

more, but they say that I am too old and too slow to be of use any longer.'

Throughout their talk Mr. Sheldon had been entirely impersonal. Apparently, Mr. O'Keefe was to him a machine—no more. Now, however, his big heart got the better of him. He seized Mr. O'Keefe's hand and shook it hard.

'You are a man of honor, which is far better than being young. Suppose you are slow—what's the hurry? Besides, most of us will be old some day, and the wiser for it.'

Mr. O'Keefe's face beamed again, though his eyes were dim with tears.

'Thank you! Thank you!' he exclaimed. 'You cannot imagine all it means to me to get this position, and at once. I have never earned a great deal—not much more than half what you are giving me; and I have been able to lay but little aside for the rainy day which I thought had come. My wife is old now, and she's frail, and she feels badly when anything worries me. For all these reasons I—I—when you spoke to me I was wondering how I could tell her about Whitmore and Cole's. It was because I had not courage enough to go directly home that I came here to the garden. After I left the office I stopped in the church and said a little prayer to our Lady, and then I came here. Heaven isn't often on the side of a coward, is it?'

'Heaven is always on the right side,' Mr. Sheldon observed reverently.

For a few minutes no more was said. Mr. O'Keefe was thinking how delighted his wife would be when he told his great good news. It would have been hard to guess what was in Mr. Sheldon's mind. He was gazing absently at a near-by bush which flaunted the first green of spring on every twig, and he looked far less stern and less prosaic than usual. His face was almost tender. After a little while he turned again to Mr. O'Keefe.

'I have a story to tell you,' he said; and, not noticing that the old man seemed surprised, he continued after a pause: 'Twenty-five—no, nearly thirty years ago a country boy, friendless and almost penniless, went to Chicago in search of work. His father had been dead a long, long time; his mother, only three weeks. He could find nothing to do at first, and had known hunger and cold before he got a position in a railroad office. His pay there was niggardly. In the beginning he did not understand his work; he was homesick and lonely—desperately lonely. No one ever noticed him—except to make fun of his awkwardness or his old-fashioned clothes—save one of the book-keepers, a middle-aged man. He was always kind to the boy; and once, when he fell ill, went to his poor boarding-place, and, bundling him up, took him to his own home, where his wife gave him the first mothering he had had for a year—the last he was ever to have. A month after he got well Christmas came; and those two kind people gave the boy a scarfpin prettier than anything either of them owned, for they were far from rich. And—and—' Mr. Sheldon's heavy voice was becoming husky—and here it is. I've worn it ever since.'

Mr. O'Keefe did not even glance at the pin which Mr. Sheldon held out for him to see; instead, he peered into his employer's face for a moment, before he laid his trembling hands on his knee.

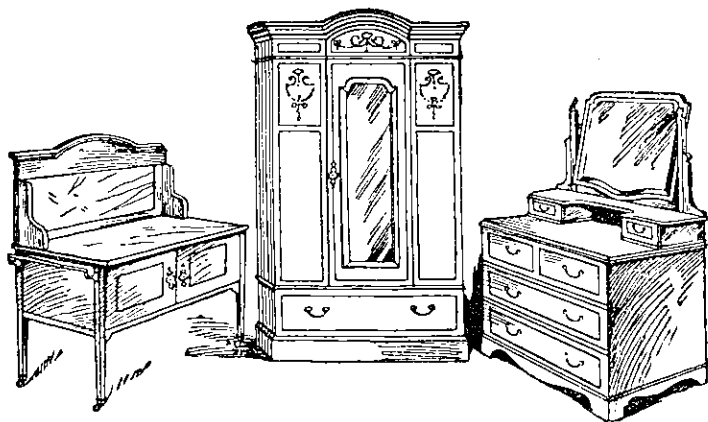
'Is it Tom?' he asked—'our little Tom?' And, when Mr. Sheldon smiled, he cried, in a fever of loving excitement: 'Oh Tom, we've grieved so much, my wife and I, because we lost sight of you! We always felt as if you were our own boy; and now—Oh, Tom!, I am glad that it was you the good God and His dear Mother sent to me this morning! You were the only son I ever had.'—*Ave Maria.*

The lazy person waits for something to turn up; the ambitious one goes out and turns it up.

George Barrell

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