

# OUR MONTHLY.

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## BEN'S BUSINESS.

PART FIRST.

BY MRS. JULIA M'NAIR WRIGHT.

THE Elwells lived, as for a long while seemed perfectly proper, at Elwell Place. The Place was one of the pleasantest suburban residences of a famous city; it was a rambling, old-fashioned spacious villa, fronting a broad, well-shaded lawn, with a carriage drive sweeping in wide curves to the street; the gardens in the rear wandering through grape trellis and rose arbor, flower beds gay as rainbows, and sunny walls where all kinds of heat-loving plants thrived, and little green alleys hung with fruit, and bordered with strawberry patches down to the bank of a broad lazy river, in the sluggish branches of which water-lilies grew.

The Elwells were called by their neighbors "very nice people," because they had such a nice house, and such very nice belongings every way; and five nice young people, and such a nice mother, who never interfered with anybody, and to back all, a very nice fortune.

In this satisfactory state Elwell affairs had gone on for many years, ever since the head of the family had died suddenly, leaving his estate in the hands of three administrators.

Whenever any one had wanted money at Elwell Place, it had come to them— from somewhere, neither mother nor children knew definitely where. However, it came; money for necessaries, money for luxuries, for business, for pleasure, for going abroad and staying at home. They were not particularly extravagant, but to provide six people with all the money they call for, is no small task, yet one which the kind administrators very cheerfully assumed. There was talk of having "everything settled up some day," when the youngest child, Laura, came of age; and then they were all to have piles of money and go to Europe, and do very great things generally.

Mrs. Elwell was one of our innocent, helpless sisters, a cardinal point in whose practice is to know nothing about business. This business ignorance the Elwell administrators very highly approved, and Mrs. Elwell's children followed in their mother's ways; they had not any other business but being "jolly," not even the son. They none of them kept accounts, none of them knew what property belonged to the family, what the income

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was, what the yearly expenses amounted to, what was likely to be the amount of the estate when the administrators were done with it.

Three prominent results of this ignorant, easy existence, demand our attention. Mrs. Elwell retired from society when she became a widow; supplied with ample means, she had no demand made on her for exertion; she had no business to excite her interest or stir up her energies, and *inertia* wore her out far faster than work would have done, so that the amiable, indolent lady sank gradually into the gentle, nerveless invalid, and with transparent skin, low voice, soft, weary, inactive hands, and a thousand "singular feelings," Mrs. Elwell kept the house generally, and frequently her room or her bed.

But there was a son, now twenty-one years old, Ben Elwell, the delight of mother and sisters, whose young life had been blasted by—prosperity. Education, support, society, had come early to Ben; he had never learned whether he were likely to be called on one day to support himself, whether he were ever to have anything more to do with money than to demand it of an administrator, and spend it when and how he liked.

Ben had three younger sisters, eighteen year-old Bertha, Valerie, sixteen, and Laura, fourteen years old, when a change came over the spirit of Elwell's dreams. Until this moment, when gray shadows crept into their sunny sky, and chill blasts of coming winter swept through the glorious summer gardens of their lives, these three damsels had lived as thoroughly without any aim for their existences as so many butterflies. They had nothing to do, and they did nothing beyond the ordinary skimming of lessons, and amusing of youthful company. They had no serious thoughts, no earnest work, no lofty impulses, no careful nurturing of talent, no unselfish toil for others' good. It had been the object of their mother to have them like other nice girls, and they were so alike that you could not, by any outworking of individuality, tell them from any twenty other nice girls with whom you might chance to find them.

I do not know what would have become of this easy, pleasant, unthinking family, if it had not been for Judith, the daughter of Mr. Elwell's first wife. Judith was twenty-four, and as far as possible, she did the family thinking.

Mrs. Elwell was quite accustomed to having Judith act as household brains; the mother threw her little burdens of care on Judith, and if she had had large burdens, would have resigned them to her daughter also. Judith owned Elwell Place, and five thousand dollars besides. She knew to a penny what her property was, and how invested. She could keep books, was forever busy, found every day too short for what she had to do in it, and when she had once deliberately made up her mind, could say to her resolve, "nought but death shall part thee and me."

There was a little mild contention between Judith and her step-mother, because the four junior Elwells were growing up such drones in society, but the mother would mildly remark:

"You can't expect every one to be as capable as you are, my dear Judith."

"I do expect though, mother, to see every one act as if they felt their responsibility to God, and understood that he had put them in the world for something more than to amuse themselves."

Then Mrs. Elwell would rouse up, for she was a Christian, if a weak and lazy one, and she would say, earnestly, "You know, Judith, that the one great wish of my heart is to see my children Christians."

"Then why, mother, have them growing up in all things exactly like the children of parents who have no such earnest wish?"

"I don't suppose you can understand it, Judith," Mrs. Elwell would begin, plaintively.

No; Judith couldn't understand it, and there the matter between her and her mother ended. Judith used to go for consolation to Mrs. Brury.

The elder sister was one of those rare people who in thought and act esteem nothing so important as the immortal life; her complaint to the pastor's wife

was, that Ben and the three younger girls seemed to have no sense of personal responsibility, either to man or to God; all they thought of was to have a good time, and get through the world as easily as possible. Careless youth, thought Judith, would mature into worldly middle life, and ungodly and peevish old age.

"Well Judith," Mrs. Brury would reply, "your mother says that she desires the salvation of her children above all things. Don't you think if she had her choice offered for them between all earthly prosperity and spiritual profit, she would accept at once the heavenly inheritance?"

"I haven't a doubt of it," replied Judith, "in her heart of hearts she sets salvation first of all."

"And I feel assured," said Mrs. Brury, "that the Lord will take her at her word, and give the children that which she wishes most."

"But it seems so strange to desire an end, and take no means to reach it," said Judith.

"Does your mother ever take any active measures to reach any end,—when she wants new wardrobes for the girls?"

"O, she says, 'Judith, you attend to it, dear.'"

"And suppose Ben were seized with a fever?"

"Why she would be nearly distracted, and tell me to call a nurse and a doctor, and she would worry herself nearly to death, but never think of administering a dose of medicine, or following a direction!" Judith was laughing now.

"She will live out her nature in the spiritual, as well as the temporal, my child. But don't despond. I am assured that the Lord has thoughts of mercy to all your house."

And Mrs. Brury proved a true prophet. Before long that fair tree of fortune wherein this home was built began to be shaken, that the nestlings might be stirred up to use their immortal wings and lift themselves nearer heaven. When this happened, Judith showed the usual beautiful consistency of human nature, by being quite as anxious as her mother to keep the young folks unconscious of the coming storm, to fold them closer in

serene enjoyment, and deny them their inheritance of responsibility.

The administrators began to hint that money was scarce; fortune was dwindling away; by some occult means affairs had been brought to a crisis, and 'retrenchment was necessary.'

Mrs. Elwell hardly knew what "retrenchment" was—something horrible, no doubt; and as usual, she said, "Judith," and Judith undertook the business.

With how many available falsehoods Judith covered up her "retrenching" from young eyes!

Valerie was at an enormously expensive school; she came home "to rest and recruit her health." The seamstress disappeared, because Judith thought she would "like the amusement of running the sewing-machine herself." The French master discontinued his visits, because the girls "could easily finish up their French whenever they went to the Continent." The high-priced music teacher intermitted his lessons, for "Judith meant to take charge of the piano herself."

Travelling was pronounced quite wearisome, and they would stay at home next summer. Thus Judith saved here a hundred, and there a thousand; and while the girls went and came, and were as jolly as possible, Judith prepared for them wonderful attire, supposed to be the last thing out, but which cost very little money, because, like the prudent man in the gospels, Judith was bringing out of her treasures "things new and old."

Mrs. Elwell approved of Judith and her doings more than ever, and mother and step-daughter conspired together to keep the home-nest steady, and the young birds snugly folded up in it, however providential storms might shake the tree.

All this went on for a year, and with the awakening of spring the administrators gave warning of loss and *retrenchment* more loudly than before, and Judith began to see that it was absurd to keep Ben, the strong young man who ought to know all about business, and be the managing head of the family, in ignorance of their circumstances.

Now nobody had ever said an ill word

of Ben so long as fortune smiled. He was called gay, genial, good company, generous, and so on. He kept his own carriage and horses in town, and they were good horses too; he gave little suppers, and dressed finely; was fond of his family, pleasant to his friends and elegant in his manners; all was well enough until the warnings of administrators reached the public ear, and then poor Ben was called "idle," "fast," and "extravagant." He was indeed idle, because no one had ever put him to work; fast, in a measure, because he had nothing useful to expend his energies on; and extravagant, because it had never been hinted to him that judgment was needful in the use of money.

