

Mr. Gatherwick's Prodigal

"Dawson stay behind to-night; I wish to speak to you," said Mr. Gatherwick in a peremptory voice one day when that dusty summer was merging into autumn. He was opening his private door as he spoke, and he passed in and shut it to with an ominous click.

Mr. McCallum twirled round on his stool to inspect the delinquent. "What pranks have you been up to now, Davidson?"

"None that I know of," was the answer; "unless— There he stopped, with a sudden fear that he did know, and that there would be a bad half hour before him. How it could have come to his master's ears puzzled him; he had never mentioned Mr. Maurice's name even to McCallum.

"Well, returned Mr. McCallum curiously, "there is something, and you know that quite well. Better make a clean breast of it at once. Don't wait till it's a case of disappearing, like—well—like some one who shall be nameless. The downward track is easy, but there's no turning back, mind."

"There ought to be a turning back," said Davidson gloomily; "it's hard lines if one slip is to be reckoned up against one always."

Mr. McCallum whistled. "So you have been slipping. I thought as much, and you cannot say I have not warned you often enough against trying that prodigal business."

With a solemn shake of the head, Mr. McCallum turned round to his desk again. There were sounds of some one moving about the inner office, and Mr. Gatherwick might reappear at any moment; and in much uneasiness of spirit Davidson also went on with his invoicing.

"Now, then," began Mr. Gatherwick sternly, when six had arrived and, very unwillingly, McCallum had retired downstairs—"How long have you been in communication with my son, may I ask?"

"Since last January," came the unwilling answer.

"Indeed, knowing it to be against my orders."

"I didn't know it, sir," said Davidson, blushing at his own audacity. "You never said we were not to speak to him, and Mr. Maurice was very kind to me when he was here."

"It is not to happen again," said Maurice's father decidedly. "I will have no go-between in this office. Mr. Maurice ought to have known better than to employ you in such a capacity."

"He had no thought of any such thing," began the culprit earnestly; "and he's working so hard, he that—"

"That is enough," interrupted his master. "Pay attention to what I have said.—That is all; you may go now."

Davidson's strongest point was not vacant; he went down disconsolately. At the end of the street he encountered McCallum; not that that gentleman was waiting there for the purpose, only seeing—as he mentally phrased it—that there was a screw loose somewhere, it was but considerate to try to put it right, the first step of course being to find out which screw it was.

But that was the difficulty. Davidson flatly declined to give him any information about the matter, and thereby laid the foundation of a coolness that for weeks after completely took the gift off those constitutional half-hours before closing-time.

Winter set in early that year, early and very bleakly. Week after week the bitter east winds went driving down the streets which Maurice Gatherwick trudged daily back and forth, scantily clothed, and often scantily fed; little wonder that he felt it keenly.

"I think we must be growing old, Nell," he remarked one night as he came in with blue fingers and chattering teeth. "I used to enjoy frost and snow thoroughly, instead of shivering along after this fashion. They say you do feel the cold more when you are getting on in life."

"It is a new overcoat you are needing Maurice," she said, stirring the tiny fire to a blaze. "Couldn't we manage one? It is such a long way to that office, and you must keep well."

"Nell, do you know how much cash I possess at this present moment? Just three-and-ninety. If you persuade any tailor to furnish one for that, you are heartily welcome to try. Afterwards you might look up a shoemaker on the same terms; I am needing boots worse still; look at those."

Nell shook her head.

"Well, well," said Maurice, with an attempt at looking resigned, "another month, and the worst of the winter will be over, if we can only hold out."

It—Before that month was over, the prodigal's brief career was ended. Utterly unfitted for the battle, either by nature or training, it ended as any one might have safely foretold from the first. One morning he was not equal to going down to the office; he would rest and go fresh to-morrow; but to-morrow he did not want to leave his bed, and a cheap doctor had to be hastily sent for. The doctor spoke of a touch of palsy, and a consultation below par, and promised to send in a bottle of medicine and come again to-morrow.

Nell put on her bonnet after dark and raved round to Davidson's lodging. "He looks so ill," he sobbed out. "Oh, do go and tell his father; he wants better food, and so many things we cannot get."

"It'll not make any difference, Mrs. Maurice. You don't know what Mr. Gatherwick is when he makes up his mind."

"But for his own son. Do go and tell him," pleaded Nell.

"It's as much as my place is worth," said Davidson, against beyond measure. "But it's Mr. Maurice I'll try it."

