WILL IT STAND THE FIRE?



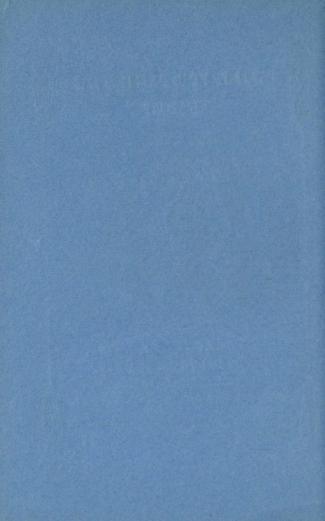
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WILL IT STAND THE FIRE!



THERE was in London-town a man
Who follow'd long a prosperous plan,
And he was rich, the people said,
And far and wide his fame was spread.
Though other folks their wealth might win
By silver, copper, brass, or tin,

Such trade to him was all unknown;
He dealt in gold, in gold alone.
From different parts the people brought
The different substances he bought,
But still, whate'er they might display,
He never would a shilling pay,
Until, by prudence still restrain'd,
He knew what gold the thing contain'd.
All sorts of substances untried
Within the fire he purified,
Until his eyes could there behold
Pure, unadulterated gold.

At times they brought him, less or more, Of dross, and earth, and sparkling ore, And told him, as he silent sat, That it was this, and it was that. They might have spared themselves the pain, For all they said they said in vain, Howe'er the thing might be approved He listen'd with a mind unmoved, And still prefer'd, as he drew nigher, The question, Will it stand the fire?

At times his customers demur'd Because he would not take their word. The substance brought, they would uphold, Was nothing else but solid gold, 'That it would every test endure Uninjured, unalloy'd, and pure; But while of words they took their fill This was his steady answer still, Without his temper rising higher, Let's try it! Will it stand the fire?

Now, had this man believed the tale
Of all who brought their goods for sale,
And, without trial, been content
With what they said, and what they sent,
What heaps of rubbish had been sold!
What dross would he have had for gold!
But no! his maxim was to start
The question all should gain by heart
Who deal in gold, and would aspire
To riches—Will it stand the fire?

But think me not so weak and frail To lure you with an idle tale. There is, and, reader, mark it well! A moral to the tale I tell.

A serious moral, and a truth To fix the wandering heart of youth, When glittering dust and dross arise, On real riches in the skies. The fire of which my tale has told May try the purity of gold, But there's another fire to try The dross of human vanity; The sparkling dust that closely clings Unceasingly to human things; A trial-flame, a day of doom, That shall the things of time consume; For worldly gifts, and fleeting breath, Shall perish in the hour of death. Death is a trial-fire; therein Shall perish all the hopes of sin: The glittering joys, the guilty gains, That gild the hour where folly reigns, And all the sinful ties that bind The wandering hearts of all mankind.

If every one that lives, alas!
The trial-flame of death must pass!
Put not away the solemn thought
Till future sins have sorrows brought;

Till age and care are on your brow, But rather ask the question now; The thing in which you most delight, And fondly think of morn and night, The object of your heart's desire, Ask, reader, Will it stand the fire?

You may as yet be but a child, With trifling hopes and toys beguiled: But should you peep, while rambling round Within the churchyard's solemn ground, Your eyes the resting-place will view Of children younger far than you. Then, if to-morrow, or to-day, Your spirit should be call'd away From this vain world of sin and woe, Where, think you, would your spirit go? If trifles only are your care, And draw your heart from heaven, beware Whate'er the toy that may delight-A doll, a hoop, a ball, a kite, Or blooming rose upon a brier, Ask, reader, Will it stand the fire?

Think, while your eyes the world behold, How many metals look like gold, Which, when inspected close, alas! Are worth no more than shining brass! And think how many glittering toys, And follies vain, and empty joys, That promise long the heart to cheer, Forsake us, fade, and disappear!

To lure your unsuspecting youth, Falsehood will wear the dress of Truth; And Pride depress her baughty eye. To personate Humility.
Things are not what they seem! in air The bubbles burst that look so fair.
Delay his promises will make.
And Fraud and sly Deceit will take The air, the form, and fashion given To every virtue under heaven.
But though a season they endure, And many an erring heart allure From duty's path, with influence dire, We know they will not stand the fire.

The thousand glittering things that bind The vain affections of mankind, And shine with empty, proud display, So draw the heart from God away,— They boast at best a moment's breath, And vanish in the hour of death.

Look at the pleasures wealth commands—Dogs, horses, coaches, houses, lands; However lawful these may be, Enjoy'd with meek humility, How dangerous are they when they prove A hindrance to our heavenly love! In death they are but earthly mire, For they will never stand the fire.

"Give me thy heart," the Saviour cries:
Then let your fervent prayer arise,
And humbly seek his grace and truth
To guide you in the days of youth.
Though you are young, and frail, and weal.
"A bruised reed he will not break;"
Nor will he quench, with mighty power,
"The smoking flax" in angry hour.
Sure as you seek with willing mind,
So sure his mercy will you find!

Then hasten on your pilgrimage, And foster in your youth and age The hope of heaven through Christ alone; For this, when other hopes are flown, When friends, fame, riches, all expire, This, reader, this will stand the fire!



