

slave, can meet but little sympathy, consideration, or toleration; I fear there will be strong efforts made to induce your boy to leave you.”

“I fear nothing of that kind,” answered Moreland. “If they can bribe him from me, let him go. I brought him far less to minister to my wants than to test his fidelity and affection. I believe them proof against any temptation or assault; if I am deceived I wish to know it, though the pang would be as severe as if my own brother should lift his hand against me.”

“Indeed!—I did not imagine that the feelings were ever so deeply interested. While I respect your rights, and resent any ungentlemanlike infringement of them, as in the case of our landlord, I cannot conceive how beings, who are ranked as goods and chattels, things of bargain and traffic, can ever fill the place of a friend or brother in the heart.”

“Nevertheless, I assure you, that next to our own kindred, we look upon our slaves as our best friends.”

As they came out of the avenue into the open street, they perceived the figure of a woman, walking with slow steps before them, bearing a large bundle under her arm; she paused several times, as if to recover breath, and once she stopped and leaned against the fence, while a dry, hollow cough rent her frame.

“Nancy,” said the gentleman, “is that you?—you should not be out in the night air.”

The woman turned round, and the starlight fell on a pale and wasted face.

“I can’t help it,” she answered,—“I can’t hold out any longer,—I can’t work any more;—I ain’t strong enough to do a single chore now; and Mr. Grimby says he hain’t got any room for me to lay by in. My wages stopped three weeks ago. He says there’s no use in my hanging on any longer, for I’ll never be good for anything any more.”

“Where are you going now?” said the gentleman.

“Home!” was the reply, in a tone of deep and hopeless despondency,—“Home, to my poor old mother. I’ve supported her by my wages ever since I’ve been hired out; that’s the reason I haven’t laid up any. God knows——”

Here she stopped, for her words were evidently choked by an awful realization of the irremediable misery of her condition. Moreland listened with eager interest. His compassion was awakened, and so were other feelings. Here was a problem he earnestly desired to solve, and he determined to avail himself of the opportunity thrown in his path.

“How far is your home from here?” he asked.

“About three-quarters of a mile.”

“Give me your bundle—I’ll carry it for you, you are too feeble; nay, I insist upon it.”

Taking the bundle from the reluctant hand of the poor woman, he swung it lightly upward and poised it on his left shoulder. His companion turned with a look of unfeigned surprise towards the elegant and evidently high-bred stranger, thus courteously relieving poverty and weakness of an oppressive burden.

“Suffer me to assist you,” said he. “You must be very unaccustomed to services of this kind; I ought to have anticipated you.”

“I am not accustomed to do such things for myself,” answered Moreland, “because there is no occasion; but it only makes me more willing to do them for others. You look upon us as very self-indulging beings, do you not?”

“We think your institutions calculated to promote the growth of self-indulgence

and selfishness. The virtue of common vitality.”

“We, who know the value of our own strength, are more than any other men for the performance of our duties, made free from the prejudice of those who are ignorant. My good woman, do we not?”

“Oh, no, sir. I so love my bundle.”

He had forgotten to mention that he had presented to him for solution the daily labour for the support of his mother from ministering to the means of subsistence: in the mother a life of destitution and bare necessities of life, the attendance of a physician, and the support of others.

She had probably been weak and strength lasted. He was old and had doled out her wealth, and he had no superfluous goods. He was stronger and more healthy than she, which was required by her to die? She could not murmur at the service she had been employed in, and he, satisfied that he had missed her, without incurring any additional, without deserving it, she had died, and a home provided for her.

Moreland, whose mind drew a contrast in his own condition when reduced to a state of poverty in comparison with the leading negro, retained under no sad, anxious lookings, no fears of being cast into an unhappy family, consecrated in contrast a far happier life, a horrible concomitant, poverty, public charity, or the capital bondage of the slave. The iron chains are heard clanking, wrought in the forge of hell, they reach and dry up the need be no such thing as a offspring of vice and inte-

and selfishness. The virtues that resist their opposing influences must have more than common vitality."

"We, who know the full length and breadth of our responsibilities, have less time than any other men for self-indulgence. We feel that life is too short for the performance of our duties, made doubly arduous and irksome by the misapprehension and prejudice of those who ought to know us better and judge us more justly and kindly. My good woman, do we walk too fast?"

"Oh, no, sir. I so long to get home, but I am so ashamed to have you carry that bundle."

He had forgotten the encumbrance in studying the domestic problem, presented to him for solution. Here was a poor young woman, entirely dependent on her daily labour for the support of herself and aged mother, incapacitated by sickness from ministering to their necessities, thrown back upon her home, without the means of subsistence: in prospective, a death of lingering torture for herself, for her mother a life of destitution or a shelter in the almshouse. For every comfort, for the bare necessities of life, they must depend upon the compassion of the public; the attendance of a physician must be the work of charity, their existence a burden on others.

