest trials.

One pleasant afternoon, my friend and I were seated in the neat little room which served old Susan Vincent for parlor, kitchen, and bed-room. She was sitting in a nice arm-chair which her infirmities made necessary for her comfort. A kind friend had sent it to her. She had on a nice clean gingham gown, a handkerchief crossed on her neck, in the fashion of the Shakers, and a plain cap, as white as the driven snow, covered her silver locks. A little round table, polished by frequent scouring, stood beside her; on it was her knitting work, Baxter's Saints' Rest, and the Bible; the last lay open before her. She was reading in it when we entered. As her door was open and she did not hear very quickly, we had an opportunity of observing her before she perceived us. There was that deep interest in her manner of reading this holy book, as she was leaning over it with her spectacles on, entirely absorbed, that made her resemble a person who was examining a title deed to an estate which was to make her the heir of uncounted treasures. She was indeed reading with her whole soul the proofs she there found of her claim to an inheritance that makes all earthly riches seem poor indeed.

"I am glad to see you, dear," was her affectionate welcome to me; "do I know this lady with you?"

"No," I answered; "she is my friend whom I told you the other day I should bring to see you."

"I am glad to see her if she is your friend," she replied.

"I want you, Susan, if you are strong enough to-day, to repeat to my friend that little account of yourself that you were once kind enough to give me."

"What, the whole story?" said Susan, "beginning at the beginning, as the children say?"

Susan was silent a minute or two, as if to collect her thoughts, and then said, I have always believed, that, though it seemed strange that such a good-for-nothing creature as I am should be spared, and others taken away, that, may be, I was left to give my testimony for some good purpose, and that my experience might do some good to poor pilgrims. For

"It is a straight and thorny road,
And mortal spirits tire and faint;
But they forget the mighty God
Who feeds the strength of every saint."

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Susan knew half the hymn book by heart, and loved to repeat hymns so well, that she could hardly have told her story without this preface. She immediately began as follows:—

"My father, who was a sailor, lost his life at sea when I was two years old; my mother never had very good health, and about six years afterward she fell into a consumption. She lived only a year after she was taken sick. I was too young to remember much of her, but I have a distinct recollection of seeing her often sitting by a little stand like this, with an open Bible upon it; and once I was struck with her looking up to heaven with her hands clasped for a long time as if she were praying, and then looking at me, and then at the book; and I saw big tears rolling down her cheeks. She called me to her, and said, with an earnest but broken voice, God save my child from the evil that is in the world! and give her the testimony of a good conscience.

These words I could not forget, for the next day she died. We forget many things in this world, ladies, but the words of a dying mother we cannot help remembering. This was the first time I had ever seen death, but there was such a peaceful, happy expression in my mother's face, that it did not seem very terrible to me, till I found they were going to carry her away; indeed, I think I must have believed it was sleep, and expected her to awake; for, when they took her from me, I was half out of my senses, and screamed for them to leave me my mother.

A kind old lady, a friend to my mother, took me in her lap and put her arms round me, and tried to soothe and comfort me. She told me my mother had gone to heaven; that it was only her body that was dead; but that her soul was living, and was gone to heaven. "She will never be sick or unhappy any more; she is gone to God, and she will live forever with Jesus Christ and all good beings."

"But I want to see her," said I.

"You will see her again, I doubt not, my child, if you are good," the old lady said. Perhaps I should not have remembered so exactly what she said, if she had not frequently repeated the same thing to me, and if I had not loved my mother so much.

This excellent lady took me home with her, and it was to her goodness I owe every thing. She had lost nearly all her property by the failure of a merchant to whom she had lent money; she had supported herself by taking boarders. I was perfectly destitute; my mother had made out to get a living by taking in sewing, but left nothing. The last year of her life she could not have got along without my assistance, and what was given her by her charitable neighbors; and for the last three months she could not even make her bed, or clean her own room, or do her little cooking, without my help. And O, how happy I was when I was helping my dear mother! Now at this moment, when I am so old, and forget so many things, how well I remember her and all she said! It seems as if I could hear her say, "What should I do without you, my dear Susan." It seems to me as if I would rather live over again those days, when I was trying to help and comfort my sick mother, than any of my whole life. Children are not aware how much they can do for their parents, nor do they know what a blessed remembrance it will be to them to think that they have lessened the sufferings of a sick mother. All the riches in the world would not afford them such happiness.

