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Democratic Watchman.

Bellefonte, Pa., Dec. 22, 1899.

THE BOY AND THE PESSIMIST.

Concluded from Page 6.

hand might come in gently where it would and as it could. So he began now to learn the right hand part first. He put the soft pedal down and struck the notes as gently as possible, because he did not want Mr. Elton in the masters' room overhead to hear the tune. It was to be a surprise on Christmas eve—supposing that it could be got in to good going order by that time. As a matter of fact the precaution was needless; the tune in its embryonic state might safely have been audible, as it would certainly not have been recognizable.

At 9 o'clock there was supper, and, as Mr. Bunby frequently pointed out, all the best doctors are agreed that this meal, if taken at all, should be as light as possible. After supper Elton read prayers, omitting two somewhat lengthy petitions for "a steady and conscientious application to our studies" and for "such pleasant and friendly intercourse with our comrades as may tend to promote," etc. These were, he considered, only applicable in term time. Mr. Bunby had composed these prayers himself, and it is greatly to be feared that Tommy regarded their abbreviation as one more of the relaxations that the holidays had brought with them.

Then Tommy went off to his bedroom, read "Treasure Island" for half an hour by the light of one surreptitious candle, and finally dropped off to sleep. Elton, in the masters' room, sat before the fire, pondered and pined himself.

It was going to be terribly lonely for him. In consideration of his board and lodging and a fraction under a shilling and 3 pence per diem he had sentenced himself to absolute solitude. There was Tommy, of course, but Tommy did not count, or rather Tommy made things worse. All through the term there were many Tommys. The chief point of the holidays was that they brought with them a complete absence of boys. That point was lost, for he would certainly have to suffer Tommy's presence at mealtimes, and he would also be expected to exercise some sort of slight supervision of his movements during the day. That was what a man of intelligence and education and taste was compelled to endure in order to secure for himself the paltry privilege of being allowed to live. Was it worth while? Emphatically not. He would have preferred to die, but being a victim to the primary instinct he went to sleep instead. He also read in bed, but his book was the English translation of Schopenhauer, and it was on the floor in ten minutes.

"What are you going to do with yourself?" he asked Tommy on the following morning. "My old stampbook's come to bits," replied Tommy, "and I've got a better one that was a present. So I'm going to float off all the stamps out of the old one and put them—"

"Yes, yes, I see."

"The chaps being away, I can get all the lavatory basins at once for floating the pages in, and that keeps the stamps from getting mixed. I can have all the basins, can't I?"

"Yes. Don't make any mess, though, and don't go out until I return."

Then Elton sauntered down into the town, smoking openly the cigarette that in term time was prohibited. He examined the shops, with their Christmas cards, Christmas toys, Christmas turkeys, and as he did so a very great idea came to him. He would occupy his leisure during the holidays by the composition of a long, satirical poem, to be called "Christmas Reviewed." By the audacity of its manner of dealing with a sacred subject, by its fierce and concentrated bitterness, by its marvellous melancholy and by its exquisite insight it should attract attention and appreciation. Such things would be worthless to a man without illusions, but he was prepared to work hard to secure them. He went into the best stationer's shop at once.

"Have you," he inquired, "any hand-made writing paper, with the rough edge, you know? Letter size? It might be scribbling or letter—but not folded as letter."

The stationer reflected, touched his forehead, beamed with sudden recollection and was off up a ladder like an adventurous monkey in a black coat. Down he came with his dusty prize, blowing it, smacking it, active and businesslike. A touch and a jerk, and the knot that only business could loosen was loosened as only business could loosen it. The soiled covers fell apart. There in creamy whiteness, with rough edge, was "an article that I've had no inquiry for, sir, for years."

After this, as the days went on toward Christmas, Elton saw less and less of Tommy Maynham. The boy was well behaved apparently and did not require supervision. Absorbed in his composition, Elton hardly noticed him. Sometimes at meals the boy would speak to Elton, and Elton's answer would come after a lapse of minutes or not at all. It was not, as Tommy supposed, that the master wished to snub the boy, but only that Elton had in the carrying out of his very great idea become somewhat absentminded. If he had noticed the boy at all, he would have noticed that his cheerfulness and activity were fast vanishing. The stamps were all correctly arranged in the stampbook now, "Treasure Island" was finished, and Tommy's order for another of the same brand was still the subject of apologies from the bookseller.