When Judith took Ben into full confidence, the young man roused up to a great deal of indignation against some one, he hardly knew whom, and a chivalrous feeling that he was bound to labor for and defend the family, and that on him rested the whole burden of household care. He talked quite largely and wildly, declared "darling Judy" to be a brick, said that he and she would see to matters, that mother and the girls must not be troubled with "these sort of things." "You and I, Judy, know what business is, and we will see that it's done, my dear."

Ben had works as well as deeds; he too *retrenched* vigorously for three days, by wearing his oldest coat and blacking his boots. At Judith's suggestion, though he thought the idea came from himself, he gave up two rooms which he rented in the city, sold the furniture and a supply of champagne and sherry, and called upon his tradesmen for all their bills. He had no idea how many or how large these were until they came in, and appalled him, and distressed his "Judy" terribly. Judith and Ben spent two or three days over these bills, the dear boy showing his penitential zeal by further retrenchments in the matter of sugar and butter, which convinced all the family that he was falling ill, and caused them to lament exceedingly.

Judith meanwhile worked at the accounts, gave advice, showed Ben what to dispose of, and what measures to take,

and for a while the young fellow took heart of grace, and worked in an orderly manner under his sister's directions.

But Ben succeeded so well in settling with his creditors, and in lessening his expenses, that he suddenly conceived a very high opinion of himself as a business man, and concluded that he could immediately build up the fortunes of the family on a broader basis than ever. He talked largely of business, of stocks and of speculation, and, as is common to inexperienced young men, he fell in with people who are flying kites and blowing bubbles, and his vaunted "business friends" were of a dangerous variety. These friends came seldom to Elwell Place; one or two of them, on visits of curiosity, had encountered a calm, dark-eyed maiden of twenty-five or thereabouts, with the decision and dignity of fifty, and the searching look of some venerable judge of the Supreme Court. Judith having had to supply business brains for a family of six, for some ten years, had become quite an imposing personage, and Ben's shaky friends dared not encounter her a second time.

Ben had once been in dangerous places, because he was not trying to do anything at all; now he was on the verge of destruction, poor fellow, because he was trying to do well. When Ben closed up his city establishment he had not found a suitable purchaser for his carriage and pair, and by Judith's advice had brought them home, to save livery expenses, and await a sale. Among his bubble-blowing friends Ben heard of some stock to be purchased in the gold region, which would bring him five hundred per cent., and make him a millionaire in a very short time. Indeed this stock company seemed likely to deluge the country with millionaires, and it was a little singular also that such very paying stock should be for sale below par. Ben saw the whole matter clearly, at least he thought he did, and he made up his mind, as he said, "to go in for all the Central Jewel stock that ever he could buy." To be able to keep all the credit of this splendid transaction to himself, and moreover as he had been vaingloriously striving for some weeks to

get on alone, he kept his new expectations a profound secret from Judith.

Ben's intentions were to sell his carriage and horses for a thousand dollars, and invest this money in "Central Jewel;" and as soon as his five hundred per cent. of dividends came in, he would use them for buying further stock, and by "thus proceeding, in a couple of years he would have all the money he wanted for himself, mother, and the girls." It is as plain as day that the first thing for Ben to do was to sell his horses and carriage; he had counted on a "fancy price" for them, and he determined to look for that among the "fancy men."

This ridiculous, blundering, kind-hearted, self-conceited young man therefore began to search out horse-jockeys, and before long heard of a horse-jockey, prince of his trade. This man's name was Jerome Jenkins; he gave high prices, and paid cash down. He was a most gorgeous jockey to behold in swell attire, and he used choice slang, which none but brother jockeys could understand. He came out to Elwell Place once, and met Judith by the marble lion on the broad walk. Judith gave him one look, and at this every feature of his countenance bore witness against him to her. His eyes said "liar," his mouth said "coward," his forehead said "cunning," his neck said "cruel," and his whole head and face testified "rascal."

"What does that man want?" asked Judith.

"To buy my horses," said Ben.

"Don't sell them to him for anything," said she.

Therefore when Jerome Jenkins wanted to see the horses again, and try them, Ben drove them out to Stetson, and met him there, to be free of Judith.

Jerome was either wonderfully easy to trade with, for a jockey, or Ben's horses were of wonderful value, for the bargain was speedily made. On the third meeting, Ben, having driven to Stetson Tavern to see Jenkins, had a neat little dinner with him alone in the parlor, received from him in clean new money one thousand dollars down, in bills of divers denominations, and walked the eight

miles between himself and home rejoicing; Jenkins having driven off with his new purchase, and Ben being all ready to invest in "Central Jewel" stock.

Judith was constantly advising Ben to get into some business, and Ben was just as constantly assuring her that he was "looking the matter up." Our young friend meant to astonish his family, and especially his half-sister, with his business achievements, and the surprise was certainly effected, though possibly not in the manner he meant it. Looking up the *Central Jewel* interests, Ben left home for several days. On one of these days a grand picnic took place, to which all the Elwells had been invited.

The day of the picnic Mrs. Elwell was more than usually feeble, so that she must have one daughter at home with her; she would not allow either of the younger girls to attend the pleasure party without their staid elder sister with them, so it fell out that our Laura, a fifteen-year-old pet of the house, a sunny child who had never known a bigger trouble than to break an easily replaced doll's head,—Laura, forever singing, and every day growing into a beauty which amazed and rejoiced all her friends, was left at home with mother and the servants, while Ben was about his *business*, and Judith took Bertha the coquettish, and Valerie the pleasure-loving, to the rural feast.

It was an early summer day, all golden and fragrant, and peace-speaking. Who would have dreamed that a gale was blowing up, fast and furious, to deluge this home-nest with a rain of tears, and blacken it with clouds of sorrow, and tear a nestling away, and wreck and shatter and make miserable all the once cosy establishment? Who, indeed?

But after all, you know, it was only to teach these birds for what their wings were made; and how strong they were, and how much broader the world is than one little nest; and how much brighter it is, up beyond the mist and haze of this world, in the sunshine of the King's Presence.

I told you it was a peerless summer day; Judith and her pair of sisters went off about eleven o'clock, and Laura petted





"You should have seen our Laura then." P. 87.

her mamma and read and sung to her, and ate luncheon with her, and finally put her to sleep, shaded the room, and curled herself up in a broad-seated hall window with a book. It was not the Bible, she wasn't one of the "perfect" children; it was not a novel, for she was not a missish, immature, romantic young lady; not a history or algebra, for Laura was not a genius—in fact, the dear child was reading *Robinson Crusoe*, and

dreaming that she was on a desert island! She heard some rough voices below stairs—then Peggy coming up—and speaking softly—

"Miss Laura, there's two men in the hall as *will* see one of the family. Missis ain't fit, and these ain't the people Miss Judith would have you speaking with; but all the same, it appears like you'll have to see them."

"Beggars?" asked Laura.

Peggy shook her head.

"Peddlers? agents? tax collectors?"

Peggy "guessed not." So Laura went down to interview the strangers, standing prudently on the stairs, about five steps from the bottom, while her interlocutors posted themselves in the hall, and seemed to have especial interest in all the doors. They were rough men; one with official promptitude in all his face and air; a machine man, who looked on every one else, even this pretty maid, as also machines. The other man, in coarser clothes, a short, keen-eyed, vigilant, muscular, honest, blunt and resolute old fellow, looked as if he would only strike where the law allowed, and then as a matter of duty strike very hard indeed.

"Where is your brother, Miss?" asked man No. 1.

"Away on business."

"Been gone long?"

"Three days."

"Very sure? We have business with him. We must see him."

"I don't know where he is, sir."

"Come now, Miss, if you know anything of him it is better to speak at once, or—or we shall be obliged"—

"What's the use of palavering?" demanded man No. 2. "You wouldn't do it if 'twas a poor man with a ragged wife and three or four dirty babies. Serve all alike, *I say*. Miss, if you don't tell us where your brother is, we'll have to search the house, that's all! We've got a search-warrant—sent to arrest him."

"Who are you?" demanded Laura the fair, blazing up into fierceness.

"I'm a constable."

"And come to arrest *my* brother?"

"Exactly. Sorry—got to do it—ought to have behaved himself."

Judith, had this scene been foretold, would have opined that her Laura would have fainted; but the meek little dove was transformed to a furious little hawk; she demanded, hotly:

"How dare you! What has my brother done?"

"He's counterfeited money, that's what he have," said man No. 2, man No. 1 having evidently preferred to be silent in this very unpleasant affair.

You should have seen our Laura then. Her brown eyes scintillated; she shook back the mass of golden hair on her shoulders; she lifted her pretty head like a queen, and gazed defiant scorn at this cruel constable.

