

# OUR MONTHLY.

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RELIGIOUS AND LITERARY MAGAZINE.

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## BEN'S BUSINESS.

PART FIRST.

BY MRS. JULIA M'NAIR WRIGHT.

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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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# OUR YOUNG PEOPLE.

## THE FATAL TEMPTATION.

BY MRS. A. F. RAFFENSPERGER.

SEVERAL years ago, when the events of the following true story occurred, the Rev. Mr. Steinway was pastor of a German church in the city of ———. The church was weak, having but few members, and most of them quite poor. Mr. Steinway was an earnest, faithful, laborious pastor, and under his ministrations the church was growing with new vigor. He superintended the Sabbath-school, taught the day-school to which most of the children of the congregation belonged, and in every possible way tried to benefit the church.

The parsonage which was occupied by Mr. Steinway, stood beside the church, and the people of the congregation were made to feel perfectly welcome in it at all times. So much was this the case that no room in the house was sacred from their intrusion, and the pastor rarely had even his study to himself.

The minister's family consisted of his wife, a little girl of ten, named Annie, and three or four boys, younger still. Annie was a very winning, sweet, innocent little creature; her large blue eyes always seemed appealing for sympathy, and her pale, delicate face, with its setting of golden hair, made a picture of rare beauty. But there was something in her quaint, motherly manner of taking care of her little brothers, that was even more beautiful. Her parents often left her for the afternoon, while they visited around among their people, and they felt perfect confidence in her kindness and watchfulness. Indeed so much were the children accustomed to being taken care of by her, that they clung to her even more than to

their mother. She it was who led them to church and Sabbath-school, and it was amusing to see her important air as she lifted first one and then another of her little flock on the seat, and then sat down among them with such a serious face, as if she felt deeply the responsibility of her charge.

The mother of Mrs. Steinway, who lived at a distance of several hundred miles, was getting very old. Mrs. Steinway had not visited her for several years, and their salary was so small, it seemed very doubtful if they ever would be able to save enough to take such a journey. But Mr. Steinway was very anxious that his wife should make one more visit to her aged parent, and so, without letting her know his plan—for fear she might after all be disappointed—he was putting aside money, a little at a time, till he had over a hundred dollars laid away, nearly enough to pay the expenses of the trip.

Where to put this money had been a great question with him. As I have stated, the house was at all times open to his congregation, and he and his wife were often absent from home, leaving only the children in the house. He was afraid to put the treasure in any drawer, for sad experience had taught him that his people had their full share of curiosity, and did not scruple to look over the contents of his own private desk.

Opening out of his study was a closet with shelves, where he kept his newspapers filed away. On one shelf were the picture papers from the Sabbath-school, and these the children were accustomed to take whenever they pleased. On another

shelf was a pile of the German weekly paper that he took, and as these papers contained no pictures, the children never cared to look at them, though they had never been told not to touch them. It was a strange idea that struck the good man, but it occurred to him that those German newspapers could offer no possible temptation to any one to examine them, and so he concluded that the very safest place in all the parsonage for the precious money that was to make his wife so happy, was among the leaves of that pile of papers. Accordingly, for months, it had been his savings bank.

One day he and his wife started out to spend the day, leaving Annie at home, as usual, to take care of the little ones. It was a hot day in early summer, and the children were unusually troublesome and exacting. After exhausting every other source of amusement Annie remembered the picture papers, and brought them out for the boys to look at. But they had seen them so many times before that they were an old story, and soon ceased to interest them. Almost at her wit's end, the poor child thought possibly there might be some papers on the upper shelf that they had never seen, so she took a chair into the closet and climbed up to look over the shelf and see what she could find. Turning over the German papers to see if she could find any pictures, she discovered the money concealed so strangely, but it did not seem to attract her attention particularly, and she did not then touch it.

A few days after this, the girls in the German school of which Mr. Steinway was teacher, were all out together at recess, and were talking of the fine things they would buy if they only had the money. There were two girls, several years older than Annie, who did not bear as good a character as they might have done, though nothing positively bad was known of them. Still they were the oldest girls in the school, and consequently were leaders among the younger ones, who if they did not like them, were at least very

much influenced by them as well as very much afraid of them.

These were the two girls who were saying the most about what they would do with money if they had it. Annie Steinway heard the conversation, and it brought to her mind the money she had seen in her father's closet. In a child-like way she said to the girls, "My pa has got lots of money."

"Where is it?" they asked, very scornfully, as if the idea of the poor minister's having "lots of money" was quite preposterous.

"O, laid away in his closet, among the papers on the shelf."

No more was said then of the money, but the two girls did not forget it. Before the next day they had planned together to work upon poor Annie's credulity and fear till they got possession of that money. Accordingly the next day at recess they called the child to one side, and in the most threatening manner said, "Annie, if you don't give us some of that money we will tell your pa that you have been stealing it."

