

IN SPITE OF HIS BIRTH.

"Thank you again, sir; but, truly, my mind was almost made up before my mother received this letter. I have a fair education already, enough to help me along in a business career. Plainly, Ned went on thoughtfully. "I believe I should not care to be a professional man—I'd like a stirring business, and, as I am situated, I am convinced that it would be unwise for me to give four years to a college course when during that time I might be steadily advancing in some good business. I would like to get at work right away," he concluded, energetically. "All right, youngster. I believe you've a level head on your shoulders, and, according to my way of thinking, college-bred men are not always the smartest nor the best men. What do you want to get into?" Mr. Lawson questioned, with some curiosity. "I do not know, sir, but I have a particular; something in which I'll have a chance to work up, with a prospect of being boss myself, some time," Ned said, smiling.

"That's the talk! and I'll see that you have a position of some kind before the beginning of another week," the old gentleman replied, and then arose and left the room. "Smart boy! I'm half plucky, too! I've half a mind to tell him the truth, make over a handsome income to him, let him go to college and give him a hint about my intention for the future," he muttered, as he went slowly down the hall to the library. "Guess I won't just yet," he added after a little thought; "better give him a little more time to show his great abilities. I want to see how he'll meet the world and its temptations. I'm not sorry he isn't going to college, though I believe he'd do himself credit, and I hated to have him disappointed. But I don't want to do the dogs there and there may be a germ of Heatherton rascality in Ned; though I think he favors his mother rather than his father. No! I'll keep him for a while longer and let him work his own way, just to prove what kind of stuff he's made of."

That evening Ned begged his mother to allow him to go to Thomas Heatherton's communication in her place, saying that he was a man now, and competent to speak for himself, while he believed it was his duty to shield her from all such unpleasant business.

She consented, and he indited the following letter:

No. 1 Mount Vernon street, Boston, July 8th, 18—.

Mr. Thomas Heatherton—Dear Sir—Your favor of to-day was duly received, and is herewith acknowledged. While I do not for a moment wish to "upon you" the fact of my relationship to you, that fact nevertheless remains. I am the son of your son, and honorably born. Except that it has established my mother's honor beyond my ability to refute it, I regret that the matter should have been mentioned to you at all, or the proofs forwarded to you. I also regret that any fanciful obligation on your part, in connection with the accident of yesterday, should weigh heavily upon you. I beg you to believe that the consciousness of having performed, what appeared to me an obvious duty, and which saved a precious human life, is of itself all the reward I could desire. Therefore, I return with this draft for one thousand dollars, which—with similar favors which you proposed for the future—I could not, under any consideration, make use of.

With due respect, Edward Wallingford Heatherton. Mrs. Heatherton feared that this letter was altogether too curt; but Mr. Lawson, to whom Ned also submitted it, said it was all right. It was to the point and no more cause than the highly old scamp needed to offset his own innocence. "But you might at least have thanked him for offering to bear the expenses of your education," said Mrs. Heatherton in a tone of gentle reproach.

"But, mother, I didn't feel a bit thankful—my only sensation was one of contempt for the man's insufferable arrogance and despite his desire to rid himself of an unpleasant sense of obligation. So I would not be a hypocrite and pretend to what I do not feel," Ned returned with considerable spirit. "This effectually silenced his mother, for she had always impressed it upon Ned to be honest in everything, and she could not now urge him to violate his principles. So the letter went its way and created quite a revision of feeling on the part of his reluctant grandfather. "Blasphemous!" he cried, grimacing, as he finished reading the independent epistle, the second sentence of which was worded so nearly like the first one of his own. Then he read it through again, and a queer little smile began to hover about the corners of his mouth. "Bless me!" he muttered, when he finally laid it down. "I can't help liking the spirit after all. He does not wish to force upon me the fact of his relationship—but for the sake of establishing his mother's honor he would prefer that the fact had never been mentioned. He desires no reward for saving a human life, but the approval of his own conscience. Hum! high-toned young man, upon my word! Must not be taken at all from his mother's thought, for Dick was never troubled with a conscience, or with any scruples about using all the money he could get hold of. Wallingford—yes, that was the girl's name—and he signs the whole of it with evident pride; I'm beginning to be interested in the fellow, in spite of myself. I wonder if he will have to give up going to college—I would like to know, blessed if I wouldn't!"