"You wicked wretch! you know very well that my brother never *thought* of doing such a thing; *my* brother is a gentleman! He is *not* home; and I wouldn't tell you if he were. How dare you insult us so? Leave the house instantly, or I'll call the servants to put you out!"

But all the majesty of the law was in the rough old constable. His search-warrant was more potent than a six-shooter; he confided to his companion that he "liked grit," and that the young man ought to be hung for disgracing such a nice little sister; then they searched the house from attic to cellar; were as quiet as possible when Laura pleaded with them not to let mamma know about it, for fear it would kill her, and even aided her to decoy mamma into another room, that her apartment might be searched without her knowledge. When mamma was safely reinstated, and the search was ended, Laura followed them to the door, abusing them roundly for talking so wickedly about Ben, and threatening to have them both arrested.

Of course the servants were all agog with excitement, and stood about wondering and whispering, and our poor Laura, learning her first lesson in enduring affliction, thinking for other people, and keeping silent over her troubles, held her peace until Judith came home.

Such a gay party as returned when the twilight fell; Judith shining with health and happiness; Bertha, fed on flatteries, proud of her own loveliness, and satisfied with everybody; Valerie, in exuberant spirits, with plans for a dozen more festivals filling her mind and rippling from her tongue.

Somehow Judith was soon drawn away from the group excitedly talking to mamma, and in the refuge of her own room Laura told her sister that terrible story, and, her self-control giving way, sobbed and cried like the baby she had always been until that afternoon.

While Laura lay tumbled into a heap of sobs and cambric ruffles on the lounge, Judith, suddenly shorn of her mirthfulness, stood in the centre of the room as one transfixed. Her silence woke a new terror in the weeping girl; she sprung up, flung herself upon her sister, and with a scream of anguish demanded:

"He isn't guilty, is he? Can our brother have done this? Tell me, Judith; if you say he is a counterfeiter I shall die!"

"Never!" Judith replied. "He is innocent, Laura; always *know certainly*, however circumstances may be against him, that our Ben has never done this foul deed."

The tea-bell rang furiously in the hands of Valerie. Judith loosened Laura's clasp of her waist, saying: "My good little maid, you have done wonders today. I did not know you were grown all at once into such a reliable woman. But our trouble is only begun, I am afraid; and you and I must keep our courage up, and go on doing wonders." They were quiet and simple words enough, but out of a full heart they were spoken in season, and they transformed the household baby and pet to a woman strong-souled and true, after Judith Elwell's own heart.

Early in the gray of the next morning, two who had slept but little during the night, in slippers and white gowns, crept softly down different staircases, and met unexpectedly on the veranda of Elwell Place. They were Judith and Laura.

"Why Laura!" whispered Judith.

"I am after the morning paper, before the servants get it; they are all agog I know, suspecting something."

"It is just what I thought of," said Judith, regarding her young sister respectfully. "Ah, Laura, you will do to leave here in my place!"

With the damp sheet of morning news the two girls slipped up stairs, and a lurking servitor around the corner of the house retired, disappointed of his prey.

"I can't read it," said Laura, flinging away the paper, and creeping shivering into bed. Judith began dressing herself, with the utmost exactness.

"What are you going to do, Judy dear?" asked Laura.

"I am going as fast as possible to Mr. Radford"—this gentleman was Judith's chief adviser and former friend—"and he and I will hunt up Ben, and ferret out this mystery. If money is needed, I'll raise it; we will see our lawyer, and have our Ben cleared. Meanwhile, Laura, you must bear up at home. Watch the door, and don't admit a single visitor to distract poor mother with the news. Tell Bertha and the rest that I am away on some business; ask Bertha to do me the favor of finishing my gray dress, as I must wear it to-morrow; and tell Valerie that I promised Mrs. Bond that she should be able to play those cantatas perfectly, before her musical festival to-morrow evening."

This was an artful contrivance of Judith to keep both her sisters at home busy all day. They had grown so accustomed to doing as Judith said, and she so seldom asked anything for herself, that she could rely on their doing exactly as she suggested.

Mr. Radford was an early riser; the methodical old Quaker made it the first item of his day's work to read the paper. He expected Judith that morning, and was standing on the door-steps waiting for her, before breakfast. He expected her, because he had seen this paragraph in the morning paper:

#### COUNTERFEITING.

##### A PASSER OF COUNTERFEIT MONEY ARRESTED!

A certain gang of men has lately been doing an extensive and damaging business in counterfeit bank notes. The counterfeiting is remarkably ingenious, and much of the money has been circulated among unsuspecting business men. Our citizens will be surprised to learn that Mr. B. Elwell was yesterday arrested by two detectives, for passing one thousand dollars of this counterfeit money. The offender will doubtless be severely dealt with, in spite of his family position and influential friends. Elwell has been rather a fast young man about town for some while. It is whispered that the family property has been nearly ruined



by his extravagance. We trust that in this glaring case of crime the offender will receive strict justice. There is no doubt but that the young man knew what he was doing. He has probably been passing similar notes for some time, and has grown bold from success. Of course we know that young Elwell had not the skill to counterfeit the money, but he circulated it, knowing what it was, and there is an old and true proverb, that "The receiver is as bad as the thief."

It was this cheerful paragraph which Mr. Radford read as soon as he rose, and Judith on her way down town in the horse-car.

The venerable ex-guardian met his ward on the sidewalk, kept her hand in a reassuring grasp as they went into the parlor, and then looking away from her, remarked: "Well, Judith, this is a sad case."

"Mr. Radford," said Judith, "I want you to do something for me; will you?"

"Yes, Judith."

"Look at me."

He turned and met her resolute gaze.

"Mr. Radford, Ben is entirely innocent! What I want of you is—to believe it, and prove it."

Mr. Radford had known Judith before she was old enough either to walk or talk. He boasted of her as the most perfect specimen of a young woman he had ever known—he was a bachelor, you see—and he frequently asserted that he had never known her to form a wrong judgment, or fail in carrying out a design. From the moment when she said to him "Ben is innocent—believe it, and prove it," he never doubted the innocence, or its coming proof, though there were weeks—yes, and months—when he did not understand how the proving was to be accomplished.

"What shall we do?" asked Mr. Radford, meekly.

"Let us have some breakfast," replied Judith, "human beings cannot work energetically when they are hungry."

"Thee has common sense," replied the guardian.

"It seems, Mr. Radford," said Judith, as they sat alone at the breakfast table, "that my brother has been arrested. Where can we find him, and how can we get a permit to see him?"

"Thee can do all that at the office of the Chief of Police."

"And is he likely to be accommodating?"

"He is an honest gentleman; and Judith, he will be sorry to see thy father's son in such a case, for thy father lent him money once to pay a mortgage which saved his homestead. Thee knows thy father was always doing kindnesses."

"We will go out to-day to find some of the bread my father sowed on the waters," said Judith, gladly.

Ten o'clock. Judith and Mr. Radford had at last gained admission to Ben. The brother and sister met in a prison. Ben had paced his cell in an agony of mind for twelve continuous hours; he had groaned, and sobbed, and torn his hair, after he was too much exhausted to walk, and at last he had fallen asleep, all haggard and dishevelled. The warden opened the cell door softly. Judith stepped in. All at once she seemed to see, not the broken, distracted young man, but the small, soft, black-headed bundle of a baby, which had been put in her own childish arms, and esteemed by her as a special contribution to her happiness, by the pretty young step-mother, who lay smiling her joy at her first-born. In Judith's heart had grown up maternal as well as sisterly love for Ben, and should he now be accused of an outrageous crime, and be condemned as a felon? Never.

Poor Judith! he was so accused, and he was—But stay—

Judith bent down and kissed the sleeper, and a tear fell on his weary face. He started up. Ben was on the verge of distraction, perhaps of brain fever; we think it saved him, to start out of his troubled dreams and see bending over him two faces full of love, sympathy, and *confidence*; indeed so marked were these feelings of Judith and Mr. Radford, that they were contagious, and the very warden looked sympathy and acquittal also.

"Why do you come to see a disgraced man?" cried Ben.

"It is no disgrace to be wrongfully accused," said Judith.

"But think of the shame—an Elwell in jail!"

"Thee knows, Benjamin," said the Quaker, "that very many good people have been in jail, and somewhere in Scripture it is written, 'out of prison he cometh to reign.'"

"Let us get at the root of this matter, Ben, boy," said Judith, sitting down on the narrow pallet by her brother. "Have you sent for a lawyer?"

Ben shook his head.

"We thought as much, and retained Judge Harpwell; he will be here in a moment."

