The Bread-Winners

Hay John
Title: The Bread-Winners

Author: Hay John

This is an exact replica of a book. The book reprint was manually improved by a team of professionals, as opposed to automatic/OCR processes used by some companies. However, the book may still have imperfections such as missing pages, poor pictures, errant marks, etc. that were a part of the original text. We appreciate your understanding of the imperfections which can not be improved, and hope you will enjoy reading this book.
THE BREAD-WINNERS

A Social Study

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE
Copyright, 1883, by The Century Company.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1883, by

HARPER & BROTHERS,

In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

All rights reserved.
THE BREAD-WINNERS.

I.

A MORNING CALL.

A French clock on the mantel-piece, framed of brass and crystal, which betrayed its inner structure as the transparent sides of some insects betray their vital processes, struck ten with the mellow and lingering clangor of a distant cathedral bell. A gentleman, who was seated in front of the fire reading a newspaper, looked up at the clock to see what hour it was, to save himself the trouble of counting the slow, musical strokes. The eyes he raised were light gray, with a blue glint of steel in them, shaded by lashes as black as jet. The hair was also as black as hair can be, and was parted near the middle of his forehead. It was inclined to curl, but had not the length required by this inclination. The dark brown mustache was the only ornament the razor had spared on the wholesome face, the outline of which was clear and keen. The face suited the hands—it had the refinement and gentleness of one delicately bred, and the vigorous lines and color of one equally at home in field and court;
and the hands had the firm, hard symmetry which showed they had done no work, and the bronze tinge which is the imprint wherewith sky and air mark their lovers. His clothes were of the fashion seen in the front windows of the Knickerbocker Club in the spring of the year 187–, and were worn as easily as a self-respecting bird wears his feathers. He seemed, in short, one of those fortunate natures, who, however born, are always bred well, and come by prescription to most of the good things the world can give.

He sat in a room marked, like himself, with a kind of serious elegance—one of those apartments which seem to fit the person like a more perfect dress. All around the walls ran dwarf book-cases of carved oak, filled with volumes bound in every soft shade of brown and tawny leather, with only enough of red and green to save the shelves from monotony. Above these the wall space was covered with Cordovan leather, stamped with gold fleurs-de-lis to within a yard of the top, where a frieze of palm-leaves led up to a ceiling of blue and brown and gold. The whole expression of the room was of warmth and good manners. The furniture was of oak and stamped leather. The low book-cases were covered with bronzes, casts, and figurines, of a quality so uniformly good that none seemed to feel the temptation either to snub or to cringe to its neighbor. The Owari pots felt no false shame beside the royal Satsuma; and Barbédienne’s bronzes, the vases of Limoges and Lambeth and bowls from Nankin and Corea dwelt together in the harmony of a varied perfection.
It was an octagon room, with windows on each side of the fire-place, in which a fire of Ohio coal was leaping and crackling with a cheerful and unctuous noisiness. Out of one window you could see a pretty garden of five or six acres behind the house, and out of the other a carefully kept lawn, extending some hundred yards from the front door to the gates of hammered iron which opened upon a wide-paved avenue. This street was the glory of Buffland, a young and thriving city on Lake Erie, which already counted a population of over two hundred thousand souls. The people of Clairfield, a rival town, denied that there was anything like so many inhabitants, and added that "the less we say about 'souls' the better." But this was pure malice; Buffland was a big city. Its air was filled with the smoke and odors of vast and successful trade, and its sky was reddened by night with the glare of its furnaces, rising like the hot breath of some prostrate Titan, conquered and bowed down by the pitiless cunning of men. Its people were, as a rule, rich and honest, especially in this avenue of which I have spoken. If you have ever met a Bufflander, you have heard of Algonquin Avenue. He will stand in the Champs Elysées, when all the vice and fashion of Europe are pouring down from the Place of the Star in the refluent tide that flows from Boulogne Wood to Paris, and calmly tell you that "Algonquin Avenue in the sleighing season can discount this out of sight." Something is to be pardoned to the spirit of liberty; and the avenue is certainly a fine one. It is three miles long and has hardly a shabby house in it, while for a mile or two
the houses upon one side, locally called "the Ridge," are unusually fine, large, and costly. They are all surrounded with well-kept gardens and separated from the street by velvet lawns which need scarcely fear comparison with the emerald wonders which centuries of care have wrought from the turf of England. The house of which we have seen one room was one of the best upon this green and park-like thoroughfare. The gentleman who was sitting by the fire was Mr. Arthur Farnham. He was the owner and sole occupant of the large stone house—a widower of some years' standing, although he was yet young. His parents had died in his childhood. He had been an officer in the army, had served several years upon the frontier, had suffered great privations, had married a wife much older than himself, had seen her die on the Plains from sheer want, though he had more money than he could get transportation for; and finally, on the death of his grandfather he had resigned, with reluctance, a commission which had brought him nothing but suffering and toil, and had returned to Buffalo, where he was born, to take charge of the great estate of which he was the only heir. And even yet, in the midst of a luxury and a comfort which anticipated every want and gratified every taste, he often looked longingly back upon the life he had left, until his nose inhaled again the scent of the sage-brush and his eyes smarted with alkali dust. He regretted the desolate prairies, the wide reaches of barrenness accursed of the Creator, the wild chaos of the mountain caños, the horror of the Bad Lands, the tingling cold of winter in the Black Hills. But the