Mrs. Brown, the kind lady who took me home, told me that she would send me to school, and that I should have a home at her house; but that, as she was very poor, she should expect me to exert myself when I was not at school, and do all I could to help in the house; and that I must improve my time at school. She gave me a great deal of good advice, and told me I must not imitate the bad conduct that I might see; and that I must never do any thing without asking my conscience whether it was right to do it. I remember she asked me if I knew what my conscience was. I was not quite sure that I did; so I said, I did not know whether I did. Then she asked me if I ever remembered doing wrong.

"O yes, ma'am," I said; "I never shall forget playing with my mother's bottle of cough drops, when she told me not to, and spilling them all out. I did not tell her of it at first, and she could not get any more till next day; and every time she coughed, it seemed as if my heart would break; and I hated myself, and could not bear it at all till I told her I had played with the bottle and spilled the drops."

"It was your conscience, Susan," the old lady said, "that was so troubled; it was your conscience that said you must tell your mother; this is God's witness in your heart; always do as that directs you, and come what will, Susan, you can bear it."

I was so grateful to my kind friend for her tender care of me, that I attended to all she said to me, and never forgot it; and it has been the source of happiness to me through life. I had not been long in the school before I had

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a trial of my conscience, and I thank Him who is the giver of all strength that I resisted this first temptation.

One day the schoolmistress left her penknife open upon her desk, when she went out of her room during the recess; nearly all the girls took it into their hands to look at it, for it had a number of blades, and was rather curious; some of them tried the knife to see how sharp it was. We had been told not to meddle with her things, and all of us knew it was wrong; as I was one of the small girls, I did not get a chance to look at it till all had seen it; but, when the others ran out to the play ground, and I was left alone, I went to the desk, and took up the knife, and opened and shut all the blades; but instead of leaving the one open which I found so, I left open another blade, just put it on the edge of my nail, to see how very sharp it was, and then laid it down, and ran after the rest of the girls.

When the schoolmistress came in, she immediately saw that we had taken up her knife. "Some one," said she, "has been using my knife; I am sure of it, because the blade that I left open is shut, and another is open, and it is gapped; who has done it?" Not a girl spoke; I thought that I was the only one who had opened and shut the blades, but I knew I had not gapped either of them. I knew that all the others had taken up the knife; I was afraid to speak; I did not like to take the whole blame, and I was silent as the other girls were.

After waiting a few minutes, our teacher said, "As none of you choose to confess who has done this, I shall have to punish the innocent with the guilty; I shall take away a merit from all of you, except those few girls who, I feel sure, would not disobey me."

There were only five girls in the school who did not lose a merit, and I was one of the number. As she named them over, and gave her reasons for believing them innocent, when she came to me, she said, "Little Susan Vincent has been so orderly and so good ever since she has been here, that I am sure it was not she that did it, and, if she had, I am sure she would confess it."

I felt as if I was choking; I put my head clear down so that no one could see my face; but the girls, who had none of them seen me touch the knife, thought that my modesty made me appear so much confused; no one but God and myself knew that I had a guilty conscience. I felt too dreadfully to speak then; I thought of nothing else all school time; I missed in all my lessons, for I did not attend to any thing that was said to me. The schoolmistress thought I was sick, and I went home miserable enough.

As I went along, I thought over all that Mrs. Brown had said to me about conscience, and I understood then what she meant by the voice of God in the heart. No one accused me, but I felt like a criminal; every one thought well of me; my schoolmistress and companions all loved me; but I despised and hated myself. I felt as if God was displeased with me.

As usual, I went directly to Mrs. Brown to ask what she had for me to do. "What's the matter, Susan?" said she; "you don't look right; have you been naughty, or are you sick, child?"

I could not bear to have her speak so kindly to me when I did not deserve it, and I burst into tears; I loved her like a mother, and I told her all.

"And now, Susan, what are you going to do?"

"I want you, ma'am, to tell the schoolmistress."

"Better tell her yourself," she answered.

After thinking a while, I said that I would; and then my conscience was a little easier. I went a little before the time, that I might see her alone. When I came in, I found a friend of hers with her, and I heard my mistress whisper, "This is my dear little orphan girl." She called me to her, and took me up in her lap. "Well, honest little Sue," said she, "why don't you look up in my face, as you know you always do?"

