



***T. S. ARTHUR***

***TRUE RICHES;  
OR, WEALTH  
WITHOUT  
WINGS***

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# **True Riches; Or, Wealth Without Wings**

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# INTRODUCTION.

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The original title chosen for this book was "Riches without Wings;" but the author becoming aware, before giving it a permanent form, that a volume bearing a similar title had appeared some years ago, of which a new edition was about to be issued, thought it best to substitute therefor, "True Riches; or, Wealth without Wings," which, in fact, expresses more accurately the character and scope of his story.

The lessons herein taught are such as cannot be learned too early, nor dwelt on too long or too often, by those who are engaged in the active and all-absorbing duties of life. In the struggle for natural riches—the wealth that meets the eye and charms the imagination—how many forget that *true* riches can *only* be laid up in the heart; and that, without these true riches, which have no wings, gold, the god of this world, cannot bestow a single blessing! To give this truth a varied charm for young and old, the author has made of it a new presentation, and, in so doing, sought to invest it with all the winning attractions in his power to bestow.

To parents who regard the best interests of their children, and to young men and women just stepping upon the world's broad stage of action, we offer our book, in the confident belief that it contains vital principles, which, if laid

up in the mind, will, like good seed in good ground, produce an after-harvest, in the garnering of which there will be great joy.

## **TRUE RICHES.**

# CHAPTER I.

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"A fair day's business. A *very* fair day's business," said Leonard Jasper, as he closed a small account-book, over which he had been poring, pencil in hand, for some ten minutes. The tone in which he spoke expressed more than ordinary gratification.

"To what do the sales amount?" asked a young man, clerk to the dealer, approaching his principal as he spoke.

"To just two hundred dollars, Edward. It's the best day we've had for a month."

"The best, in more than one sense," remarked the young man, with a meaning expression.

"You're right there, too," said Jasper, with animation, rubbing his hands together as he spoke, in the manner of one who is particularly well pleased with himself. "I made two or three trades that told largely on the sunny side of profit and loss account."

"True enough. Though I've been afraid, ever since you sold that piece of velvet to Harland's wife, that you cut rather deeper than was prudent."

"Not a bit of it—not a bit of it! Had I asked her three dollars a yard, she would have wanted it for two. So I said six, to begin with, expecting to fall extensively; and, to put a good face on the matter, told her that it cost within a

fraction of what I asked to make the importation—remarking, at the same time, that the goods were too rich in quality to bear a profit, and were only kept as a matter of accommodation to certain customers."

"And she bought at five?"

"Yes; thinking she had obtained the velvet at seventy-five cents a yard less than its cost. Generous customer, truly!"

"While you, in reality, made two dollars and a half on every yard she bought."

"Precisely that sum."

"She had six yards."

"Yes; out of which we made a clear profit of fifteen dollars. That will do, I'm thinking. Operations like this count up fast."

"Very fast. But, Mr. Jasper"—

"But what, Edward?"

"Is it altogether prudent to multiply operations of this character? Won't it make for you a bad reputation, and thus diminish, instead of increasing, your custom?"

"I fear nothing of the kind. One-half the people are not satisfied unless you cheat them. I've handled the yardstick, off and on, for the last fifteen or twenty years, and I think my observation during that time is worth something. It tells me this—that a bold face, a smooth tongue, and an easy conscience are worth more in our business than any other qualities. With these you may do as you list. They tell far better than all the 'one-price' and fair-dealing professions, in which people have little faith. In fact, the mass will overreach if they can, and therefore regard these 'honest' assumptions with suspicion."

The young man, Edward Claire, did not make a reply for nearly a minute. Something in the words of Mr. Jasper had fixed his thought, and left him, for a brief space of time, absorbed in his own reflections.

Lifting, at length, his eyes, which had been resting on the floor, he said—

"Our profit on to-day's sales must reach very nearly fifty dollars."

"Just that sum, if I have made a right estimate," replied Jasper; "and that is what I call a fair day's business."

While he was yet speaking, a lad entered the store, and laid upon the counter a small sealed package, bearing the superscription, "Leonard Jasper, Esq." The merchant cut the red tape with which it was tied, broke the seal, and opening the package, took therefrom several papers, over which he ran his eyes hurriedly; his clerk, as he did so, turning away.