"Here! Have you got my book yet," asked Tommy, "and if you haven't why the dickens haven't you?" The bookseller referred to "the delays in transmission inevitable during the pressure of business prevalent at this season of the year."

Tommy remarked "settlers" and walked out of the shop.

He would not so much have minded having next to nothing to do if he had only had somebody with whom to do it. Not being analytical, he grew dull and dejected without being conscious of the reason for it. The day before Christmas day he cheered him up a little. A hamper arrived for him containing meals that was edible and a Jules Verne that was readable. There were letters from India with Christmas cards and postal orders in them. There were letters from his cousins. There were sundry small packages containing presents. He himself was busy with the sending of letters and cards, and with a final rehearsal of that time he had been so anxious to learn. The trouble of it had by this time been brought to a satisfactory condition, and a great deal of the bass was only a very little wrong. On the whole, the prospects of making it a proper Christmas seemed to him much better than that which had done the day before.

That night when Tommy went up to his bedroom he did not go to sleep; on the contrary, he adopted precautions to keep himself awake. He drank cold coffee of exceptional strength, made to his order by a local confectioner and brought up from the shop in a medicine bottle. This in conjunction with the excitement of the Jules Verne, kept him from sleep until 11 o'clock. It was at that hour, he remembered, that the waits generally began at home. He went down stairs to the dayroom, lit (as though there were no such things as gas bills) both the gas jets, opened the piano, arranged the music, clapped down the loud pedal and commenced. He played hard and he sang hard. Tommy's rendering of "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" could be heard distinctly—as he intended it to be heard—all over the building.

"Now this," Tommy thought to himself, "will be a surprise for Mr. Elton."

It was. Up stairs in his own room Mr. Elton could hardly believe his ears. Here was apparently an open defiance of rules and discipline. He put down the manuscript of "Christmas Reviewed," "now appearing in its maturity, and dashed down stairs to the dayroom."

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked angrily.

Tommy smiled, turned round on the music stool and explained.

"I was going to have asked permission," he said, "only I couldn't, because it was meant to be a surprise for you, sir, and I thought you wouldn't mind."

"Not mind a row like this past 11 o'clock at night? What are you talking about?"

"Well, sir, the boy that does the boots told me that the regular waits never came up here, because Mr. Bunby never gives anybody anything."

"You've no business to be chattering to the bootboy at all."

Tommy's real excuse—that during the greater part of the day there was absolutely no one else to whom he could talk at all—seemed to him too silly to put forward.

"I don't often do it," he pleaded. "We always have the waits at Christmas, and that gave me the idea. I didn't mean to do any harm."

"Very likely; but you must please remember that rules are rules. You've given me no trouble so far, and I believe that you didn't intend to give any now. For that reason I shan't punish you. Now shut the piano and run back to your bedroom, and another time try to think before you do anything."

Tommy thanked him, said good night and went off to his room. It was all a failure, and he wished that he had never thought of it. Christmas was not beginning very well.

When Elton came down to breakfast on the following morning, he found a white envelope on his plate. Tommy, looking rather self-conscious, watched that envelope out of a corner of his eye as Elton opened it.

On one side was a contained in a small church and a card from the other was written in a boyish hand. "With love and best wishes from T. Maynham." Elton glanced at it and put it down. He never sent cards himself and did not like receiving them.

"Very pretty," he said. "Thank you, Maynham. The compliments of the season to you." Then he relapsed into silence and Schopenhauer. When he got up from breakfast, he forgot to take the card. Tommy brought it to him just as he was leaving the dining hall.