"He soon had an opportunity of satisfying himself upon that point, as we shall see later. Three days after Ned returned Thomas Heatherton's draft, Mr. Lawson informed him that he could have a position in a certain banking house, which he named, if he was willing to begin upon a low round of the ladder. "I expected to do that in any business, sir," Ned responded, but looking pleased at the prospect of employment. "Mr. Lawson beamed excessive approval upon him at this reply. "That's sensible!" he said. "I've

seen chaps—greenhorns, of course—who expected to step straight into the salary of an experienced man. I'll sort 'em out for you, my boy, but one is advanced in proportion to his faithfulness and efficiency."

"I will do the best I can, sir, to justify your recommendations, as well as for my own credit," Ned earnestly answered. Then he asked eagerly, "When shall I begin?" "Next Monday morning at nine, sharp."

"All right, sir; I will be on hand. Mother," turning to her with a merry twinkle in his eyes—"henceforth be hold in your son a man of business—embryo banker; well have that coach and pair for you yet."

"Humph! a coach and pair!" grunted Mr. Lawson, who did not indulge himself in such luxuries. "You're flying a high kite, seems to me, for a simple bank-runner." Then he added to himself with an inward chuckle: "He always thinks of his mother first, and that's a very good sign."

Ned laughed out lightly at this remark. "That sounds extravagant to you, doesn't it, Mr. Lawson?" he said, "but I am going to take for my motto, 'An high young man, and who knows but what I may yet get to be the President of a bank.'"

"You're modest, surely, in your aspirations," he replied, "but Mr. Lawson, then adding, "but such things have happened."

A few days later Thomas Heatherton had occasion to go to the very bank where Ned was employed. The young man was just leaving the bank on an errand as his grandfather entered, and a look of surprise and curiosity leaped into Mr. Heatherton's eyes as they met his.

Ned flushed slightly at the encounter, but feeling it would be rude to pass the man without any sign of recognition, he courteously lifted his hat and then went about his business. "Who was that young fellow who just left the bank?" Mr. Heatherton inquired of the cashier, who counted out the money for his check.

"His name is Heatherton—he's just entered the house to learn the business. He's a fine young chap—smart as a cricket, too, and one who will make his mark yet."

Then he gave up going to college," he muttered. "If Dick had been so good a fellow, that is, that he would have been." The sign that followed this observation told of a heavy heart and blighted hopes, with perhaps mighty yearning for the boy whom his proud heart had refused to acknowledge.

CHAPTER XX. Ned, after gravely thinking the matter over, concluded that he would not go to Nantasket with Mr. Lawson and his mother that summer.

"I cannot afford it," he said; "the fare up and down on the boat every day will be more than my pay will allow. If you are willing, sir," he said to Mr. Lawson, "I would like to sleep here in your house, getting my meals somewhere downtown, during the week, then Saturday nights I will go to Nantasket to spend my Sunday with you and my mother."

This arrangement was going to be something of a trial to Mrs. Heatherton, for she had never yet been separated from Ned, but she could both understand and appreciate his feelings. He had reached man's estate and wished to assume man's independence and responsibility; so she did not oppose him, particularly as Mr. Lawson said he would feel much easier to have someone in the house on Mount Vernon street at night while they were away.

So Mr. Lawson and Mrs. Heatherton went away to the beach together and Ned remained in Boston. It was rather lonely at first, for he did not have to go down town until nearly nine in the morning, and he missed the genial companionship of his mother, the pleasant chats in her room, and her sunny presence in the house. Then the evenings were long, for his duties were always over at four o'clock, and, at first he hardly knew what to do with himself between then and bedtime.

It suddenly occurred to him that these long hours would be just the time in which to do some solid reading and study; so he laid in a supply of books and was soon deeply interested in the course which he had marked out for himself, while the time, after that, did not hang nearly so heavily on his hands.

He always went for a stroll on the common or the Public Garden, both of which were within easy distance of Mr. Lawson's house, between eight and nine of the evening; for he fancied that he rested better for this exercise in the open air.