"What's this?" muttered Jasper to himself, not at first clearly comprehending the nature of the business to which the communication related. "Executor! To what? Oh! ah! Estate of Ruben Elder. Humph! What possessed him to trouble me with this business? I've no time to play executor to an estate, the whole proceeds of which would hardly fill my trousers' pocket. He was a thriftless fellow at best, and never could more than keep his head out of water. His debts will swallow up every thing, of course, saving my commissions, which I would gladly throw in to be rid of this business."

With this, Jasper tossed the papers into his desk, and, taking up his hat, said to his clerk—"You may shut the store,



Edward. Before you leave, see that every thing is made safe."

The merchant then retired, and wended his way homeward.

Edward Claire seemed in no hurry to follow this example. His first act was to close the window-shutters and door—turning the key in the latter, and remaining inside.

Entirely alone, and hidden from observation, the young man seated himself, and let his thoughts, which seemed to be active on some subject, take their own way. He was soon entirely absorbed. Whatever were his thoughts, one thing would have been apparent to an observer—they did not run in a quiet stream. Something disturbed their current, for his brow was knit, his compressed lips had a disturbed motion, and his hands moved about at times uneasily. At length he arose, not hurriedly, but with a deliberate motion, threw his arms behind him, and, bending forward, with his eyes cast down, paced the length of the store two or three times, backward and forward, slowly.

"Fifty dollars profit in one day," he at length said, half audibly. "That will do, certainly. I'd be contented with a tenth part of the sum. He's bound to get rich; that's plain. Fifty dollars in a single day! Leonard Jasper, you're a shrewd one. I shall have to lay aside some of my old-fashioned squeamishness, and take a few lessons from so accomplished a teacher. But, he's a downright cheat!"

Some better thought had swept suddenly, in a gleam of light, across the young man's mind, showing him the true nature of the principles from which the merchant acted, and, for the moment, causing his whole nature to revolt

against them. But the light faded slowly; a state of darkness and confusion followed, and then the old current of thought moved on as before.

Slowly, and now with an attitude of deeper abstraction, moved the young man backward and forward the entire length of the room, of which he was the sole occupant. He *felt* that he was alone, that no human eye could note a single movement. Of the all-seeing Eye he thought not—his spirit's evil counsellors, drawn intimately nigh to him through inclinations to evil, kept that consciousness from his mind.

At length Claire turned to the desk upon which were the account-books that had been used during the day, and commenced turning the leaves of one of them in a way that showed only a half-formed purpose. There was an impulse to something in his mind; an impulse not yet expressed in any form of thought, though in the progress toward something definite.

"Fifty dollars a day!" he murmurs. Ah, that shows the direction of his mind. He is still struggling in temptation, and with all his inherited cupidities bearing him downward.

Suddenly he starts, turns his head, and listens eagerly, and with a strange agitation. Some one had tried the door. For a few moments he stood in an attitude of the most profound attention. But the trial was not repeated. How audibly, to his own ears, throbbed his heart! How oppressed was his bosom! How, in a current of fire, rushed the blood to his over-excited brain!

The hand upon the door was but an ordinary occurrence. It might now be only a customer, who, seeing a light within,

hoped to supply some neglected want, or a friend passing by, who wished for a few words of pleasant gossip. At any other time Claire would have stepped quickly and with undisturbed expectation to receive the applicant for admission. But guilty thoughts awakened their nervous attendants, suspicion and fear, and these had sounded an instant alarm.

Still, very still, sat Edward Claire, even to the occasional suppression of his breathing, which, to him, seemed strangely loud.

Several minutes elapsed, and then the young man commenced silently to remove the various account-books to their nightly safe deposit in the fire-proof. The cash-box, over the contents of which he lingered, counting note by note and coin by coin, several times repeated, next took its place with the books. The heavy iron door swung to, the key traversed noiselessly the delicate and complicated wards, was removed and deposited in a place of safety; and, yet unrecovered from his mood of abstraction, the clerk left the store, and took his way homeward. From that hour Edward Claire was to be the subject of a fierce temptation. He had admitted an evil suggestion, and had warmed it in the earth of his mind, even to germination. Already a delicate root had penetrated the soil, and was extracting food therefrom. Oh! why did he not instantly pluck it out, when the hand of an infant would have sufficed in strength for the task? Why did he let it remain, shielding it from the cold winds of rational truth and the hot sun of good affections, until it could live, sustained by its own organs of appropriation and nutrition? Why did he let it remain until its lusty growth gave sad

promise of an evil tree, in which birds of night find shelter and build nests for their young?

