

The Girl

The man in the big easy chair looked across the table at his wife. "I am repeating what Richardson said. He told me this morning that the boy had braced up in quite a wonderful way. He is punctual and energetic and works as if he meant to climb. Richardson says he is positive that Edgar has stopped drinking. His eyes have lost their dullness and his hand is steady."

The woman breathed more quickly. "Wh-what will you do, Robert?" "Do?" the man answered. "Nothing. This isn't the first time the boy has tried to brace up. You know how long it lasted."

"But perhaps a word from you would help him, dear."

"No."

"You are his father?"

"See here, Emily, this won't do. I'm the boy's father, and I've been a bad father. Where I meant to please him I proved his worst enemy. He spent the money I gave him in wasteful living. But why speak of it? Before these doors are opened to him again he's got to prove that he's fit to enter them. He hasn't forgotten what I said to him. If there is a spark of manhood left in his breast he will make no attempt to come near us until he shows he is worthy."

"You are very hard, Robert."

"I've been softer than wax. I'm as hard as nails now. But, there, we've had enough of this for tonight. I told Richardson not to report to me until a week from today. Then we can tell, perhaps, whether this spasm of reform has any foundation."

"It will be hard to wait, Robert."

The man looked across at the woman. His stern face relaxed. "Let us hope for the best, my dear," he softly said.

It was a week later and the woman had patiently waited for the man to unfold his news of this erring son. "Richardson reported again to-day," he said as he sank back in the easy chair.

"Well, dear?"

"The boy continues to do himself credit, Richardson says he is grasping his duties with a firmer grip. The other day he came to Graham—he's the head of the department—and told him he must have more pay. He said he knew he was worth more and that he could get a job at any time with the Ajax people. Graham will double his pay next week. He told Richardson the boy was well worth the raise. It seems that Richardson noticed the change in Edgar two months ago, but wouldn't mention it because he was afraid it might not last." He paused. "Sounds good, doesn't it?"

The woman's head was bowed. She looked up slowly.

"I know what's brought about this change," she said half hysterically. "It's a girl."

The man stared at her.

"Thank God for the girl!" he said in his quick and earnest fashion.

"I—I must see her at once," exclaimed the woman.

"Go slow, Emily," said the man. "You are jumping at conclusions. But if there is a girl—a good girl, of course—with enough influence to turn our boy into the right path—when his father and mother have failed—she is not to be interfered with—do you hear me?"

There was a little silence.

"I did so want him to marry Alice Landon," said the woman.

"Huh!" growled the man. "He will please to marry himself—if he marries at all—and there's no probability that he will ask our advice. If your suspicion is correct—and I suppose it might be called intuition—don't interfere. There'll be nothing too good for the girl who can awaken our boy to his duty. Let her alone."

But the woman said nothing.

Two nights later they were in their accustomed places beside the big library table.

The man suddenly smiled as he looked across at the woman.

"There is a girl," he said.

"Yes," said the woman, "I have seen her."

"The man stared at her.

"I hope you did nothing rash," he said and his voice was almost harsh.

"No," she answered; "I was very careful. What do you know about her?"

"Very little. She is a stenographer in the factory office. She earns a fair salary and bears an excellent reputation. Edgar has been seen in her company a number of times. That's the extent of my knowledge. You say you've seen her. How did that happen?"

"It was easily planned, Robert. I waited about the factory until Edgar came out—I was in the little antique shop across the way and he didn't see me—and, oh, Robert, our boy looks ten years older."

She paused with a little catch in her voice.

"Go on," said the man. "Let's hope he has grown ten years the wiser."

"He held himself straight, Robert, and I think there is a new look in his eyes."

"Go on, you foolish mother."

"I saw him quite well, because he crossed the road and passed in front of the shop, walking slowly. And after the others had gone a girl came out of the office, a slender girl, walking alone, and when our boy saw her his face lighted up and something seemed to grip my heart."

The man softly laughed.

"The mother love showing itself

through maternal jealousy. Go on, my dear."

"Edgar crossed the street quickly and fell into step beside the girl. They walked slowly, the girl looking up into his face now and then. There's no doubt that she loves him, Robert."

The man laughed again.

"And did your eyes tell you all this?"

"My eyes and my heart, Robert. When Edgar and the girl turned the corner I hurried out and found Michael—he had the car on a little side street—and I followed them."

