

did not reply. I repeated some of his allegations. She began to weep, and told feebly how sick she had been, and how importuned to make the confession. She said that Tilton had confessed his alien loves, and she could not bear to think herself better than he, and hoped to win him back by this course. She then denied to me all the charges made by Tilton, and expressed contrition for her act, and made, at my suggestion, a brief counter-statement to her husband.

"The next day Moulton informed me that Mrs. Tilton had told her husband of what she did in our interview and he, Moulton, expostulated and claimed that I had taken advantage of the permission to visit Mrs. Tilton; he was greatly excited and, opening his overcoat, with some emphatic remarks, shoved me a pistol, and I afterwards gave him the paper and he left. Moulton soon after made another visit to me in my house while I was still in the greatest distress over this affair. I didn't blame Mrs. Tilton, for whose condition I made the greatest allowance, and yet I believed that this story, invented by him and substantiated by her statement, would be immediately published, and against it I could only oppose my word of honor. Believing that disasters would result from its publication, and the great interests with which I was identified be ruined, and the name I had hoped would live after me be cause for reproach, my mind was in the most distressed condition. Moulton found me thus, and in a sincere and kindly manner convinced me that I had been accomplishing Tilton's downfall in conjunction with Bowen. Moulton depicted the wrong done Tilton in such strong characters that I became fully convinced I was the cause of all the wreck in Tilton's fortunes and happiness. Moulton then proposed that I should write a letter, and he would prepare a memorandum of our talk. He took down what I supposed was a condensed memorandum of my words and I continued talking over the desolation in Tilton's family. It was not dictation, and he put it in a shape which suited his purpose, and then I signed it, supposing it to be the points of our conversation. He did not read the paper to me, and I never heard it until its publication by Tilton recently.

"This patchwork, of a man unused to writing, was signed; thus when the document, written on large half sheets of paper, was written, Moulton asked me to sign it. I said, 'No, it was not my letter.' He said it would have more weight if I would in some way or other indicate that he was authorized to explain my sentiments. I took my pen and, some distance below the writing and upon the lower margin, indicated that I had committed the document in trust to Moulton and signed the line thus written by me. A few words as to its further date. Mr. Moulton, of his own accord, said that after using it he would, in two or three days, bring the memorandum back to me, and he cautioned me about disclosing, in any way, that there was a difficulty between Mr. Tilton and me, as it would be injurious to Tilton to have it known that I had quarrelled with him, as well as for me to have rumors set afloat. I did not trouble myself about it until more than a year afterwards, when Mr. Tilton began to write up his case, of which hereafter, and was looking up documents. I wondered what was in the old memorandum and desired to see it for greater certainty. So one day I suddenly asked Moulton for that memorandum and said, 'You promised to return it to me.' He seemed confused for a moment, and said, 'Did I?' 'Certainly,' I answered. He replied that the paper had been destroyed. On my putting the question again, he said, 'That paper was burned up long ago,' and during the next two years, in various conversations, of his own accord, he spoke of it as destroyed. I had never asked for, nor authorized the destruction of this paper, but I was not allowed to know that the document was in existence until a distinguished editor in New York, within a few weeks past, assured me that Mr. Moulton had shown him the original, and that he had examined my signature to be sure of its genuineness. I know there was a copy of it. Since this statement was in preparation, while I rejected this memorandum as my work, or as an accurate condensation of my statement, it does un-

doubtedly correctly represent that I was in profound sorrow, and that I blamed myself with great severity for the disasters of Tilton's family. I had not then the light that I now have; there was much then that weighed heavily upon my heart and conscience which now weighs only on my heart. I have not the light which analyzes and discriminates things, but by one blow there opened before me a revelation full of anguish. An agonized family whose inmates had been my friends, greatly beloved; the husband ruined in worldly prospects, the household crumbling to pieces, the woman by long sickness and suffering either crippled to deceit, as her husband alleged, or so broken in mind as to be irresponsible, and either way it was her enthusiasm for her pastor, as I was made to believe, that was the germ and beginning of the trouble. It was for me to have forestalled and prevented that mischief. My age and experience in the world should have put me on my guard. I could not at that time tell what was true and what not true of all the considerations urged upon me by Tilton and Moulton. There was grief before me in which lay those who had been warm friends, and they alleged that I had helped to plunge them therein. That seemed enough to fill my soul with sorrow and anguish. A mother who has lost a child will understand the wild self-accusation that grief produced, against all reason blaming herself for what things she did do and for what she neglected to do, and charging upon herself and her neglect or heedlessness the death of the child, while evidently every one knew that she had worn herself out with her assiduousness.

