VARIOUS

TIGER AND TOM AND OTHER STORIES FOR BOYS

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Содержание

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TIGER AND TOM

The day was pleasant, in that particularly pleasant part of summer time, which the boys call "vacation," when Tiger and Tom walked slowly down the street together.

You may think it strange that I mention Tiger first, but I assure you, Tom would not have been in the least offended by the preference. Indeed, he would have told you that Tiger was a most wonderful dog, and knew as much as any two boys, though this might be called extravagant.

Nearly a year ago, on Tom's birthday, Tiger arrived as a present from Tom's uncle, and as the dog leaped with a dignified bound from the wagon in which he made his journey, Tom looked for a moment into his great, wise eyes, and impulsively threw his arms around his shaggy neck.

Tiger was pleased with Tom's bright face, and affectionately licked his smooth cheeks. So the league of friendship was complete in an hour.

Tom had a pleasant, round face, and you might live with him a week, and think him one of the noblest, most generous boys you ever knew. But some day you would probably discover that he had a most violent temper.

You would be frightened to see his face crimson with rage, as he stamped his feet, shook his little sister, spoke improperly to his mother, and above all, displeased his great Father in heaven.

Now I am going to tell you of something which happened to Tom, on this account, which he never forgot to the end of his life.

Tiger and Tom were walking down the street together one pleasant day, when they met Dick Casey, a schoolfellow of Tom's.

"O Dick!" cried Tom, "I'm going to father's grain store a little while. Let's go up in the loft and play."

Dick had just finished his work in his mother's garden, and was ready for a little amusement. So the two went up in the loft together, and enjoyed themselves for a long time.

But at last one of those trifling disputes arose, in which little boys are so apt to indulge. Pretty soon there were angry words, then (Oh, how sorry I am to say it!) Tom's wicked passions got the mastery of him, and he beat little Dick severely.

Tiger, who must have been ashamed of his master, pulled hard at his coat, and whined piteously, but all in vain. At last Tom stopped, from mere exhaustion.

"There, now!" he cried, "which is right, you or I?"

"I am," sobbed Dick, "and you tell a lie."

Tom's face became crimson, and darting upon Dick, he gave him a sudden push. Alas! he was near to the open door. Dick screamed, threw up his arms, and in a moment was gone.

Tom's heart stood still, and an icy chill crept over him from head to foot. At first he could not stir; then—he never knew how he got there, but he found himself standing beside his little friend. Some men were raising him carefully from the hard sidewalk.

"Is he dead?" almost screamed Tom.

"No," replied one, "we hope not. How did he fall out?"

"He didn't fall," groaned Tom, who never could be so mean as to tell a lie, "I pushed him out."

"*You* pushed him, you wicked boy," cried a rough voice. "Do you know you ought to be sent to jail, and if he dies, maybe you'll be hung."

Tom grew as white as Dick, whom he had followed into the store, and he heard all that passed as if in a dream.

"Is he badly hurt?" cried some one.

"Only his hands," was the answer. "The rope saved him, he caught hold of the rope and slipped down; but his hands are dreadfully torn—he has fainted from pain."

Just then Tom's father came in, and soon understood the case. The look he gave his unhappy son, so full of sorrow, not unmingled with pity, was too much for Tom, and he stole out followed by the faithful Tiger.

He wandered to the woods, and threw himself upon the ground. One hour ago he was a happy boy, and now what a terrible change! What had made the difference?—Nothing but the indulgence of this wicked, violent temper.

His mother had often warned him of the fearful consequences. She had told him that little boys who would not learn to govern themselves, grew up to be very wicked men, and often became murderers in some moment of passion.

And now, Tom shuddered to think he was almost a murderer! Nothing but God's great mercy in putting that rope in Dick's way, had saved him from carrying that load of sorrow and guilt all the rest of his life.

But poor Dick might die yet—how pale he looked—how strange! Tom fell upon his knees, and prayed God to spare Dick's life, and from that time forth, with God's help, he promised that he would strive to conquer his wicked temper.

Then, as he could no longer bear his terrible suspense, he started for Widow Casey's cottage. As he appeared at the humble door, Mrs. Casey angrily ordered him away, saying, "You have made a poor woman trouble enough for one day." But Dick's feeble voice entreated, "O mother, let him come in; I was just as bad as he."

Tom gave a cry of joy at hearing these welcome tones, and sprang hastily in. There sat poor Dick, with his hands bound up, looking very pale, but Tom thanked God that he was alive.

"I should like to know how I am to live now," sighed Mrs. Casey. "Who will weed the garden, and carry my vegetables to market? I am afraid we shall suffer for bread before the summer is over," and she put her apron to her eyes.

"Mrs. Casey," cried Tom, eagerly, "I will do everything that Dick did. I will sell the cabbages, potatoes, and beans, and will drive Mr. Brown's cows to pasture."

Mrs. Casey shook her head incredulously; but Tom bravely kept his word. For the next few weeks Tom was at his post bright and early, and the garden was never kept in better order. Every morning Tiger and Tom stood faithfully in the market place with their baskets, and never gave up, no matter how warm the day, till the last vegetable was sold, and the money placed faithfully in Mrs. Casey's hand.

Tom's father often passed through the market, and gave his little son an encouraging smile, but he did not offer to help him out of his difficulty, for he knew if Tom struggled on alone, it would be a lesson he would never forget. Already he was becoming so gentle and patient that every one noticed the change, and his mother rejoiced over the sweet fruits of his repentance and self-sacrifice.

After a few weeks, the bandages were removed from Dick's hands, but they had been unskillfully treated, and were drawn up in very strange shapes.

Mrs. Casey could not conceal her grief. "He will never be the help he was before," she said to Tom, "he will never be like other boys, and he wrote such a fine hand; now he can no more make a letter than that little chicken in the garden."

"If we only had a great city doctor," said a neighbor, "he might have been all right. Even now his fingers might be helped if you should take him to New York."

