

Peck's Bad Boy and His Pa.

THE OLD MAN COMPLAINS THAT IT IS TOO QUIET SINCE THE BOY BECAME GOOD, SO THE BOY AND HIS CHUM MAKE IT INTERESTING FOR HIM.

"Come in the back room, Henney, I want to talk with you," said the groceryman to the bad boy, as he came in laughing and slapping his hands on his legs. "I have heard something to-day that has hurt me as much as though you was my own boy," and the groceryman looked as though it wouldn't take many good sized onions to make the tears come.

"Great jewillikens, what is it," asked the bad boy, as his face sobered down at the look of pain on the face of his mercantile friend. "What is the matter? Won't your creditors accept ten cents on a dollar?" and the boy looked like a lawyer, ready to help a client out, and reached into a cinnamon bag and took out a handful of cinnamon.

"No, nothing of that kind," said the groceryman. "I have concluded not to fail. But I am told on good authority that you have become bad again, and that you have been playing the meanest trick on your pa that you have ever played. The minister told me he was coming in from a country funeral the other day, and he overtook your pa on the road with a gun, and asked him to get in and ride, and your pa's pants were all torn, his boots and gun full of snow, and he was so scared that he kept looking around all the way to town, expecting to be shot in the back. Now, what kind of a way is that to treat the author of your being? Say, you will have a through ticket to the bad place, and your train will leave on schedule time, and arrive at the grand central depot in ladies, just as the fire is kindled. You bad-boy. I have been proud of you, and thought you would come out all right, but now I know you are a hypocrite."

"There, there, don't put on any extra sadness," said the boy, as he quartered an orange. "Pa is all right. He wanted us to stir him up. You see, since I have been good, pa has been neglected, and he has become sour, and his clothes don't fit. He told ma that what he wanted was excitement, and he had got to have it. He said when the boys were playing things on him, and making him scratch gravel, and he felt as though a house was going to fall on him every minute, he enjoyed himself, had a good appetite, and felt equal to any emergency, but since the boys had become good, and let him alone, his life was a burden, he had failed in business, and everything went wrong, and unless there was a change soon, he would lose his mind. He said he sighed for the old times, when he didn't know whether he was afoot or a horseback, and when something was liable to happen every minute. He said he was brought up to be surprised, and fall through holes, and to have everything stop, and to lead a quiet life, and just eat, drink and sleep, with no cyclones, no happy laughter of children raising the deuce, was more than he could bear. Ma told me about it, and the state of mind pa was in, and I felt sorry for pa. Ma told me to try and think up something that would sort of wake up pa, or he would relapse into a state of melancholia, and have to hire a doctor. I told my chum about pa's case, and he said it was too bad to see a man suffer that way, and we must do something to save his life."

"So we agreed to take pa out rabbit hunting. I asked pa if he didn't want to go with us, and he jumped right up and yelled, and said it would tickle him half to death to go. I told him where there was a place about four miles out of town, where there was dead loads of rabbits, but the man that owned the farm drove everybody off. Pa said there couldn't no man drive him off, and for us to come on. Well, you'd a dide. Pa wasn't afraid of anybody, until the man hollered, so him to git. You see, we went out to the farm, and stationed pa by a fence, and my chum and me went on the other side of a piece of woods, to scare rabbits towards pa. Then we went up to the farm house, where a man lived that we know, and told him we wanted to scare a man out of his boots, and he said all right, go ahead. So we borrowed some farmer's clothes, and old plug hats, and went around behind the barn and yelled to pa to get off that farm. Pa said for

us to go to the bad place. He said he came out to hunt rabbits and by gosh he was going to hunt rabbits. Then my chum and me started towards pa, wading through the snow, and pa thought we were grown men, seven feet high. When we got about twenty rods from pa we told him to 'git,' and he was going to argue with us, when we pulled up our guns and fired both barrels at him. We had blank cartridges, but pa thought he felt shot striking him everywhere, and he started for a barbed wire fence, and we loaded our guns again and fired just as pa got on the fence, and he yelled murder. You know these barbed wire fences, don't you? The barbs catch on your pants and hang on. Well, pa got caught by the pants, and couldn't get over, and we kept firing, and he dropped his gun in the snow, and tried to tear the fence down, and he kept yelling, 'For God's sake gentlemen, spare my life. I don't want any of your rabbits.' I got to laughing so I couldn't shoot and I laid down in a snow bank, and my chum kept shooting. Pa finally got off the fence and burrowed in a snow-bank, and held up a piece of his shirt which the fence tore off, for a flag of truce, and we quit, and he stuck up his head and saw me laying there on the snow, and pa thought his gun had gone off and killed one of the farmers, and my chum said, 'Great heavings, you have killed him.' At that pa grabbed his gun and ran for the road, and started for town, and that's where the minister overtook him. Along towards night me and my chum came home with four rabbits, and we told pa he was a pretty rabbit hunter to leave before the rabbits got to running, and that we looked all around for him. He looked surprised, and asked us if we struck any corpses around on that farm, and I thought I should bust. We told him we didn't see any, and then he told us that he was standing there waiting for rabbits, when a gang of about fifteen roughs came and ordered him away, and he refused to go. He said they opened fire on him, and he threw himself into a hollow square, the way they used to do in the army, threw up intrenchments of snow, and defended himself, and when he was finally surrounded and had to retreat, he saw the ground covered with dead and wounded, and he expected he had wiped out an entire neighborhood. He said it was singular we didn't see any corpses. I asked him how he tore his pants, and he said the gang shot them all to pieces. Then we told him of the joke we had played on him, and how we fired blank cartridges at him as he was trying to get over the fence, and he tried to laugh, but he couldn't. He was inclined to be mad at first, but finally he said this was more like business, and he hadn't felt as well before since we initiated him into the Masons, and we could ply anything on him, and do anything we chose except let him alone. So you see I am not so bad as you think. Pa enjoys it, and so does my chum and me. Eh! old rutabaga, do you see?"