Nell went back to her husband. Davidson buttoned up his coat without giving himself time to think, and hurried off to the dull stately house where Maurice had been born and brought up.

"See Mr. Gatherwick! Why, he's just at dinner," said the scandalized man to whom he made his request.

"Dinner or not, you must tell him it's important."

The man debated for a moment; he was new to the situation, and perhaps scarcely realized the risk. He opened a door close by, and Davidson could hear the message delivered.

"There's the young man from the office, sir, Davidson by name, wishing to see you, and won't take no denial."

"Davidson? Show him in."

With his first glance down the brilliantly lighted table, there flashed across the visitor some odd fancy about the fatted calf; it was there in abundance; but this father was eating it alone.

"Well, what has brought you out here?" demanded Mr. Gatherwick without laying down his fork.—"You leave the room," with a glance at the man in waiting.

"It's Mr. Maurice, sir; he's very ill, and his wife's frightened about him. She's too poor to get him what he ought to have."

At that same table—Davidson could have touched the spot with his hand—had once stood Maurice's chair. Perhaps Mr. Gatherwick thought of it also for one fleeting instant before he remembered his principles.

"The old story," he said impatiently. "We have heard it all before. I thought I told you some time ago that I would have no communication between you."

"And I have never been there since," said Davidson; "but—for the first time daring to assert myself in opposition to the great Mr. Gatherwick—I've not forgotten him, and I'm going straight to him now."

The fatted calf might have played unnoted in its native fields, for all Mr. Gatherwick consumed after his clerk's departure. He had believed in and stood by certain rules and principles all his life; his son had gone counter to both, if he were to bring him back to-morrow and put him in the old place, how long would it last? Could he risk that sore disgrace a second time? Possibly at no distant date. This exile meant more to him than it could to Maurice. He had lost the most by it; a solitary old age stretched before him; better that, than to build up fresh plans with a broken faith for foundation. Maurice was young, and would find out new interests—may, had found them already. Nothing ever troubled him long thought the father bitterly; and he sat still and made no sign, while the slow hours ticked themselves past.

Davidson went away to McCallum in the sudden revolt, and told him the tale of Maurice's wrongs. McCallum listened in much perplexity. His theories about prodigals were well known; had he not reiterated them over and over again in Davidson's unwilling ears? And yet he, too, had liked Mr. Maurice; prodigals often are rather likeable people—he would go and see him at any rate, and there would be no harm done if they took some jelly or wine with them.

"I believe it was black currant jelly they used to give me when I was ill," he remarked on the way. "We had better buy a pot—it's said to be strengthening stuff, if you give it a fair trial."

This patient was past giving it a fair trial; he smiled faintly up in McCallum's perplexed face—talked a little disconnectedly about Nell, and his father, and school-pranks long ago—and finally drifted away to a much farther country just before day-break.

Nell laid her face down on the pillow beside him with a burst of passionate tears. "We were poor, and hungry, and cold often; but he never said an unkind word to either mother or me since the first day we saw him; and I'll love him—I'll love the very sound of his name all the days of my life."

And some of us—not prodigals by several degrees—need not complain if we get no better epitaph.

There is something to be said on both sides. Was ever yet a flawless unsatisfiable case recorded? Cheap victories are worth little. Mr. Gatherwick vindicated his principles thoroughly, carried them out to the end; but there are times when he sits alone at night, listening to that clock ticking out the hours, and feels that he would give all his wealth for one sight of the young face that lapsed out of the march long before its time, for lack of a helping word he might have spoken—a hand that he might have stretched out.

(The End.)

THE MARRIAGEABLE AGE.

The ages at which the inhabitants of some European countries are considered capable of aspirations for the matrimonial noose are as follows: Germany, France and Belgium, man 18, woman 15 years of age; Spain, Portugal Greece and Switzerland, man 14, woman 12; Austria, man and woman, 14; Russia and Saxony, man 18, woman, 16; in Hungary Catholic youths of 14 may wed maidens of 12, but Protestants are supposed to require maturer age to know their own minds, as the age of the young man must be 18 and the woman 15.

GOOD WORK FOR A WHOLE YEAR.

Customers—Do you guarantee these porous plasters to be good for a week back? Druggist—Yes, sir; they are good for a week back—and for a month to come after you put them on.

HIS SOURCE.

Tommy, whose questions had been legion.—Pa, where did Adam get the names for all the animals? Father, absently.—From the dictionary, of course.