"Oh, I am too poor, *too poor*" said she, and burst into tears.

Tom could not bear it, and again rushed into the woods to think what could be done, for he had already given them all his quarter's allowance. All at once a thought flashed into his head, and he started as if he had been shot. Then he cried in great distress:—

"No, no, anything but that, I can't do *that!*"

Tiger gently licked his hands, and watched him with great concern.

Now came a terrible struggle. Tom paced back and forth, and although he was a proud boy, he sobbed aloud. Tiger whined, licked Tom's face, rushed off into dark corners, and barked savagely at some imaginary enemy, and then came back, and putting his paws on his young master's knees, wagged his tail in anxious sympathy.

At last Tom took his hands from his pale, tear stained face, and looking into the dog's great, honest eyes, he cried with a queer shake in his voice:—

"Tiger, old fellow! dear old dog, could you ever forgive me if I sold you?"

Then came another burst of sorrow, and Tom rose hastily, as if afraid to trust himself, and almost ran out of the woods. Over the fields he raced, with Tiger close at his heels, nor rested a moment till he stood at Major White's door, nearly two miles away.

"Do you still want Tiger, sir?"

"Why yes," said the old man in great surprise, "but it can't be possible that you want to sell him, do you, my boy?" and the kind old gentleman gave Tom a quick, questioning glance.

"Yes, please," gasped Tom, not daring to look at his old companion.

The exchange was quickly made, and the ten dollars in Tom's hand. Tiger was beguiled into a barn, the door hastily shut, and Tom was hurrying off, when he turned and cried in a choking voice:—

"You will be kind to him, Major White, won't you? Don't whip him, I never did, and he's the best dog—"

"No, no, child," said Major White, kindly; "I'll treat him like a prince, and if you ever want to buy him back, you shall have him."

Tom managed to falter "Thank you," and almost flew out of hearing of Tiger's eager scratching on the barn door.

I am making my story too long, and can only tell you in a few words that Tom's sacrifice was accepted. A friend took little Dick to the city free of expense, and Tom's money paid for the necessary operation.

The poor, crooked fingers were very much improved, and were soon almost as good as ever. And the whole village loved Tom for his brave, self-sacrificing spirit, and the noble atonement he had made for his moment of passion.

A few days after Dick's return came Tom's birthday, but he did not feel in his usual spirits. In spite of his delight in Dick's recovery, he had so mourned over the matter, and had taken Tiger's loss so much to heart, that he had grown quite pale and thin. So as he was allowed to spend the day as he pleased, he took his books and went to his favorite haunt in the woods. He lay down under the shade of a wide-spreading maple, and buried his face in his hands:—

"How different from my last birthday," thought Tom. "Then Tiger had just come, and I was so happy, though I didn't like him half as well as I do now."

Tom sighed heavily; then added more cheerfully, "Well, I hope some things are better than they were last year. I hope I have begun to conquer myself, and with God's help I will never give up trying while I live. But O how much sorrow and misery I have made for myself as well as for others, by only once giving way to my wicked, foolish temper. And not only that, but," added Tom, with a sigh, "I can never forget that I might have been a murderer, had it not been for the mercy of God. Now if I could only earn money enough to buy back dear old Tiger."

While Tom was busied with these thoughts, he heard a hasty, familiar trot, a quick bark of joy, and the brave old dog sprang into Tom's arms.

"Tiger, old fellow," cried Tom, trying to look fierce, though he could scarcely keep down the tears, "how came you to run away, sir?"

Tiger responded by picking up a letter he had dropped in his first joy, and laying it in Tom's hand:—

"MY DEAR CHILD: Tiger is pining, and I must give him a change of air. I wish him to have a good master, and knowing that the best ones are those who have learned to govern *themselves*, I send him to you. Will you take care of him and oblige

Your old friend, MAJOR WHITE."

Tom then read through a mist of tears—

"P.S. I know the whole story. Dear young friend, be not weary in well doing."

THOSE SCARS

"What are those scars?" questioned Mary Lanman of her father as she sat in his lap, holding his hand in her own little ones.

"Those scars, my dear? If I were to tell you the history of them, it would make a long story."

"But do tell me, papa," said Mary, "I should like to hear a long story."

"These scars, my child, are more than forty years old. For forty years they have every day reminded me of my disobedience to my parents and my violation of the law of God."

"Do tell me all about it, father," pleaded Mary.

"When I was about twelve years old," he began, "my father sent me one pleasant autumn day into the woods to cut a pole to be used in beating apples off the trees. It was wanted immediately to fill the place of one that had been broken.

"I took my little hatchet and hastened to the woods as I had been bidden. I looked in every direction for a tall, slender tree that would answer the purpose; and every time I stopped to examine a young tree, a taller and straighter sapling caught my eye farther on.

"What seemed most surprising to me was that the little trees that looked so trim and upright in the distance, grew deformed and crooked as I approached them. Frequently disappointed, I was led from tree to tree, till I had traversed the entire grove and made no choice.

"My path opened into a clearing, and near the fence stood a young cherry tree loaded with fruit. Here was a strong temptation. I knew very well to whom this tree belonged, and that it bore valuable fruit. I knew, too, that I had no right to touch a single cherry. No house was near, no person was in sight. None but God could see me, and I forgot that His eye looked down upon me.

"I resolved to taste the tempting fruit. I climbed the tree and began to pick the rich, ripe cherries. But I found no pleasure in the taste of them; I was so fearful of surprise and detection. Some one might come and find me in the tree. I therefore resolved to break off some richly-loaded boughs, and feast upon the cherries as I hastened home.

"The top of the tree was bowed with the weight of its fruit. I climbed as high as I could, and bending down the top, attempted to cut it off with my knife. In my eagerness to secure my prize, I did not guard my left hand, which held down the top of the tree. My knife slipped from the yielding wood to my fingers, and passed with unspent force across all the fingers of my left hand, cutting the flesh to the bone.