"Soon after this I met Mr. Tilton at Moulton's house. Either Moulton was sick, or was very late in rising, for he was in bed. The subject of my feelings and conduct towards Tilton was introduced. I made a statement of the motives under which I had acted in counseling Bowen; of my feelings towards Tilton's family, disclosing horror at the thought of wrong, and expressed a desire to do whatever lay in human power to remedy any evil I had occasioned, and to reunite his family. Tilton was silent and sullen; he played the part of the injured man, but Moulton said to Tilton with intense earnestness, 'That is all that a gentleman can say, and you ought to accept it as an honorable basis of reconciliation.' This he repeated two or three times, Tilton's countenance changed under Moulton's strong talk. We shook hands and parted in a friendly way.

"Not very long afterwards Tilton asked me to his house, and said that he should be glad to have the good old times renewed. I do not remember whether I ever took a meal after that under his roof, but I certainly was invited by him to renew my visits as formerly. I never resumed my intimacy with the family, but once or twice I went there soon after my reconciliation with Tilton, and at his request. I particularly remember a scene which took place at his house, when he talked about his wife and me in a very gracious mood. He began by mourning his sorrows. He was very desolate. The future seemed quite dark. After impressing us with his great patience, he grew generous, praised me to his wife, saying that I had taken upon myself all the blame of his troubles, and had honorably exculpated her, and telling me that his wife had likewise behaved very magnanimously, she had blamed herself, and declared that I was blameless, and he closed his homily with increasing hope and cheer, saying that deep as was his misery he hoped that he would come out in the future more cheerful than he had before. I restrained my smiles at the absurdity of the thing, well content to have it evaporate, and even thinking that he was generous in his way. This seemed to me the end of trouble, and with a sensitive and honorable man, who had no ulterior designs to accomplish, it would have been the burial of difficulty. I supposed Tilton had given up the idea of intentional wrong on my part, and forgiven my unintentional wrong. I plainly understand now, what I did not then suspect, that any trouble of mine was to be kept alive and nourished so that I might be used to act on my friend in securing from Bowen the money which Tilton claimed to be due as compensation for his expulsion

from two newspapers. Mr. Moulton and Mr. Tilton both strove to obliterate from my mind all belief in the rumors that had been circulated about Tilton. There was much going on in silencing, explaining, arranging, etc., that I did not understand then as well as now. Of one thing I was convinced, viz., that Tilton had the highest sense of marital purity, and that he had never strayed from the path of virtue, which preservation he owed, as he told me in the narrative of his life, to a very solemn scene with his father, who, on the eve of his leaving home, pointed out to him the nature of all those temptations and snares and evils to be dreaded from unlawful practices. We declared that he had always been kept spotless by the memory of that scene. I was glad and believed it true, and felt how hard it was that he should be made to suffer by evil and slanderous foes. I could not explain some testimony which had been told before me, but I said, 'There is undoubtedly some misunderstanding, and if I knew the whole I should find Theodore, though with obvious faults, at heart sound and good.' These views, I often expressed to intimate friends, in spite of their manifest incredulity, and what in the light of facts, I must call their well deserved ridicule. Moulton lost no occasion of presenting to me the kindest view of Tilton's character, and on the other hand he complained that Mrs. Tilton did not trust her husband or him, and did not assist him in his effort to help Theodore. I know that she distrusted Moulton, and felt bitterly hurt by the treatment of her husband. I was urged to use my influence with her to inspire confidence in Moulton, and to lead her to take a kinder view of Theodore. Accordingly, at the instance of Mr. Moulton, three letters were written on the same day, Feb. 1, 1870, with one common purpose—to be shown to Mrs. Tilton, and reconcile her to her husband, and my letter to her of that date was designed to effect the further, or collateral purpose of giving her confidence in Moulton. This will be obvious from the reading of the letters. I have no recollection of seeing or hearing read the letter of Mrs. Tilton, of the same date. In my letter to Mrs. Tilton I alluded to the fact that I did not expect, when I saw her last, to be alive many days. That statement stands connected with a series of symptoms which I first experienced in 1856.