Let us introduce another scene and another personage, who will claim, to some extent, the reader's attention.

There were two small but neatly, though plainly, furnished rooms, in the second story of a house located in a retired street. In one of these rooms tea was prepared, and near the tea-table sat a young woman, with a sleeping babe nestled to-her bosom. She was fair-faced and sunny-haired; and in her blue eyes lay, in calm beauty, sweet tokens of a pure and loving heart. How tenderly she looked down, now and then, upon the slumbering cherub whose winning ways and murmurs of affection had blessed her through the day! Happy young wife! these are thy halcyon days. Care has not thrown upon thee a single shadow from his gloomy wing, and hope pictures the smiling future with a sky of sunny brightness.

"How long he stays away!" had just passed her lips, when the sound of well-known footsteps was heard in the passage below. A brief time, and then the room-door opened, and Edward Claire came in. What a depth of tenderness was in his voice as he bent his lips to those of his young wife, murmuring—

"My Edith!" and then touching, with a gentler pressure, the white forehead of his sleeping babe.

"You were late this evening, dear," said Edith, looking into the face of her husband, whose eyes drooped under her earnest gaze.

"Yes," he replied, with a slight evasion in his tone and manner; "we have been busier than usual to-day."

As he spoke the young wife arose, and taking her slumbering child into the adjoining chamber, laid it gently in its crib. Then returning, she made the tea—the kettle stood boiling by the grate—and in a little while they sat down to their evening meal.

Edith soon observed that her husband was more thoughtful and less talkative than usual. She asked, however, no direct question touching this change; but regarded what he did say with closer attention, hoping to draw a correct inference, without seeming to notice his altered mood.

"Mr. Jasper's business is increasing?" she said, somewhat interrogatively, while they still sat at the table, an expression of her husband's leading to this remark.

"Yes, increasing very rapidly," replied Claire, with animation. "The fact is, he is going to get rich. Do you know that his profit on to-day's sales amounted to fifty dollars?"

"So much?" said Edith, yet in a tone that showed no surprise or particular interest in the matter.

"Fifty dollars a day," resumed Claire, "counting three hundred week-days in the year, gives the handsome sum of fifteen thousand dollars in the year. I'd be satisfied with as much in five years."

There was more feeling in the tone of his voice than he had meant to betray. His young wife lifted her eyes to his face, and looked at him with a wonder she could not conceal.

"Contentment, dear," said she, in a gentle, subdued, yet tender voice, "is great gain. We have enough, and more than enough, to make us happy. Natural riches have no

power to fill the heart's most yearning affections; and how often do they take to themselves wings and fly away."

"Enough, dear!" replied Edward Claire, smiling. "O no, not enough, by any means. Five hundred dollars a year is but a meagre sum. What does it procure for us? Only these two rooms and the commonest necessities of life. We cannot even afford the constant service of a domestic."

"Why, Edward! what has come over you? Have I complained?"

"No, dear, no. But think you I have no ambition to see my wife take a higher place than this?"

"Ambition! Do not again use that word," said Edith, very earnestly. "What has love to do with ambition? What have we to do with the world and its higher places? Will a more elegant home secure for us a purer joy than we have known and still know in this our Eden? Oh, my husband! do not let such thoughts come into your mind. Let us be content with what God in his wisdom provides, assured that it is best for us. In envying the good of another, we destroy our own good. There is a higher wealth than gold, Edward; and it supplies higher wants. There are riches without wings; they lie scattered about our feet; we may fill our coffers, if we will. Treasures of good affections and true thoughts are worth more than all earthly riches, and will bear us far more safely and happily through the world; such treasures are given to all who will receive them, and given in lavish abundance. Let us secure of this wealth, Edward, a liberal share."

"Mere treasures of the mind, Edith, do not sustain natural life, do not supply natural demands. They build no houses;

they provide not for increasing wants. We cannot always remain in the ideal world; the sober realities of life will drag us down."