"I never could look at fresh blood without fainting. My eye caught sight of the red drops that oozed from every finger, and my heart began to die within me. I slipped through the limbs of the tree to the ground. The shock of the fall drove away the faintness, and I soon stood upon my feet.

"I wrapped my handkerchief about my bleeding fingers, and hurried home. My mission was worse than useless; I had not accomplished the purpose for which I was sent, I had committed a crime and disabled myself for work; for how could I pick apples in my present condition.

"I found no sympathy from anybody; my father reproved me, and threatened chastisement when my wounds were healed. My mother, who dressed my aching fingers, looked very sorrowfully upon me, and I knew that I had grieved her deeply by my disobedience.

"I assisted in picking the apples, but I was compelled to work with one hand, while the other hung in a sling. That was a sad day for me.

"It required some weeks to heal the deep gashes made by my knife, and the scars are as bright, after forty years, as they were when the wounds were first closed.

"But if the scars in the flesh were all, it would have been comparatively a trifle. But the soul was wounded as well as the body. The conscience was defiled with guilt. Tears of repentance could not wipe away the stain. Nothing but the blood of Christ could give health to the wounded spirit.

"As wounds leave scars, so, my dear child, youthful sins leave the traces of their existence. Like the scars of the healed wound, they disfigure and weaken the soul. The follies of youth may be overcome, but they are always sure to leave their mark. Every sin of childhood hangs like a weight upon the neck of manhood. The blood of Jesus Christ alone cleanseth from all sin."

COALS OF FIRE

Guy Morgan came in from school with rapid step and impetuous manner. His mother looked up from her work. There was a round, red spot on his cheek, and an ominous glitter in his eyes. She knew the signs. His naturally fierce temper had been stirred in some way to a heat that had kindled his whole nature. He tossed down his cap, threw himself on an ottoman at her feet, and then said, with still a little of the heat of his temper in his tone, "Never say, after this, that I don't love you, mother."

"I think I never did say so," she answered gently, as she passed her hand over the tawny locks, and brushed them away from the flushed brow. "But what special thing have you done to prove your love for me just now?"

"Taken a blow without returning it." She bent over and kissed her boy. He was fifteen years old, a tall fellow with strong muscles; but he had not grown above liking his mother's kisses.

Then she said softly, "Tell me all about it, Guy."

"O, it was Dick Osgood! You know what a mean fellow he is, anyhow. He had been tormenting some of the younger boys till I could not stand it. Every one of them is afraid of him.

"I told him he ought to be ashamed of himself, and tried to make him leave off, till, after a while, he turned from them, and coming to me, he struck me in the face. I believe the mark is there now;" and he turned the other cheek toward his mother. Her heart was filled with sympathy and secret indignation.

"Well," she said, "and you—what did you do?"

"I remembered what I had promised you for this year, and I took it—think of it, mother—took it, and never touched him! I just looked into his eyes, and said, 'If I should strike you back, I should lower myself to your level.'

"He laughed a great, scornful laugh, and said, 'You hear, boys, Morgan's turned preacher. You'd better wait, sir, before you lecture me on my behavior to the little ones, till you have pluck enough to defend them. I've heard about the last impudence I shall from a coward like you.'

"The boys laughed, and some of them said, 'Good for you, Osgood!' and I came home. I had done it for the sake of my promise to you! for I'm stronger than he is, any day; and *you* know, mother, whether there's a drop of coward's blood in my veins. I thought you were the one to comfort me; though it isn't comfort I want so much, either. I just want you to release me from that promise, and let me go back and thrash him."

Mrs. Morgan's heart thrilled with silent thanksgiving. Her boy's temper had been her greatest grief. His father was dead, and she had brought him up alone, and sometimes she was afraid her too great tenderness had spoiled him.

She had tried in vain to curb his passionate nature. It was a power which no bands could bind. She had concluded at last that the only hope was in enlisting his own powerful will, and making him resolve to conquer himself. Now he had shown himself capable of self-control. In the midst of his anger he had remembered his pledge to her, and had kept it. He would yet be his own master,—this brave boy of hers,—and the kingdom of his own mind would be a goodly sovereignty.

"Better heap coals of fire on his head!" she said quietly.

"Yes, he deserves a good scorching,"—pretending to misunderstand her,—"but I should not have thought *you* would be so revengeful."

"You know well enough what kind of coals I mean, and *who* it was that said, 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.' I can not release you from your promise till the year for which you made it is over.

"I think that the Master who told us to render good for evil, understood all the wants and passions of humanity better than any other teacher has ever understood them. I am sure that what He

said must be wise and right and best. I want you to try His way first. If that fails, there will be time enough after this year to make a different experiment."

"Well, I promised you," he said, "and I'll show you that, at least, I'm strong enough to keep my word until you release me from it. I think, though, you don't quite know how hard it is."

Mrs. Morgan knew that it was very hard for a true, brave-hearted boy to be called a coward; but she knew, also, that the truest bravery on earth is the bravery of endurance.

"Look out for the coals of fire!" she said smilingly, as her boy started for school the next morning. "Keep a good watch, and I'm pretty sure you'll find them before the summer is over."

But he came home at night depressed and a little gloomy. There had always been a sort of rivalry between him and Dick Osgood, and now the boys seemed to have gone over to the stronger side, and he had that bitter feeling of humiliation and disgrace, which is as bitter to a boy as the sense of defeat ever is to a man.

The weeks went on, and the feeling wore away a little. Still the memory of that blow rankled in Guy's mind, and made him unsocial and ill at ease. His mother watched him with some anxiety, but did not interfere. She had the true wisdom to leave him to learn some of the lessons of life alone.

At length came the last day of school, followed next day by a picnic, in which all the scholars, superintended by their teachers, were to join.

