

SO'S YOUR OLD MAN

Editor's Note.—The story given below, written by Samuel A. Derieux for The Youth's Companion, has a lesson for a good many growing boys, the men of tomorrow. How often you hear a father spoken of as "the old man!" The term is applied thoughtlessly, it is true, but somehow or other, the expression always hurts. A boy's father should be his father, not "the old man," and it is quite possible that after reading this story, a lot of the boys will think so, too.

Joe Staples whistled and threw the letter he had just received to his room-mate, Trowbridge. "There's a bit of news," he said. "My old man's coming to pay me a visit."

"Such visits are often embarrassing," said Trowbridge. "There are a lot of fellows here who'd be just as pleased if their fathers never came."

"Oh, my old man's all right," said Staples quickly. "He's not very attentive to the styles,"—the boy flushed—"but he's no rube, either. Only we ought to make some changes."

He pointed to a picture on the wall. "Flossie must come down. And we can shake up the way our reading matter is arranged. Put the Sunday School Quarterly on top of the pile—or what about a Latin dictionary?"

Staples and Trowbridge were freshmen—"rats," as the upper classmen called them.

"Is your old man pretty straight-faced?" asked Trowbridge. "Some people would say so. He's been living in the sticks all his life."

"So's my old man," grinned his room-mate, looking across the room at Sam Clark. Clark was the idol of the college, the All-America tackle. Although a senior, he had honored those calls with a visit for Trowbridge had shown good form in a class football game. Clark was a powerful fellow, with a bronzed face and crisp yellow hair.

"You seem to be asking my opinion," he said. "Well, I think a cheap phrase like 'so's my old man' is a pretty dangerous thing to say. I used to call my own father 'old man,' but I quit short off. I was like you. I used to fake little accounts of money spent on Sunday school entertainments and send them to him; I took a girl's picture off the wall before he visited me. I quit that, too. I don't feel the same way about him any more."

He swung his feet down to the floor and sat up straight in the chair. His big, square jaw seemed to stand out more than it had. "If you two chaps would like to know why I suffered a change of heart, here goes."

It happened on a visit home at Christmas time (said Clark), and my home is little better than a cabin in the pines on the edge of the Santee Swamp. There was a time when I tried to fly high, and keep the fact hid. But because a man's fool once is no reason why he should be a fool all the time.

Father was at the station to meet me, in a ratty buggy pulled by a mule. He wasn't dressed any too well. His whiskers weren't trimmed after the latest, and he'd forgotten to put on a cravat and scarfpin. But his eyes were beaming welcome. You couldn't see the rest of his face for his whiskers.

"But mother! She was standing on the porch, and you'd have thought that an angel was coming. You know how it is. My kid brother looked at me as if I were the greatest man in the world, and even the hound seemed to tuck in his tail in the presence of so much majesty. I never had anything that tasted so good as supper that night. But I guess I hadn't realized before how plain things were at home. You see I had traveled north to play Yae and stayed in the Waldorf-Astoria the night after the game, and I had been in other handsome dining-rooms. Back home our room isn't finished in mahogany and gold leaf. That night they gave me the company room with grandma's crazy quilt on the bed, and they didn't call me till breakfast was ready. Mother's our cook, and father's her assistant. He brings in the wood, stirs the hominy, cuts the side meat and gets in the way.

After breakfast I walked about the lot with him. It was cloudy, with low-flying mist. Father kept casting an eye at the sky, and he asked me if it had been raining where I came from.

I noticed that the chicken yard was deserted. When I had left home, they had two hundred chickens. Now there were only a few aged hens and a dilapidated rooster. "Where are the chickens?" I asked. "Sold," he said. "Had to," and he looked at me, embarrassed.

planning to get a raincoat. I had one that had cost me twenty dollars. Father said that he feared a freshet and had driven the cattle near the gate. After supper he didn't have much to say and went to bed dead tired. When I went to my room, I lay awake for an hour, listening to the wind and rain and boiling over with good resolutions.

Then I dreamed I was in a submarine, and the water was bubbling all around me. I woke up and heard the spray was dashing through chinks in the old window frame.