THE PROGRESS OF QUEBEC.

THE OLD CITY MOVES IN A SOMEWHAT LEISURELY FASHION.

Folk Down There Look on New Things as not in Keeping with the Rest of the Scenery—The Following Remarks Apply to Other Places as Well.

Hon. Francois Langlois, in an article in La Semaine Commerciale, of Quebec, after complimenting Mr. Barthe, the editor, upon the truths contained in a recent article by him entitled "Les Elements du Progress," proceeds:—

"All those enterprises which have prevented the grass from growing in the streets of Quebec have met with the same objections as those of which you speak in connection with the electric railway. Whenever something new is spoken of, some one says 'all castles in the air, it might do in Montreal but it is useless in Quebec; it is useless to think of it.' Seventeen years ago my brothers and myself obtained a charter to build the Quebec Montmorency & Charlevoix railway, and I applied to all the capitalists who had money to embark in the enterprise without avail. It was useless for me to show them that the pilgrim traffic alone would pay the road's way—none of them would risk their money. And notice that I only applied to men who had thousands upon thousands of dollars lying in the banks at 4 per cent; but they would risk nothing. You know the popular proverb, 'Who risks nothing has nothing.'"

"Well, I found it true in this instance. We were obliged in the end to sell our rights to Mr. Beemer for a mess of pottage, and to-day the road is probably the best paying one in Canada, but Quebec does not profit by it. The same may be the case with the electric railway, which has been talked about for years, and should have been spoken of long before in view of the advantages for such an enterprise furnished by the motive power of Montmorency Falls. It was only because Mr. Beemer could not float his scheme in New York that Quebec has not totally lost the benefits of the enterprise. For thirty years past it has been the same old story. In 1864 the late Hon. G. Brasse and the Messrs. Cote, on my advice decided to start the first boot and shoe factory here, and it was necessary to see them at work, as I did, to believe what difficulties they had to encounter. The same people who, with a knowing air exclaim, whenever a new enterprise is spoken of, 'what fools; nothing of the kind can ever succeed in Quebec, though it might in Montreal; they will lose their money.' These same people, or others of their kind, did all they could to discourage them. And as these parties occupied many of the highest places in the Quebec financial world, they for years shut the bank doors against this growing enterprise which had just then so much

NEED OF ENCOURAGEMENT. One day when I asked a bank cashier to discount one of Mr. Bresse's notes for \$500, endorsed by Messrs. Cote & Cote, our brave banker who was as weak on French as on finance, replied: 'On ne discompte pas pour les cordonniers.' Would you believe it, but I myself was obliged to endorse Mr. Bresse's notes in order to have them discounted for him. He wanted to devote himself to the industry and was considered almost as a robber. But at the same time rotten paper for certain wood merchants was discounted to the extent of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Then what happened? The boot and shoe industry, owing to the work, energy and intelligence of those who had commenced it, and our banks made their shareholders, almost all of them Quebecers lose millions of money. We have heard talk of the losses sustained by our city through fires, but what are they compared to those caused by our banks? If all this money had been invested in industries, possibly some of it would still have been lost, but never a tenth of what has been swallowed up in the lumber trade. Moreover, a large number of these industries would have survived and contributed to

THE PROSPERITY OF THE CITY. "But Quebec is not the only place where people are ready to criticize those who wish to undertake some thing new and call them brainless fools, was in Ottawa when its electric railway was built. Ottawa owes it to two young men, Messrs. Ahern and Soper. For twenty years previously the city had had a car service which hardly paid for the oats eaten by the horses, although it passed through the best streets and when these young men spoke of constructing an electric railway in the minor streets, these smart Alecks, who always knew more than anyone else, began to laugh at them and predict that they would lose all the money which they had made out of building the C. P. R. telegraph line. Messrs. Ahern and Soper let them laugh and set to work. In two months they had completed their road, and inside of a year they had absorbed the horse cars. To-day stock in the Ottawa Street Railway Company is one of the best paying in the country. I am convinced that the same will be the case with that of Quebec. Not only that, but as in Ottawa, it will awaken the dormant spirit of enterprise in our people and effect a revolution in the city.

"Nothing succeeds like success," and when people see this, they will no longer listen to these croakers, who always say that nothing can succeed in Quebec and they will then no longer leave their money in the savings bank where it goes to feed the commerce of Montreal. Then and then only shall we see the spirit of enterprise reawaken in our citizens."