Guy Morgan hesitated a little and then concluded to go. The place selected was a lovely spot, known in all the neighborhood as "the old mill." It was on the banks of the Quassit River, where the stream ran fast, and the grass was green, and great trees with drooping boughs shut away the July sunlight.

Among the rest were Dick Osgood and his little sister Hetty, the one human being whom he seemed really and tenderly to love. The teacher's eyes were on him for this one day, and he did not venture to insult the older scholars or domineer over the little ones. He and Guy kept apart as much as they conveniently could; and Guy entered into the spirit of the day, and really enjoyed it much better than he had anticipated.

Dinner was spread on the grass, and though it was eaten with pewter spoons, and out of crockery of every hue and kind, it was certainly eaten with greater enjoyment and keener appetite than if it had been served in the finest dining room.

They made dinner last as long as they could, and then they scattered here and there, to enjoy themselves as they liked.

On the bridge, just above the falls, stood a little group, fishing. Among them were Dick Osgood and his sister. Guy Morgan, always deeply interested in the study of botany, was a little distance away, with one of the teachers, pulling in pieces a curious flower.

Suddenly a wild cry arose above the sultry stillness of the summer afternoon and the hum of quiet voices round. It was Dick Osgood's cry: "She's in, boys! Hetty's in the river, and *I* can't swim. O, save her! save her! Will *no* one try?"

Before the words were out of his lips, they all saw Guy Morgan coming with flying feet,—a race for life. He unbuttoned coat and vest as he ran, and cast them off as he neared the bridge. He kicked off his shoes, and threw himself over.

They heard him strike the water. He went under, rose again, and then struck out toward the golden head, which just then rose for the second time. Every one who stood there lived moments which seemed hours.

Mr. Sharp, the teacher with whom Guy had been talking, and some of the boys, got a strong rope, and running down the stream, threw it out on the water just above the falls, where Guy could reach it if he could get so near the shore—*if!*

The water was very deep where Hetty had fallen in, and the river ran fast. It was sweeping the poor child on, and Dick Osgood threw himself upon the bridge, and sobbed and screamed. When

she rose the third time, she was near the falls. A moment more and she would go over, down on the jagged, cruel rocks beneath.

But that time Guy Morgan caught her—caught her by her long, glistening, golden hair. Mr. Sharp shouted to him. He saw the rope, and swam toward it, his strong right arm beating the water back with hammer-strokes—his left motionless, holding his white burden.

"O God!" Mr. Sharp prayed fervently, "keep him up, spare his strength a little longer, a little longer!" A moment more and he reached the rope and clung to it desperately, while teacher and boys drew the two in over the slippery edge, out of the horrible, seething waters, and took them in their arms. But they were both silent and motionless. Mr. Sharp spoke Guy's name, but he did not answer. Would either of them ever answer again?

Teachers and scholars went to work alike for their restoration. It was well that there was intelligent guidance, or their best efforts might have failed.

Guy, being the stronger, was first to revive. "Is Hetty safe?" he asked.

"Only God knows?" Mr. Sharp answered. "We are doing our best."

It was almost half an hour before Hetty opened her blue eyes. Meantime Dick had been utterly frantic and helpless. He had sobbed and groaned and even prayed, in a wild fashion of his own, which perhaps the pitying Father understood and answered.

When he heard his sister's voice, he was like one beside himself with joy; but Mr. Sharp quieted him by a few low, firm words, which no one else understood.

Some of the larger girls arranged one of the wagons, and received Hetty into it.

Mr. Sharp drove home with Guy Morgan. When he reached his mother's gate, Guy insisted on going in alone. He thought it might alarm her to see some one helping him; besides, he wanted her a few minutes quite to himself. So Mr. Sharp drove away, and Guy went in. His mother saw him coming, and opened the door.

"Where have you been?" she cried, seeing his wet, disordered plight.

"In Quassit River, mother, fishing out Hetty Osgood."

Then, while she was busying herself with preparations for his comfort, he quietly told his story. His mother's eyes were dim, and her heart throbbed chokingly.

"O, if *you* had been drowned, my boy, my darling!" she cried, hugging him close, wet as he was. "If I had been there, Guy, I couldn't have let you do it."

"I went in after the coals of fire, mother."

Mrs. Morgan knew how to laugh as well as to cry over her boy. "I've heard of people smart enough to set the river on fire," she said, "but you are the first one I ever knew who went in there after the coals."

The next morning came a delegation of the boys, with Dick Osgood at their head. Every one was there who had seen the blow which Dick struck, and heard his taunts afterward. They came into the sitting room, and said their say to Guy before his mother. Dick was spokesman.

"I have come," he said, "to ask you to forgive me. I struck you a mean, unjustifiable blow. You received it with noble contempt. To provoke you into fighting, I called you a coward, meaning to bring you down by some means to my own level. You bore that, too, with a greatness I was not great enough to understand; but I do understand it now.

"I have seen you—all we boys have seen you—face to face with Death, and have seen that you were not afraid of him. You fought with him, and came off ahead; and we all are come to do honor to the bravest boy in town; and I to thank you for a life a great deal dearer and better worth saving than my own."

Dick broke down just there, for the tears choked him.

Guy was as grand in his forgiveness as he had been in his forbearance.

Hetty and her father and mother came afterward, and Guy found himself a hero before he knew it. But none of it all moved him as did his mother's few fond words, and the pride in her joyful eyes.

He had kept, with honor and with peace, his pledge to her, and he had his reward. The Master's way of peace had not missed him.

LYMAN DEAN'S TESTIMONIALS

I do not believe two more excellent people could be found than Gideon Randal and his wife. To lift the fallen and to minister to the destitute was their constant habit and delight. They often sacrificed their own comforts for the benefit of others. In vain their friends protested at this course; Gideon Randal's unfailing reply was:—

"I think there's enough left to carry Martha and me through life, and some besides. What we give to the poor, we lend to the Lord, and if a dark day comes, He will provide."