"Ah, thanks!" said Elton. "I'm always forgetting my letters, you know." But this did not reassure Tommy. He knew that the card was, like the hymn tune, a failure. Elton sauntered up stairs to his own room and dropped the card into the waste paper basket. Tommy went to church alone that morning. Elton explained that he had an incipient cold and thought it would be better for him to keep to the house that morning. As a matter of fact, he wished to finish copying out that bitter satire, "Christmas Reviewed." It would be an additional point if it were finished on Christmas day. As he began work an uneasy idea flashed across him that he might just as well look after Tommy a little bit more and make things pleasant for him. Tommy apparently took Christmas very seriously and would like a little more sociability. He made up his mind to encourage Tommy to talk at dinner, and perhaps spend a few minutes in the dayroom with him afterward. Elton was not an unkind man, only rather vain, rather selfish and frequently forgetful. By the time that the dinner bell rang he had forgotten all about Tommy and had worked up his dejection and detestation of life (by close application to "Christmas Reviewed") to such a pitch that he neither wanted to talk to anybody nor see anybody.

It is to be feared that that dinner must place Tommy in no heroic light. Christmas dinner was in all of Tommy's previous experience a banquet. Tradition demanded that there should be turkey in it. The bootboy had told

Tommy (though a superficial knowledge of Mr. Bunby should have taught him better) that he was pretty certain it would be turkey. Tommy had expected turkey. He had pictured it carved liberally by a smiling master, now at last awake to the joviality of the season, and handed to a rejoicing boy. He had decided to ask Mr. Elton that excellent riddle about Turkey and China which Tommy's uncle never failed to propound on due occasion. Why, the mere eating of the turkey would be a mystic bond of union between himself in exile and his people at home. Five minutes before dinner his imagination plainly detected the very smell of turkey.

And it was a leg of mutton. Elton carved it without seeming at all conscious that it was wrong or even conscious that Tommy was present. It is an authenticated fact that thousands of starving families would have welcomed that leg of mutton, and that some religious orders habitually take their meals in silence. Tommy, being neither a starving family nor a religious order, but merely a wretched boy, for the first time in his life refused a second help.

And then came rice pudding and more silence. It is an authenticated fact that some whole nations live almost entirely on rice. It is singularly nutritious.

Then Tommy rose and said, with fair steadiness: "May I go, sir? I'm not well."

"Certainly," said Elton. Of course Tommy's people had sent him a hamper, and the boy had eaten too much. Pig! Well, it was all a suggestion for "Christmas Reviewed."

Elton finished his dinner leisurely and then supposed that he would have to go to bed after the disgusting Hullo beast. He found him in the dayroom. The disgusting little beast was sitting, with a book in front of him, at the farther end of the table. His head rested on his hands, and when Elton entered he turned away as much as possible.

"Well, Maynham, what's the matter?"

"I'm all right now, sir," said Tommy.

It did not sound like the boy's natural voice. Elton came farther into the room and then saw that Tommy was trying to keep his hands on the Lafayette Memorial commission not later than Monday.

"The coin is a legal tender dollar and bears upon its face a double medallion of the heads of Washington and Lafayette and on the reverse a miniature reproduction of the equestrian statue of Lafayette, with the inscription, 'In commemoration of monument erected by school youth of the United States to General Lafayette Paris, France, 1900.'"

"Secretary Chase" on December 8, ordered the purchase of silver bullion for the mintage of the Lafayette dollar. A specimen coin had been submitted by the secretary of the treasury to the Lafayette memorial commission and upon the recommendation of a special expert committee composed of Artist Frank Millet, and C. A. Coolidge, who pronounce the coin the most artistic piece of work turned out by the United States mint, was approved.

This being the 100th anniversary of the death of George Washington it was considered appropriate that the coins should be minted now. The second coin struck off was forwarded to Mrs. McKinley, while the third was given to Mrs. Kate Tyson Marr, of Washington.

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"Of course we have to pay more for coal now than we did a month or two ago," said Mrs. Chungwater, "but we ought not to mind that. I suppose it means that they have been raising the poor coal miners' wages."

"Samantha," remarked Mr. Chungwater, looking at her over his glasses, "you are too good for this wicked world."

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