"In the car?"

"Yes, Robert."

"Rather an obtrusive way to trail your prey. But go on."

"They were standing still when we turned the corner, but Edgar did not look around. Michael ran ahead slowly, and as we passed them Edgar left the girl—she gave him her hand as he turned away—and ran and caught a car. The girl looked after him—she is very fond of him, Robert."

"We will admit the fondness, my dear. What next?"

"I told Michael to stop at the curb and I leaned out and called to the girl."

"Was that discreet?"

"Wait, dear. At first she didn't hear me. And I called again, and she heard me and came toward the car. She—she has a nice face, Robert."

The man laughed once more.

"Your mother heart is defending the boy's taste."

"No, Robert, the girl has an attractive face."

"You will admit it's a little crafty and hard about the mouth?"

"No."

"And that it suggests paint and flannels its powder?"

"No, Robert."

"And that it is feebly pretty and altogether cheap?"

"No."

"Then it was much better than you expected?"

"Yes, Robert. She has a nice face—not beautiful, but frank and clear-eyed." She paused. "If she had been simply pretty it would have hurt me, Robert. It would have looked as if Edgar had been caught by a dimple and a curl. But the affair is more serious than I thought."

He caught her eye and nodded.

"What you are telling me is good to hear," he said. "I'm feeling easier about Edgar than I have felt since he left college. It looks very much as if his liking for this girl was the first sensible symptom he has shown. And there's another thing."

"Well, Robert?"

"If the girl can run the gauntlet of your critical mother eyes there must be something very attractive about her. But you haven't told me all the story."

"I called to her and when she realized that I wanted her she came to the car. I told her I was nervous and a little faint—which was quite true, Robert. And I asked her if she wouldn't sit by me for a few moments until the attack passed away. She looked at me wonderingly and then something in my face decided her and she took the seat by my side. I asked her where she lived and she told me and I directed Michael not to hurry. Then I talked to the girl and found out something about her. She is an orphan and came to the city from an interior town. She has been well educated and is qualified to teach singing, but her present work is fully as remunerative and more certain. And she is twenty-three."

The man laughed.

"That's extremely interesting—I don't refer to the age item especially. But go on."

"I don't know what she thinks of me. I tried to interest her."

"By asking her questions?"

"I asked no questions. She told me all this voluntarily. I am quite sure she will tell me more the next time we meet."

"Then you have planned to see her again?"

"Yes. I am going to take her with me for a ride in the parks Wednesday evening. I told her I was a fussy old woman and that she was doing the best kind of charity work in amusing me. I said I had taken a fancy to her—and it's true, Robert."

"Eh?"

"Yes, Robert. I can't quite say that I am ready to take her as a daughter-in-law. Think of the talk it would make!"

The man laughed.

"I see you haven't quite surrendered, my dear. And what's the girl's name?"

"Elinor Viets."

"That's not bad. Of course, you didn't exchange cards?"

"I thought of inventing a name, but I couldn't bring myself to do that. I suppose she thinks I'm a forgetful old creature who doesn't remember even the common usages of polite society."

The man leaned back in the deep chair and interlocked his fingers.

"Well," he said, "things are not nearly so bad as they might be. Up to the present moment I must frankly admit that the girl seems too good for the boy."

"Robert!"

"It's the unpleasant truth. Of course, he's improving, but don't let your mother heart cherish any belief that this fine young girl—I take her at your own valuation—isn't much better than this wayward boy of ours. But there, we'll postpone any further discussion until after the coming ride."

So it was Wednesday evening when they took up the subject again. The man was waiting in the library for the woman to come home.

He looked up as she came through the doorway. Then he quickly arose

and went to her, and took her cloak and led her to a chair.

"Why, Emily," he said. "What's happened?"

For a moment she could not find her voice.

"They are to be married Tuesday evening," she sobbed.

The man whistled.

"The boy seems to be developing energy enough with his other awakened qualities. There, there, calm yourself and tell me about it."

The woman waited a moment.

