

# **ARNOLD'S RESOLVE**

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Arnold's Resolve by Mrs. Lucas Shadwell

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**MRS. LUCAS SHADWELL**

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BY

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## CHAPTER I.

Sore has the battle been, but victory  
Crowned me as evening fell. — *B. M.*

ARNOLD HOULTON'S resolve was taken. The light of conscience was too clear to be mistaken. For days and nights he had fought the foe step by step. The tempter, so ready to adapt his snares, had striven to entangle the struggling man in his net, to confuse his sense of right and wrong, but had been driven off the field and vanquished.

Arnold Houlton's conviction was now firmly rooted; he would not judge another; "to his own master he standeth or falleth," but the calling by which he was living, *to him at least*, was the price of blood, the price of the bodies and souls of men. At *any cost* it must be abandoned; this much was clear. What then? he knew not. As yet he had not the full-grown faith of the child of God, who could leave all without fear or doubt in a heavenly Father's hand. Arnold was only struggling towards the true light, but the rays which he scarcely saw, or saw so dimly and distantly as yet, were drawing him with the all-powerful attraction of light to the

Day Spring from on high. Had he counted the cost? He thought so. Perhaps it was not yet, in loving mercy, *all* revealed to him.

It may be that to him even now the loving Lord was saying, though his ear was not yet practised to catch the strain, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

Arnold had taken his resolve to go and seek his father, and tell him he must relinquish the coveted partnership, the goodly income just placed within his grasp. His approaching marriage, the house in the act of furnishing for himself and bride, these must be foregone *for a while*, till time should enable him to earn a competency. A much more modest one would suffice for comfort for his own quiet tastes, and he thought he knew Alice well enough to feel sure she would, like himself, be as happy on three or four hundred a-year as on double that sum.

Patience and perseverance would attain this. Meanwhile *he must do right*. But how would Alice view the question of right and wrong? Not as he did *as yet*, he felt almost sure, and *therefore* he would not trust himself or his resolution by telling her of his purpose till it was fulfilled, lest he should be drawn aside. The old prayer he had *said* from childhood, and now *prayed* intelligently, asked "Lead us not into temptation," and he dared not go into the very face of it. Alice's entreaties or tears would be hard to withstand, but once the step was taken she would only honour his acting up to his conscience, and be his stay and comforter.



On entering his father's private office, again the old oft-repeated suggestion met him. Should he bring fresh trouble on that parent's brow? The moon had only once again passed its full since the fearful night which deprived him of his eldest son. Again the thought arose, Ought he to wait a while still?

The only earthly counsellor at hand, with whom he would care to advise, was Edwin Moreton, tutor to his younger brothers, but he felt assured he would only confirm all his own convictions, and the speaking these out might lose him his post if discovered. Arnold knew not only that the salary and vicinity to his widowed mother was of great moment to the young tutor, but also felt sure that his influence was so good over his pupils, especially the invalid boy, who had been so spoilt through indulgence during ill health. Alfred, his lame brother, had never been so bright and happy under any teacher before. No, Arnold would not, for the sake of the relief of sympathy and converse on his trouble, endanger Edwin Moreton's continuance in the family; he would have it to say that no one had influenced in any way the step he was taking.

But the honest heart was to be relieved of suspense, and the way opened up to him.

"Arnold," said his father, "there's a new contract to supply the firm of C——. I was to have gone and met the second partner at the Queen's Hotel to-day, but you must go in my stead, for I want to be at home to see Holmes, who writes he is coming on his way through town. As partner,

you will do just as well, and your first official act will be a good stroke of business.

"But I am not partner yet."

"To all intent and purpose, the deed is signed on my side which makes you so. The stupid mistake of the clerk, who engrossed the parchment in inserting a wrong name, has been corrected. There it is, ready for you to add your signature."

"But, my dear father, I wanted to speak to you on this very matter. I am thankful for the mistake and delay."

"Why, what difference on earth can it make?"

"I'm sadly afraid I shall distress you, father, but I have, after much consideration, come to the conclusion that I do not wish to become a partner."

"Have you taken leave of your senses, Arnold? or are you talking in your sleep. What *do you mean?*"

"That the scruples I have at times hinted to you have become rooted convictions."

"Rooted fooleries, you mean!"

"I can only judge for myself, sir, but I feel I cannot longer subsist on what is, you know, the cause of the ruin of body and soul of thousands in this great metropolis."

"And, pray, on what *do you* intend to subsist, may I ask?"

"I thank you gratefully, father, for all your past goodness to me, and all you had promised and offered me, but I desire to go forth to earn my bread at some other branch of commerce."

"Indeed! and your marriage? Do you suppose,

if Alice is silly enough to wish it, that Mr. Warton will suffer her to live in lodgings on bread and cheese?"

"I should not ask to take her from her father's home till I can offer her a comfortable one."

"Does Alice know this new absurd freak, pray, or her father?"

"No, sir. I have spoken to no one but yourself on the matter."

"That's the only grain of sense you've shown in the matter. Perhaps the folly is not yet past remedy. What difference will it make to the world at large, or how will the consumption of spirits be affected one gill, by your not becoming a partner? answer me that; or, if the firm of Houlton were to cease to-morrow, would it lessen the amount consumed, or make one drunkard the less? You *know* it would not! The demand regulates the supply, and the existing firms would make up the deficit, or a new one arise, and not one of the establishments you so deprecate be shut up. We are not answerable for the folly of the intemperate, and have nothing to do with the way in which those places are conducted. The managers are the responsible agents; we only take care to supply a genuine article, its abuse and the evils and adulteration do not lie at our door."

"Father, I have weighed the arguments you use, and others of like nature, over and over again, but they, at least to me, sound out the warning of the writing on the wall. As I lay awake, night after night, this past month, it seemed written in liquid-fire on the whole of the arguments in favour of the