The simple-hearted, true-minded young wife was not understood by her husband. She felt this, and felt it oppressively.

"Have we not enough, Edward, to meet every real want?" she urged. "Do we desire better food or better clothing? Would our bodies be more comfortable because our carpets were of richer material, and our rooms filled with costlier furniture? O no! If not contented with such things as Providence gives us to-day, we shall not find contentment in what he gives us to-morrow; for the same dissatisfied heart will beat in our bosoms. Let Mr. Jasper get rich, if he can; we will not envy his possessions."

"I do not envy him, Edith," replied Claire. "But I cannot feel satisfied with the small salary he pays me. My services are, I know, of greater value than he estimates them, and I feel that I am dealt by unjustly."

Edith made no answer. The subject was repugnant to her feelings, and she did not wish to prolong it. Claire already regretted its introduction. So there was silence for nearly a minute.

When the conversation flowed on again, it embraced a different theme, but had in it no warmth of feeling. Not since they had joined hands at the altar, nearly two years before, had they passed so embarrassed and really unhappy an evening as this. A tempting spirit had found its way into their Paradise, burning with a fierce desire to mar its beauty.

## CHAPTER II.

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"Oh, what a dream I have had!" exclaimed Mrs. Claire, starting suddenly from sleep, just as the light began to come in dimly through the windows on the next morning; and, as she spoke, she caught hold of her husband, and clung to him, frightened and trembling.

"Oh, such a dream!" she added, as her mind grew clearer, and she felt better assured of the reality that existed. "I thought, love, that we were sitting in our room, as we sit every evening—baby asleep, I sewing, and you, as usual, reading aloud. How happy we were! happier, it seemed, than we had ever been before. A sudden loud knock startled us both. Then two men entered, one of whom drew a paper from his pocket, declaring, as he did so, that you were arrested at the instance of Mr. Jasper, who accused you with having robbed him of a large amount of money."

"Why, Edith!" ejaculated Edward Claire, in a voice of painful surprise. He, too, had been dreaming, and in his dream he had done what his heart prompted him to do on the previous evening—to act unfaithfully toward his employer.

"Oh, it was dreadful! dreadful!" continued Edith. "Rudely they seized and bore you away. Then came the trial. Oh, I



see it all as plainly as if it had been real. You, my good, true, noble-hearted husband, who had never wronged another, even in thought—you were accused of robbery in the presence of hundreds, and positive witnesses were brought forward to prove the terrible charge. All they alleged was believed by those who heard. The judges pronounced you guilty, and then sentenced you to a gloomy prison. They were bearing you off, when, in my agony, I awoke. It was terrible, terrible! yet, thank God! only a dream, a fearful dream!"

Claire drew his arms around his young wife, and clasped her with a straining embrace to his bosom. He made no answer for some time. The relation of a dream so singular, under the circumstances, had startled him, and he almost feared to trust his voice in response. At length, with a deeply-drawn, sighing breath, nature's spontaneous struggle for relief, he said—

"Yes, dear, that was a fearful dream. The thought of it makes me shudder. But, after all, it was only a dream; the whispering of a malignant spirit in your ear. Happily, his power to harm extends no further. The fancy may be possessed in sleep, but the reason lies inactive, and the hands remain idle. No guilt can stain the spirit. The night passes, and we go abroad in the morning as pure as when we laid our heads wearily to rest."

"And more," added Edith, her mind fast recovering itself; "with a clearer perception of what is true and good. The soul's disturbed balance finds its equilibrium. It is not the body alone that is refreshed and strengthened. The spirit, plied with temptation after temptation through the day, and

almost ready to yield when the night cometh, finds rest also, and time to recover its strength. In the morning it goes forth again, stronger for its season of repose. How often, as the day dawned, have I lifted my heart and thanked God for sleep!"

Thus prompted, an emotion of thankfulness arose in the breast of Claire, but the utterance was kept back from the lips. He had a secret, a painful and revolting secret, in his heart, and he feared lest something should betray its existence to his wife. What would he not have given at the moment to have blotted out for ever the memory of thoughts too earnestly cherished on the evening before, when he was alone with the tempter?

There was a shadow on the heart of Edith Claire. The unusual mood of her husband on the previous evening, and the dream which had haunted her through the night, left impressions that could not be shaken off. She had an instinct of danger—danger lurking in the path of one in whom her very life was bound up.