At that instant Judge Harpwell entered, and nodded to Judith to go on questioning in her own way. "Be careful and not commit yourself, Mr. Elwell," suggested the wary counsel.

"Commit myself!" bawled Ben, rudely. "I am going to state things just as they are, commit or not."

The lawyer took out a small note-book, established himself on the only stool, leaned his head against the wall, and fixing his eyes on the ceiling, remained apparently oblivious to all creation. Judith continued in steady tones.

"On what charge were you arrested, Ben?"

"For passing, yesterday, one thousand dollars of counterfeit money—greenbacks, new, all of them. Twenty-five dollars to Pegg the bootmaker, nine hundred and fifty earlier in the day to Happ and Hazard, of Central Jewel Stock Company, for fourteen hundred shares of stock, and twenty-five more at Flex's furnishing store. I was arrested on this charge at six o'clock, just as I was going quietly home; and I swear I didn't do it—you know I didn't, Judy."

"I know it," said Judith, calmly—knowing quite well that her brother neither did the evil deed, nor got home! She asked, still quietly: "And what grounds were there for this charge?"

"Why, I had passed the sums mentioned at these places, but I passed good

money, Judy, at least it looked good to me, and was given in good faith."

"And can you swear that these parcels of counterfeit money were not the exact bills which you paid?"

"If they are clean, and new, and of the denominations which I gave, I cannot swear anything about it, beyond that I thought my money was good, and I know where I got it."

"And where did you get it?"

"I sold my carriage and pair on Monday morning to Jerome Jenkins, that horse-jockey whom you took such a dislike to, Judith. He paid me a thousand dollars in new clean money. We had a lunch at Stetson Tavern; he gave me the money and drove off, and I walked home."

"And who saw this transaction?"

"No one. Jenkins and I ate alone in the parlor, and then he handed me the money, took my receipt and went off."

"And does thee know counterfeit bills when thee sees them, Benjamin?" demanded Mr. Radford.

"I don't know as I ever *did* see one," said poor Ben.

"What did you do next?" asked Judith.

"I went home, and stayed all night, as you know."

"And why did you not tell *me* of this transaction?"

"Because I wanted to surprise you by doing a good stroke of business for myself, and I could make a neat thing out of Central Jewel."

Mr. Radford groaned.

"What next, Ben?" pursued Judith.

"Why, I went off on Tuesday morning, and spent Tuesday and Wednesday up at Oredale—where most of the *Central Jewel* men live—talking over the stock, you know, so as not to be rash. Then Thursday morning I came in, bought the nine hundred and fifty dollars worth of shares, then paid Pegg about noon, and Flex at three o'clock, and was coming home when I was arrested."

"And was there anything especial in Jerome's manner, or in his words, or even in his receipt, that might suggest he was intentionally cheating you in the

matter of the money, making you his cat's-paw to put it into the market?"

Judge Harpwell took his gaze from the ceiling and fixed it on Judith's face, as she asked this.

Ben shook his head.

"No desire for concealment, no secrecy about the transfer, no advice about its use? A mere receipt, received so much, at such a time, and for so and so?"

"That's all, and—and the numbers of the bills."

"The numbers of the bills!" cried the learned counsel, pouncing upon the information like a hawk. "The *numbers*, those are not usual in receipts."

He said he "liked to be particular," explained Ben.

"I presume that the parties who received this counterfeit money are prepared to prove conclusively that it came from you," said Judith. "It will remain, then, for us to show conclusively, that you got it of Jerome Jenkins, and paid it out in good faith."

"Which you'll find it confoundedly hard to do," interposed the lawyer, "for from this whole story of our simple youth, I perceive that Jerome Jenkins is as sharp as the —." He paused abruptly, his word "confoundedly" had materially discomposed the worthy Quaker, and a hasty termination of his sentence might have been the death of that excellent individual.

"Do you know who the men were that came to the house for you yesterday?" Judith asked.

"Detective Forbes, and Constable Perrymine," said Ben.

"Perrymine is a rough lout," said Harpwell, "but he is keen as a razor; he could go in the detective corps himself, and make his mark."

Ben had his first hearing that day. We shall let the trial alone for the present, and turn to the family. To Judith fell the wretched task of going home that night and telling the mother and sisters what foul aspersions had been cast on the character of their brother, and also of his unhappy case, for he was obliged to remain in prison; evidence was so strong against him, and public feeling

was so aroused on the subject of counterfeiting, in which a large business had recently been done, that the court refused to receive bail.

Before Judith could face the agony at home, she went to get counsel and sympathy from her pastor and his wife. Perhaps the faith of Mr. and Mrs. Brury in Ben Elwell was a little shaken—he had been a trifling, self-loving youth—but their trust in Judith was abundantly strong. The brave girl was ready to give way. "How can I tell them this horrible thing, and crush them, and break their hearts?" she moaned wearily.

Moved by her grief, the pastor was unable to speak, and retired to a window; but his wife replied steadily. "Judith, listen to me. You have desired the spiritual safety of your family, the conversion of your sisters and brother. This great trouble may be the Lord's way of giving you the wish of your heart. The idle, trifling, petty lives of these young people have shocked you; you have told me how the first report of this affliction startled little Laura into a noble courage. Believe me, it will call them all out of themselves, and mature them into fine characters. The Apostle counsels us, 'Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us.' You know, Judith, we are made of such poor stuff that we hug the weights and the sins, and cannot run. God, more merciful to us than we to ourselves, strips us of weights, and removes out of our way the sin, and having cleared the track and lightened the racer, by a handling that may have seemed harsh, points out the goal, and says, Now run! That is what he is doing for your household; receive it well, and be a co-worker with God."

Judith went home, answering never a word; but a new light lay along her path, and she began to catch an inkling of "the reason why."

She called the mother and sisters together, and told them all, telling them also of her own unshaken faith in Ben, and her resolve to clear him. There was a stormy time of woe and weeping, but





"She sat and thought out the great problem of her life." P. 93.

out of it the mother and children passed  
to hopefulness, helpfulness, a deeper and  
better and more unselfish life.

Bravely and energetically Judith  
worked, and bravely the others waited,  
and bore the burden with her. In vain

was all they did. In vain did Judith and Harpwell try to fix the guilt on Jerome Jenkins. A model of unassuming candor, Jerome seemed to prove that he paid good money to Ben, the numbers of bills in receipt not at all corresponding to numbers on counterfeits, and Ben could only say he had not compared them. The money could be traced to Ben, no farther. Dozens of witnesses proved that he had been "idle, fast, uncertain," and attributed errors to him undreamed of when fortune smiled. Yes, in spite of all, Ben was sentenced to five years in the penitentiary.

Judith visited the Governor; kind but firm, he rejected her plea. *Ben had been proved guilty.* Jerome Jenkins went his way rejoicing, and Ben from his prison, on the eve of his departure for the penitentiary, wrote his sister a detailed account of his intercourse with Jerome, and every minutæ of his miserable "business." Along with this paper he sent a long and heart-broken letter.

Judith took the documents to her room, and seated by the hearth-fire, for the evening was chilly, she read them over and over again; at first able only to weep and lament, but passing that weakness, she began to *think*. The papers slid one by one to the floor; her face brightened, her eyes on the fire, the whole case passing in review before her, she sat and thought out the great problem of her life. A grand plan grew before her; her way became plain; she could and would save Ben yet, and bring his righteousness forth like the noonday. She knew now that she had helpers in her plan. The three careless girls had grown into earnest and capable souls in this their furnace of affliction. Out of her woe and darkness a light had arisen, and it illuminated her whole face. Thoughtless of passing time, she sat the night nearly out, arranging every step of her future way. The plan was moulded in her mind to perfection; she resolved on means and on helpers, and only waited for day to begin her work.

[CONCLUSION NEXT MONTH.]

## P R A Y E R .

(From the German of Arnim.)

○ GIVE me love, and let my tongue proclaim  
 Thy glory, Lord of Earth, with loud acclaim:  
 O give me health, with competence combined,  
 A pious heart, a firm and steadfast mind:  
 O give me children, who all care repay,  
 Scare from my cheerful hearth the foe away;  
 Then give me wings and one small hill of sand,  
 That hill of sand in my loved fatherland,—  
 The wings give to the soul, so loth to flee,  
 That gladly it may speed its flight to Thee.

# OUR MONTHLY.

A

RELIGIOUS AND LITERARY MAGAZINE.

SEPTEMBER—1873.

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## BEN'S BUSINESS.

PART SECOND.—CONCLUDED.

BY MRS. JULIA M'NAIR WRIGHT.

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WHEN Judith thought out deliberately her plan to clear up the mystery of the counterfeiting, and bring her brother's innocence to public view, she laid out for herself a very difficult piece of work.