"But I didn't touch it," replied Annie, her great blue eyes fixed in terror upon them.

"Yes you did, or you wouldn't have known it was there. We are going right straight to tell your pa, and then you will have to go to jail;" and her tormentors started off as if to carry their threat into execution.

"Come back, come back!" Annie screamed, "I didn't take a bit."

"Well, you'll have to go to jail, if your father knows you have been looking at it."

Go to jail? To that poor innocent child this was the sum of all terrors, and she turned white with fear. The girls watched her closely, and when they thought they had frightened her enough, they told her that if she would go and get them one bill they would not tell her father, and she would not have to go to jail. So sorely tempted, and so terribly frightened, it was little wonder that she at last, under the

influence of their threats, stole into the house, found a bill—she did not look to see how much it was—and gave it to them.

It proved to be a ten-dollar bill, and for a few days the miserable girls were the envy of all their school-mates. Ribbons, brass rings, and candy, soon exhausted their fund, however; but they knew well enough that they had Annie in their power, and could get the rest of the money when they wanted it. Of course that time soon came.

Annie, meanwhile, had been in a perfect agony of terror and remorse, but she did not dream that any further demand would be made upon her. The next time the girls changed their tactics a little.

“Now, Annie Steinway, you *did* steal ten dollars from your pa, and gave it to us. We told a policeman about it, and he is coming to-day to take you to jail unless you send him ten dollars too.”

Her conscience told her she *had* stolen ten dollars, and now there seemed no way out of her trouble but to steal ten more. She took it and gave it to the girls, hoping she had bought them off at last.

It was the same thing over and over again, the girls becoming more and more insolent in their demands, till at last ninety dollars of that precious hoard had passed into the hands of the hard-hearted tempters. Meanwhile Annie's face had grown thinner and whiter than ever, and she went about the house looking so sad and desolate that her parents became alarmed. But as yet they had not the slightest suspicion of the dreadful truth.

Of course the possession of such an unusual sum of money by the girls could not fail to attract attention, and people began to ask how they could afford to buy so many new hats and dresses, ribbons and rings. At first the girls invented various plausible stories to account for the unwonted outlay, but finding their stories were not believed, and fearing to get into trouble through the envy and suspicion of the other girls, they put on a brazen assurance and declared boldly that Annie

Steinway had given them the money. “Of course, if she did, she had stolen it from her father,” people said, and it began to be whispered around that she was “a little thief,” and children pointed their fingers at her on the street and called her “thief, thief.” Even the two girls who had been the cause of all her wrongdoing, were foremost in applying the dreadful name to her.

Strange as it may seem, it was several days after the matter had become common talk, before either Mr. or Mrs. Steinway heard of it. People naturally felt a reluctance to speak to them about the matter, and Mr. Steinway had never thought of looking to see if the money was still safe.

At last a neighbor, feeling it her duty to do so, spoke to Mrs. Steinway of the reports that were in circulation. But Mrs. Steinway, not dreaming that her husband had hidden away so much money without her knowledge, said at once that the story could not be true, for they had not had so much money in the house for years. The story troubled her, however, and when she went home she took Annie into a room by herself, told her what she had heard, and asked her if she knew anything about it. To her great astonishment the child showed evident signs of guilt. Knowing well the sensitive nature of the timid, shrinking little girl, she told her if she would confess it all, she should not be punished; for she divined at once that she had already been sufficiently punished, and that the child's evident ill-health for days past had been in consequence of her remorse for what she had done.

Tenderly, skilfully, like a true mother, she drew from the poor, penitent little one the whole story as it has been told here, only the child had not the slightest idea of the amount of the money she had given away. Then the two, mother and child, went into Mr. Steinway's study to tell him about it.

At first he was utterly incredulous. It could not be possible that his cherished treasure was gone, and with it the happi-

ness he had anticipated it would bestow. But a search soon convinced him that over ninety dollars were gone, and the worst of it was, that his own child, his own dear trusted Annie, had taken it! He could not understand the fearful trial through which she had passed, and did not know how terrible the temptation had been, nor yet how penitent the poor child was. Naturally enough he was grieved at the loss, and he began to tell her the fearful consequences of such a sin. Annie sat mute, frozen dumb with terror at the violence of his words. He mistook her silence for stubborn indifference, and in still stronger language he painted the enormity of her guilt, and finally told her never to call him "father" again, till she had sought and found forgiveness of her Father in heaven.

It was a sad mistake. The poor, heavy-laden, sin-stricken soul needed sympathy, needed the voice of love to point it to Christ and his blood as sufficient to cleanse it from all sin. Instead of receiving this, it was thrown back upon itself, to become a prey to the most agonizing remorse.