This was too much for me; I burst into tears, and put my hands over my face.

"What's the matter, Susan?" said she.

As soon as I could speak, I said, "I did open the knife; I was wicked when you thought I was good, for I did not tell the truth; I opened and shut all the blades, and I cut a notch on my nail with one, and then I did not tell you of it when you asked who opened it." When I had got it all out, I felt better; it seemed as if a great load was taken off of my heart.

In a few minutes, my kind friend said to me, "I am sorry you did wrong, Susan; but I am very glad to see that you have a tender conscience, and that it has made you come and confess your faults; I am very glad that you are so sorry; it is a bad sign when children think they are happy, after they have done wrong. I trust, my dear Susan, that you have suffered so much, that you will never commit such a fault again; it was only foolish and disobedient to take up my knife, but it was very wrong not to tell me, when I asked who did it, and let me punish so many

girls for your offence."

I saw that she thought I was the only one that had touched the knife, and believed me worse than I was; and then I felt what a difference there was between a good and an evil conscience; for it did not trouble me half so much that she thought me worse than I really was, as to see that she thought me better.

Then she said, "You must, Susan, confess before the whole school that it was you that took my knife."

While she was speaking, the girls came in. I had cried so much that I could hardly speak; and my good friend said that, as I was a little girl, she would speak for me.

As soon as she said that I had confessed that it was I that took the knife, almost every girl in the school cried out, "It was not little Susan, it was I!" "It was not Sue, it was I!" was heard all round the room. This made me feel bold enough to speak, and I said,

"Yes, I did take it up when you were all out on the play ground; I opened and shut all the blades, and cut a little notch on my nail."

"And so did I!" "And so did I!" was heard from a number of voices. "And we took it up first," said all the girls.

When there was silence, the schoolmistress told us that she was glad to see that, though we had done wrong in the morning, we were trying now to do right, and repair our fault; that although we had not obeyed conscience then, we were acting as it directed us now.

"And are you not all happier?" said she. "Yes," they all said. "And is not God good, to put this feeling in your hearts, that makes you unhappy when you do wrong, and happy when you do right? Follow this guide, children, and it will lead you to heaven."

It may seem strange that a child, hardly nine years old, should remember all that was said at such a time; but I suffered a great deal before I confessed my fault, for I was a little proud of my good character at school, and my suffering made me remember. Besides, Mrs. Brown often talked about conscience to me, and told me that I must learn to govern myself, for that when she died, I should have nothing but my character to depend upon; no guide but my Bible and my conscience, and no protector but God.

When I was about fifteen years old, Mrs. Brown, my kind friend, died, and she died so sweetly and calmly that death in her seemed beautiful. I sat by her side, after I had closed her eyes, and looked in her dear face, till even my grief at losing her was quieted, and till I felt what we learn in the good book, that the good never die. I felt sure that her soul was with God.

After the funeral, I went out to inquire for a place, and soon found one, for every one knew Mrs. Brown's regard for me.

I met with a great trouble at my first place; I was the chamber maid, and the nursery maid was envious of me, because my mistress liked me better than her. She often accused me of faults I did not commit; but, when my mistress spoke to me, I looked and was so innocent that she was convinced.

One morning my mistress sent for me; as soon as I saw her face I knew that something very bad was the matter, for the tears came into her eyes when she spoke to me. She told me that she was very sorry, but that she could not keep me any longer; she was grieved to lose me, but more for the cause.

I asked her to tell me the cause.

"I am afraid," she said, "indeed, Susan, I have a good reason to believe, that you are not honest."

I do confess, ladies, that I was very angry; it seemed as if all the blood in my body flew up into my face and head; I could not speak, and I don't know but my confusion and anger together made me look guilty.

"I am glad," said she, "that you don't tell any falsehood about it; you are welcome to stay here till you get a place."

By this time I could speak, and I said to her, "I am as innocent as the child just born. I never took so much as a pin from any one; I do not wish to stay a minute in your house; I would not stay in any one's house who had accused me of dishonesty;" and I called upon my mother and my friend Mrs. Brown, though I knew they could not answer me, and I cried aloud like a child.

