

The Left Hand of Samuel Dodson

III.

"You will be pleased to hear, mater, dear, that corn is up twopence a cental, and that the market is buoyant; that's the good of new blood being brought into corn. I would have been lost in medicine."

"I have been studying the career of a corn prince, and it has five chapters. He begins a poor boy—from the north of Ireland by preference, but that is not necessary—then he attracts his chief's attention, who sends him out to America, where even the Yankees can't hold their own with him, and he becomes manager of his farm. His next move is to start in partnership with some young fellow who has money and no brains. By and by he discovers by instinct that corn is going to rise, so he buys it ahead by the cargo, and piles up a gorgeous sum—say £100,000. Afterwards he buys out the £100,000, and becomes the chief of a big house, with lots of juniors, and he ends by being a bank director and moving resolutions at the town hall."

"Please don't interrupt, mater, for I am not done yet. Long before the town hall level rising corn man has gone up by stages from the street off Princess road to an avenue near the park, and then into the park, and perhaps into the country, whence he appears as High Sheriff."

"One minute more, you impatient mother. A certain person who will pretend to be nearly 50 when the corn man comes into his kingdom, but will remain always at 25 exactly, and grow prettier every year, will have a better set of rooms in each new house, and at last will have her own carriage, and visit whole streets of poor folk, and have all Liverpool blessing her. This is the complete history of the corn man and his mother as it will be expounded to after generations of school boys by informing and moral philanthropists. What do you think of it?"

"I think that you are a brave boy, Jack, and your mother is proud of you and grateful; if it's any reward for you to know this, I can say that the way you have taken your disappointment in our great sorrow."

"Don't talk as if I were a sort of little tin hero, mater, or else I'll have to leave the room, for I'm nothing of the sort, really. If you only saw me at my desk or fussing round the offices, or passing the time of day on corn, you would see that I was simply born for business."

"Jack," said Mrs. Laycock, solemnly, "you have not been without faults, I'm thankful to say; for you've been hot-tempered, hot-headed, wilful, and lots of things, but this is the first time you have been deliberately untruthful."

"Mother, with all respect to you, I will not stand this insult," and so he slipped down on the floor and caressed his mother's hand. "You think that I've no commercial ability. Wait for the event. It will be swagger, you bet."

"I think everything that is good of you, Jack, as I ought, and your father did, but I know, that it was very hard that you could not go back to Rugby this autumn and finish in the sixth, and go to Cambridge, and study at Caius, your father's college, and get your M. D., and take up your father's profession and the one you loved, the noblest a man can live and . . . die in," and there was a break in the widow's voice.

"Of course, mater, that is what I would have preferred, and it was a bit . . . stiff when I knew that it all would have to be given up, but that was nothing to . . . losing father. And, besides, I think that I may get on in business and . . . help you, mater."

"Your father had set his heart on your being a doctor, and I don't know whether he ever spoke to you about it, but he hoped you might become a specialist—in surgery, I think; he said you had the hands at least for a good surgeon."

"It was his own heart's desire to be a surgeon pure and simple, and Mr. Holman, the great consultant, considered him one of the best operators in the provinces, but he was obliged to be a general practitioner."

"Why? O, because he had no private means, and he had you and me to support, so he couldn't run any risks, he had to secure a regular income, and there is something I wish you to understand, in case you should ever think hardily of your father."

"Mother—as if I could! The very people on the street admired father, you know what they said in the Morning Trumpet about his self-sacrificing life, and his skill being at the disposal of the poorest without money and without price."

"Yes, the papers were very kind, and his patients adored your father, but I am certain some of our neighbors criticised him because he did not make better provision for his wife and child. As if he had been extravagant or imprudent, who never spent a farthing on himself, and was always planning for our welfare."

"You are just torturing yourself with delusions, I am sure, mater. Did any single person ever hint that father had not done . . . his duty by us? I can't believe it."

"One man did, at any rate, Jack, and that was our neighbor, Mr. Dodson."

"What did he say, the miserable old curmudgeon? Did he dare to bring a charge against father? I wish I had been with you."

"No, it was not that he said anything; it was rather what he implied; he just questioned and questioned in an indirect fashion, all by way of interest in our affairs, but left the impression on my mind that he thought the doctor ought to have done better for his family."

