

**STRIVE AND
THRIVE: A TALE**

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Strive and Thrive: A Tale by Mary Botham Howitt

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MARY BOTHAM HOWITT

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THRIVE: A TALE**

STRIVE AND THRIVE.

A TALE.

BY MARY HOWITT,

AUTHOR OF "WHO SHALL BE GREATEST?" "HOPE ON! HOPE
EVER!" "SOWING AND REAPING," ETC. ETC.

443 & 445 BROADWAY.
1864.

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STRIVE AND THRIVE.

CHAPTER I.

NEIGHBOUR'S GOSSIP.

‘THAT poor man over the way is dead at last,’ said the younger of the two Miss Poindens, as they sate at breakfast.

“How do you know that?” returned the elder.

“They did not take the roll this morning,” answered Miss Barbara; “I saw the baker put it back into his basket; and that tall, thin girl has not dusted the window-frames; nor has that pale-faced boy fetched the spring-water, as usual; nor have the blinds been drawn up; and the sash of the sick chamber has been raised a matter of three inches. I am sure he is dead. It would but be neighbourly to send over and inquire if we could be of any service.”

“Barbara!” exclaimed Miss Poinden, as if

quite shocked and astonished; "and what concern is it of ours if the man be dead or alive?"

"Sister," replied the more benevolent Barbara, "they are poor; very poor, I am sure they are. I have studied the ways of those people as if they were my own kindred; I know they are poor; and relations or friends they have none, for there never was going or coming to that house, nor have they had as much as a neighbour to take tea with them; and yet how respectable they all look; those children—and there are five of them—always so neat, and with a something about them so unlike common people's children; the boys with their clean white collars—but they always take them off as soon as they get within doors—I've seen it scores of times! Bless me! I've sat and fretted myself if it came on rain while they were out, as if they had been my own children, and I had to pay for their washing. Of course I know nothing of them further than I have seen," continued Miss Barbara, talking on in a weak, pattering voice, that might have reminded an unaccustomed listener of quiet rain against the window; "but, you know, when one has seen a thing for some time, one can make a shrewd guess respecting it. Now, I maintain it, that although these people are poor—which is a common lot enough—

yet that they are not common people. The house itself is a miracle to me;—always so clean and neat as it looks; and yet there is no servant, not even a girl, nor a char-woman on a Saturday;—how they manage is past my skill to say; one would think fairies did the work of the house. Look only at their street-door—there is not a door like it: paint clean, knocker bright, steps as white as a lily; yet, never did I see a hand upon them. It is my opinion that all this is done when everybody else is in bed: and they would not have that sensibility if they were your common people. I declare I feel quite a regard for them. They take in needle-work, poor things, and that's money hardly earned. I've seen the draper's porter bring Irish linen there—I am sure it was Irish; and it is my opinion that they work for warehouses; and the boy takes home the work in a carpet-bag every Saturday morning. I was a long time before I could understand things—that carpet-bag puzzled me much; but I have a pretty good knowledge of all their movements now. They are respectable people, sister; very respectable people, though they are poor. I think I shall just send Martha over with my or our compliments, and ask if we could be of any service—it would but be neighbourly, you know."

"Nonsense!" returned Miss Poinden; "I beg