She had probably been a faithful labourer in her employer's family, while health and strength lasted. He was an honest man in the common acceptance of the word, and had doled out her weekly wages as long as they were earned; but he was not rich, he had no superfluous gold, and could not afford to pay to her what was due to her stronger and more healthy successor; he could not afford to give her even the room which was required by another. What could she do but go to her desolate home and die? She could not murmur. She had no claim on the affection of the man in whose service she had been employed. She had lived with him in the capacity of a hireling, and he, satisfied that he paid her the utmost farthing which justice required, dismissed her, without incurring the censure of unkindness or injustice. We ought to add, without deserving it. There were others far more able than himself to take care of her, and a home provided by the parish for every unsheltered head.

Moreland, whose moral perceptions were rendered very acute by observation, drew a contrast in his own mind, between the Northern and Southern labourer, when reduced to a state of sickness and dependence. He brought his own experience in comparison with the lesson of the present hour, and thought that the sick and dying negro, retained under his master's roof, kindly nursed and ministered unto, with no sad, anxious lookings forward into the morrow for the supply of nature's wants, no fears of being cast into the pauper's home, or of being made a member of that unhappy family, consecrated by no head, hallowed by no domestic relationship, had in contrast a far happier lot. In the latter case there was sickness, without its most horrible concomitant, poverty, without the harrowing circumstances connected with public charity, or the capricious influence of private compassion. It is true, the nominal bondage of the slave was wanting, but there was the bondage of poverty, whose iron chains are heard clanking in every region of God's earth, whose dark links are wrought in the forge of human suffering, eating slowly into the quivering flesh, till they reach and dry up the life-blood of the heart. It has often been said that there need be no such thing as poverty in this free and happy land; that here it is only the offspring of vice and intemperance; that the avenues of wealth and distinction are

open to all, and that all who choose may arrive at the golden portals of success and honour, and enter boldly in. Whether this be true or not, let the thousand toiling operatives of the Northern manufactories tell; let the poor, starving seamstresses, whose pallid faces mingle their chill, wintry gleams with the summer glow and splendour of the Northern cities, tell; let the free negroes, congregated in the suburbs of some of our modern Babylons, lured from their homes by hopes based on sand, without forethought, experience, or employment, without sympathy, influence, or caste, let them also tell.

When Moreland reached the low, dark-walled cottage which Nancy pointed out as her home, he gave her back her bundle, and at the same time slipped a bill into her hand, of whose amount she could not be aware. But she knew by the soft, yielding paper the nature of the gift, and something whispered her that it was no niggard boon.

“Oh, sir,” she cried, “you are too good. God bless you, sir, over and over again!”

She stood in the doorway of the little cabin, and the dull light within played luridly on her sharpened and emaciated features. Her large black eyes were burning with consumption’s wasting fires, and a deep red, central spot in each concave cheek, like the flame of the magic cauldron, was fed with blood alone. Large tears were now sparkling in those glowing flame-spots, but they did not extinguish their wasting brightness.

“Poor creature!” thought Moreland. “Her day of toil is indeed over. There is nothing left for her but to endure and to die. She has learned to *labour*, she must now learn to *wait*.”

As he turned from the door, resolving to call again before he left the village, he saw his companion step back and speak to her, extending his hand at the same time. Perceiving that he was actuated by the Christian spirit, which does not wish the left hand to know what the right hand doeth, he walked slowly on, through an atmosphere perfumed by the delicious but oppressive fragrance of the blossoming lilacs, that lent to this obscure habitation a certain poetic charm.

During their walk back to the inn, he became more and more pleased with his new acquaintance, whose name he ascertained was Brooks, by profession an architect of bridges. He was not a resident of the village, but was now engaged in erecting a central bridge over the river that divided the village from the main body of the town. As his interests were not identified with the place or the people, his opinions were received by Moreland with more faith and confidence than if they issued from the lips of a native inhabitant.

When they returned to the inn, they found Albert waiting at the door, with a countenance of mingled vexation and triumph. The landlord and several other men were standing near him, and had evidently been engaged in earnest conversation. The sudden cessation of this, on the approach of Mr. Moreland, proved that he had been the subject of it, and from the manner in which they drew back as he entered the passage, he imagined their remarks were not of the most flattering nature.

“Well, Albert, my boy,” said he, when they were alone in his chamber, “I hope you relished your supper.”