"I went through the Fremont campaign, speaking in the open air three hours at a time, three days in a week. In renewing my literary labors I felt I must have given way, I very seriously thought I was going to have apoplexy or paralysis, or something of the kind. On two or three occasions while preaching I should have fallen in the pulpit if I had not held on to the table. Very often I came near falling in the streets. During the last fifteen years I have gone into the pulpit I suppose 100 times, with a very strong impression I should never come out of it alive. I have preached more sermons than any human being would believe when I felt all the while that whatever I had got to say to my people I must say it then or I never would have another chance to say it. If I had consulted a physician his first advice would have been, 'You must stop work.' But I was in such a situation that I could not stop work. I read the best medical books on the symptoms of nervous prostration and over work and paralysis, and formed my own judgment of my case. Three points I marked were—I must have a good digestion, good sleep, and I must go on working. These three things were to be reconciled, and in regard to my diet and stimulants and medicines I made the most thorough and searching trial, and as a result managed my body so that I could get the most work out of it without essentially impairing it. If I had said a word about this to my family it would have brought such distress and anxiety on the part of my wife as I could not bear. I had for many years so steadily taxed my mind to the utmost that there have been periods when I could not afford to have people even express sympathy with me. To have my wife or friends anxious about it, and showing it to me, would be just a drop too much. In 1863 I came again into the same condition, just before going to England, and it was one of the reasons why I was

wishing to go. The war was at its height. I carried my country in my heart. I had the *Independent* in charge, and was working, preaching and lecturing continually. I knew that I was likely to be prostrated again. In December, 1870, the sudden shock of these troubles brought on again these symptoms in a more violent form. I was very much depressed in mind, and all the more because it was one of those things that I could not say anything about. I was silent with everybody. During the last four years these symptoms had been repeatedly brought on by my intense work, carried forward or underlying a basis of so much sorrow and trouble. My friends will bear witness that in the pulpit I have very frequently alluded to my expectation of sudden death. I feel that I have, more than once, already been near the stroke that would have killed or paralyzed me, and I carry with me now, as I have so often carried in years before this trouble began, the daily thought of death as a door which might open for me at any moment, out of all cares and labors unto welcome rest. During the whole of the year 1871 I was kept in a state of suspense and doubt, not only as to the future of the family, for the reunion and happiness of which I had striven so earnestly, but as to the degree to which I might personally be subject to attack and misconstruction, and trouble be brought into the church and magnified by publicity.

"The officers of the church sought to investigate Mr. Tilton's religious views and moral conduct, and on the latter point I had been deceived into the belief that he was not in fault; as to his religious views, I still hoped for a change for the better, as it was proposed to drop him from the list of members for non-attendance, and as he asserted to me, after his withdrawal, this might have been done; but his wife still attended church, and hoped for his restoration. I recollect having with him a conversation in which he dimly intimated to me that he thought it not unlikely he might go back into his old position. He seemed to be in a mood to regret the past, and so, when I was urged by the examining committee, to take some steps, I said I was not without hopes. In the meanwhile, one wing of the female suffrage party had got hold of the story in a distorted and exaggerated form, such as had never been intimated to me by Mr. Tilton or his friends. I did not then suspect what I now know, that these atrociously false rumors originated with Mr. Tilton himself. I only saw evil growing instead of diminishing, and perceived that while I was pledged to silence, and therefore could not speak in my own defense, some one was forever persevering in falsehood, growing continually in dimensions, and these difficulties were immensely increased by the affiliation of Mr. Tilton with the Woodhull clique.