One warm evening about the middle of August, he was a little later than usual in starting out for his walk. He passed through Walnut street to Beacon, which he crossed, and entered the common, strolling leisurely along his smooth walks and thinking over what he had been reading before coming out.

The night was cloudy and it seemed likely to rain, but Ned did not mind the dampness, and, keeping on his way, he finally came out upon the small running parallel with Tremont street. There were not as many people as usual abroad—in fact the mall was almost deserted; but he noticed, as he came to the crossing leading to Winter street, that a lady was standing there as if waiting for a car.

He passed her without paying much attention to her except to notice that she was alone. He supposed her to be some clerk who was belated in getting home after her day's work, and yet, afterward, he remembered that he had been impressed with something familiar about her figure.

He went on for perhaps half a dozen rods, when he saw a man cross the street to the very entrance where the lady was waiting, and instinctively, he wheeled about to watch him. He then noticed that he stopped close beside the lonely figure and peered curiously into her face, whereupon Ned began to feel his blood tingle with indignation at his rudeness, and he walked slowly back beneath the trees.

"You're a thundering pretty girl, miss," he heard the man remark in a wheedling tone. The lady instantly retreated a few

steps from him without deigning to make any reply. He followed her. "Come, now, don't be shy," he continued in the same tone as before; "give us a kiss and then I'll see you home. You shan't get put forth one hand in a repelling gesture."

"Well, now—I ain't in the habit of being put off when I've set my heart on anything, and I guess you will, as he threw out his arm as if to fold her in his embrace, and, thus rendering him powerless, for a few moments at least, to do any one harm.

Then he turned his attention to the lady. "I hope he hasn't frightened you very badly," he began, when with a sudden heart-bound of consternation, he cried out appalled, "Gertrude! how do you get here, and here, and alone, at this time of the night?"

"Oh, Ned! Ned!" was all that the terrified girl could say as sheathing tremblingly in his arm, and completely unnerve.

"There, poor child! do not tremble so, for you are perfectly safe with me," Ned said in a soothing tone, for a moment just then, for the almost sobbing from excitement, and the reaction caused by finding herself under the protection of a friend.

But his attention was diverted from her for a moment just then, for the fallen man had come to himself and was scrambling to his feet.

"Well, sir, what do you want now?" Ned inquired as he approached him, brushing his arms and muttering threats of vengeance. "Have a care or you will find the recent operation repeated," he warningly added.

He gently put Gertrude behind him and assumed a threatening attitude as the fellow drew nearer. "Don't strike!" whined the wretch appealingly.

Then as Ned dropped his arms by his side, he crept, in a sneaking way, still nearer, and peered curiously up into his face.

"I only want to know you the next time I see you," he said, meekly, but with a veiled sneer in his words, then starting suddenly back as though he had been struck by a hot iron, he cried, "Curse you!" he continued, fiercely, "you head me off at every turn, but I swear I will get even with you yet."

"Yes, Bill," for the fellow was Bill Bunting, "it is I," Ned replied, scarcely less surprised than his old-time enemy, "and you shall get your head out of every evil turn, whenever I can. You may be very sure, also, that I shall not let you off as easy as this, if I ever catch you repeating the offense of to-night. Now the sooner you blow your business the better it will be for you, for there comes a policeman."

Bill turned sullenly away, muttering threats of vengeance, while Ned drew Gertrude's trembling hand within his arm and made her lean upon him.

"I think a car is coming that will take us to the corner of Arlington street," said Ned, as he looked at a Back Bay electric car came rolling along.

"No, please, if you will not mind walking with me a little way up the street," he said to Gertrude, "I would like to sleep here in your house, getting my meals somewhere downtown, during the week, then Saturday nights I will go to Nantasket to spend my Sunday with you and my mother."

"I will walk with you as far as you wish," Ned said, reassuringly. "Indeed I shall not leave you until you are safe at your own door."

Gertrude informed him that she had been at Clifton, spending a week with her Aunt Annie. She had started for Boston that afternoon, but an accident had broken her journey, and she had to reach Clifton by the train. Through a blunder on reaching the city, she had taken the wrong street car, and it was only after riding a few squares that she had discovered her error. She had got out of the car and was waiting for one which would carry her there, when the incident we have described occurred.