The "dark day" came; but it was not until he had reached the age of three score and ten years. As old age came upon him, and his little farm became less productive, debts accumulated. Being forced to raise money, he had borrowed a thousand dollars of Esquire Harrington, giving him a mortgage on his home for security. But as the interest was regularly paid, his creditor was well satisfied. However, Mr. Harrington died suddenly, and his son, a merciless, grasping man, wrote Mr. Randal, demanding payment of the mortgage.

Vainly did the old man plead for an extension of time. The demand was pressed to such an extent that it even become a threat to deprive him of his home unless payment were made within a given time.

"Martha," he said to his wife, "young Harrington is a hard man. He has me in his power, and he will not scruple to ruin me. I think I would better go and talk with him, telling him how little I have. It may be he will pity two old people, and allow us better terms."

"But husband, you are not used to traveling; Harrowtown is a hundred miles away, and you are old and feeble too."

"True, wife; but I can talk much better than I can write, and besides, Luke Conway lives there, you remember. I took an interest in him when he was a poor boy; perhaps he will advise and help us, now that we are in trouble."

At last, since he felt that he must go, Mrs. Randal reluctantly consented, and fitted him out for the journey with great care.

The next morning was warm and sunny for November, and the old man started for Harrowtown.

"Gideon," called Mrs. Randal as he walked slowly down the road, "be sure to take tight hold of the railing, when you get in and out of the cars."

"I'll be careful, Martha," and with one more "good bye" wave of his hand, the old man hurried on to take the stage, which was to carry him to the station. But misfortune met him at the very outset. The stage was heavily loaded, and on the way, one of the wheels broke down; this caused such a delay that Mr. Randal missed the morning train, and the next did not come for several hours.

It was afternoon when he finally started. He became anxious and weary from long waiting, and after three stations were passed, he became nervous, and worried.

"How long before we reach Harrowtown?" he inquired, stopping the busy conductor.

"At half past eight."

Another question was upon Mr. Randal's lips, but the conductor was gone. "Not reach there until evening!" he exclaimed to himself in dismay, "and pitch dark, for there's no moon now; I shall not know where to go!"

Presently the conductor passed again. "Mr. Conductor, will you kindly tell me when to get out? I've never been to Harrowtown, and I don't want to stop at the wrong place."

"Give yourself no uneasiness," was the polite reply, "I'll let you know; I will not forget you."

Soothed by this assurance, the old man settled back in his seat and finally went to sleep.

In the seat behind him sat a tall, handsome boy. His name was Albert Gregory. He was bright and intelligent, but there was an expression of cruelty about his mouth, and a look about his eyes that was cold and unfeeling. This lad saw the old man fall asleep, and he nudged his companion:—

"See here, John, by and by I'll play a good joke on that old country greeny, and you'll see fun."

On rushed the train; mile after mile was passed. Daylight faded, and the lamps were lighted in the cars, and still the old man slept, watched by his purposed tormentor and the other boy, who wanted to see "the fun."

At last the speed of the train began to slacken. They were nearing a station. Albert sprang up and shook Mr. Randal violently.

"Wake up! wake up!" he called sharply. "This is Harrowtown. You must get off here!"

Thus roughly roused, the old man started from his seat and gazed around in a bewildered way. The change from daylight to darkness, the unaccustomed awakening on a moving train, and the glare of the lights added tenfold to his confusion.

"Wh—what did you say, boy?" he asked helplessly.

"This is Harrowtown. The place where you want to stop. You must get off. Be quick, or you'll be carried by."

The noise of the brakes, and ignorance of the real locality on the part of those near enough to have heard him, prevented any correction of the boy's cruel falsehood.

Mr. Randal knew it was not the conductor who had aroused him; but, supposing Albert to be some employee of the road, he hurried to the car door with tottering steps. The name of the station was called at the other end of the car,—a name quite unlike that of "Harrowtown," but his dull ears did not notice it. He got off upon the platform, and before he could recover himself or knew his error, the train was again in motion.

Albert was in ecstasies over the success of his "joke," and shook all over with laughter, in which, of course, his companion joined. "O dear! that's jolly fun!" he cried, "isn't it, John?"

John assented that it was very funny indeed.

Neither of the boys had noticed that the seat lately occupied by the poor old man had just been taken by a fine-looking gentleman, wrapped in a heavy cloak, who appeared to be absorbed in his own thoughts, but who really heard every word they said.

They kept up a brisk conversation, Albert speaking in a loud tone, for he was feeling very merry. "Ha, ha, ha!—but I did think the old fool would hear the brakeman call the station, though. I didn't suppose I could get him any farther than the door. To think of his clambering clear out on the platform, and getting left! He believed every word I told him. What a delicious old simpleton!"

And having exhausted that edifying subject for the moment, he presently began to boast of his plans and prospects.

"I don't believe you stand much of a chance there; they say Luke Conway's awful particular," the stranger heard John remark.

"Pooh! shut up!" cried Albert. "Particular! That's just it, and that makes my chance all the better. I've brought the kind of recommendations that a particular man wants, you see."

"But there'll be lots of other fellows trying for the place."

"Don't care if there's fifty," said Albert, "I'd come in ahead of 'em all. I've got testimonials of character and qualifications from Prof. Howe, Rev. Joseph Lee, Dr. Henshaw, and Esq. Jenks, the great railroad contractor. His name alone is enough to secure me the situation."

At this, the gentleman on the next seat turned and gave Albert a quick, searching glance. But the conceited boy was too much occupied with himself to notice the movement, and kept on talking. Now and then the thought of the victim whom he had so cruelly deceived seemed to come back and amuse him amazingly.

"Wonder where the old man is now. Ha, ha! Do you suppose he has found out where Harrowtown is? Oh, but wasn't it rich to see how scared he was when I awoke him? And how he jumped and scrambled out of the car! 'Pon my word, I never saw anything so comical."