My mistress shed tears, and said she should not have accused me without certain proofs of my dishonesty, and begged me to confess my fault, and to stay till I got a place; but I told her I would not stay another minute, and I went to my chamber and tied up my bundle, and put on my bonnet and shawl, and walked straight off without speaking to any one.

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I had gone nearly a mile before I was at all calmed, and then, out of breath, and miserable beyond words to tell, I sat down under an old tree by the roadside. It was autumn; the tree was stripped of its leaves, the wind sounded mournfully among the dead branches, there were heavy dark clouds in the sky, and my heart was heavier and darker than the clouds, and my sighs were sadder than the wind.

The place where I had been living was two miles from the village where I had lived with Mrs. Brown, and I had taken the road to it, though then she was not there to take me in; I had no relation in the wide world; O, I never shall forget that dreary moment, and how desolate I felt. I looked up into the sky, and called upon God, the Father of the fatherless; I cried to him for help, and help came to me, for I felt stronger and I grew composed; and then I remembered I was innocent, and just then the sun broke out between two dark clouds, and it looked to me like the pure bright eye of God, looking right into my heart, and seeing my innocence; and then it seemed as if my soul was full of light, and I went on my way to the village, feeling as if I had no dreadful sorrow.

When I got into the village, I remembered my old schoolmistress, and I knew that, though she was poor herself, she would share her bed with me for a night at least, and I remembered that scripture, "Be not anxious for the morrow."

It was dusk when I knocked at her door; and O, you know not, who have never been without a happy home, how cheering to my heart was the sound of her kind voice, saying, "Walk in." She was not very quick sighted, and at first she took me for a stranger, till I said, "It is I, Miss Howe; do you not know me?" She turned me towards the light that was still left in the west, and in a second exclaimed, "Why, it is little Sue, my orphan girl!" This was too much for me. She put her arms round me, and I cried again like a child; but they were not such bitter tears as I had shed before.

"What brought you here at this time?" said she, "and what is the matter? But come take some supper first, and tell me afterwards; you look very tired." She took off my bonnet, and made me sit down by the fire, and finished getting her tea ready which she was preparing when I came in, and made me drink a cup of it before she asked another question, and then she said, "Now, Susan, tell me what is the matter; something has happened, I know." Then I told her all that I knew myself, for why my mistress had treated me so I could not tell.

When I had finished, she said, "Now, Susan, you will find the advantage of a good character; if I did not believe that you would starve sooner than steal or tell a falsehood, I should be afraid about you now; but as it is, I do not feel uneasy, for I believe that innocence always prevails. I will do the best I can for you; I shall never forget the penknife; so, my child, do not cry any more, and let us talk of other things; you shall have half of my bed and whatever I have, till you can get a place to suit you; so, dear, do not be downcast."

O, young ladies, you must know what it is to be alone in the world, and to be accused wrongfully, to be able to know the blessing of kindness, of true Christian charity; it seemed as if a voice had said to my troubled heart, "Peace, be still."

Directly after breakfast the next morning, Miss Howe left me; she said she was going to take a short walk before school began, and should soon return. She looked much pleased when she came back. "I think," said she, "I have got a good place for you. It is at the minister's; I heard they wanted some one; I went and told them all about you, and they believe you are innocent. Mr. A——says he remembers you in Mrs. Brown's sick chamber, but his wife thinks it proper to go and see the lady you have been living with, and he will come and see you this evening."

At first this made me feel very badly; my pride and my anger began to rise, but after a while I conquered them. I remembered that no one could take away my good conscience, and I could not think that I should be forsaken.

I passed the day very comfortably, and even cheerfully; I sometimes forgot that I had any trouble. Just after tea, the minister came in; he shook hands very kindly with me, but he looked very serious, and fixed his eye right in my face.

O, if I had not had a good conscience then, how could I have borne that look! but it seemed to me as if I could feel my soul coming up into my face, to tell its own innocence; I am sure my looks must have said, I am not afraid, for I have done no wrong.

He seemed more satisfied, but he told me that he had been to Mrs.——, where I had lived, and she had told him that the evidence was so great of my dishonesty that she could not doubt it. She was only sorry for me.

"We have determined," said he, "to try you; I cannot but hope that you are what you seem, innocent; but time

will show."