The public with one consent were satisfied of Ben's guilt, and united in execrating him. The great Harpwell had been unable to bring his client safely through the terrible *business* in which he had become involved. Not a friend hoped, but Judith only. Ben had never been able to get one straw's weight of confirmatory evidence. He had undoubtedly uttered the base money; Jerome Jenkins swore he had never given him a counterfeit note, and a swarm of brother jockeys arose to vouch for the unimpeachable honesty of Jerome.

Judith stated the case, as she saw it, to Harpwell, and Harpwell eloquently rehearsed it to judge and jury, and not a man of them would take any stock in it. Judith had visited the Governor several times. His Excellency was a bachelor, who above all things admired what he called "a woman with a head on." But though Judith had the finest of heads,

was keen, shrewd, eloquent, practical, she could not prevail on him to see Ben as an injured party. It now remained for her, by her own unaided skill and energy, to work out Ben's salvation without help.

On the night we have described, the last night Ben was to have outside of the penitentiary, Judith closed her meditations by morning light, and set to packing a small trunk. The trunk had been left at the house by an old schoolmate, and bore the initials B. P. To match these, Judith marked six new handkerchiefs also B. P. She then put on a new travelling costume, and prepared a thick green veil.

It was then breakfast time, and she went with her sisters to their mother's room. You understand that since this family got into trouble they had begun to lead a more religious life; and whereas they had once found it impossible to rise for worship, they now had family prayers, led regularly by Judith, in their mother's apartment.

On this morning, when devotions were over, Judith said: "I am quite resolved to prove Ben innocent, and fix the guilt



of passing the counterfeit money on Jerome Jenkins, where it belongs. To do this I must leave home, for I do not know how long. I shall use my own money, and have enough of it; and I will write you frequently. You must all of you be strong-hearted while I am away, and look right on to the end when I shall bring Ben home. Of course you will none of you even whisper my intentions, or the reasons of my absence, for then my plans might be defeated. Mother, while I am gone you will lead prayers; you, Bertha, must be the housekeeper, and see that you are very prudent and economical. Valerie, you and Laura should pursue your studies together. Write me often; if you gather any facts about Ben's business, let me have them. I shall start this morning; you shall be the home-guard, and I the army in front of battle, and see if we do not get the better of our enemy."

"And you are going this very day, Judith?" asked the mother. "Suppose something happens while you are gone?"

"I am going in about an hour," replied Judith, "and you need not be afraid; nothing will happen."

It was a sorrowful morning, but they all trusted in Judith, and somehow hope brightened through the clouds of their sorrow; they felt so sure she would accomplish the work she had assigned herself.

Judith bade them good-by at the house, all but Laura. Bertha, Valerie, and mamma cried together. Judith and Laura walked along the flagged path to the end of the last terrace, where the grand stone steps go down to the arched front gate; this is the gate for foot passengers, the carriage way is on the other side of the house. Judith had sent her trunk to Mr. Radford's, and meant to walk into the city. She and Laura sat down on a stone wall where roses grew, and talked over all the particulars of "Ben's business." Then Judith gave Laura a paper of carefully written instructions for guidance in emergencies. The sisters read it together, knew that the parting hour had come, clasped and kissed each other, and cried a little, as girls will.

Then Judith said, "God bless you," and walked away, not looking back until she reached the last turn, which hid the house from view. Here she gave a parting glance to the home trouble had invaded; and there was our Laura's fair, pure, hopeful face, bent forward and looking after her through the rose vines; a face full of good omens, as if it already watched her returning home in peace.

"And thee wants my consent to this scheme?" said Mr. Radford to his late ward.

"No, only your blessing and enough money."

"Judith, I foresee thee will spend all thy small fortune on this boy."

"And be no worse off when it is gone. Honor first, sir; and beside I am a fortune to myself."

"Thee is a true woman," said Mr. Radford, "and there is a little bank account of mine that will keep thee from penury in thy old age."

Judith wanted a coadjutor in her proposed task, and of all men she sent for constable Perrymine, who had arrested her brother.

When she told him what she wanted, he opened mouth and eyes, and stared aghast.

"Why, the jury found him guilty!"

"Very true, but you and I will prove the jury wrong. My brother is innocent, Mr. Perrymine; that Jenkins has made an unconscious tool of him. I know you are honest, shrewd, silent; a person I can put confidence in, and exactly the one to help me. I will pay you just the salary you are making now, and your travelling expenses and extras besides."

"It will take a mint of money," said Perrymine, "and all for nothing."

"No, it is to right an injured man, and bring a wretch to justice!"

Mr. Perrymine had long set himself like a flint against any distinctions in favor of rich criminals; he felt that justice must not swerve one hair's breadth because the sinner had plenty of friends, or a high social position. He was, on the whole, inclined to stand so straight that he overbalanced, and leaned back-



"A face full of good omens." Page 162.

wards from the absolute perpendicular; if a rich man were accused, Perry mine felt sure that he was accused justly. He now began slowly shaking his head, divided between a righteous desire to see Ben spend his legitimate five years in the penitentiary, and a chivalric wish to help this courageous, clear-headed and self-devoted young woman.

"I shall trust you with my plans before you make me any promises," said Judith.

Here she acutely took Perry mine on his weak side, and secured his interest. When her sketch of future proceedings was ended, she had the constable fairly enlisted.

"I'll take hold on't," he said, "but, but—after all, miss, I ain't quite so much

faith in that young gent as you have. I know what young gents is like."

"You'll grow into the faith," said Judith, brightly, "all I want now is hearty work."

"You'll get that; I always works with a will," said Perry mine.

After that they consulted for a little, and Perry mine's head fairly got to work for his late prisoner.

He came back toward evening. "Jerome's in Troy," he said, "and I'll start in about an hour."

"You'll put up wherever he stops," said Judith, "and I shall come by the early morning train. You can find out something about private boarding in sight of the hotel, and take means to let me know about it, when I get there."

Now this was Judith's plan. She and Perry mine were persistently to follow in the track of Jerome Jenkins. He was to be watched night and day wherever he went; if he could be fully detected in passing counterfeit bills, Judith felt that the exposure of the gang to which he belonged would be certain; and the establishment of Ben's innocence would speedily follow. Judith knew she was dealing with a most thoroughly accomplished rogue, and did not expect any instant success to her plans; but success in the end she confidently looked for.

It was now late in August. Behold then, the position of these parties. The Elwells at home, living under the shadow of a strange disgrace, their lives fed by their hope in Judith; daily learning to live for, and think for, and help others: learning to wait, and to pray, and to be patient.

Ben, alas, poor boy, the lively, happy, full-pursed young man of the town, serving out a term in the penitentiary for something which, we tell the anxious reader in confidence, he had never done. Judith away from home, her plain possessions in one small trunk, her name changed to Miss B. Prentice, her hair covered for various colored wigs, her fashionable garments changed for simple, dark, unnoticeable work-a-day costumes: following the devious wanderings of a horse jockey. Not a move did Jenkins make but Judith was cognizant of it; he put up at a hotel, and she stopped at the same house, or took lodgings opposite; when he bought his tickets, she bought hers, splitting them, taking different trains, and so on, but always bringing up where Jerome did. Unnoticed she passed him in street and hall, with keen eyes, so swift in their glances that they never seemed to take him in; she ate at the same table, had money changed, or put into larger bills where he had just been pying out money; studied the bank detector as she did her Bible, became an expert in notes, and day by day, after all this toil and pains, beheld the fruition of her hopes deferred.

But besides Judith, Jerome had another steadfast watcher, the faithful Per-

rymine. Perry mine had shaved his face and dyed his hair red. He could talk horse and slang when needed, and he had streaks of rustic simplicity that were most tempting to a scoundrel. Perry mine sat in bar-rooms where Jenkins shone in his splendor; Perry mine traded in tobacco shops where Jenkins bought his cigars; Perry mine and Jenkins strolled the streets together, and Perry mine had thoughts of going into the horse business himself, whenever he had learned enough of the business from Jerome.

Meanwhile Jerome, thus walking amid snares and pitfalls, watched by spies, and daily drawn into a little closer quarters by the web of circumstances, held the even tenor of his way, in serene consciousness of being the sharpest sharper and the most crafty scoundrel in half a world.

From city to village, from county seat to state capital, went these three, apparently strangers to each other, bent on entirely separate errands; one watched by two, and knowing nothing of this censorship; and of the pursuers the woman growing heartsick but never despairing, and the man giving up every week, and yet out of sheer shame because of his companion's persistency, keeping up the role he had assumed.

"It is no use," said Perry mine to Judith. It was on a Sunday, and Jerome could make no wide move because no trains were running, and Judith had gone to church. Perry mine had taken himself to church too, and sat in the seat behind her—both there very early, and taking the liberty of exchanging a few words, with only an old woman or two and a little child in church.