"What business had Mr. Dodson to eall at all and to ferret into our affairs, who was never before in our house? If we needed help—which we

don't—he is the last man in this district to give it. Do you know he's the hardest, meanest creature in Liverpool? He'll leave a cab thirty yards from his house when he's coming from the station to keep within the shilling limit, and he goes down in the penny bus with the workingwomen to save twopence."

"There is a certain young corn broker," interpolated Mrs. Laycock, "who walks all the way to save even that penny, and I don't consider him mean."

"That is economy, and indicates the beginning of a fortune which will be shared with a certain sarcastic mater. But Dodson is a millionaire, and has nobody depending on him but an old housekeeper. Certainly father was not economical by his standard."

"Your father was most careful and thrifty," said the widow, eagerly, "and that is what I want to explain. He had to borrow money to educate himself, and that he paid back every penny with interest. Then, you know, a doctor can not keep himself for the first few years with his practice—he only made £32 6d the year he began—and when he reached £200 he did a foolish thing."

"Let me guess, mater. Was it not marrying the dearest, sweetest, prettiest—"

"Hush, you stupid boy! And we had to keep up a certain appearance and pay a high rent, and we were very poor—poorer than the public ever knew."

"Of course the doctor had a large practice before he died, and people used to think he made £2000 and £3000 a year, and Mrs. Tattler Jones, who knows everything, said our income was £4000."

"His last year your father earned £1800 and got in £1200; the other £600 will never be paid; and yet he was so pleased because he had cleared off the last penny of his debt, and thought he would begin to lay something aside for your education."

"But why did he not get the other £600? Could the people not pay?"

"They could pay everybody else—wine merchants, jewelers and car owners—but their doctor's bill was left last, and often altogether, and your father would never prosecute."

"And didn't father attend many people for nothing?"

"No one will ever know how many, for he did not even tell me; he used to say that if he didn't get often to church he tried to do as people were told to do there; his commandment was the eleventh—'Love one another.'"

"That's the bell, and see, six, seven, I declare, ten to begin with! Here's one in a rare, old-fashioned hand. I'll take off the envelope and you will see the name. Why, it's a letter, and a long screed, and a—check!"

"Have some of those thieves paid their account? You are crying, mater. Is it about father? May I see the letter, or is it private?"

"No, it's about you, too, son. I wish you would read it aloud; I'm not—quite able."

"Liverpool, December 24, 189—
Dear Madam: Along with many others in Liverpool, I experienced a feeling of keen regret that in the inscrutable actings of Providence your respected husband, Dr. Laycock, was, as if appears, prematurely removed from his work and family."

"It must be a sincere consolation for his widow to know that no man could have rendered more arduous and salutary service to his fellows, any of whom he relieved in pain, not a few of whom he was instrumental in restoring to their families from the portals of death. Without curiously inquiring into the affairs of private life, many persons were persuaded that Dr. Laycock was in the custom of attending persons of limited means as an act of charity, whereby he did much good, won much affection, and doubtless has laid up for himself great riches in the world to come, if we are to believe the good book."

"I have not, however, sent you this letter merely to express my sympathy, shared with so many who have the privilege, denied to me, of your personal friendship, or to express the admiration felt by all for the eminent departed. My object is different, and must be its own excuse. Unless I have been incorrectly informed—and my authority seemed excellent—the noble life of Dr. Laycock hindered him from making that complete provision for his family which he would have desired, and other men in less unselfish walks of life could have accomplished. This disability I am given to understand, has seriously affected the career of your son, whom every one describes as a promising lad, so that he has been removed from a public school, and has been obliged to abandon the hope of entering on the study of medicine."

"If my information be correct, it was his father's wish that your son should follow in his steps, and it is incumbent on those who honored Dr. Laycock for his example of humanity to see that his cherished wish be fulfilled. Will you, therefore, in the light of the explanation I have made at some length, accept the draft I have the honor to send—value £1000—and use the proceeds in affording to your son a complete medical education at home and abroad? The thought that the just desire of a good man has not fallen to the ground, and that a certain burden will be lifted from his widow's life, will be more than sufficient recompense to one who will, so long as he may be spared, follow your son's career with sincere interest. Believe me, my dear madam, your obliged and grateful servant,

"ZACCHEUS."

"Hold it up against the light, mater; it's the prettiest Christmas card we'll ever see. You ought to be laughing and not crying. But I feel a little—just a tiny wee bit watery myself."