FROM THE EAST. Master of the Seraglio—Ha, ha, Most illustrious, I have had the most delicious joke, I told your wives that you were dead and you should have heard them wail.

The Sultan—What a harem-scarem follow you are to be sure.

YOUNG FOLKS.

THE FAIRY SISTERS.

There was once a little maiden. And she had a mirror bright; It was rimmed about with silver; 'Twas her pride and her delight. But she found two fairy sisters Lived within this pretty glass. And very different faces showed, To greet the little lass.

If she was sweet and sunny. Why, it was sure to be The smiling sister who looked out Her happy face to see. But if everything went criss-cross, And she wore a frown or pout, Alas! Alas! within the glass The frowning one looked out.

Now this little maiden loved so much The smiling face to see, That she resolved with all her heart A happy child to be. To grow more sweet and loving, She tried with might and main, Till the frowning sister went away, And ne'er came back again.

But if she's looking for a home, As doubtless is the case, She'll try to find a little girl Who has a gloomy face. So be very, very careful, If you own a mirror, too, That the frowning sister doesn't come And make her home with you.

RUTH'S DISCARDED SCHEME. "Could you analyze all those sentences from Paradise Lost?" "No, indeed, not the half of them. Did you master them? They're tougher than pine knots."

"No, I confess some of the constructions mastered me. I sat up as long as mother would allow me, and dreamed of them all night. I suppose I shall have to respond with 'not prepared' when my name is called to-day, and I hate that of all things."

It was the new scholar who spoke. She was an earnest student, as well as a most attractive girl, and Ruth Hastings had grown quite attached to her in the few weeks of their acquaintance. Ruth gave her friend's arm an affectionate little squeeze as she answered lightly:

"O, I shall not do that, nor will you have to either. Ralph and I have it all planned. We shall just start Professor Morris on an argument in the very first sentence and no one will be called upon after that."

"I do not quite understand you."

"O, it's a scheme we often work on the professor when we haven't our lessons well prepared. You have been here so short a time that you have not caught it yet I presume. You must have noticed, however, that our teacher is exceedingly fond of argument?"

"Yes I have thought it was almost a weakness of his—though I do not like to be critical."

"Such a decided weakness, that we have learned to turn it to good account to escape bad marks. When not well prepared we just spring some knotty question upon him—if possible some point about which grammarians differ—and then when he undertakes to explain it some of the smart ones like Ralph will disagree with him and the work is done. He not only will not yield a point himself, but is never satisfied until he has made you yield yours; so he talks on and on reviewing the history of language from Sanscrit, if necessary to his point and first thing he knows, the recitation hour is past, the bell rings, he jerks out his watch, examines it nervously and says: 'We will review to-day's lesson on the morrow.' We go home chuckling at having gained an extra study period on a difficult lesson."

The expression on the new scholar's face which had at first been simply one of curiosity, became suddenly grave and she offered no reply. Ruth looked at her inquiringly.

"Isn't it a scheme?" she asked.

"Yes—it certainly is a scheme—but is it exactly—" her face flushed and she seemed unwilling to go on.

"Exactly what?"

"Why, is it really honest?"

"Honest!" exclaimed Ruth, almost stopping upon the sidewalk in her astonishment. "Why, what possible dishonesty can there be in a pupil's asking questions of his teachers? They are employed to give us information, are they not?"

"Certainly; but I understood you to say that you did not ask for the sake of information, but simply to evade a recitation."

"O yes, of course, if you wish to strain a point; but all the class do it at least you are the only one I've heard object to it. They all seem to enjoy the sport, and really I cannot see what harm it does the professor."

"I was not thinking of the harm to him—although you own that he is annoyed when made conscious of the lapse of time—I was thinking of the harm to you, or whoever is party to the act."

"And what is that, pray?"

Mary Bennett hesitated. She had not meant to preach, and she did not enjoy criticizing her friends, especially a whole class of them, and such new ones, too.

"Come out with it! I promise not to be offended. I shall like you all the better if you do not always agree with me."

"Well, then, if you will pardon my saying so, it seems to me that acting from any other than perfectly sincere motives must always be in a degree damaging to character, a weakening of the mainspring of Christian purpose."

They were at the recitation hall now and companions were joining them. Mary lowered her voice as she added: "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts."

Ruth pressed her hand cordially. "Thank you," she said, "I never looked at it in that light before. I'm so apt to see just the fun in things."