The slender form grew slighter, the buoyant step grew heavy, the pale face was flushed with an unnatural color. Her nights were passed in vain attempts to sleep, and if at last sleep came to her relief, then she dreamed strange, dreadful dreams, from which she woke in fright. This could not last always. Her mother's fears were at length aroused for the health and reason of her darling child. Too late—too late!

The next Sabbath morning after the sad revelation had been made, she lay tossing in wild delirium. A nervous fever of the most hopeless character had set in. From the first the physician had little hope of subduing it. She was possessed with a restlessness that never left her. Day and night her eyes were strained wide open—sad, mournful blue eyes, the sight of which brought tears to those of her friends—and she seemed gazing at some nameless horror; staring with a fixed, stony look, that never left them. She would call for her

father and mother in tones so utterly heart-broken that they could hardly endure to hear them, but she never seemed to recognize their tender ministrations around her bed, except, perhaps, for a brief moment or two. "Father—father!" often rung out wildly, in the still night; and then she would turn her head away in hopeless agony, exclaiming—"I have no father now; he does not love me since I took his money!"

What days and nights those were to the fond parents! What untold misery they endured through those fearful weeks! Their agony was beyond description. The father never left her bedside except to ask, with strong crying and many tears, that God would permit her reason to return long enough for him to assure her of his forgiveness and tender love, and to find out if she had asked God's forgiveness. But the days wore on into weeks, and their prayer was still unanswered; and still the poor white arms tossed wildly over her head, and still she called mournfully, "Father, mother, why don't you come?" always adding, "I have no father, no mother now!"

Sorely tried were the hearts of those parents. The furnace was indeed seven times heated. To have lost their child at any time would have been hard, but now, under such circumstances, the trial was aggravated beyond measure. There was no resource but prayer. To whom could they carry such sorrows but their Father in heaven? So, as the young life wore away, their prayers became more importunate.

One night, when Mr. Steinway was on his knees in his study, he was called to Annie's bedside. His prayer was answered and reason had returned.

"Father," she whispered faintly, "father, you told me not to call you father again till I had told you God had forgiven me."

"My darling child, have you asked God to forgive you?"

"Yes, father, ever so many times."

"For whose sake?"

"For Christ's sake, father."

"Then, darling, you have a Father in

heaven who loves you, and one on earth who has always loved you dearly."

She clasped her arms tightly about his neck, straining every nerve for one last, long farewell embrace. Again and again she kissed him, as if claiming now the caresses she had not dared claim before. Then she folded her arms in the same passionate way around her mother's neck, murmuring words of deepest affection, whose memory the mother will ever cherish as the chiefest of her treasures. She covered her face, too, with kisses, and then called for her little brothers. To each of them she gave a good-by kiss, telling them they must be good boys, for they would have no little sister any more.

The weeping mother uttered a thanksgiving that God had heard and answered their petitions, and into His keeping she surrendered her darling child, feeling assured that he had forgiven her and would take her to Himself.

Gradually she sank into a sleep, almost the first sleep she had enjoyed since her sickness. On one side of the bed stood her father, gently fanning her. On the

other side sat her mother, cooling her burning forehead with ice-water. Still she slept. The light in the sick-room burned dimly, casting faint shadows on the face that already began to wear the shadows of death. At length the arms—poor, wearied, wasted arms—were tossed once more over her head, then settled down slowly on her breast. There was a long-drawn sigh, the blue eyes unclosed once more and turned a look of unutterable love on the stricken watchers at her bedside, then closed again; another sigh—and Annie was at rest!

She died on Friday night, and on Sabbath afternoon the children of the German Sabbath and day-schools, to which she belonged, followed her to her grave in Forest Cemetery. Among them were the two girls who had been her tempters!

There are silver threads in the dark hair of the sorrowing mother, and the father's form is bowed; and both will carry to their graves bitter memories, which even their trust in God cannot wholly efface from their hearts. Still they have no doubt that in heaven they shall meet their darling Annie once more.

## BESET.

A LETTER FROM A SHIP CARPENTER.

BY JOHN VALLANCE.

SIR—You have only to sing out "Avast there!" and I'll give you back an "Ay, ay, sir;" but as long as you go on printing my letters, I guess I shall go on writing them, till I've run all my yarns off the reel. This one is to be about the time I was aboard a whaler. First time and only time. That's a service I could never take to. I'm much like my old cat in some of my ways; I like cleanliness and I like quiet. I don't mind hard work, and honest dirt while I'm about it, but when my work's done, I like to clean

myself up and have a bit of time to myself for a book or a pipe, or what not. Now aboard a greasy whaler it's next to impossible to keep yourself clean, and you never know when your work's done.

But yet the wonders of the Lord are to be seen in a surprising manner up in those northern regions. "He saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth. By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the water is straightened." In the same chapter it says, "He sealecth up the hand of every man." I should like to know if