Here the stranger turned again and shot another quick glance, this time from indignant eyes, and his lips parted as if about to utter a stern reproof. But he did not speak.

We will now leave Albert and his fellow-travelers, and follow good Gideon Randal.

It was quite dark when he stepped from the cars. "Can you tell me where I can find Mr. Aaron Harrington?" he inquired of a man at the station.

"There's no such man living here, to my knowledge," was the reply.

"What, isn't this Harrowtown?" asked Mr. Randal, in great consternation.

"No, it is Whipple Village."

"Then I got out at the wrong station. What shall I do?" in a voice of deep distress.

"Go right to the hotel and stay till the train goes in the morning," said the man, pleasantly.

There was no alternative. Mr. Randal passed a restless night at the hotel, and at an early hour he was again at the station, waiting for the train. His face was pale, and his eye wild and anxious. "The stage broke down, and I missed the first train," thought he, "and then that boy told me to get out here. I've made a bad beginning and I'm afraid this trip will have a bad ending."

There were many passengers walking to and fro on the platform, waiting for the cars to come.

Among them was a plain-featured, honest-looking boy, who had been accompanied to the station by his mother. Just before she bade him "good-bye," she said, "Lyman, look at that pale, sad old man. I don't believe he is used to traveling. Perhaps you can help him along."

As the train came into the station, the lad stepped up to Mr. Randal, and said, respectfully: "Allow me to assist you, sir." Then he took hold of his arm, and guided him into the car to a seat.

"Thank you, my boy. I'm getting old and clumsy, and a little help from a young hand comes timely. Where are you going, if I may ask?"

"To Harrowtown, sir. I saw an advertisement for a boy in a store, and I'm going to try to get the situation. My name is Lyman Dean."

"Ah? I'm sure I wish you success, Lyman, for I believe you're a good boy. You are going to the same place I am. I want to find Aaron Harrington, but I've had two mishaps. I don't know what's coming next."

"I'll show you right where his office is. I've been in Harrowtown a good many times."

Half an hour later, the brakeman shouted the name of the station where they must stop. Lyman assisted Mr. Randal off the train, and walked with him to the principal street. "Here's Mr. Harrington's office," said he.

"Oh, yes, thank you kindly. And now could you tell me where Mr. Luke Conway's place of business is?"

"Why, that's the very gentleman I'm going to see," said Lyman. "His place is just round the corner, only two blocks off."

Mr. Randal was deeply interested. He turned and shook the boy's hand, warmly. "Lyman," he said, "Mr. Conway knows me. I am going to see him by-and-by. I am really obliged to you for your politeness, and wish I could do something for you. I hope Mr. Conway will give you the situation, for you deserve it. If you apply before I get there, tell him Gideon Randal is your friend. Good-by."

Fifteen minutes after found Lyman waiting in the counting-room of Luke Conway's store. Albert Gregory had just preceded him. The merchant was writing, and he had requested the boys to be seated a short time, till he was at leisure. Before he finished his work, a slow, feeble step was heard approaching, and an old man stood in the doorway.

"Luke, don't you remember me?" The merchant looked up at the sound of the voice. Then he sprang from his chair and grasped the old man's hands in both his own.

"Mr. Randal! Welcome, a thousand times welcome, my benefactor!" he exclaimed. Seating his guest, Mr. Conway inquired after his health and comfort, and talked with him as tenderly as a loving son. It was evident to the quick perception of the merchant that the good old man's circumstances had changed, and he soon made it easy for him to unburden his mind.

"Yes, Luke, I am in trouble. Aaron Harrington owns a mortgage on my farm. I can't pay him, and he threatens to take my home," said Mr. Randal, with a quivering lip. "I went to his office, but didn't find him, and I thought may be you'd advise me what to do."

"Mr. Randal," answered the merchant, laying his hand on the old man's shoulder, "almost thirty years ago when I was cold, and hungry, and friendless, you took me in and fed me. Your good wife —God bless her!—made me a suit of clothes with her own hands. You found me work, and you gave me money when I begun the world alone. Much if not all that I am in life I owe to your sympathy and help, my kind old friend. Now I am rich, and you must let me cancel my debt. I shall pay your mortgage to-day. You shall have your home free again."

Mr. Randal wiped great hot tears from his cheeks, and said, in a husky voice, "It is just as I told Martha. I knew, if we lent our money to the Lord, when a dark day came, He would provide."

The reader can imagine the different feelings of the two boys, as they sat witnesses of the scene. The look of derision, that changed to an expression of sickly dismay, on Albert's face, when the old man came in and was so warmly greeted by the merchant, was curiously suggestive. But his usual assurance soon returned. He thought it unlikely that Mr. Randal would recognize him in the daylight, and he determined to put on a bold front.

For a minute the two men continued in conversation. Mr. Conway called up pleasant reminiscences of "Aunt Martha," his boy-life on the farm, and the peace and stillness of the country town. He thought a railway ride of a hundred miles must be quite a hardship for a quiet old man. "It was a long way for you," he said, "Did you have a comfortable journey?"

"Well, I can't quite say that. First, the stage broke down and delayed me. Then I slept in the cars, and a boy played a trick on me, and waked me up, and made me get out at the wrong station, so I had to stay over nigh in Whipple Village. To tell the truth I had a great deal of worriment with one thing and another, getting here; but it's all right now," he added, with a radiant face.

"You shall go with me to my house and rest, as soon as I have dismissed these boys," said Mr. Conway, earnestly; and turning to Albert and Lyman, who anxiously waited, he spoke to them about their errand.

"I suppose you came because you saw my advertisement?"

"Yes, sir," replied both, simultaneously.

"Very well. I believe you came in first," he began, turning to Albert. "What is your name?"

"I am Albert Gregory, sir. I think I can suit you. I've brought testimonials of ability and character from some of the first men—Esq. Jenks, Rev. Joseph Lee, Dr. Henshaw, and others. Here are my letters of recommendation," holding them out for Mr. Conway to take.

