

**WHAT'S TO BE
DONE? OR, THE
WILL AND THE WAY**

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What's to be Done? Or, the Will and the Way by Epes Sargent

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EPES SARGENT

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WILL AND THE WAY**

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OR,

THE WILL AND THE WAY.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "WEALTH AND WORTH," &c

"Heaven helps those who help themselves."—Old Proverb.

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WHAT'S TO BE DONE!

OR,

THE WILL AND THE WAY.

CHAPTER I.

CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME, BUT SOMETIMES VENTURES ABROAD.

ON a dark and chilly evening in the last month of the year, a young portrait-painter named Stanford was sitting alone in the room where he practised his art. An easel was before him, and on it was a painting, although so dim was the light shed by a solitary candle from an adjoining table, that it was difficult to distinguish the figures on the canvass. There was a fireplace in the apartment, but it no longer emitted a cheerful warmth, for the last spark upon the hearth-stone had expired, and the air was growing colder and colder.

The artist seemed to be unconscious of the decay of his fire, for he still sat, with arms folded and eyes fixed, as if absorbed in contemplation. While he is in this position, let us take such a survey of his person as the imperfect light will permit. To judge from his features, he has numbered not far from twenty-sev-

en years. In stature you would call him neither short nor tall, and in frame neither stout nor thin. His complexion, though not ruddy, is sufficiently indicative of good health, and his face, if not handsome, has that charm of expression which may generally be found in company with serenity of mind and cheerfulness of temper. But hark! he begins to soliloquize, and, with his permission, we will overhear what he has to say.

“I wish I had a thousand dollars! I would go abroad and study my art. I would see the best models—cull from every style its choicest beauties—satisfy myself of the merits of every school—then return and astonish the natives. I do really wish I was not quite so poor. Heigho! What! Mr. Franklin Stanford! do you call yourself poor? What ingratitude! Are you not out of debt? Haven't you good health and good spirits? Have you any one to look out for but yourself? Haven't you a fair field and no favour? What more would you ask, so you have wit enough to shut a door without jamming your fingers, and energy enough to go in when it rains? Surely no young man, unencumbered and free, has a right to call himself poor in this new country, while there are millions upon millions of government acres whither he can go and shoot buffalo and deer for his dinner, sleep on a prairie, and drink out of the Mississippi!”

As the young painter concluded his soliloquy, which, had he imagined it would ever be recorded in print, would undoubtedly have been

less discursive and free, the City Hall clock struck the hour of midnight.

"Halloo! Twelve o'clock! I had no idea it was so late! I must have been in a brown study," continued Stanford, as he threw on his cloak, and, putting out the light, left the room to wend his way towards his boarding-house.

In the street, he found that a slight snow had fallen since he was last out. The air was humid and uncomfortable, the sidewalks were sloppy, and New-York's great thoroughfare seemed dull, dreary, and deserted. Turning the corner of Vesey-street, Stanford passed the Astor House and hurried up Broadway, eager to seek warmth and repose in his bed. The city was unusually still. Occasionally the figure of a watchman, with his staff under his arm and his hands in his pockets, cowering up against the embrasure of a door, might be distinguished through the mist, but his doze was undisturbed by the rattling of carriages or the exclamations of riotous pedestrians.

Our young painter had not gone farther than Chambers-street, however, when he met a little girl, rather thinly clad, who followed him a step or two, and said, in a low, sweet voice, "Sir! sir! will you listen to me?"

Stanford was naturally humane, but of late he had been so accustomed to the importunities of beggars in Broadway, and so well aware was he that it was one of the tricks of the most experienced of them to send forth their children with slight clothing on inclement nights to excite compassion, that on the present occasion he

passed on without bestowing any notice upon the little mendicant who had accosted him. She did not renew her appeal, and he had proceeded several rods at a rapid pace, when something like a twinge of pity and regret induced him to look back. The little girl had leaned her head against the iron lamp-post at the corner, and Stanford fancied that he heard her giving way to something like a subdued sob.

What should he do?

"Go home," whispered Selfishness. "You are sleepy and tired. Think of your warm bed. If the child is suffering, let the watchmen take care of her. She is doubtless some impostor. If you are to be stopped in this way by every object of compassion you meet, you may as well abandon every other occupation for that of alms-giver."

"Turn back," said Humanity. "A stray dog should excite your pity on such a night as this. Go and inquire the poor child's story, test its truth, and lend her such aid as your slender means will allow. It is a very convenient excuse to cry out 'imposition,' but let not your heart be blinded by that perfidious plea. Is it not better to be duped than to do an injustice? Be merciful, as you would have mercy at your extremest need."

Here the debate closed, and I am happy to say that Humanity won the cause.

"What ails you, my child?" said Stanford, retracing his steps, and laying his hand on the little girl's shoulder.

She started, and looked up in his face. The