"It is of use," said Judith firmly; have we not found out this much—that wherever Jenkins has been, counterfeit money is soon after in circulation?"

"Yes, but we can't track it to him."

"That part is to come," said Judith.

Not long after—in Toledo, perhaps—Jenkins was walking down one side of the street, and Judith kept pace with him on the other. He turned into a store where they sold hosiery and hand-

kerchiefs. She crossed over and looked at handkerchiefs and hosiery through the window. She saw him buy socks, and pay out an apparently large bill, for he received considerable change. He came out, and passed Judith coming in. Judith went to the same clerk with whom her enemy had traded, asked for gentlemen's socks, bought a dozen pair, offered a twenty dollar bill, and said, "Large bills, if you please; I dislike a purse full of small change." She got a ten, a five, and a two; one glance, swift and sharp as lightning, a clear, decisive voice ringing through the store—"Sir, this ten is counterfeit!" Impossible! Owner, brother clerks, shoppers, all fired into interest. Counterfeit, never! Judith kept the corner of the note between thumb and finger, and calmly submitted it to inspection. Her heart beat high—it was counterfeit—and now only to prove who paid it out! But unfortunately for Judith, it was late in the day. Perrymine was trying to trace up parties who had lately traded with Jenkins, and there happened to be three ten dollar bills in the money drawer. Every clerk denied having taken the counterfeit.

"One of you has," said the merchant angrily.

"Mrs. Wiggins paid me ten for her parcel," said one.

Mrs. Wiggins was unimpeachable; she had paid a new note from her husband's bank, and there it was.

"I took a ten, and I know this is it; I remarked the torn corner," said the senior clerk.

"I didn't take this one," said a middle-headed youth, of whom Judith had bought the socks.

"You gave me this," she said quietly.

"Yes, but I hadn't received it, and concluded it was good if I found it in the drawer."

"There was a man trading with you just before me," suggested Judith. "I saw him buy socks, and thought they looked a nice quality, and so came in to purchase."

"What did he pay you?" asked the merchant.

"Ten dollars, but I'll swear it was

this one with the torn corner and red line."

Then both the clerks disputed hotly for a moment; and the merchant, taking the counterfeit bill, gave Judith a good one.

"Isn't it your duty, sir, to find out who uttered that bill? I have travelled much lately, and find a deal of counterfeit money about. Some one should try and bring counterfeiters to justice."

She went out and sent Perrymine to look after affairs. Suspicion was turned on Jenkins, and he was arrested. Judith not having been in the store when he made the trade, kept quiet. That Jenkins had paid out ten dollars, was admitted by the clerk and himself, but both swore that it was not the counterfeit ten. The other clerks were positive against him, but the pig-headed youth who gave him his change would have died rather than admit that he had been deceived by a counterfeit bill. He would have perjured himself a thousand times rather than confess he had been mistaken. Judith moved to the hotel where he boarded, made his acquaintance, talked with him at table and in the parlor, caused him to think she was much pleased with his society, and talking over the "bill" case, tried to show him what he would do for society if he brought a guilty man to justice. But no; this wooden youth understood that to admit what she wished would be to admit that he himself had been careless or ignorant, and would not allow himself "to be looked on in that bony light." For want of this youth's testimony, or rather because of it, the case fell through, and Jerome Jenkins went scot free. Neither Perrymine nor Judith had been apparently active against him; they had been so wary, that he might not suspect them if they were obliged to continue their pursuit of him.

Once more Jerome walked abroad in proclaimed innocence, and once more Perrymine told Judith that it was of no use to follow him up; they would never be able to convict him. "I believe now that he is guilty," he said.

"Very good," interrupted Judith; "that is something. It is much to prove

my brother's innocence to one man. Let us go on."

But just here the astute Jenkins quite outdid himself; he outwitted Perrymine the wary! Thus: Jenkins stated that he was going to Cleveland, and Perrymine suddenly discovered that he had business in Ohio City. Jenkins agreed to meet Perrymine for the evening train. He met him outside of the depot in the dark, and proposed to go in himself and buy the tickets for both. "But I've no small money," he said. "What have you with you?"

"Fifty dollars, large and small," said Perrymine, elaborately playing the green-horn.

"Let me take your pocket-book, and do you hold this roll of bills; it is a couple of hundred in twenties."

He put the roll of bills in Perrymine's hand, and the constable, clutching at the thought that the hour of vengeance had come, held them fast, and gave up his pocket-book willingly. No Jenkins returned. The train left, and Perrymine waited; then he found the police, to whom he told his story, before whom he unrolled his bundle of notes, and lo! they were counterfeit!

Now he had Jenkins fast enough. He had him arrested at Sandusky. What now? Why, Jenkins proved an *alibi*; he had not been seen in Toledo all day; he had gone out, standing on the platform of the morning train, and brought two men of Sandusky, who swore that he had been with them for twenty-four hours previous to his arrest.

Again the Jenkins came off wearing laurels. Poor Perrymine was in a sad case; he had enough to do to come out of the matter clear himself. He felt disgraced, outwitted, thoroughly miserable.

"That's the end of my line," he said to Judith. "Now he knows me; he will forever shun and suspect me. I can be no more help to you, and I'm sorry to say it, for he's the vilest wretch alive."

"Good-by, then, Mr. Perrymine," said Judith, paying him to the last penny what she owed him. "If I want you I'll telegraph. Now I'll finish up this business alone."

"You can't—there's no way," said Perrymine.

"God will make me a way," replied Judith.

This was in November. Thus Judith was left in the beginning of winter to pursue her work unaided of men; but I think that angels came to help her from that hour. Her courage rose with her adversities; she got on so nicely after that; wherever she went, affairs fell into train so easily.

Pursuing Jerome Jenkins like a shadow, but keeping ever out of sight, she dogged his steps, persistent in her purpose. So the old year went out, and the new year came in, and from town to town went Ben's sister, intent on Ben's most difficult business.

Judith had called Mr. Perrymine to her help by means of money; he had tried to do her good, but his means had proved ineffectual, and he had failed. Now by earnest prayer she called One to her aid who can work by superhuman agencies, and who never fails in an undertaking.

What need is there to suggest how painful it was to write home to the waiting ones, telling them that as yet nothing had been accomplished, and that the end seemed as far away as ever? How pitiful to receive those family letters, wherein all strove to be cheerful and encouraging, and yet the great sorrow looked forth out of every line!

Then, too, the letters from Ben were heart-rending; protestations of his innocence in this matter blended with lamentings over wasted days, when he might have built up an unimpeachable character for integrity, and might have been educated into a careful business man, who was not to be made the cat's-paw of any passing rogue.

And Ben's grief had worn upon him so, that he had been very ill; and what is it for the petted son of wealth, to find himself sick in the cell of a prison! Ben's wind-sowing had been comparatively trifling; his whirlwind harvest was astoundingly great.

In February Mr. Radford went after Judith, to entreat her to abandon her

pursuit, and yield to the inevitable. He found her in Philadelphia, at a small hotel on Market street, quietly watching her man, and with two detectives in her pay.

"It is not the inevitable, Mr. Radford," said she, "and I will never give up until the real criminal is in the penitentiary in our Ben's place."

"Child, thy brother may be innocent a thousand times over," said the old man, "but can thee prove it? This rascal is too sharp for thee; he will give thee no evidence to inculpate him."

"He will," replied Judith, confidently; "every villain must sometime betray himself to watching so constant. The hour will come when I shall be able to expose him."

Since he could prevail nothing, Mr. Radford privately paid the detectives and the hotel bill, and departed.

The keeper of the detectives told Judith that he believed her estimate of Jerome Jenkins to be correct, but that he was convinced that he was one of the acutest villains on the roll of law breakers, and that he had little hopes of her ever overtaking him in his faults.

"It must all come out," said Judith, and she pursued the jockey through Lancaster and Pittsburgh; to Wheeling, Zanesville, and Frankfort, and finally settled down to watch him in a little town of Kentucky, in a county famous for good horses. Here Jerome said that he should stay for a fortnight, and here Judith took a room opposite him, separated by only a narrow hall. She wore a red wig there, and blue glasses, and sat near her enemy at table.

There were ventilators over the bedroom doors, and the first night of the stay here, Judith heard Jerome coughing. Next day he went out to look at some horses at a farm; the day was unusually warm for the time of year, and he wore no overcoat. The weather changed, rain came for sunshine, and Judith, watching for the jockey at the parlor window, saw him come home wet through.

"It won't help his cough," she said, casually to herself.