"I don't care to see them," returned the merchant, coldly. "I have seen you before. I understand your character well enough for the present."

He then addressed a few words to Lyman Dean.

"I should be very glad of work," said Lyman. "My mother is poor, and I want to earn my living, but I haven't any testimonials."

"Yes, you have," said old Mr. Randal, who was waiting for an opportunity to say that very thing. And then he told the merchant how polite and helpful Lyman had been to him.

Mr. Conway fixed his eyes severely upon the other boy. The contrast between him and young Dean was certainly worth a lesson.

"Albert Gregory," said the merchant, "I occupied the seat in the car in front of you last evening. I heard you exultingly and wickedly boasting how you had deceived a distressed and helpless old man. Mr. Randal, is this the boy who lied to you, and caused you to get out at the wrong station?"

"I declare! Now I do remember him. It is! I'm sure it is," exclaimed the old gentleman, fixing his earnest eyes full upon the crimson face of the young man.

It was useless for Albert to attempt any vindication of himself. His stammered excuses stuck in his throat, and he was glad to hide his mortification by an early escape. Crestfallen, he slunk away, taking all his "testimonials" with him.

"Lyman," said Mr. Conway kindly, "I shall be very glad to employ you in my store. You shall have good pay if you do well, and I am sure you will. You may begin work at once."

Lyman's eyes danced with joy as he left the counting-room to receive his instructions from the head clerk.

Mr. Conway furnished the money to pay the debt due to Mr. Harrington by Mr. Randal, and a heavy load was lifted from the good old farmer's heart. He remained a visitor two or three days in Mr. Conway's house, where he was treated with the utmost deference and attention.

Mr. Conway also purchased for him a suit of warm clothes, and an overcoat, and sent his confidential clerk with him on his return journey to see him safely home. Nor was good Mrs. Randal forgotten. She received a handsome present in money from Mr. Conway, and a message full of grateful affection. Nothing ever after occurred to disturb the lives of the aged and worthy pair.

Albert Gregory secured an excellent situation in New York, but his false character, and his wanton disregard of others' feelings and rights, made him as hateful to his employers as to all his associates, and it soon became necessary for him to seek another place.

He has changed places many times since, and his career has been an unhappy one—another example of the results of frivolous habits and a heartless nature.

Lyman Dean is now a successful merchant, a partner of Mr. Conway, and occupies a high position in society, as an honorable, enterprising man. But best of all, he is a Christian, and finds deep satisfaction and happiness in the service of Him who has said:—

"Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God."

BERT'S THANKSGIVING

At noon on a dreary November day, a lonesome little fellow stood at the door of a cheap eating house, in Boston, and offered a solitary copy of a morning paper for sale to the people passing.

But there were really not many people passing, for it was Thanksgiving day, and the shops were shut, and everybody who had a home to go to, and a dinner to eat, seemed to have gone home to

Bert Hampton, the newsboy, stood trying in vain to sell the last *Extra* left on his hands by the dull business of the morning.

An old man, with a face that looked pinched, and who was dressed in a seedy black coat, stopped at the same doorway, and, with one hand on the latch, he appeared to hesitate between hunger and a sense of poverty, before going in.

It was possible, however, that he was considering whether he could afford himself the indulgence of a morning paper, seeing it was Thanksgiving day; so at least Bert thought, and addressed him accordingly:—

"Buy a paper, sir? All about the fire in East Boston, and arrest of safe-burglars in Springfield. Only two cents."

The little old man looked at the boy, with keen gray eyes which seemed to light up the pinched look of his face, and answered in a shrill voice:—

"You ought to come down in your price, this time of day. You can't expect to sell a morning paper at 12 o'clock for full price."

"Well, give me a cent, then," said Bert. "That's less than cost; but never mind. I'm bound to sell out, anyhow."

"You look cold," said the old man.

"Cold," replied Bert, "I'm nearly froze. And I want my dinner. And I'm going to have a big dinner, too, seeing it's Thanksgiving day."

"Ah! lucky for you, my boy!" said the old man. "You've a home to go to, and friends, too I hope."

"No, sir; no home, and no friend—only my mother." Bert hesitated and grew serious, then suddenly changed his tone—"and Hop Houghton. I told him to meet me here, and we'd have a first-rate Thanksgiving dinner together, for it's no fun to be eating alone Thanksgiving day! It sets a fellow thinking,—if he ever had a home, and then hasn't got a home any more."

"It's more lonesome not to eat at all," said the old man, his gray eyes twinkling. "And what can a boy like you have to think of? Here, I guess I can find one cent for you—though there's nothing in the paper, I know."

The old man spoke with some feeling, his fingers trembled, and somehow he dropped two cents instead of one into Bert's hand.

"Here! you've made a mistake!" cried Bert. "A bargain's a bargain. You've given me a cent too much!"

"No, I didn't,—I never give anybody a cent too much!"

"But—see here!" And Bert showed the two cents, offering to return one.

"No matter," said the old man. "It will be so much less for *my* dinner—that's all."

Bert had instinctively pocketed the pennies, but his sympathies were excited.

"Poor old man!" he thought; "he's seen better days, I guess. Perhaps he's no home. A boy like me can stand it, but I guess it must be hard for him. He meant to give me the odd cent, all the while; and I don't believe he has had a decent dinner for many a day."

All this, which I have been obliged to write out slowly in words, went through Bert's mind like a flash. He was a generous little fellow, and any kindness shown him, no matter how trifling, made his heart overflow.

"Look here," he cried; "where are *you* going to get your dinner, to-day?"

"I can get a bite here as well as anywhere—it don't matter much to me," replied the old man.

"Come; eat dinner with me," said Bert, "I'd like to have you."

"I'm afraid I couldn't afford to dine as you are going to," said the man, with a smile, his eyes twinkling again.