"O, yes, that is all right if your pa likes that kind of fun, but if you was my boy I would mail you till you couldn't stand." Just then a big cannon fire cracked that the boy had lit and laid on the floor exploded and the groceryman went out the back door bareheaded while the boy went out the front door whistling. "Be sure and call me early, for I'm to be queen of the May."

A SUCCESSFUL strike occurred when the Richmond night express struck a negro walking on the track, who got a glimpse of the locomotive's head light just before being landed in the woods a dozen or two yards from the road line. His first conscious words were: "For de Lord's sake, boss, w'en frow'd dat lantern at me?"

A VERMONT girl paid \$20 for a parrot and hung it up in its cage on the front porch. Next day she gave a small boy 75 cents to take it away. The boy wondered why, until the bird suddenly stuck its head on one side and exclaimed in a loud voice: "Kiss me—kiss me quick."

Do not think of knocking out another man's brains because he differs in opinion from you. It would be as rational to knock yourself on the head because you differed from yourself ten years ago.

DARKNESS, solitude and remorse are grim and hateful company.

"Yours Truly."

THE WAY IN WHICH A YOUNG WOMAN WAS ENTRAPPED INTO MATRIMONY.

"Amazin Grace," said Mrs. Pillsbury, as she sat with her daughter at their afternoon sewing, "be yew goin' to piece a quilt?"

"What fur, mother?"

"Why, ain't Mr. Van Vleet been to see y-u twice't runnin' lately? He's axed ye, I s'pos, to hev him?"

"An' I giv him the mittin'."

"Sho! You wouldn't be half so silly! Why, he's with a dozen orniray men. You mought go further and fare wuss."

"Jest wha'I'm goin' to dew."

"Did yew tell him so?"

"No, I writ; now, mother, let me be; I ain't a goin' to marry no man that thinks I'm jumpin' et the chance. I'd a heap ruther be an old maid."

"There was nothing said for some time; then the widow asked: 'When did yew write, 'Mazin?'"

"A day or so past."

"Where did you git a pen?"

"I borrowed one. Mebbe you'd like to know what I said tew him."

"You've guessed rite," said the widow eagerly.

"It ain't nuthin, to nobody but us, mother, s'long es I didn't have him," said the girl curtly, and no more was said, but the widow sighed heavily and held her hand to her left side.

Amazin knew that it meant her heart, for she had been brought up to respect that organ as an intimidating power. This time she did not relent, but wondered why she could not like that big, good looking Van Vleet well enough to marry him, for they were poor, poor as that historic church mouse, and he was well off.

But they were not mercenary. People called them simple folks; perhaps because they lacked education and believed everything that was told them. But they were good as gold. The widow's face and form, lank and ungainly, were familiar to every sick room. They rendered unto Caesar the things that were Caesar's. They owed no man anything, though they worked early and late to accomplish it. They were good to everybody and everything, and Amazin Grace—her mother had named her after the hymn beginning, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound"—was really pretty. So thought big, bulking, shame faced Van Vleet, when he came a courting her, with his trousers tucked into cowhide boots, and a coonskin cap tied down over his ears. She was the only girl he was afraid of, and he wasn't afraid of her, come right down to it.

He was an honest, decent chap, with a fist like a sledgehammer and a heart like a child's. He wanted Amazin Grace, and he couldn't imagine any reason why he should have left her. When he got her simple little letter of refusal, written out with infinite difficulty, and spelled on a new plan of phonetics, he read it over and over, smoked his cob pipe, read the letter again, grinned a good bit, then folded it reverently, and put it in the pocket nearest his heart.

"That's all rite, my girl," he chuckled.

A couple of months passed away. One peculiarity of time is that it treats all people alike. It does not fly from some and stand still with others. It was spring at the Van Vleet farm, which was one mass of apple and cherry blossoms, and it was spring at the Widow Pillsbury's little lean-to house, without shrub or blossom. The widow looked out of the window and sighed. She had never heard the "Song of the Spirit," but she had sung it all her life. It was her bread and butter.

"There's Van Vleet!" she exclaimed, looking up from her lapboard. "Well, I declare! What brings him here?"

"Praps he's comin' to ask yew to hev him, mother," said Amazin Grace, laughing, while a sweet flush of pink stained her round cheeks.

"I wish he should!" said the widow, devoutly; "I should consider it was flyin' in the face of Providence not to marry such a man—if he asked me."

But Mr. Van Vleet stalked in with a brief "good day," threw an armful of blossoms into the lap of Amazin Grace, and said:

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Colored Silks from	80c a yard.
A new and superior quality all silk Rhinoceros	75c. City price 1.50
The finest quality 1 1/2 pt width all wool Dress Cloth and Flannel \$1.00 per yd. Same quality elsewhere 1.25	75c up.
Silk Velvets from	1.00 and 1.25 up.
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