

Literature, &c.

THE FIRST AND LAST QUARREL.

BY T. S. ARTHUR.

JOHN THOMPSON'S wife had a bad fashion of getting out of patience with her servants at meal times, and looking cross to her domestics when her husband came home, with the pleasing hope uppermost in his mind of a quiet retreat from the toils and troubles of business. John Thomson, like many of the John Smiths and John Joneses, had rather a troublesome business to manage, and it cost him many hours sad thoughts each day in pondering over the ways and means of getting safely over three o'clock. But all these perplexing cares were locked up in his own bosom, and when he turned his face homewards, it was always with a strong resolution to be cheerful, and make, as far as he was concerned, home a pleasant spot to all.

But he was sadly grieved to find that, from some cause or other, his wife had sundry and great troubles with her domestics. Things hardly ever went right, and she was too often in a very unhappy humor. Patient as another Job, however, John Thomson never protested against the domestic prerogatives of being cross and scolding. True, whenever Mrs Thomson would cut him off rather short, and say things to him in an unkind tone of voice, he would have his own thoughts about the matter. But he said nothing. He would not, for the world have wounded the feelings of Mrs John Thomson, although she seemed to have at times, little regard for his.

Now the reader must not, for a moment, suppose, than John Thomson's better half was not a loving wife. She was affectionate to a fault. When in the humour, and would kiss, and talk love to him by the hour. True, she would feel a little annoyed at his phlegmatic temper, for he was always as even as a lake, over whose bosom no breeze ever stirred. Her little endearments he would receive as patiently as could be, yet all the while he would be thinking of some exhibition of wrong temper, of which may be, a day or an hour before, she had been guilty. But we must introduce them once more in form to the reader.

One morning in May, and it happened to be a sultry morning, Mr Thomson examined his bank notices, and found that he had three thousand dollars to pay. He did not look at his bank book, for he remembered too distinctly that he had checked to within five dollars the day before.

'And now what is to be done?' he said aloud, as he sat down in a chair to collect his thoughts.

'Any thing over to day, Mr Thomson,' said a neighbour, advancing towards the desk, near which he was seated.

'Short three thousand dollars,' replied Mr. John Thompson, mechanically.

'No chance for me, then,' said the neighbour, withdrawing on the instant.

'Hum, I should think not,' soliloquized Mr Thomson, with an ironical smile.

'But what must I do? Borrow, of course, that's the only remedy. But where shall I borrow? that's the question. I owe two thousand dollars borrowed money now, and to-morrow half of that must be paid. I'm hard up with all my borrowing friends, except such as are hard up themselves. What shall I do?'

But Mr. Thompson, like a philosopher as he was, readily came to the conclusion that sitting there was not going to get his note out of the bank; he sallied forth, still undetermined as how he should raise the money. Being in the dry goods line, he took the south side of Market street, and commenced a line of calls from Frederick street up.

'How's the money market to-day?' was his first salutation to a young man he had accommodated. 'Tight enough! I want five hundred dollars.'

'Nothing to spare, of course.' 'Not a dollar.' 'Then I can't stop here. Good morning.' Any thing over to-day?' he asked next door. 'Twenty dollars, if that'll help you any.' 'Can't you spare a hundred by one o'clock?' 'Very likely,—call in about that time, and if we take in that much, you shall have it.' 'Very well,' said John Thompson, entering it upon his memorandum book.

'Can you spare five hundred dollars to-day?' was asked at his next place of entry. 'No; but we can two hundred.' 'That'll help a little.'

'But it's in Ohio funds.' 'Ah! that is another matter. But stay, keep it for me until two o'clock; if I can't do better, I'll take it.'

'Very well, it is at your service.'

After entering this in his memorandum book, Mr. T. went on his way.

'Easy as an old shoe here, I suppose. How much can you spare to-day?' he said carelessly, as he entered a store where he knew money was plenty, but hard to get at.

'Tight as a boot to-day. We have ten thousand dollars to pay.' 'Good morning,' said Thompson, who understood the evasion.

'Can you let me have that hundred dollars to-day? I shall need every cent I can raise,' he said; as he went into another store. 'Not if you can spare it longer.'

'You should have it longer in welcome, but I must raise three thousand dollars to-day, but don't know no more than the man in the moon where it is to come from.'

'I will let you have it then by one o'clock.' This was also entered among the memorandums. 'How are you off for the metal to-day?' was asked of another retailer.

'Nothing over to-day, Thompson; sorry for it!' and the man turned to his desk and went on writing.

'Have you a thousand dollars out of town money to day?' he asked of a partner in a large domestic house in Sharp street, for he had got up this high.