Coughing again at night—very hard coughing; next day Jerome was pale

and haggard, eating nothing. Coughing still at night, bells rung, servant called; Judith, on the alert, saw the landlord at her neighbor's door next morning, who in answer to her apparently careless inquiries, said the doctor was to be called at once. Judith hurried through her breakfast, and mounted on a chair, watched for the physician through the ventilator. He came; a tall, gracious, thoughtful young man. Judith bade the chambermaid tell the doctor that a lady wished to see him in the parlor, when he left Mr. Jenkins. Then she put away the hideous wig and goggles, and like her namesake of old, made herself as beautiful as she could. When the doctor came to the parlor, she saw that she impressed him at once.

She spoke with her most stately sweetness: "Sir, if I propose myself to you as a patient, it is for a mental trouble. I am in a most distressed and anxious state of mind. Last evening I was on the verge of despair, but this morning I saw you passing through the hall to see a sick person, and a great hope took possession of my mind."

She had accomplished her first purpose, aroused his curiosity, and secured his careful attention.

"If I can be of any service—" he began.

She spoke abruptly. "Sir, you called on an invalid; may I ask you what is the matter with him?"

The physician gave her a look of unfeigned amazement. The sick jockey was indubitably a low fellow, and here was a handsome, cultivated, intellectual woman, with intense interest in the question as to the man's illness.

"Incipient pneumonia," he replied, a little stiffly.

"Doctor!" exclaimed Judith, passionately, "that man's life and death are of absorbing moment to me. I believe in you lies my last chance for help, and to secure that I must tell you my story. Sir, have you time to listen to me?"

The doctor bowed a little reluctantly.

Judith was naturally eloquent; she leaned forward a little toward her auditor, her eyes holding his as by a spell,



her fine face kindling with her emotions. She sketched in a few telling words her home, her mother, the lovely sister trio, that boy brother, Ben. She hinted of their business embarrassments; of Ben's new ambition to retrench and to help; of his youthful restiveness against advice, of the horrible accusation, the trial, the hopeless efforts to fix guilt on the really guilty, Ben's condemnation, and his incarceration. Her face flushed. There lies my brother, sir, heart-broken and ruined in his young manhood, a miserable prisoner, and here, going abroad, prosecuting his nefarious business under cover of horse dealing, is this Jerome Jenkins. All have given up hope—all but myself."

Then she described the long months of her pursuit of Jenkins. Weary travelling by day and by night, disguises, assumed name, homelessness, loss of position and society of friends, everything given up for the sole purpose of tracking this sinner, uncovering his crime, and proving her brother guiltless. A new Nemesis, following the evil doer, with uplifted arm prepared, when the right hour came, to strike, avenging wrong, and executing the righteous anger of the gods.

"O thou who never yet. of right or wrong.  
Left the unbalanced scale, great Nemesis."

She paused a moment when the tale was done, then spoke dispassionately: "Doctor, I have come to believe that this man has a craft almost superhuman. I believe he will never betray himself, as others do, by rash acts. But I have learned that great criminals are great cowards, and this man is a coward. I have read it in his face; I have studied him carefully, and I know that he fears death—fears it unspeakably, and like a catiff. Do you think he is likely to die?"

"No, I see no present prospect of it. He is very tough, and any ordinary doctoring and nursing are likely to pull him through this attack."

"I wouldn't have him die for anything!" cried Judith. "He must live to stand in Ben's place, and serve out his term in prison. *But I want him to*

*think that he is going to die.* Doctor, hear my plan and help me. You can give this man safe but depressing medicines; you can make him anxious, shake your head, and arouse his fears; let him think himself in a critical condition; knowing this, his past and his crime, you may bring him to a full and free confession. When that is secure, change your medicines, and restore him to expiate his sins, if possible. In the name of justice and mercy, for the sake of a whole family wrecked by this man, for the purpose of saving my mother's life and Ben's, I beseech you to help me."

The doctor was greatly moved. He rose and paced the room for some little while. At last he stopped before her.

"I will do what you ask."

"Then my cause is gained. At last I see an end of this tribulation."

"I shall return this evening. I will then begin my treatment in your behalf, proceeding, however, with the utmost care, and in no case doing what may in any permanent manner injure my patient. I understand what you want done, and I can help you to accomplish it."

He left the room, but in an instant, before he reached the outer door, with swift, noiseless steps Judith was beside him.

"Doctor, recommend your patient to procure a nurse. I will be ready for the office to-morrow morning. This man's confession and subsequent recovery are more to me than my life."

At last Judith's golden opportunity had come. All day she sat in her room, listening for every sound from the chamber across the hall. When the door opened to admit the landlord there, Judith, standing in her threshold, said in a clear voice, meant for the invalid's ear, "How is the poor man now? Pneumonia is a terrible disease; so many die suddenly of it."

She waylaid the doctor, leaving after his second visit. "He seemed rather alarmed at seeing me," said the physician, "and I told him I would bring a nurse to-morrow morning."

The doctor told the landlord that he had engaged the lady across the hall to

1873.]



"Joy on each pretty face, the work was done." P. 172.

nurse Mr. Jenkins, and he wished her meals sent up to her and people kept out of the sick room. This was to prevent particular notice of Judith's new disguise. Miss Elwell, as a nurse, wore a dark calico dress, black silk apron, a cap, hair slightly gray, white glass spectacles, and her skin was darkened a shade. A

nurse of light step, soft voice, deft hand, but a very solemn countenance; a nurse prompt, alert, given to sighing, anxious looks at her charge, feeling of his pulse, careful inquiries, and dismal suggestions of how many people had lately died of pneumonia, closing with the hopeful remark, "but then *you* may get well, Mr. Jenkins. There are *some* things in your favor."

The nurse, the doctor with his three visits a day, the depressing medicines, and more than all, a fiercely accusing conscience, drove Jenkins to the verge of distraction. The eternal world loomed up before him full of terrors unspeakable. In an agony he shrunk from the death that seemed about to drag him to a realm of horrors.

I fear the new nurse did not preach the soundest theology to her patient. Sitting in sombre shadows, her soft, dreamy voice would mention to him that she hoped he was prepared for death, "though you *may* get well, Mr. Jenkins." She appeared not to think it likely her patient had ever done anything very wrong, but she had known people whose souls were burdened with dreadful sins, who died without making confession thereof, and died in awful agony; and the nurse was quite graphic in delineating their probable future estate. "There's only one way, Mr. Jenkins, for sinners, and that is to make confession of their guilt; it is a wonderful relief. I've known of people who had done things they *dared not* confess, for fear of the law while they lived; but the law could not touch them while on their dying beds, and they told the truth and slept away like babies."

To *soothe* her patient this nurse read to him a very interesting story about a murderer who had allowed an innocent man to be hung for his own deed, but being about to die, confessed his crime, and became quite composed in his mind. This woman preached confession, but not so much repentance; you see she preached what she thought this wretch was most likely to attain to. The story of the murderer piled on the horror so that Jenkins fairly shrieked aloud, and

nurse laid by the book, "hoping that it had not disturbed him." In his misery Jenkins asked for Bible reading; a good many Scripture despisers take to the Word as a sort of life preserver when they are *in extremis*. Judith culled out passages of warnings, threatenings and exhortations, and a good deal about confessing our faults.

The doctor seconded the nurse ably; he hoped Mr. Jenkins was ready to live or die, but at all events he had better make sure of the latter. If he had any thing on his mind, he had better free it at once.

Five days passed. Jenkins fought so long to keep his secret that Judith and the doctor began to fear that they would have to give up the strife, and leave the facts in his keeping. If Jenkins were played with thus too long, real damage might be done him, and neither of them were ready for that. The doctor had been inviting his patient to see a minister and open his mind to him. Jenkins had, amid his terrors, been wofully obdurate, but just as the doctor was leaving he said:

"Doctor, what *shall* I do? I'm done for—I see it, and I'm in a bad fix to die. Doctor, I've led a bad life, and done a dreadful deed, and I daren't tell it, and I can't die without telling it."

"Tell it, my man, by all means. You may put it off too long. Have you wronged anybody?"

"O, dreadfully!"

"Speak out, then, and make it right. Come, now, this is the best thing I can do for you. I'll bring you a minister, and you will tell him the whole story. To do the whole thing up squarely and make your mind easy, I'll just bring some one to take it down in writing, duly witnessed."

Jerome here began to draw back, but the nurse had been listening, and stepped to his bed. Looking in his face, she sighed. "He can't hold out this way long, doctor; very pale; eyes set?—well, not *quite*. O dear! if you have anything to say, will to make, trouble on your mind, attend to it this very hour."

The words were final. Jenkins groaned, "Bring 'em."