I heard father and mother stumping around. I got up—it wasn't cold—and lighted my lamp. I slipped on my clothes and went to their room. Father had a lantern in his room, and mother was pulling his collar snug around his neck. "Whiskers help on a night like this," he said with a wink at me. He was afraid, he said, that the water would rise over the point where he had driven the cattle, and that they couldn't get out, on account of the barbed-wire fence.

Of course I went with him. It was an inky-black night, a roaring, slashing, beating night that blew my off your feet. The wind dazed me, seemed to blow my wits away, and all I could do was to keep my eyes on father's lantern—a little circle of swinging brightness in the vast black night.

Now and then we heard a pine go down. Twice we had to climb over fallen trees in the road. But father just chugged right along at a gallop that made me blow like a bellows. Morning had come when we reached the edge of the swamp, the wildest, ugliest morning I ever saw. We could see ahead, down the little slope that led to the swamp, the lead-colored water with tree-trunks tossing about in it. The river was two miles out of its banks!

It was a mile, still, to the gate where the cattle were huddled, but father nodded his head as if it were all right, so far. He gave me a grim look, as I stood there panting. He was soaked; his old black coat looked like silk; his whiskers were dripping; and the water was running in streams off his broad-rimmed hat. He seemed to be sizing me up and asking himself, "I wonder if this son of mine is a man."

We didn't wait long. There was a cabin not far off, and a negro woman came running toward us, wailing. She told us that her father, old Andy, had helped my father, and had gone into the swamp the afternoon before and hadn't come back again. He was trying to save some pigs, she said. She was sure he was drowned; and then in the next breath, screamed, "Save him! Oh, save him, Mr. Clark!"

"Is there a boat?" shouted father. She told us that there was a dug-out, a little way off. It was tied to a tree in the creek.

Father turned to me. "Sam," said he, "I must save that old Andy. He's likely to be on the high ground at English Point. The water will cover that before night. I'm going after him. You let the cattle out."

"Not much," I cried. "I'll go with you." "Sam," he said, sternly, "don't be a fool. Three can't come back in the dugout." "Then I'll go. You stay here." I'm thought to be a big, strong chap—good enough to play football and put the shot. I tried to brush past my father. He caught my shoulder, and his fingers felt like a steel trap.

"It isn't boys' work today," he said, with a frown. But it wasn't the strength in his hand that stopped me. It was the authority I saw in his eye. It bored into me. It made me feel like a kid.

Then he turned and left me staring at him. I was paralyzed somehow; I just stood there and watched him wade out to that crazy little boat, and get into it, and start poling away across the current into the trees beyond. I remember dashing after him when it was too late. The current sucked and tore at me, and I had all I could do to get back to the bank.

I remembered the cattle and ran and turned them loose. They were streaming up toward higher country, with their tails straight up in the air. I sent a boy to tell mother that we wouldn't be home till night. Then I sat down to wait. Some negroes made a fire after a while, on the bank, and all day long I sat there, watching the tossing water rise higher. It was the longest day I ever spent. Logs went drifting by, and dead cattle and horses, and once the body of a man. He was floating face down, and turning over now and then. A young man. What chance had my father against such a flood?

I had a vision of him, dead in that raging torrent of water. How could I ever forgive myself? How could I ever hold up my head again? I saw myself crawling through life—Sam Clark, once a football player, once a social favorite, the cowardly Sam Clark, who had stood aside and let his father drown. Hadn't I let my father go bravely out to save

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A NEW SENATOR Dr. W. L. McDougald, Chairman of the Montreal Board of Harbor Commissioners has been appointed to the Senate.

old Andy, while I stood like a coward in the bank? It wasn't true. I had tried to go. But who would ever believe it? Would I believe it myself? I got up and walked up and down, digging my nails into my palms until they bled. The sun suddenly shot through the clouds and stained the water blood-red. Then there was a hoarse cheer behind me, and a piercing scream of joy from old Andy's daughter.

My father was in sight, poling the dugout to shore. Old Andy was lying in the bottom, tired out and almost dead with the chill. My father drove the boat high up on shore and got out and shook hands with me. "On second thought," he said, "I'm sorry I couldn't let you go, Sam. Hard on you if I hadn't come back."

