

What He Falls to Eat on Thanksgiving He Gobbles Down Next Day.

By E. L. SYLVESTER.



They warned him not to eat so much. They begged him to refrain. They threatened him with medicine. But threatened all in vain.



He ate and ate and ate until of wits he seemed bereft; Then 'rose next day, quite fresh and gay, And finished what was left.

"OVER ONE SINNER."

How One Thanksgiving Dinner Was Brightened by the "Joy in Heaven."

By DAVID A. CURTIS.

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The cards had been dealt for the last "consolation jack-pot," and a gleam of satisfaction shone in Harry Maynard's eye as he saw three jacks in his hand. All six of the players came in, and the pot swelled to a considerable sum. It was enough, Maynard thought, after a quick calculation, to recoup him for his losses that night. If he could only win it, he would—well, time enough afterward to make resolutions. What he had to do now, was to play his hand for all it was worth.

It was useless to finessé in the last pot, for all had come in, and his money was nearly gone anyhow, so he drew two cards. They were a pair of trays, and he played on with considerable confidence. This lessened as he saw how promptly the others bet, but it was his only chance, so he put up his last dollar with a hoarse demand that he have "a show for his money."

When the hands were shown, four nines won. Maynard was too proud to say anything, but he turned a little whiter than



MAYNARD WAS TOO PROUD TO SAY ANYTHING.

he was before, as he arose with the others and walked out of the club-room. Traf ton, who had held the four nines, and who had been the heaviest winner, was sensitively aware of the feverish dissatisfaction and suppressed ill-feeling among his companions, and he invited them to supper. The others accepted, but Maynard refused.

"At least," said Traf ton, cordially, "you will have a glass of wine."

"I don't drink, as you know," said Maynard. Then with a sudden revulsion of feeling, he said: "Yes, I will," and they all entered a handsome restaurant.

One glass was followed by another, and the stimulant, unused to it as Maynard was, excited him and changed his mood. He played to supper, and was the gayest of the party.

It was almost daybreak when they separated, and Sherburn and Horton, who lived together, looked curiously after Maynard as he left them. "I don't like that boy's look," said Horton.

"He's pretty hard hit, I fancy," said Sherburn.

"Yes, and that isn't the worst of it. He is in a precarious condition. Men like him, who take to gambling, after take to stealing, and he is the cashier in a banker's office, you know. I tell you, Sherburn, it's bad business, this poker-playing."

Sherburn shrugged his shoulders. "It's a little late for you to turn moralist," he said. "We only play a friendly game, and if he can't take care of himself, let him keep out of it."

Meanwhile, Maynard was walking home. Arrived at his room, he glanced at his clock. Seeing that he had little time for sleep, he swore a little, and sat down by his writing table to think.

It was bitter thinking that he did. He remembered how four years before he had left the old home up in New England and had come to this city to make a fortune. Bright, clever, quick and with a natural aptitude for business, he had risen rapidly from the position as office-boy which he first obtained to the desk of cashier and bookkeeper of the office. His faithful service (for he had been faithful) and his engaging manners had won the entire confidence and the warm regard of his employer, hardheaded Mr. Spooner, so that he now had full control of the office business. Spooner was on "Change in business hours always, and never questioned, hardly ever looked at his accounts. And Maynard, while never neglecting his business had relaxed, little by little, the scruples he had brought with him from his Puritan home. He had fallen in with a fast set, and while he was regarded by his comrades as unusually steady, he

knew that his life would have been called wild and wicked by any of his friends at home. Still, he thought, he had not done anything so very bad until he began to gamble. But since then—

Well, gambling wasn't any worse at the club than it was on the street, and he saw men of the highest standing doing that every day. They were not thought the less of because they gambled, so why should he condemn himself. But the fever had subjected him thoroughly, and he had gone on playing and losing, till all his savings were gone, and he was heavily in debt. Some of his debts were pressing, and it was in the hope of winning enough to pay them that he had lately played a higher and more desperate game than ever. But the luck was against him.

Now what could he do? He did not know where to borrow any more. His salary was over-drawn and he hadn't a dollar left. There was only one thing he knew of.

That was horrible. He thrust the thought from him again and again, but it came back so often as it was dismissed. Finally, almost in despair, he considered it carefully.

Thousands of dollars passed through his hands daily, and it had always been his pride that his cash account balanced every night to the very penny. Spooner knew this so well that he never examined the cash book and only glanced at the totals occasionally. It would be perfectly easy to make a "mistake" in the footings that would look like a slip of the pen. Just the reversal of two figures would enable him to put ninety dollars in his pocket without anybody's knowledge. And with the ninety dollars he could keep on with his play and win back what he had lost. The luck would be certain to change, and he could easily replace the ninety dollars.

It was terrible, but he could see nothing else to do, so he thought it out carefully while he took his sponge bath and dressed himself neatly, according to his habit, for it was now almost breakfast time. The breakfast did not relish very well, and he was worn and nervous for the lack of sleep, but he pulled himself together as well as he could and appeared at the office at the usual hour, looking pretty much as he always did. Only, for the first time in his life, he could not look at Mr. Spooner when he said "Good morning."

Spooner noticed it, too, and looked at him keenly for a moment but said nothing, and in due time left the office to go on "Change. He was a man who said little at any time, but kept his eyes open. He knew more about Maynard than the latter supposed, though he did not know all.