"I drew her out," she began, "and soon found that she wanted to talk to a woman—it seems she has no intimate girl friends—and she told me just what I wanted, and yet dreaded to hear. She is very fond of Edgar and she has the fullest confidence in him. He has told her about his wild days and how he quarreled with his father and mother. She doesn't know who his parents are—Edgar doesn't want to talk about the past—but she feels convinced they were wrong in their treatment of Edgar. She is sure they didn't understand him that his mother was indulgent and his father unwise. Edgar needed an object in life, he needed to be thrown on his own resources. Now he has his ambition to rise and be a lawyer." She paused and drew a quick breath. "Think of a mother listening to all this!"

"You will be an unbidden guest, you know."

"I want to be there, Robert."

"Perhaps you would prefer to have it stopped?"

"How, Robert?"

"I might buy off the girl."

The woman shook her head.

"You haven't money enough to do that, Robert."

"Fine. Then the wedding goes on. And to-morrow I will send for the Rev. Frank Darnley. He will be glad to come. I believe I have a little gift for his mission project. When he comes I will make the necessary arrangements." He went over and neatly smoothed the woman's hair. "I think this is going to turn out all right," he said.

It was Tuesday evening and the Rev. Frank Darnley sat in his little parlor and waited for the girl and the man who had asked his professional services. It was a neat little parlor nicely furnished, with folding doors that connected it with the sitting room beyond. These doors were closed and the Rev. Frank Darnley inspected them carefully before he answered the bell.

When he returned from the front door he brought with him the girl and the wayward son. He greeted them cordially and bade them be seated.

"We are in something of a hurry," said the young man. "We have a brief little trip in view, and time tables make no provisions for delayed happy pairs."

He laughed and the young pastor laughed with him.

The girl unfastened her travelling cloak.

"Would it be possible," she said, "for you to have a woman present during the ceremony? I have a fancy that I would like it better."

The young pastor brightened.

"Why, yes," he answered. "I have two visitors at the present moment, a very worthy couple. I will ask them to be witnesses—in accordance with the State law."

And he slipped from the room. He was back presently.

"They will be glad to aid us," he said a little hurriedly. "They will stand in the doorway here while the ceremony proceeds. If you are quite ready you may arise."

The doors at the back were softly opened.

The ceremony proceeded, the most nervous member of the trio being the Rev. Frank Darnley.

When it was all over and the Rev. Frank had shaken hands with both and wished them joy, the girl looked around and suddenly started. A man and woman had entered the room, but it was the woman who startled the girl.

"Why, madam!" she cried. "Are you here?" And she advanced with her hands outstretched. The woman was crying and could not answer. But she opened her arms and held the girl close.

The bridegroom had whirled about, and then catching sight of the man and woman had drawn back.

"Elinor," he cried, "do you know this lady?"

The girl released herself from the woman's embrace.

"Why, yes," she answered. "She has been kind to me—as a mother might be. There is no person I could so gladly greet on my wedding night."

The young man stared at her.

"Don't you know her name?" he demanded.

"Why, no, Edgar; I don't know the lady's name. I never thought of it."

He was still amazed.

"Do you mean to say that you don't know this is my mother?"

"Your mother!" she cried. "Your mother! Oh, I'm very glad! Don't cry—mother."

The older man took a step forward.

"Eddie," he said, "I hope your resentment doesn't go so far as to prevent your father from kissing his new daughter—God bless and guard her!"

The younger man gave a quick start and put out his hand.

"Father!" he cried.

And the Rev. Frank Darnley smiled approvingly.

Always A Way

When Frank Sheldon left the law school he settled in his old home town. Fairfield was a small place, not far from a large city. Sheldon figured it out that he could live better on a certain income in Fairfield than on a doubtful prosperity in a large city. There was something else. Edith Sawyer lived in Fairfield.

But the Hon. John Sawyer railroad magnate, could not appreciate an attachment between his daughter and a poor young lawyer. So the poor young lawyer studied and struggled along.

He had been struck by a peculiar phase of a great case that was being tried in a near-by city. The law journal, which printed his article on the subject commented on his views rather enthusiastically, and sent him a number of free copies. He sent some to his friends, including the Hon. John Sawyer, whose interests were deeply touched by the case in question.

Urged by his confidence that he had done a worthy thing, he set off for the Sawyer home, determined to interview Mr. Sawyer. He was very civilly received.

"Quite an interesting article of yours," said the millionaire. "I thank you for the copy."

Frank bowed, then plunged. "Mr. Sawyer, you must have seen that I love your daughter, but I've said nothing until I felt assured of your consent."