"He might as well told us his name; but I suppose he was afraid of a row."

Eaccheus? Why that's the mangave the playgrounds. He must have a pile, and he knows how to use it; he's no Dodson, you bet. At any rate, though we don't know him, we can say God bless him, matter."

"Amen," said Mrs. Laycock. "I hope the father knows."

IV.
"How do I know that there is something wrong, Bert? Because we've been married five years last month, and I can read your face like a book, or rather a great deal better than most books, but I'm quite sure about your face."

"No, I don't imagine, for you may be able to hide what you feel on the flags, but you let out the secret at home; and that is one reason why I love you; because you are not cunning and secretive. Now, tell me, is cotton down, and have you lost?"

"Oh, yes, Bert, I know your principle, that a man ought to bear the burden outside and the woman inside the home; but there are exceptions. You have acted up to your principle splendidly. You have never said a word all those years, although I know you've had anxious times, and you've helped me many a time with my little troubles. Let me help you in yours now."

"Queenie, if you want to put me to utter shame, you have taken the right way, for it's your thrift and good management which have given us our happy home, and I—"

"Yes, you, Bert, you have idled your time, I suppose, and spent your money on dress, and generally neglected your family. For shame, sir, when you have done so well, and every one says that nobody is so much respected. Don't look like that if you love me. What is it?"

"It is necessary that you be told, and I was going to speak this evening, but it is very hard. Queenie, when I kissed the children and looked at you all so happy, I felt like a murderer."

"Have you—"

"No, on my word of honor, I have done nothing wrong, that I can say; neither you nor the little ones have any cause to be ashamed of me."

"If you had I would have stood by your side, Herbert, but I knew disgrace would never come by you, then what is it? If it's only the loss of some money, why, I know half a dozen economies."

"It's far worse than that, wife, I fear. This will be our last Christmas in our dear little home, and it's all my blame, and I feel . . . the basest of men. As if you had trusted me when I had deceived you all."

"You are the best wife ever man had. . . . I feel better, and I'll explain it all to you. It is not very difficult; it is so easy to be ruined."

"You know we are brokers, and our business is to buy and sell cotton for other people, and we are responsible for them, so that if they can not pay the losses, we have to find the money."

"Two of our firms, which have been very kind to us, were sure cotton would go up—and so it ought to have done, and will in the end—and they bought so many bales through us."

"Well, a big firm, which can do pretty much as it likes, seized the opportunity of a fraud to rush in and upset the market, so our friends and many others have to face declines they can not meet. So unless our poor little firm can pay £10,000 at least on Monday, we must stop, and . . . all our hard work to build up an honorable firm is lost."

"We can scrape £4000, and my partner and I have £1000 private means to put in, and . . . that's all; £5000 short."

"Yes, we have tried the bank, but they can't do anything there. Goldsworthy, the manager, is the nicest fellow living, and his 'No' is almost as good as another's 'Yes,' but of course it was 'No' we had no security; the cotton may go lower before it turns, and he has told us we must pay."

"But surely, Herbert, if the big firms knew how you were situated they would help you, because things would come right in a few weeks, you say."

"Every man has to look after himself in the market. But I did go to Huddleston, because he has given me so much advice, and wanted me to take an interest in the church. . . . I wish my tongue had been burned before I crossed his room."

"No, he wasn't rude—that's not his sin; he might be better if he were straighter. He hoped that I was prospering in business, and reminded me that I must not allow the world to get too much hold, and became eloquent on money being only stewardship. But when I opened up my errand he explained that he had made it a principle never to lend money, and suggested that this was a chastening because we had hastened to be rich. He hoped that the issue would be sanctified, . . . but I rose, and left, quite sick."

"What a canting old wretch!" Mrs. Ransome was very angry. "I always hated that man's soft sawder; he's much too pussy to be true."

"He was not bound to help me unless he pleased. But what riled me was his religious talk; he might have spared me that at least. And if those operators who have knocked the market to pieces haul in £30,000 they will likely give £1000 to missions."

"When a man has done his level best, and been fairly prudent, and has worked hard and is getting a fair connection, and everything is taken away by a big, unscrupulous, speculative firm, which sees a chance of making a pile at the ruin of half a dozen struggling firms, it's a little hard."