I had felt so proud of my character, that the idea of going upon trial was hard for me to bear, and I just answered that I would go; I was not as grateful as perhaps I ought to have been, for it was very good in him to believe me innocent, in spite of all that was told him against me, and I ought to have thanked him for his compassion upon such a forlorn creature as I was then.

Many years after, I found out what I had been accused of, and I had the satisfaction of having my innocence acknowledged. The morning of the day when I left my mistress, she had received some money in gold. She had counted all the pieces over very carefully, and was about putting them away, when she was called suddenly out of the room to see a friend at the door upon important business. It was cold, and she called me, and sent me into the room for her shawl, where I never even saw the gold.

Her brother, who had come with her friend, ran into the room to warm himself while they were talking; he saw the gold, and, to tease his sister, put one of the eagles into his pocket meaning to return it the same day.

He was in a merchant's counting house, and that very day was sent out of town upon important business, at only a minute's warning. He was a careless fellow, and forgot his jest, and did not learn till long afterwards its sad consequences.

My mistress, who knew that no one had entered the room but her brother and I, and was certain of her accuracy in counting the money, was convinced that I was a thief. She had believed some ill-natured things the other servant, who disliked me, had said against me, and had become ready to think ill of me. When, long after, this lady found out her injustice, she took pains to declare my innocence and to ask my forgiveness. But ladies should be careful not to accuse poor girls wrongfully, and not to leave money about. Terrible ruin may follow such carelessness.

After I had lived five years at the minister's, I married a carpenter, a good man, whom my friends all liked; and, though I was almost broken hearted at leaving my happy home, I was willing to give up all for him.

And then new troubles and trials began. My husband was not very successful at first, but I took in sewing, and we got along; we loved each other, and were very happy. But about a year and a half after our marriage, he had a fall from a house, and injured his spine, and after a sickness of three months he died.

At the time he was brought home so dreadfully hurt, I had an infant six weeks old; I was not very strong, and nursing my husband, and the care of my infant, and my distress at his death, all together, were too much for me; I had a severe illness. The doctor, who was a very kind man, took care of me and sent me a nurse, who tended me through the worst of my illness, and did not leave me till I was able to crawl about, and help myself and take care of my poor baby, who had been sadly neglected; for I was so sick that I required all the nurse's attention; and now came my hardest trial.

One night in December, about three months after my husband's death, I was sitting over my little fire late in the evening, reading my Bible, in hopes that those words of comfort might quiet my grief, when I was startled by a knock at the door, and my landlord entered. He lived in the other part of the house in which he rented me one room; I never liked this man, and at first I felt frightened, but in a minute I got over it.

"I want the rent," he said.

"But you know," I said, "all my troubles, and that my poor husband left nothing, that I have been sick, and that I have no money; I shall soon be able to earn enough to pay you, if you will only take pity on me and wait till I can."

"Well," said he, "one good turn deserves another; perhaps I'll accommodate you if you will do something for me."

"If it is any thing I can do," I said, "I should be glad to do it, and very thankful to you for your kindness in waiting for the rent."

He went into the other room and brought in a large bundle of laces and silks and other valuable goods. "I want you," said he, "to open your feather bed and put all these things into it; they are rightly mine, but I have my reasons for wishing to hide them; some goods have been stolen, and the constables are after them, and if they were to see these they might seize them instead of those they are searching for, and it would make a great bother."

I had no doubt they were stolen goods, and I said immediately that I would not do what he wished me to, but as civilly as I could.

"I will," said he, "give you one of the pieces of cambric for your trouble, and I will never ask you for this last

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quarter's rent; it will be a great favor to me, for they know that you are sick, and you have the credit of being very honest, and the things would not be touched in your bed, and a great deal of trouble would be saved."

"I will," said I, "keep the credit of being honest; I can have nothing to do with any of these things; your conscience can best tell whether they are honestly come by."

"Do you dare," said he, "to say I stole them?" in such a loud voice as to wake up my poor baby and to make me start.

"I say nothing," I answered, "but that it is against my conscience to do what you asked me to do."

He flew into a passion, and said, "Conscience or no conscience, you do as I ask you to, or out of my house you go this very night."

"Not to-night," I said.

"Yes, to-night," he answered. "Do as I tell you, and you have no rent to pay, and this piece of cambric is yours, and I am your friend; but refuse me, and out of the house you go this very night; I have warned you long enough to pay the rent."