"Oh, of course," interrupted Mr. Sawyer. "How much did you get for that article?"

"A few free copies," said Frank, blushing.

"About what I thought," said Mr. Sawyer. "Now, Sheldon, I like you, but liking doesn't count when a life contract is involved. You've given all your time and trouble for nothing. The only things that count are results." He paused, then added, "I don't think I need say any more."

"I thank you for your candor," said Frank, rising. "Good night." He pushed out of the house, and down the street almost ran into a stout, elderly gentleman who was toiling up the hill.

"Pshaw!" said the man. "Where can I find John Sawyer's house?"

"The Sawyers' house is on the hill."

The stout man pulled the Sawyer door bell and said, "Tell Mr. Sawyer that John Hunter wants to see him."

Mr. Sawyer almost ran down stairs.

"Why, this is an honor. What brought you here?"

"You've got a young lawyer in this village named Frank Sheldon. Know him?"

"Yes, he was here a few minutes ago. What's it all about?"

"It's about that article the young man wrote. He has struck the right lead on that case of ours. Is he all right, honest, reliable?"

"I think he is," said Mr. Sawyer, slowly.

"Then send a note to him at once, asking him to come."

After the note was sent, Mr. Hunter explained that the discovery of the young man, if known at the beginning, might have saved a hundred thousand dollars in litigation; that now he had it in his power to up set their plans if the other side get hold of him. "We must have him at any cost. A thousand dollars will probably be enough for him."

Edith Sawyer had heard the conversation. She was standing on the step watching the moonlight when Sheldon arrived. She put her fingers to his lips. She told him of the conversation, and, as he was leaving her, whispered, you needn't bid for me."

There was a deal of hemming and hawing in the ensuing conversation. Frank smiled. "I suppose you are joking, Mr. Hunter?"

"Why, certainly not; it is a large offer—"

"It's ridiculous," said Sheldon. "And if you will excuse me, it is a mistake to think a man a fool because, knowing what he is doing, he settles where he can do it best."

"Well, say two thousand," said Mr. Hunter, while Mr. Sawyer's eyes grew wider.

"Really, Mr. Hunter, I appreciate your kindness, but I am not a person to put up with a minor bid."

"You call two thousand a minor bid," said Mr. Sawyer.

"Of course," said Sheldon, calmly. "In order to shorten this interview, I will name my own terms—a fee of twenty thousand and an equal share in the contingent fund."

"It is preposterous!" cried both together.

"Gentlemen, I bid you good evening," said Sheldon, rising and walking to the door.

"Hold on there," said Mr. Hunter. "I shall certainly hold on to the terms given," Frank said. "Others will pay more."

Mr. Hunter looked at Mr. Sawyer who nodded his head. "Well," he said, "give us a few minutes to think it over." At the end of 10 minutes a knock came at the door. Mr. Hunter turned to Frank and said, "Mr. Sheldon, we accept your terms."

When the famous case of Hunter-Sawyer Company vs. — was ended, great were the congratulations given to that "brilliant young member of the bar" as all the papers styled him, and predicted a great career ahead of him.

He was retained by the Hunter-Sawyer Company as their attorney.

Six months after he paid another visit to Mr. Sawyer. "Mr. Sawyer, I —" Frank began. "Sheldon, my boy," said Mr. Sawyer. "Edith is in the drawing room. Go to her."—MRS. ALICE J. LESHNER.

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Goosebona Prophecy.
Samuel T. Christ, of Strausstown Berks county, made his annual prediction of the winter weather from the bone of a goose hatched last spring, and according to the theory of Elias Hartz, the winter will be erratic.

The markings show stormy conditions during the late fall and a severe cold snap about the holidays. This will be followed by a brief spell of mild weather, when severe winter weather will again set in and continue until spring.

The indications are that there will be plenty of snow and an abundance of ice. A blizzard is indicated for February and cold and stormy weather will extend late into March.

The one time a man is sure his wife will listen to him is when he talks in his sleep.

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Duchess Can Be Shabby.
A duchess may be as shabby as she pleases, and, in spite of socialism and a badly hanging skirt, she will remain a power in the land, but the suburban lady does not care to be seen with her best friend if the latter be wearing an old-fashioned frock. — Black and White.