"They ought to be put in jail; but they'll catch it some day," and it was evident Mrs. Ransome, like many other people in her circumstances, found much satisfaction from the belief in future punishment.

"It's apt to make one bitter, too," Ransome went on. "When I sat opposite old Dodson in the bus this afternoon—come to the penny bus now, you see, Queenie—looking out from below his shaggy eyebrows like a Scotch terrier with meanness written over his

shabby clothes, and almost heard the gold, chinking in his pockets, and thought that he could save our home and secure my future by a check, and never miss the money—suppose he lost it, which he wouldn't if I lived—I declare I could have . . . well, I did not feel as Christian as Huddleston would desire."

"But here is a letter which must have come by the last post and been forgotten; perhaps it's a Christmas card in advance. Let's see. O, I say, you've left me in darkness."

"Come up to our room; we can open it there; very likely it's a bill. Well?"

"I say—Queenie—no, it can't be a hoax—nobody would be so cruel—and here's an inclosure—letter from London bankers confirming—sit down beside me; we'll read it together—so, as near as you can, and your arm round my neck—just a second before we begin—my eyes are all right now."

"Liverpool, December 22, 189—
Dear Sir—It has been my practice as a man engaged for many years in commercial pursuits, to keep a watchful, and I hope, not unkindly, eye on young firms beginning their business career in Liverpool. For the last five years I have observed your progress with much interest, and you will pardon my presumption and take no offense when I express my satisfaction as an old merchant with your diligence, caution, ability, and most of all integrity, to which all bear witness."

"I was, therefore, greatly grieved to learn that your firm may be hard-pressed next week, and may be in danger of stoppage—all the more that I find no charge of folly can be brought against you, but that you are the indirect victim of one firm's speculative operations. There is no one, I am also informed, from whom you can readily obtain the temporary assistance you require and are morally entitled to receive."

"The only satisfaction I have in life is using such means as providence has been pleased to put in my hands for the succor of people who are in every way better than myself, but who are in some kind of straits. I have, therefore, directed my London bankers to open an account for you and to put £10,000 to your credit. Upon this account you will be pleased to draw such a sum as will tide you over the present crisis, and such other sums as will enable you to extend your business along the safe and honorable lines you have hitherto followed. I make no doubt that you will repay the said sum or sums to the same account as you may be able—no interest will be accepted—and I only lay one other obligation on your honor, that you make no endeavor to discover my name."

"Be pleased to accept my best wishes of this season for your admirable wife, your two pleasing children, and my confident hope for your final and large success in business. I remain, your faithful friend,

"ZACCHEUS."

"Let us go and kiss the children, hubbie, and then—we might say the Lord's prayer together."

To Be Continued.

STAYIN' UP LATE.

Every one who has ever been a child will recall that sense of injury entailed by being sent to bed early—that conviction that you are being deprived of the most interesting part of the whole day. There is really no knowing what the elders are up to when once they get the youngsters tucked up safe in bed, but it stands to reason it must be very interesting, or why would they be in such a hurry to get the youngsters out of the way?

With some children this amounts to more than mere feeling. It was a little girl of the latter sort who begged so hard to sit up just for once, that her mother one evening, not long ago, said that she might. How the little girl's eyes danced at the prospect of all the wonderful things she would see for herself upon this her first occasion of 'sitting up!' How commiseratingly she regarded the other children, who were as usual packed off to bed at an early hour! She seated herself in her small chair, and eagerly awaited developments.

But imagine her surprise when her parents as was their custom, seated themselves at the library table, and unsocially, but hygienically, turning their backs to the light, began to read. For some time the small girl rocked away in her small chair in silence. Then came a sleepy, plaintive voice: "Is this all you do?"

BITS OF FEMININITY.

Fringes are the fad of the hour with English women.

Corsages are out in front like stays with a Louis XV. yoke.

The newest skirts are entirely without lining and worn over silk skirts with frills.

The latest fad in neckties is the long band of silk gauze which passes twice round the throat and terminates in front in two bows and long ends.

The double turned-down linen collar prevails just now for men and women.

Fetching neck bands of white velvet with applications of heavy guipure lace are being worn.

Stitched bands are much used in trimming tailor frocks and should be lighter in color than the habit cloth.

The lace shawls that have passed through one or more generations are now being used in the beautiful lace frocks that fashion decrees.