"I'll pay for your dinner!" Bert exclaimed. "Come! we don't have a Thanksgiving but once a year, and a fellow wants a good time then."

"But you are waiting for another boy."

"Oh! Hop Houghton. He won't come now, it's too late. He's gone to a place down in North street, I guess,—a place I don't like, there's so much tobacco smoked and so much beer drank there." Bert cast a final glance up the street, but could see nothing of his friend.

"No, he won't come now. So much the worse for him! He likes the men down there; I don't."

"Ah!" said the man, taking off his hat and giving it a brush with his elbow as they entered the restaurant, as if trying to appear as respectable as he could in the eyes of a newsboy of such fastidious tastes.

To make him feel quite comfortable in his mind on that point, Bert hastened to say:—

"I mean rowdies, and such. Poor people, if they behave themselves, are just as respectable to me as rich folks. I ain't at all aristocratic!"

"Ah, indeed!" And the old man smiled again, and seemed to look relieved. "I'm very glad to hear it."

He placed his hat on the floor, and took a seat opposite Bert at a little table which they had all to themselves. Bert offered him the bill of fare.

"I must ask you to choose for me; nothing very extravagant, you know I am used to plain fare."

"So am I. But I'm going to have a dinner, for once in my life, and so are you," cried Bert, generously. "What do you say to chicken soup—and wind up with a big piece of squash pie! How's that for a Thanksgiving dinner?"

"Sumptuous!" said the old man, appearing to glow with the warmth of the room and the prospect of a good dinner. "But won't it cost you too much?"

"Too much? No, sir!" said Bert. "Chicken soup, fifteen cents; pie—they give tremendous big pieces here, thick, I tell you—ten cents. That's twenty-five cents; half a dollar for two. Of course, I don't do this way every day in the year! But mother's glad to have me, once in a while. Here! waiter!" And Bert gave his princely order as if it were no very great thing for a liberal young fellow like him, after all.

"Where is your mother? Why don't you take dinner with her?" the little man asked.

Bert's face grew sober in a moment.

"That's the question! Why don't I? I'll tell you why I don't. I've got the best mother in the world! What I'm trying to do is to make a home for her, so we can live together, and eat our Thanksgiving dinners together, sometime. Some boys want one thing, some another; there's one goes in for good times, another's in such a hurry to get rich, he don't care much how he does it; but what I want most of anything is to be with my mother and my two sisters again, and I am not ashamed to say so."

Bert's eyes grew very tender, and he went on; while his companion across the table watched him with a very gentle, searching look.

"I haven't been with her now for two years—hardly at all since father died. When his business was settled up,—he kept a little hosiery store on Hanover street,—it was found he hadn't left us anything. We had lived pretty well, up to that time, and I and my two sisters had been to school; but then mother had to do something, and her friends got her places to go out nursing; she's a nurse now. Everybody likes her, and she has enough to do. We couldn't be with her, of course. She got us boarded at a good place, but I saw how hard it was going to be for her to support us, so I said, I'm a

boy; I can do something for myself; you just pay the board for the girls and keep them to school, and I'll go to work, and maybe help you a little, besides taking care of myself."

"What could you do?" said the little old man.

"That's it; I was only eleven years old; and what could I do? What I should have liked would have been some nice place where I could do light work, and stand a chance of learning a good business. But beggars mustn't be choosers. I couldn't find such a place; and I wasn't going to be loafing about the streets, so I went to selling newspapers. I've sold newspapers ever since, and I shall be twelve years old next month."

"You like it?" said the old man.

"I like to get my own living," replied Bert, proudly. "But what I want is, to learn some trade, or regular business, and settle down and make a home for my mother. But there's no use talking about that.

"Well I've told you about myself," added Bert; "now suppose *you* tell *me* something?"

"About myself?"

"Yes. I think that would go pretty well with the pie."

But the man shook his head. "I could go back and tell you about many of my plans and high hopes when I was a lad of your age; but it would be too much like your own story over again. Life isn't what we think it will be, when we are young. You'll find that out soon enough. I am all alone in the world now; and I am nearly seventy years old."

"It must be so lonely, at your age! What do you do for a living?"

"I have a little place in Devonshire street. My name is Crooker. You'll find me up two nights of stairs, back room at the right. Come and see me, and I'll tell you all about my business and perhaps help you to such a place as you want, for I know several business men. Now don't fail."

And Mr. Crooker wrote his address, with a little stub of a pencil, on a corner of the newspaper which had led to their acquaintance, tore it off carefully, and gave it to Bert.

Thereupon the latter took a card from his pocket, and handed it across the table to his new friend.

The old man read the card, with his sharp gray eyes, which glowed up funnily at Bert, seeming to say, "Isn't this rather aristocratic for a twelve-year-old news-boy?"

Bert blushed and explained:—

"Got up for me by a printer's boy I know. I had done some favors for him, and so he made me a few cards. Handy to have sometimes, you know."

"Well, Herbert," said the old man, "I'm glad to make your acquaintance, and I hope you'll come and see me. You'll find me in very humble quarters; but you are not aristocratic, you say. Now won't you let me pay for my dinner? I believe I have money enough. Let me see." And he put his hand in his pocket.

Bert would not hear of such a thing; but walked up to the desk, and settled the bill with the air of a person who did not regard a trifling expense.

When he looked around again, the little old man was gone.

"Now mind; I'll go and see him the first chance I have," said Bert, as he looked at the penciled strip of newspaper margin again before putting it into his pocket.

He then went round to his miserable quarters, in the top of a cheap lodging-house, and prepared himself at once to go and see his mother. He could not afford to ride, and it was a long walk,—at least five miles to the place where his mother was nursing.

On the following Monday, Bert, having a leisure hour, went to call on his new acquaintance in Devonshire street.

Having climbed the two nights, he found the door of the back room at the right ajar, and, looking in, saw Mr. Crooker at a desk, in the act of receiving a roll of money from a well-dressed visitor.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.