'Come in, and I will see,' after running over a large bundle of notes, and selecting from them a pretty respectable quantity, the merchant turned to Thompson and said—'Here is one thousand dollars Wheeling and Pittsburg, which you can have for a week, and five hundred Louisville, which you may have for two weeks.'

'Can't you say any better than that?' 'These are the best terms. We can usually pass it off even better. But if it will accommodate you any, you are welcome to it.'

'I will take it then,' said Thompson as he eagerly clenched his money, and passing his two checks, dated one and two weeks ahead.

He was now pretty well through with all the business friends upon whom he could call, and he returned to his store to take soundings. The day had proved intensely hot, and on his return he found himself completely exhausted. It was past twelve o'clock, and as he fixed his eyes upon the face of a large clock, ticking in one corner of his store, the minute hand seemed to move with strange rapidity.

'What is to be done now?' he said half despairingly. 'Oh, there is my friend G—in Howard street, who is generally pretty easy. I must see him.' So, off he hurried up street, and to his great disappointment, found G—was out. After waiting for him a quarter of an hour he came back without having seen him. It lacked now but a quarter of one o'clock. The second person upon whom he had called, promised to let him have one hundred dollars at one o'clock, so he went in there. The store was full of customers, and his friend seemed to care more about attending to them than to loaning money. After waiting ten minutes, Thompson advanced towards the door saying as he passed out, 'I'll drop in again.'

'Very well,' said the man, without alluding to the known cause of Mr Thompson's errand.

He next called upon the friend who was to have returned the borrowed money, but he found it impossible to raise over fifty. The two hundred dollars Ohio money was called for also, and received. It was nearly two o'clock when he went in again for the one hundred dollars that had been promised. Mr — had gone to dinner, and left no word with his clerk about it. Thompson was still twelve hundred and fifty dollars short, and in one hour the bank would close. His bill book showed the existence of sundry bills receivable, amounting to seven or eight thousand dollars, maturing in short dates, drawn by business men, good and true. All the banks had ceased discounting, and these had consequently been turned down at the board, and handed back to him. Visions of three and four per cent, a month now began to float before his mind, and rendered desperate, he selected notes to the amount of fifteen hundred dollars, and proceeded to the office of a note broker, who received him with a cold nod.

'I want to get these notes done, Mr P—'

Mr P— went over them very slowly, remarking as he went on, or rather dropping a few words at a time, as if talking to himself—'rather weak—too long to run—another name,' &c.

'If you can get another good name on these, I think I can get them done for you.'

'It's too late now to talk about another name. I must have the money at once.'

'The drawer of these notes is rather ticklish it is thought. If they were stronger there would be no difficulty. Don't you think you could easily get your business friend to put his name on it?'

'No, he is gone to dinner, and I have no time to lose. If you think you can't get them done, I must go to Mr C—'

'I'll try my best for you. Come in half an hour.'

In the interim, Mr Thompson went to an exchange office, and got his money discounted. This was done at a loss of fifty dollars.

True to the minute, a quarter before two, Mr Thompson was at Mr P—'s office. Mr P— was not there. He sat for five minutes in a state of mental torture which few can imagine, except those who have suffered a like infliction, when Mr P— entered.

'Have you got them done for me?' asked Thompson, eagerly. 'No, I have not,' said the broker coldly. 'I could find but one man who would do them at all, and his charge was higher than I felt willing to contract to pay, before I saw you.'

'What does he ask?' said Mr Thompson, eagerly. 'Three and a half per cent a month.' Mr Thomson groaned aloud. He looked at his watch; it lacked eight minutes of two. 'Can you get it in time?'

'I will give you the money at once, and get it from him myself.'

'Then let me have it quick.' The calculation was made; and as the money had an average of two months to run, the discount was seven per cent., which, added to the broker's commission of one per cent., took off from Mr Thomson's fifteen hundred dollars, the round sum of one hundred and twenty dollars.

The clock struck three just as Mr Thomson sat his foot upon the steps of the bank. His note safely in his possession, he retired to his store, and after entering up his cash and making the necessary memorandums of borrowed money, started for home. His head ached badly, and he felt feverish. Visions of home and an hours quiet retirement, then came up in his thoughts. He remembered the pleasant smile with which his wife had parted with him in the morning, and the sweetly uttered 'come home soon, dear father,' of his little prattling boy. If ever home is sweet to a man, it is after the racking anxieties of such a day as that through which Mr Thompson had passed; and he turns towards it with a feeling akin to that of the tempest tost mariner, when he turns his brow towards the land of his nativity. Nothing is calculated to sour the mind of a man thus circumstanced and make home unpleasant to him, as to find the little domestic trials all operating to make his wife irritable and out of temper. His own anxieties have been of a character so important to the peace and well being of his family, that the troubles incident to domestic duties seem like 'trifles light as air,' in comparison, and to find his home made unpleasant by them more than he had looked for, and more than he can well bear. For the sake of his wife's peace of mind, he breathes not of his own difficulties, and puts on a cheerful face while his feelings are under a cloud. To find her unwilling to bear a part, and constantly marring his domestic comforts by complaints or sour looks, tends to irritate and discourage him. It is not to be wondered that some men, under such circumstances, become cross, or neglectful of their families. But let us follow Mr Thompson to dinner.