MOVED HIM.

Cleverton—When you told her father you loved her, did he show much feeling?

Dashaway—Oh, yes, I don't know when I have been so moved!

COULD NOT DRESS ALONE.

A Nova Scotian Farmer Tells of His Intense Suffering From Rheumatism and How He Found Relief.

From the Bridgewater, N.S., Enterprise.

Such suffering as rheumatism causes the victim upon whom it fastens itself is almost unendurable. Only those who writhe under its pangs can imagine the joy of one who has been freed from its terrors. Mr. J. W. Folkenham, of New Elm, N. S., is one of those who has been released from pain, and who believes it his duty, to let others know how a cure can be found. Mr. Folkenham is a farmer, and like all who follow this arduous but honorable calling, is subjected to much exposure. It was this exposure that brought on his trouble and caused him so much suffering before he was rid of it. He says:—

"In the spring of 1897 I contracted rheumatism. Throughout the whole summer I suffered from it, and about the first of October it became so bad that I could not get out of the house. The pains were located in my hip and back, and what I suffered can hardly be expressed. It became so helpless I could not dress myself without aid. Eventually the trouble spread to my hands and arms, and at times these would lose all feeling and become useless. In November I began using Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and after taking four boxes began to improve. After using six boxes the pains and soreness had all gone and I was able to do a hard day's work. I intend using a few more boxes more as a precautionary measure, and I would earnestly advise those suffering from this painful trouble to give Dr. Williams' Pink Pills a fair trial and be made well."

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills cure by going to the root of the disease. They renew and build up the blood, and strengthen the nerves, thus driving disease from the system. Avoid imitations by insisting that every box you purchase is enclosed in a wrapper bearing the full trade mark, Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People.

WHY DO WE DO IT?

It is surprising what a number of little things we do without knowing the reason.

Why, for instance, do widows wear caps? Perhaps you may say because they make them look pretty and interesting. But the real reason is that when the Romans were in England they shaved their heads as a sign of mourning. Of course, a woman couldn't let herself be seen with a bald head, so she made herself a pretty cap. And now, though the necessity of wearing it has passed away the cap remains.

Why do we have bows on the left side of our hats? In olden times when men were much in the open air and hats couldn't be bought for half a dollar, it was the habit to tie a cord around the crown and let the ends fall on the left side to be grasped on the arising of a squall. They fell on the left side, so they might be grasped by the left hand, the right usually being more usefully engaged. Later on the end got to be tied in a bow, and later still they became useless; yet the bow has remained, and will probably remain till the next deluge or something of that sort.

Why are bells tolled for the dead? This has become so familiar a practice that a funeral without it would appear unchristian. Yet the reason is quite barbarous. Bells were tolled long ago, when people were being buried, in order to frighten away the evil spirits who lived in the air.

Why do fair ladies break a bottle of wine on the ship they are christening? Merely another survival of barbaric custom. In the days of sacrifice to the gods it was customary to get some poor victim when a boat was being launched, and to cut his throat over the prow, so that his blood baptized it.

Why are dignitaries deafened by a salute when the visit a foreign port? It seems a curious sort of welcome this firing off of guns, but it seems the custom arose in a very reasonable way. Originally a town or a warship fired off their guns on the approach of important and friendly strangers to show that they had such faith in the visitors' peaceful intentions they didn't think it necessary to keep their guns loaded.

Why do we sometimes throw a shoe after a bride? The reason is not very complimentary. From of old it has been the habit of mothers to chastise their children with a shoe. Hence the custom arose of the father of the bride making a present to the bridegroom of a shoe, as a sign that it was to be his right to keep her in order.

HIS ANSWER.

Little Mike, who has an inquiring mind—Father!

McLubberty—Phwo! Little Mike—Father, av wan av thim pug diogs was to follow his nose wud he turn summersets, or go down his own t'roat?

McLubberty—Ar-r-r-r! Oh dunno! But phwo! O! d know is thot av yez ask me another quistion loike thot, me young intirrygation pint, aph to bed ye'll go loike yeind thot?

A FORECAST.

"The indications are, remarked the man who was looking at the sky with an expression of great wisdom, that it will be cold and raw."

"The man who has trouble with the servant girl problem meekly inquired:—

"Which are you talking about, the weather or dinner."