During a long walk Ned and Gertrude found many pleasant things to talk about, but the chief one was a mutual declaration of love, which convinced both that Heaven had destined them to cherish each other for life.

It is not strange, therefore, that the walk to Arlington street seemed short to both of them, especially as they had opportunity to reach the other, recalling the past, and suggesting plans for the future.

When they finally reached Mr. Langmaid's residence, Gertrude asked Ned if he would call in.

"Yes," he answered, gravely, "I want to see your father." "Ned! are you going to tell him?" Gertrude exclaimed.

"Certainly; I have perhaps betrayed my feeling somewhat prematurely; but since the die is cast, I could not consent to anything of a clandestine nature, and so I am going to tell him the truth. Ned returned, with his usual straightforwardness.

"Papa is a kind and generous man," Gertrude said thoughtfully, "and I know he likes me, and I can't accord you the privilege of an engaged couple for two years to come; your own good sense will tell you that I mean by that, and I shall trust to your honor not to overstep the bounds I have prescribed. If, at the end of this time, you are both of the same mind as now, and your prospects warrant it, I will give you carte blanche to speak for the future."

"Thank you, sir," Ned said, as he arose to go; "I will try not to violate any of the conditions which you have imposed, while, as for my future prospects, I promise you that I shall put forth my strongest efforts toward attaining a position worthy of your daughter's acceptance." (To be continued.)

never take the horse or electric cars when you happen to be out alone after dark," her father exclaimed, with considerable excitement.

Gertrude flushed and shot a sly smile at Ned, who comprehended its meaning. "I suppose it would have saved me the fright of meeting that wretch," she demurely remarked, while in her heart she was saying, "If I had taken my carriage I should not have met Ned—I should not have been the happy girl to-night that I am."

They chatted pleasantly in a general way for a half hour or more, then Ned arose to go. He bade Mrs. Langmaid and Gertrude good-night and Mr. Langmaid then attended him to the door.

When they reached the hall Ned turned to his companion and inquired: "Can I have a few moments' private conversation with you, sir?"

"Certainly," the gentleman responded, but looking a trifle surprised at the request. "Come, this way," and he led him to a small reception room off the hall.

"I have a confession to make to you, Mr. Langmaid," Ned began in a frank, manly way, though he colored with something when Gertrude was with him, and then he told his story with a straightforwardness that did him great credit.

"I loved Gertrude for a long time," he said, in conclusion, "but I did not intend to declare it to her until I had won a position in the world which would warrant my asking her to be my wife; but the circumstances of this evening—her fear, her dependence upon and confidence in me, somehow broke down all barriers and I consented to her propositions for her almost before I was aware of it."

Mr. Langmaid listened in unbroken silence throughout Ned's recital and looked so grave and thoughtful over it that Gertrude's lover's heart almost failed him.

"I am free to confess," he remarked, when Ned had concluded, "that I should have preferred this should have occurred to me, Gertrude, I see a little more of the world. She is not yet through with her education and has yet to come out, when she will be liable to receive attentions from other young men. If she should then discover that she had made a mistake, this episode would doubtless mar both her life and yours with painful memories. Still, Ned," the gentleman added, with a genial smile, "you are a lad after my own heart, as far as moral worth goes, and I should be proud of you in that respect as a son. I honor you exceedingly for your gentlemanly confession to-night, even though I consider that you have been somewhat premature in declaring yourself to Gertrude. If she loves you, you have your future life by telling her that she cannot vary your wife. But you are both very young—too young to think of marriage for some time to come. You have your future life to carve out, and I claim that a man should marry until he can provide a home, even though it be an humble one, for the woman whom he loves should have a position of her own, and with a position of her own, she will be able to support herself and her children. I should be proud of you in that respect as a son. I honor you exceedingly for your gentlemanly confession to-night, even though I consider that you have been somewhat premature in declaring yourself to Gertrude. If she loves you, you have your future life by telling her that she cannot vary your wife. But you are both very young—too young to think of marriage for some time to come. You have your future life to carve out, and I claim that a man should marry until he can provide a home, even though it be an humble one, for the woman whom he loves should have a position of her own, and with a position of her own, she will be able to support herself and her children. 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