On entering the parlor, he saw at a glance, that something was wrong, there was a dark scowl upon the brow of Mrs Thompson. She rang the bell for dinner without uttering a word, and after sundry delays it was served up in about half an hour from the time Mr. Thomson came in. Seats were taken at the table in profound silence. On the part of Mr. Thompson there was no desire to speak, for he knew that all that was wanted was but a single word, when the avalanche would break through all its barriers; and he had no desire to witness its fury. But his heart felt like lead in his bosom. His silence, however, was not to prove an antidote. There was no salt on the table.

'No salt upon the table, I declare,' said Mrs. Thompson, in a high pitched voice, ringing her table bell violently, 'I can never get the table set right.'

The salt cellars were brought, and Nancy received a sound beating for her carelessness. Scarcely had she got fairly back into the kitchen, when it was discovered that there were no large spoons upon the table, and with sundry exclama-

tions of inquietude of mind, the bell was rung again.

'I can tell you what it is, Nancy,' said Mrs Thompson, as the domestic entered—'I've no notion of having things done after this fashion. Here's not a single spoon upon the table; nor no water either; as I live, Nancy, this is bad, I won't put up with it.' Nancy appeared and Mrs Thompson continued.

'The fact is, Mr Thompson, I'm overdone and completely worn out. I don't see a bit of peace of my life. You don't seem to think it any thing, but I wish you had it to do. Men think of work nothing.'

'Why, what is the matter my dear, it was easy enough to get the salt, the spoons, and the water, without getting into a fever about them.'

For the first time in his life, Mr Thompson spoke in a reproving tone, and on the instant his better half was fired.

'Getting into a fever about it. Why getting in a fever? Mr Thompson, what do you mean?'

'Just what I say, Mrs Thompson, that it was easy enough to get the things without losing temper.'

'Who lost temper? I'd like to know that. I don't like such insinuations, and won't put up with them. You men think we never have any trouble. You get in the morning, and have every thing in your hand, and go off to your business and come home again, and every thing is done for you.'

'And with a very bad grace, sometimes, too,' rejoined Mr Thompson.

This was too much for Mrs Thompson to bear, and, bursting into tears, she left the table, and retired to her chamber. It was some time before Mr Thompson's irritated feelings would allow him to follow his wife, but he soon yielded to better thoughts, and slowly ascended the stairs that led to the chamber. He found his wife lying upon the bed, sobbing hysterically. What to do, he did not exactly know; but his better feelings returned, and as he was heartily sorry for what he said, he felt that it was necessary to do something. He first called her tenderly by her name, but made no answer. This again irritated him; he had no idea of being trifled with. He was himself a straightforward man, and when he so far forgot terms as to speak kindly first, he naturally thought that Mrs Thompson ought to meet him half way.

'Sarah,' he said once more, in a slightly modified from its peculiar expression of tenderness. But there was no reply. 'Sarah,' he again repeated in a voice still less affectionate, and a little louder. But still there was no answer. Again his evil genius overtook him, and he said roughly—

'Sarah if you think to play the wive with me, you are mistaken. I'll borrow your ill humors long enough, now you must change a little for my accommodation, or there will be trouble in the wigwam. I have spoken of late what has been boiling up a time. Home has ceased to be a pleasant place to me, and all because of a cloudy brow, and continual fault finding. Scold your servants in the kitchen, wear your frowns to them if they're wrong, but don't punish me with your misdemeanors. And now I am going to the store. I shall expect when I return at night, a pleasanter reception than generally get. So good by.'

Mrs Thompson had remained when spoken to by her husband, of an amiable purpose of punishing him, but citing his sympathies to a painful point in her behalf, but in this he had failed her. And now he had already gone she heard the street door bang after the consequence of such a state of things continued. She really loved her husband, although often disposed to be unkind towards him when things went wrong in her domestic concerns. Pride, however many spirited thoughts in her mind, but the groundwork of real goodness that was at the bottom of her character, rushed into silence the insidious suggestions. To win her husband back to his strange mood, had become her desire, long before the hour of his departure had arrived; and when the door opened at dusk, she was instant to answer, but she received him with a calm, affectionate, but sad smile; for she could not but from her heart the consciousness that she was angry with her, and not with cause.

Mr. Thompson was evidently taken by surprise. He was prepared for a reception. He had expected to find himself to go through it like a man, had resolved to conquer at all hazards.