I told him that I could not do what was against my conscience for all the goods of this world, and that if he was so cruel as to turn me out of doors, God would protect me and my child. "But," said I, "are you not afraid to do such a wicked thing, it is so dark and stormy, and my poor baby"——and at the thought that it had no father to protect it, I burst into tears, and could not speak.

He was silent, and seemed to feel some pity. Presently he said, "Well, you may stay till daylight, but then you must either hide these things for me, or you must march. And I suppose it will not worry your stomach to let these things stay here till then." So he put the goods on a chair, and laid my cloak and bonnet upon them.

As soon as he was gone, and his door shut, I took the things and put them all just outside of the door. I was too much troubled and frightened to go to bed. At break of day he was in my room again. "Will you do as I desire," said he, "or will you clear out? I'll make you pay for putting these things on the dirty floor." He stopped a minute. "Come, now, hide these things, and we are friends, and no trouble about your rent, and all's right, you know."

I thank heaven that I never hesitated; it did not seem a possible thing to me that I should assist this man in hiding his stolen goods. I am certain that I should have rather died.

I cannot think now how it was that I felt so calm and so strong. I collected together a small bundle of clothes, and tried to wrap up my baby so that the cold air should not come to her; it seemed as if I could hear my conscience say, "Be not afraid;" I felt as if I was not alone.

I left the house, determining to go from door to door till I found some one to take me in. I was refused admittance at two or three; and then I remembered a poor widow who had sent me broth when I was sick, and I went to her. It was hardly daylight when I knocked; there was a driving sleet, but my heart did not fail me, my God did not forsake me.

It was some time before the good woman came down; I had taken my own cloak to cover my dear baby, and I was wet to the skin, and had such an ague fit from cold that I could hardly speak to beg shelter for heaven's sake.

She took me in, she made a fire, and got me something hot to drink; she took my child, and dried and warmed it, and put her and me to bed.

I found that the fever I had just been cured of was returning; the cold and wet was too much for my strength; I thought I might die, and I told the kind widow my story, and the name of the clergyman with whom I had lived in the country, and begged her if I should grow worse to send for him, for I knew he would be my friend. It was fortunate I did, for I grew ill very fast; I had a high fever, and did not know afterwards what I said.

She sent for him. He came and told her that all I said was true; he got me a nurse and physician, and gave the poor widow money for me, and said he would pay all my expenses, and thanked her as much, she told me afterwards, for her care of me as if I had been his own child.

After the fever left me, a severe rheumatism settled in my back, which I had strained in lifting my husband. I have never since been able to stand upright. But O, this was nothing to what I suffered when they told me, when I was well enough to bear to hear it, they told me that my baby, my little daughter,——I cannot bear now to think of it,——she took cold too, and then the weaning her, and all, it was too much for the little thing; my child went to God who gave it.

It seemed at first as if I should die; then I remembered that if I had done as that wicked man wanted me to do, I should have perhaps been well, my baby alive and well, and all might have seemed prosperous; and did I regret

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that I had not saved her life and my own health by acting against my conscience? no, not for a moment. I had no longer a kind husband, I had lost my only child and my health; and yet the light of God's blessing has ever been in my heart; when I think of all my trials, and remember that I have kept a conscience void of offence, O, I cannot tell you what peaceful thoughts I have, what a strange joy I sometimes experience.

My kind friend, the minister, had me removed as soon as I was well enough to his house, and got me this little room in the neighborhood, where I have taken in sewing work, and have ever since got a very good living.

When I inquired about my landlord, I found that the officers came that morning, found the stolen goods, and carried him to prison. My friend went to see him, and told him from me that as soon as I could earn the money, I would pay him what I owed him. This I did with the very first money I received. I went to see him, and took the rent to him myself. He did not know me, the stoop had changed me so much.

Certainly, ladies, she added, I have met with what are called great misfortunes; I have lost all that I loved best on earth, and I am a cripple for life; but I still rejoice to think that my mother's prayer has been heard for me; through the blessing of God I have been saved from the evil that there is in the world, for I have ever had the testimony of a good conscience.

The sun was setting before the old lady had finished her story; its slanting beams streamed in through the narrow window, and fell on the gray locks that were parted neatly on her forehead, and on her bright, calm, uplifted eye, and gave a glow of youthful enthusiasm and celestial brightness to her face.