In the vestibule they met Ruth's cousin Ralph. Ruth drew him to one side and whispered hurriedly.

"Don't work the scheme on Professor Morris to-day. I'll tell you about it later. You have your lesson anyway."

"All right, coz, just as you say." When Ruth's name was called she answered bravely, "Not well prepared to-day," but although her face flushed there was a warm glow of approving conscience within.

ORDERLY GIRLS.

Some girls have a knack of always looking nice. No matter when you see them, whether it be at the earliest morning hour or at any other time during the day, they are always just so. Then, again, if you know them well you find out that they have also a very happy way of making things last.

Such desirable accomplishments are nothing more nor less than the results of careful training in early years. A child should be taught to be systematic in habits from its earliest years. There is nothing harder to uproot or change than slovenly ways. The love of order, precision and neatness are jewels in a girl's character.

The secret of all this lies in nothing more nor less than being careful. Do not remove the hat and toss it upon a shelf in the wardrobe or hang it upon a peg, where it is apt to be knocked or crushed out of shape by hanging garments. Always have a hat box and a small, soft whisk brush, and give it a few touches just to remove the dust that must have accumulated. Then put it away. The same way with your dresses. After use brush and fold and put them away and remove any soiled places as soon as discovered. Lace and ribbons should be folded and straightened out each time and put away after use. The gloves should not be thrown down carelessly, all crumpled up, but if pulled out and stretched and put away in a proper receptacle one will get twice the wear out of them and always look better at the same time. It is such traits as these that when seen in the girl foretell what the wife will prove.

KEEPS A CORPSE IN STOCK.

How an Undertaker Advertises His Embalming Skill.

An Ohio undertaker named Pearce doesn't allow sentiment to interfere with business. He can't see why the shoemaker adjoining his establishment should advertise his skill by displaying his samples of the tailor across the street hang his latest sartorial confection in his front window, while the embalmer's good work has to find a lodgment beneath six feet of earth almost as soon as it has been accomplished.

Mark Twain, when he was shown the mummy of a Pharaoh who lived in the time of Moses, shrugged shoulders with contemptuous indifference and remarked to the curator of the museum:—

"Haven't you got a corpse that is a little fresher?"

All Mark has to do is to visit the funeral direction establishment of Mr. Pearce, at Armore, Ohio. There he will probably find something more to his fastidious fancy in the shape of a sample of embalming kept on view by Mr. Pearce for inspection by his customers. The "subject" has now done service for a period of three years, and the proprietor confidently expects that it will last as long as he remains in business.

The body in question has been in the very warmest workroom of his establishment all this while, and the leatherlike flesh of the corpse is totally free from odor or putrefaction. Some say the hair on the body will grow after death. This probably originated in the mind of a dramatist or novelist, who wanted to sensationalize his readers to sell his books, for there lies Mr. Pearce's dead man, with his very last haircut the same as it was two or three years ago. Then, some say that the hair will fall out, but you couldn't pull the hair out of that body with tweezers. Each hair seems to be particularly riveted into the hardening leather and bone. Even the fuzzy, lighter hairs of all other parts of the body remain the same as they were at death.

Formaldehyde, a product of wood alcohol, and a comparatively recent product, is the fluid with which the body was embalmed, and Mr. Pearce says that there is now a fluid with other elements added, that is far better than the 140 ounces, or a little over one gallon—\$3 worth—of the formaldehyde used for the desiccation of the body in question.

GRAINS OF GOLD.

God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.—Sterne.

Better three hours too soon than one minute too late.—Shakespeare.

A truly elegant taste is generally accompanied with excellence of heart.—Fielding.

The truly valiant dare everything except doing any other body an injury.—Sir P. Sidney.

Where there is much pretension, much has been borrowed; nature never pretends.—Lavater.

Many a man who now lacks shoelather would wear golden spurs if knighthood were the reward of worth.—Jerrold.

A good word is an easy obligation; but not to speak ill requires only silence, which costs us nothing.—Tillotson.

Remember that your will is likely to be crossed every day, and be prepared for it by asking only for God's will.—Fuller.

The dignity of women consists in being unknown to the world. Her glory is the esteem of her husband; her pleasure the happiness of her family.—Rousseau.

PERFECTLY HEARTRENDING.

Mr. Biker—What a horrible railroad accident!

Mrs. Biker—Dear me! What's the death list?

Mr. Biker—Seventeen brand new '97 models. Oh, yes, and a score or so of people, I believe.