“Please, Mars. Russell, don’t do that again. I made ’em wait on me this time, but it don’t seem right. Besides, I don’t feel on an equality with ’em, no way. They are no gentlemen.”

Moreland laughed.

“What were they talkin’

“About how you treat ’em. You know nothing about us. They put manacles about our wrists. They wanted to strip off my coat, but you you’d heard what I told ’em

“I have no doubt you’re wounded, though my sense is sound, sleek cheeks, and so on. They favour. They must believe you’re

“What you think one of ’em. Dress me up, and carry me ’round. Well, but that the niggers at home. I tell ’em it’s all one big lie. I

“Never mind, Albert. T

Albert never ventured to say anything away in respectful silence, but in profound sleep. In the meantime, his thought, that swelled as it rose, sometimes it seemed of icy chillness, but the latter, being under the influence of warmth to a character which would waste. He was a searcher after truth, the cold abyss, where it is said to be the thorns of prejudice, to have conquered the hope of attaining to equality in inequalities and wrongs. He compared them with our own starving sons of Ireland; the workshops, sunless abodes, to drain their hearts’ best blood; rank; of the free hirelings of the world, pining, anxious to throw off the yoke of masters only in name; and then the children of Africa, and, taking the irresistible conclusion, that truth was on the face of the globe. He was inseparably connected with truth, owned; but in view of all this, if a civilized man exists, there is no room for the poor, the thinking and the Creation toiled and groaned, the solemn sacraments of life, he the pallid slaves of Europe, c

With this conviction he felt the mystery of life, and to reconcile himself to the omnipotent God.

"What were they talking to you about so earnestly as I entered?" asked he.

"About how you treated me and the rest of us. Why, Mars. Russell, they don't know nothing about us. They want to know if we don't wear chains at home and manacles about our wrists. One asked if you didn't give us fodder to eat. Another wanted to strip off my coat, to see if my back wa'n't all covered with scars. I wish you'd heard what I told 'em. Master, I wish you'd heard the way I give it to 'em."

"I have no doubt you did me justice, Albert. My feelings are not in the least wounded, though my sense of justice is pained. Why, I should think the sight of your round, sleek cheeks, and sound, active limbs would be the best argument in my favour. They must believe you thrive wonderfully on fodder."

"What you think one of 'em said, Mars. Russell? They say you fatten me up, you dress me up, and carry me 'bout as a show-boy, to make folks think you treat us all well, but that the niggers at home are treated worse than dogs or cattle, a heap worse. I tell 'em it's all one big lie. I tell 'em you're the best—"

"Never mind, Albert. That will do. I want to think—"

Albert never ventured to intrude on his master's thinking moments, and, turning away in respectful silence, he soon stretched himself on the carpet and sunk in a profound sleep. In the mean time Moreland waded through a deep current of thought, that swelled as it rolled, and oftentimes it was turbid and foaming, and sometimes it seemed of icy chillness. He was a man of strong intellect and strong passions; but the latter, being under the control of principle, gave force and energy and warmth to a character which, if unrestrained, they would have defaced and laid waste. He was a searcher after truth, and felt ready and brave enough to plunge into the cold abyss, where it is said to be hidden, or to encounter the fires of persecution, the thorns of prejudice, to hazard everything, to suffer everything, rather than relinquish the hope of attaining it. He pondered much on the condition of mankind, its inequalities and wrongs. He thought of the poor and subservient in other lands, and compared them with our own. He thought of the groaning serfs of Russia; the starving sons of Ireland; the squalid operatives of England, its dark, subterranean workshops, sunless abodes of want, misery, and sin, its toiling millions, doomed to drain their hearts' best blood to add to the splendours and luxuries of royalty and rank; of the free hirelings of the North, who, as a *class*, travail in discontent and repining, anxious to throw off the yoke of servitude, sighing for an equality which exists only in name; and then he turned his thoughts homeward, to the enslaved children of Africa, and, taking them as a *class*, as a *distinct race* of beings, he came to the irresistible conclusion, that they were the happiest *subservient* race that were found on the face of the globe. He did not seek to disguise to himself the evils which were inseparably connected with their condition, or that man too oft abused the power he owned; but in view of all this, in view of the great, commanding truth, that wherever civilized man exists, there is the dividing line of the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the thinking and the labouring, in view of the God-proclaimed fact that "all Creation toileth and groaneth to gether," and that labour and suffering are the solemn sacraments of life, he believed that the slaves of the South were blest beyond the pallid slaves of Europe, or the anxious, care-worn labourers of the North.

With this conviction he fell asleep, and in his dreams he still tried to unravel the mystery of life, and to reconcile its inequalities with the justice and mercy of an omnipotent God.