Business was brisk that day and Maynard was kept steadily at work. Once or twice he made a trifling mistake, for he was thinking very hard about that ninety dollars, but he rectified his errors immediately, before any one else had time to notice them, and when the time came to strike his daily balance he had nine ten-dollar bills folded very small, and tucked into the fob pocket of his trousers. Aside from these, he had taken a five-dollar bill which he had duly charged to himself and placed in his pocket-book. He was allowed to pay himself in this way, and Spooner had never objected to his over-drawing a few dollars as he had a few times.

All there was to do, to hide the theft for the time being, was to falsify the footings of his days receipts, so when he wrote the total on the left hand page of his cash book, he wrote \$2,340.75, instead of \$2,430.75 which was the correct amount. Of course, he knew that this being posted in his ledger would throw his books out of balance, and would show at the end of the month, but he also knew that it was easy to make a similar "mistake" in some other footing on the credit side, so that the only chance of his detection would lie in the examination of his footings. All this was the calculation he made to guard himself in case he could not replace the money as soon as he expected, but, of course, no such contingency was likely to occur. When he should put it back, which he was positive he would do in a day or two, of course, it would be necessary to correct his figures, but that he could do easily.

It is an old trick, known to everybody who ever kept books, but that very fact made it unlikely that he should be suspected of trying it. The only possible way to detect it is to examine the footings, and he had not known Spooner to do that for some years.

All seemed to go well. Spooner looked, as usual, at the slip of paper that Maynard handed him at the close of the day, and did not even ask to look at the books, so the younger man breathed a little more freely. He was very nervous, though, and he fancied his employer was looking at him rather closely two or three times, so he was very glad when the time came to leave the office.

As he walked up town, the shame and horror of his day's work came on him again, and he again almost overwhelmedly, but he would not acknowledge that he was a thief. The old delusive hope, that he would buy every man who begins what he had begun, was strong within him. He would put it back in a day or two, and no one would ever know.

At length he reached his rooms, and as he entered he saw a letter lying on his table. One glance at it was enough to make him feel faint and sick. In the last twenty-four hours he had not once thought of his mother. Somehow, she seemed so far away, and his life lately had been such an unwholesome one, and so full of excitement that he had not allowed himself to think of her very often. And the day and the night before had been so crowded with one thought that he had not had time for any others. Now, however, he would have to think of her. He was not hardened enough to lay the letter aside, and he had not outgrown his love for his mother though he had been away from her so long.

It was a long time before he could break the seal, but at length he did it and began reading the loving lines, with a flush of shame on his face that grew deeper and deeper as he read.

Who needs to be told what the mother would write to the boy who was the pride of her age? Loving reproaches, mingled with suggestions of excuse for his infrequent letters. Prayer for his guidance amid the temptations of life. Kind messages from

his father and his sister. And last of all a reminder that it was almost Thanksgiving, and an urgent, affectionate appeal to him to come home and spend that day with those who had loved him so well.

Before he had finished reading it he was in tears, and when he reached the end he was sobbing in an agony of remorse and self-pity, as well as self-reproach.

The tears were good. When he dropped the letter he fell on his knees as he had not done before for a long time.

It was not long, however, before he was on his feet again, and jamming his hat on, his head with furious haste, he started for the street. Half a dozen blocks of a quick walk brought him to Mr. Spooner's door. Spooner was a hard man.

The servant knew him and showed him directly into the library, where presently Spooner appeared. He looked grave and rather stern when he entered, knowing that something unusual must have caused his clerk to call at his house within an hour of having seen him. Yet his voice was not unkind as he said: "Well, Maynard, what's the matter?"

"It is very serious, sir," said the lad (he was only twenty-one). "I have robbed you of ninety dollars and I want to give it back."

He handed over the roll of bills as he spoke, and Spooner took it and laid it on the library table without looking at it. "Is this all you have taken?" he said gravely.

"Yes, sir. My account is overdrawn forty-two dollars, but the books show that."

"How did you do it?"

"I made a false footing of the receipts to-day."

"Are your books all right excepting that?"

"Yes, sir."

There was a long silence. Then Spooner spoke. "You have been gambling," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"And you took this money to gamble with?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why did you bring it back? Have you made a winning?"

"No," said Maynard quickly. "I brought it back because I couldn't keep it." And there was another pause.

"This is a very grave matter," said Spooner lengthily. "What do you expect me to do?"

"I leave that entirely to you," said Maynard.

"It is a difficult matter," said his employer, slowly. "I suppose some men would tell you to go on in your place, and would trust you again, but I cannot do that. Your quick repentance and prompt restitution do not cover the fact that you have been dishonest, and I cannot keep you in my employ, nor can I recommend you to any place of trust. You have damaged your own career badly and will have to turn to something else. But I owe you consideration for what you have done for me in time past. I will pay you a month's salary in place of notice to leave, and I will recommend you for any place you may seek which does not involve the handling of other people's money."

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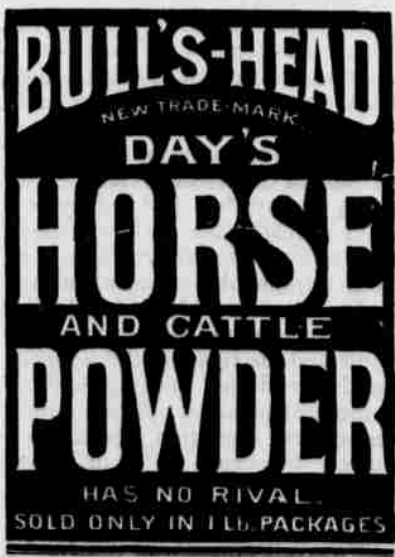
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