The doctor went swiftly for his brother, who was a magistrate, and for his minister. He had kept them informed of his singular case, and they came prepared to help him. They found Jenkins already hesitating whether to confess or not.

"Mr. Jenkins," said the doctor, "my last hope is to call a consultation. Do you object?"

This was truly the doctor's last hope of frightening him to his duty.

Mr. Jenkins gasped—"Do they ever do any good, doctor?"

"Not that I know of," said the physician.

"I'll free my mind first," said Jenkins.

He did free it. For ten years, this was his confession, he had been the chief agent for disseminating the money of a wary gang of counterfeiters. His horse dealing was a cloak for this work. He had scattered abroad thousands of dollars, besides making a handsome support by his ostensible business. Jenkins had not only uttered a good deal of bad money himself, but he had conveyed it to members of the gang, his confederates in various parts of the country. Who these agents and principals were, he would not say, having taken an oath of secrecy; but he would particularly mention the case of Ben Elwell, an easy youth, to whom he had given a thousand counterfeit dollars, and who for passing these had been convicted and put in the penitentiary. Mr. Elwell received the bills in good faith, knew nothing of their nature, and sold for them a carriage and pair. To pay out so much of this money at once was contrary to Jenkins' custom, but he wanted the horses greatly, had no other money with him, took unusual precautions against discovery, and knew that he was dealing with an exceedingly unsophisticated youth.

The precious document was finished; was duly attested, signed and sealed. Judith's work was done.

"Mr. Jenkins," said the cool doctor, "confession has already helped you physically. I perceive a little perspiration on your face and hands."

At this hint, Jenkins might have torn up the valuable paper, but he was really weak, and moreover, Judith suddenly swooped down on it like a hawk, clutched it, and ran from the room.

The doctor was mixing an antidote for his depressing medicines. "I shall stay with you to-night, Jenkins," he said; "I'll try and pull you through."

Judith, having seized the confession which should give her what she had so unwearily toiled and prayed for, darted to her room. She had been for some days ready for a hasty departure. Being one of those fortunately constituted creatures who always think to the purpose, she was hardly in her chamber before she was pulling off wig and glasses, and washing the sallow coloring from her face. The minister almost immediately tapped at her door.

"Can I be of any service?" he asked, anxiously.

"If you please," said Judith, too eager and glad to stand on ceremony, appearing at the door with a towel in her hand, and her handsome face dripping with water. "Will you go down and ask for my bill, and bid a porter come up for my trunk, and have a hack at once to take me to meet the next train east? I have only twenty-four minutes to catch it." She had wiped her face by this time, and while the minister bounded down stairs, she made all speed to belt a polonaise over the alpaca dress she had worn that day as Nurse Gibbs.

She was ready for the carriage, and the minister was also ready to take her to the depot.

"You have settled the bill?" she asked; "very good, I'll pay you in the carriage."

"How very different from other women," thought the minister; "quick, but not flurried, forgets nothing, accepts favors with a man's frankness, is devoted, heroic, fearless, mistress always of the situation; what executive ability!" Thus he mused as Judith gave orders to the driver, took the amount of the hotel bill and the hack fare from her purse, and coolly handing it over to him, settled back

among the cushions for six minutes of such rest as furious driving allowed.

After all, it was the first true rest of months.

"I have no words to congratulate you on the success of your plans, and the reward of your noble devotion," said the minister. "My wife will be wild with delight; she was deeply interested in the history the doctor told us to-day."

"To show that I appreciate your goodness, I will write you as soon as Ben and I get home," replied Judith.

Now they rolled up to the depot, and were just in time for checks and tickets. Casual observers set this last arrival down probably, as "some woman who was always late." This suggests how unfairly the casual observer generally judges.

Twenty-four hours on the road. Ben was sleeping his last night in prison. Judith was now fairly under the shadow of that executive mansion where she had been so gently but firmly treated. Her sense of right approved the Governor's course, but she was—just a little triumphant. She felt like assailing the house in the night, rousing his Excellency up, and demanding that lovely justice he so fondly advocated; but that would never do. She went to a hotel and slept peacefully, rose, breakfasted, put on a black velvet walking suit, her most glorious array, kept for this auspicious occasion, and called on the Governor just as he finished breakfast. She wrote on her card in a fine, bold hand, "A Lady."

When the man in office recognized the lady as the sister whom he had seen before, he felt troubled enough. He did not mean to swerve from duty, but she was so handsome, so eloquent, so devoted, he felt ready—almost—to go to the penitentiary in her brother's place, if it would do any good. He gave her his hand graciously. "My dear young lady—"

"Sir," said naughty Judith, "I come to demand my brother's release."

He might have been angry at the words, but the look and tone perplexed him sorely. "If it were possible—or proper—"

"Sir, my brother is innocent."

"If it could be proven—"

"It is proven. Read this." And Judith displayed the confession, duly attested.

The Governor read, clapped his hands, shook Judith's hand, said "Good, good, well done! Ah, I'll write out the pardon instantly."

"If you please," quoth the defiant Judith, "I don't want Ben pardoned for what he never did."

"A mere form of speech," said the Governor, and called his secretary.

While the secretary was writing and the coach was coming, the Governor insisted on hearing the whole story of Judith's proceedings. He seemed fairly lost in wonder and admiration, and bowing and bare-headed, accompanied Miss Elwell to the carriage.

Even while she talked, Judith had managed to take out the long-ready directed envelope, and write on a slip within it, "*Ben is free—all right, cleared—ce are coming home;*" and then she gave it to the footboy to have posted at once. She did not dare to alarm her mother by the arrival of a telegram.

Of course you know our Ben got out of imprisonment that morning, and he and Judith were at the Governor's to breakfast next day; while all the newspapers blazoned the romantic story. But I wish you could have seen those three darling girls at home, who had walked to the post-office on a raw March day, and were there lifted into a heaven of happiness by Judith's note. If you only could have met them going over the breezy common homeward, joy on each pretty face—the work was done. Let the raw wind blow its worst, their new delight kept their hearts warm; Bertha, Valerie and Laura going home to make their mother doubly glad. Why the very crackling of frost-nipped branches and grinding of frozen earth had only one voice, and that was the glad refrain, "Ben is cleared, and is coming home with Judith." Happy hearts indeed! They made the servants don their best, and they decked as for a gala day; got out the daintiest luxuries of the store closet, and sent for Mr. and Mrs. Brury,

1873.]



“And allows Gay Valeria to wet her fingers for sake of the flowers.”—P. 174.

for this the son and brother is alive again, was lost and is found.  
Well, that was some while ago. Maybe you have heard that a crowd of townspeople, foremost among whom were Harp-

well, Perrymine, and Radford, met the brother and sister at the cars, and cheered so lustily that Judith, for once in her life, was discomposed.  
Judith wrote to the minister and his



wife, as she had promised, and sent a picture of Ben and the three younger girls. The doctor was so enchanted with Bertha's picture that he found himself at Elwell Place in less than a fortnight; indeed by midsummer he had robbed the house of one of its choicest roses, carrying Miss Bertha quite away.

At first Valerie thought the doctor should have fallen in love with Judith; but I'll tell you how she came to change her mind—because a bachelor governor came to find out if Judith bore any malice, and would refuse him because he had once said nay to her. Judith thinks it wicked to bear any malice, so that

Valerie and Laura are even now out after water lilies to deck bridal rooms, while Bertha, floating in their boat, fair as the lilies herself, assumes a little new dignity, as becomes a married woman, and allows gay Valerie to wet her fingers for sake of the flowers.

It would never do to end the story without telling how Jerome, to his astonishment and half disgust, got well, and got a ten years term in the penitentiary.

As for Ben, he had his lesson and improved by it; he went into Harpwell's office, and they say is going to make a first-rate lawyer, if he has had part of a term in prison.

NOTE.—In all important points this story is perfectly true.

## A VERY STRANGE THING.

(From the German.)

BY H. R.

ONE evening, in my forest range,  
I witnessed something very strange.  
Along the lake side, to and fro,  
I saw a hunter riding slow;  
Lo, many deer around him run;  
And what does he? He fires at none.  
He blows his horn, the echoes ring;  
Will any one explain this thing?

Then further walking, puzzled quite,  
I stood and saw another sight,—  
A skiff that held a fishing maid,  
For fishing perfectly arrayed.  
The fishes sported in the lake,  
Yet not a fish she deigned to take;  
A woodland song I heard her sing;  
Will any one explain this thing?

Returning, 'twas my lot to see  
A strange occurrence, number three.  
A horse an empty saddle bore,  
An empty skiff was by the shore,  
And where the shady maples grow,  
I heard two people talking low;  
The moon the leaves was silvering;  
Will any one explain this thing?