Then he staggered and we laid him down by the fire and rubbed him. He was soon well enough to drive home in Major Barker's car, but he wouldn't start until we had taken old Andy to his cabin and made him comfortable. Father has never been strong since then; his heart and all his muscles were too badly strained. You notice I don't buy many new clothes, and my billiards and flowers never get a cent out of me. All my spare cash goes to him. You notice, too, that I don't speak of my "old man." He's my father; and if I turn out to be as good as he is—well, I'll be a man.

Dottie: Come in and see our new baby. Teacher: Thank you, but I will wait until your mother is better. Dottie: You needn't be afraid. It's not chattering, teacher.

TAKING OUR TEMPERATURE

A Few Observations About Clinical Thermometers.

In winter and spring when la grippe is rampant, many of us make use of clinical thermometers, but few give thought (especially if the mercury reads above the "normal" point) to the nature of the little instrument which is found in practically every household. Probably the clinical thermometer is the most widely used of any pathological instrument, and, although familiarity may breed contempt, the accuracy of these small thermometers does actually compare very favorably with that of the much more costly and larger instruments used in scientific laboratories.

The clinical thermometer, in common with its larger brethren, is subject to errors which may give rise to fictitious indications. Unless special glass is used for the thin bulb containing the mercury, errors will accumulate for some considerable time after manufacture, due to a slow shrinkage which takes place—extending sometimes for years. Often, too, gas entrapped in the walls of the thermometer stem passes into the fine capillary hole and results in portions of mercury becoming detached from the main column. These pieces may pass unnoticed, and incorrect temperatures may be indicated.

Then, too, clinical thermometers have troubles of their own—due in the main to the constriction which enables the mercury column to retain its reading after removal from the patient's mouth. The making of this constriction calls for great skill on the part of the glass blower. If the thermometer is over-constricted, the mercury will rise by large jumps, causing errors, and the column will be difficult to shake back. On the other hand, the mercury must be trapped effectively, otherwise a fall will take place in the index, when the thermometer is removed for reading—giving a temperature which is too low.

These errors are quite frequently encountered. The National Physical Laboratory in England reported that in one series of nine thousand thermometers, twenty-eight per cent were found unreliable. Good makers have a much smaller percentage of failures. As a comparison with the figures just quoted, one firm in the same year had only twenty-five instruments rejected out of fifteen thousand, and most of those were for minor defects.

At the National Physical Laboratory, the number of clinical thermometers tested has averaged as high as twenty-five thousand per week throughout the year—this figure giving some idea of the number of clinical thermometers in use. In Canada, tests to clinical thermometers similar to those made at the National Physical Laboratory are undertaken by the Physical Testing Laboratory, Topographical

Survey, Department of the Interior, Ottawa. This laboratory has special equipment for the work, and regularly issues certificates of approval for thermometers for the Government Service, hospitals, sanatoria and the Canadian public generally.

Tactics Were Sound Mr. Jones was no Napoleon, but his tactics when a drink was in sight were invariably sound. On one occasion, as he was rushing from his home, his wife asked, "Where are you going in such a hurry?" "Over to Robinson's house," was the reply. "He just telephoned to ask if I could lend him a cork-screw, and I'm taking it myself." "Couldn't you send it?" "My dear wife," said Mr. Jones in incisive tones, "the question you ask shows why most women are unfit to lead armies or make decisions involving millions in business deals. When the psychological moment arrives, they don't know what to do with it."

Oi Yoy! The ship was doomed. With pale faces the passengers buckled on life belts and waited the order to take to the boats. Suddenly above the storm rose the cry of an anxious man: "Is dere anybody here vat wants to buy a vine gold watch and chain?"

Giving Him the Gas "Sistah Jones, I see takin' up a collection fo' de benefit of our worthy pastah," exclaimed one of the brethren. "You know, he's leavin' us fo' to take a church down in Mobile, an' we thought we'd get together and give him a little momentum."

"I know, dear," answered the voice. "But it's time to take baby out now. You've been airing Harriet's doll most of the afternoon."

LOST ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 7, BETWEEN the Glen and Durham, a suit case. Reward on return to The Chronicle Office.

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