"In May, 1872, Mrs. Woodhull advertised a forthcoming article, shadowing an account of the disturbance in Mr. Tilton's family, but without using names. It was delayed, ostensibly by Mr. Tilton's influence with Mrs. Woodhull, until November '72. During this suspension of her publication she became a heroine with Mr. Moulton and Mr. Tilton. She was made welcome at both houses with toleration, but not the cordial consent of their wives. I heard the most extravagant eulogies upon her. She was represented as a genius born and reared among rude influences, but only needed to be surrounded by refined society to show a noble and commanding nature. I did not know much about her, and though my impressions were unfavorable, her real character was not then really known to the world. I met her three times. At the first interview she was gracious. At the second she was cold and haughty, but at the third she was angry and threatening, for I had peremptorily refused to preside at a lecture she was about to give at Steinway Hall. The most strenuous efforts had been made by both Tilton and Moulton to induce me to preside at this lecture, and to identify myself publicly with Mrs. Woodhull. It was represented to me that I need not in so doing expressly give assent to her doctrines, especially with regard to the marriage relation, upon which point she was beginning to be more explicit in opposition to the views which I, in common with all Christian men, entertained; but it was plausibly

urged that I could preside at the lecture and introduce her, upon the simple ground of advocating free speech and liberty of debate. But as I understood that she was about to avow doctrines which I abhor I would not be induced by this plausible argument to give her public countenance, and after continuing to urge me up to the very day of the meeting, without any distinct threats, but with obvious intimation that my personal safety would be better secured by taking this advice, Mr. Tilton himself went over to New York and presided at the meeting where Mrs. Woodhull gave vent, as I understand, for the first time in public, to a full exposition of her free love doctrines. The very thought that I should have been asked, under any circumstances and upon any excuse, to preside or be present at such a meeting, was inexpressibly galling to me. Whatever my astonishment might have been, the motive of Mr. Tilton and Mr. Moulton, in asking such a thing, as to which I had not at the time as clear a perception as I now have, the request was nevertheless humiliating. At about the same time I found the circle of which Mrs. Woodhull formed a part, a centre of loathsome scandals, organized, classified and perpetuated with a greedy and unclean appetite for everything that was foul and vile.

Mr. Beecher here details his efforts to prevent the scandal being made public, which was threatened by the trial of Tilton by the church, and says of Tilton:

"I was so determined to carry out my pledges to Moulton for him, and do all in human power to save him, even from himself, that I was ready to resign if that would stop the scandal. I wrote a letter of resignation, not referring to the charge against me, but declaring that I had striven for years to maintain secrecy concerning a scandal affecting a family in the church, and that as I had failed I herewith resigned. This letter was never sent. A little calmer thought showed me how futile it would be to stop the trouble, a mere useless sacrifice, but I showed it to Mr. Moulton, and possibly he copied it. I have found the original in my house. If I could at this moment remember any other letters which I have written to Mr. Moulton I would do so. If he has received all my effusions of feeling he must have a large collection. I wished him to bring them all before the committee. I should have been glad to get such hints as they may contain to refresh my recollection of facts and sequences. I have no fear of their full and fair publication, for though they would doubtless make a sad exposure of my weakness, grief and despondency, they do not contain a line confessing such guilt as has been charged to me, or a word consistent with my innocence, nor in any other spirit than that of generous remorse over a great and more and more irreparable evil. But however intense and numerous may be these expressions of grief, they cannot possibly overstate the anxiety which I constantly felt for the future. The perils which it is now clear I did not exaggerate, nor the sorrow and remorse, which I felt originally on account of the injury which I supposed I had unwittingly done to a beloved family, and afterwards for the greater injury which I became satisfied I had done by my unwise, blind and useless efforts to remedy that injury, only as it proved at the expense of my own name, the happiness of my own family and the peace of my own church.

"Gentlemen of the committee: "In the note requesting your appointment, I asked that you should make a full investigation of all the sources of information. You are witnesses that I have in no way influenced or interfered with your proceedings or duties. I have wished the investigation to be so searching that nothing could unsettle its results. I have nothing to gain by any policy of suppression or compromise. For four years I have borne and suffered enough, and I will not go a step further. I will be free, I will not walk under a rod or yoke. If any man would do me a favor let him tell all he knows now. It is not mine to lay down the law of honor in regard to the use of other persons' confidential communications; but in so far as my own writings are concerned, there is not a letter or document which I am afraid to have exhibited, and I authorize any, and I call upon any living person to produce and print forth with whatever writ-

(Concluded on page 461.)