

**THE TWO WIVES;
OR, LOST
AND WON**

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The two wives; or, Lost and won by T. S. Arthur

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T. S. ARTHUR

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AND WON**

No. 6,

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OR,

LOST AND WON.

By T. S. ARTHUR.

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PREFACE.

THE story of the "Two Wives; or, Lost and Won," is intended to show the power of tender, earnest, self-forgetting love, in winning back from the path of danger a husband whose steps have strayed, and who has approached the very brink of ruin; and, by contrast, to exhibit the sad consequences flowing from a want of these virtues under like circumstances.

This book is the third in the Series of "ARTHUR'S LIBRARY FOR THE HOUSEHOLD." The fourth, which is nearly ready, will be called "THE WAYS OF PROVIDENCE; OR, HE DOETH ALL THINGS WELL."

YOUNG WOMENS
CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

THE TWO WIVES.

CHAPTER I.

"You are not going out, John?" said Mrs. Wilkinson, looking up from the work she had just taken into her hands. There was a smile on her lips; but her eyes told, plainly enough, that a cloud was upon her heart.

Mrs. Wilkinson was sitting by a small work-table, in a neatly furnished room. It was evening, and a shaded lamp burned upon the table. Mr. Wilkinson, who had been reading, was standing on the floor, having thrown down his book and risen up hastily, as if a sudden purpose had been formed in his mind.

"I shall only be gone a little while, dear," returned Mr. Wilkinson, a slight air of impatience visible beneath his kind voice and manner.

"Don't go, John," said Mrs. Wilkinson, still forcing a smile to her countenance. "I always feel so lonely when you are away. We only have our evenings to be together; and I cannot bear then to be robbed of your company. Don't go out, John; that's a good, dear husband."

And Mrs. Wilkinson, in the earnestness of her desire to keep her husband at home, laid aside her sewing, and rising, approached and leaned her hands upon his shoulder, looking up with an affectionate, appealing expression into his face.

"You're a dear, good girl, Mary," said Mr. Wilkinson, tenderly, and he kissed the pure lips of his wife as he spoke. "I know it's wrong to leave you alone here. But, I won't be gone more than half an hour. Indeed I won't. See, now;" and he drew forth his watch; "it is just eight o'clock, and I will be home again precisely at half-past eight, to a minute."

Mrs. Wilkinson made no answer; but her husband saw that tears were in the eyes fixed so lovingly upon him.

"Now don't, love," said he, tenderly, "make so much of just half an hour's absence. I promised Elbridge that I would call around and see him about a little matter of business, and I must keep my word. I had forgotten the engagement until it crossed my mind while reading."

"If you have an engagement." There was a certain emphasis in the words of Mrs. Wilkinson that caused her husband to partly turn his face away.

"I have, dear. But for that, I should not think of leaving you alone."

Almost instinctively Mrs. Wilkinson withdrew

the hands she had placed upon the shoulder of her husband, and receded from him a step or two; at the same time her face was bent downwards, and her eyes rested upon the floor.

For some moments Mr. Wilkinson stood as if in earnest debate with himself; then he said, in a cheerful, lively tone—

“Good-by, love. I shall only be gone half an hour.” And turning away, left the room. He did not pause until he was in the street. Then a spirit of irresolution came over him, and he said to himself, as he moved slowly away,

“It isn’t kind in me to leave Mary alone in this way; I know it isn’t. But I want to see Elbridge; and, in fact, partly promised that I would call upon him this evening. True, I can say all I wish to say to him in the morning, and to quite as good purpose. But——”

Wilkinson, whose steps had been growing more and more deliberate, stopped. For some time he stood, in a thoughtful attitude—then slowly returned. His hand was in his pocket, his dead-latch key between his fingers, and his foot upon the marble sill of his door. And thus he remained, in debate with himself, for as long a time as two or three minutes.

“Yes; I must see him! I had forgotten that,” he exclaimed, in a low tone, and suddenly stepped back from the door, and with a rapid pace moved

down the street. A walk of ten minutes brought him to the house of Mr. Elbridge. But it so happened that this gentleman was not at home.

"How soon do you expect him to return?" was inquired of the servant.

"He may be here in half an hour; or not before ten o'clock," was the reply.

Wilkinson was disappointed. Leaving his name with the servant, and saying that he would probably call again during the evening, he descended the steps and walked away. He was moving in the direction of his home, and had arrived within a block thereof when he stopped, saying to himself as he did so—

"I must see Elbridge this evening. It is already nearly half an hour since I left home, and I promised Mary that I would not remain away a moment longer than that time. But, I did not think Elbridge would be out. Poor Mary! She looks at me with such sad eyes, sometimes, that it goes to my very heart. She cannot bear to have me out of her sight. Can she doubt me in any thing? No; I will not believe that. She is a loving, gentle-minded creature—and one of the best of wives. Ah me! I wish I were more like her."

Still Wilkinson remained standing, and in debate with himself.

"I will go home," said he, at length, with emphasis, and walked quickly onward. He was within a few doors of his own home, when his steps began