When Edward was about leaving her to go forth for the day, she lingered by his side and clung to him, as if she could not let him pass from the safe shelter of home.

"Ah! if I could always be with you!" said Edith—"if we could ever move on, hand in hand and side by side, how full to running over would be my cup of happiness!"

"Are we not ever side by side, dear?" replied Claire, tenderly. "You are present to my thought all the day."

"And you to mine. O yes! yes! We *are* moving side by side; our mutual thought gives presence. Yet it was the bodily presence I desired. But that cannot be."

"Good-bye, love! Good-bye, sweet one!" said Claire, kissing his wife, and gently pressing his lips upon those of the babe she held in her arms. He then passed forth, and took his way to the store of Leonard Jasper, in whose service he had been for two years, or since the date of his marriage.

A scene transpired a few days previous to this, which we will briefly describe. Three persons were alone in a chamber, the furniture of which, though neither elegant nor costly, evinced taste and refinement. Lying upon a bed was a man, evidently near the time of his departure from earth. By his side, and bending over him, was a woman almost as pale as himself. A little girl, not above five years of age, sat on the foot of the bed, with her eyes fixed on the countenance of her father, for such was the relation borne to her by the sick man. A lovely creature she was—beautiful even beyond the common beauty of childhood. For a time a solemn stillness reigned through the chamber. A few low-spoken words had passed between the parents of the child, and then, for a brief period, all was deep, oppressive silence. This was interrupted, at length, by the mother's unrestrained sobs, as she laid her face upon the bosom of her husband, so soon to be taken from her, and wept aloud.

No word of remonstrance or comfort came from the sick man's lips. He only drew his arm about the weeper's neck, and held her closer to his heart.

The troubled waters soon ran clear: there was calmness in their depths.

"It is but for a little while, Fanny," said he, in a feeble yet steady voice; "only for a little while."

"I know; I feel that here," was replied, as a thin, white hand was laid against the speaker's bosom. "And I could patiently await my time, but"—

Her eyes glanced yearningly toward the child, who sat gazing upon her parents, with an instinct of approaching evil at her heart.

Too well did the dying man comprehend the meaning of this glance.

"God will take care of her. He will raise her up friends," said he quickly; yet, even as he spoke, his heart failed him.

"All that is left to us is our trust in Him," murmured the wife and mother. Her voice, though so low as to be almost a whisper, was firm. She realized, as she spoke, how much of bitterness was in the parting hours of the dying one, and she felt that duty required her to sustain him, so far as she had the strength to do so. And so she nerved her woman's heart, almost breaking as it was, to bear and hide her own sorrows, while she strove to comfort and strengthen the failing spirit of her husband.

"God is good," said she, after a brief silence, during which she was striving for the mastery over her weakness. As she spoke, she leaned over the sick man, and looked at him lovingly, and with the smile of an angel on her countenance.

"Yes, God is good, Fanny. Have we not proved this, again and again?" was returned, a feeble light coming into the speaker's pale face.

"A thousand times, dear! a thousand times!" said the wife, earnestly.

"He is infinite in his goodness, and we are his children."

"Yes, his children," was the whispered response. And over and over again he repeated the words, "His children;" his voice falling lower and lower each time, until at length his eyes closed, and his in-going thought found no longer an utterance.

Twilight had come. The deepening shadows were fast obscuring all objects in the sick-chamber, where silence reigned, profound almost as death.

"He sleeps," whispered the wife, as she softly raised herself from her reclining position on the bed. "And dear Fanny sleeps also," was added, as her eyes rested upon the unconscious form of her child.

Two hours later, and the last record was made in Ruben Elder's Book of Life.

For half an hour before the closing scene, his mind was clear, and he then spoke calmly of what he had done for those who were to remain behind.

"To Leonard Jasper, my old friend," said he to his wife, "I have left the management of my affairs. He will see that every thing is done for the best. There is not much property, yet enough to insure a small income; and, when you follow me to the better land, sufficient for the support and education of our child."

Peacefully, after this, he sank away, and, like a weary child falling into slumber, slept that sleep from which the awakening is in another world.

How Leonard Jasper received the announcement of his executorship has been seen. The dying man had referred to him as an old friend; but, as the reader has already