

DEACON PILSEY'S PLOT.

A REASONABLY good man was Deacon Pilsley, as times went, but if he had a weakness, it was for making things in general go about as he wanted them to. Not an overbearing man by any means, and certainly not a violent one, but with wonderfully cute and quiet and subtle ways of his own, by which he brought matters about without letting other folks know how the thing was done. When a man is accustomed to have his own way, he makes up his mind pretty easily; but there was one point of all others upon which Deacon Pilsley had been set and fixed for years, and the care of which lay heavy on his mind, for the time had come when, in his judgment, something deep required to be planned and all his skill exercised in carrying it out. To a mind like this, that had taken a perfect measure of every other in the village, and for miles around it, there could be little difficulty in selecting his tools and assistants, and he had no need of counselors. That was how he came to be talking so confidentially with Joe Gaines, as the two stood by the yard-gate.

"Why, deacon," said Joe, "I always thought you liked Bob Humphrey. He's a tiptop fellow, and a good match for any girl I know of."

"So he is, so he is," replied the deacon. "Can't say a word agin him. Know him from a boy. Can't forbid him the house, or any of that sort of nonsense; but, then, he can't have Irene Wyrer."

"I don't see how you'll help it, deacon. You're only her guardian, and she is about of age."

"Not for a year yet—that's how the will reads—and she's in my own house, you know. I guess I can fix some things, especially if you'll turn in and help me. You're a lawyer, Joe Gaines, but you're a young one yet, and I'll give you the fattest fee you ever dreamed of if you'll only hitch teams with me, and see that Bob Humphrey don't get the upper hand."

"Well, if that's what you're after, so it's all right and square, I'd as lief earn a fee one way as another. What's your programme?"

"Well, you know there's nigh onto thirty thousand a coming to Irene Wyrer, in her own right, and I've took the best kind of 'keer of it. It's been a mighty sight of trouble, and all along I've thought of my son Scott."

"Scott Pilsley?" interrupted Joe. "Why, he's in California."

"He won't be long. He's comin' home inside o' six months, and I want to keep Irene safe for him. They used to be wonderful thick, and he writ to her regular ever so long after he went away, and so did she to him."

"Do they correspond now?" said Joe. "No, not now. There's the rub. That's the rub. That's one reason I'm looking out so sharp arter Bob. Now, I want you to just take a holt and try and keep Bob off till Scott gets back. 'Twon't be for long, and Irene ain't such bad company, nohow."

"I don't know," said Joe. "There's a Maggie and her mother. I couldn't be particularly attentive to Irene without their knowing it. And Bob Humphrey will be sure to be around most of the time, and it won't be long before I have the whole village talking the matter up."

"Never mind that, Joe, never mind that. It will be all right when Scott gets home. I'll give you the biggest kind of a fee."

"Well, deacon," coolly replied the young lawyer, "it's a pretty tough case, but I'll take it on one condition."

"What's that?"

"Why, so long as it's only fun, and all that, I'll go ahead, but if it seems as if I was doing any harm, anything real bad, you know, I'm to be at liberty to back out."

"Well, I don't mind, so long as you let me know in time."

And so the deacon and the lawyer discussed their plot to their satisfaction, and when all was settled the latter took his own way down the broad and grass-worn street of the village.

"The old shark!" he muttered, as he strolled leisurely on. "What on earth put it into his plotting old head to pitch on me for his tool? He never was more'n half decent to me before. I reckon I'll earn my fee, but I'll be fair and square with Bob Humphrey. What would Irene say if she knew what was up? Wouldn't those black eyes of her's strike fire?"

Now, it happened, that of late, unknown, perhaps, to the deacon, there had been growing up more than a little closeness of intimacy between Joe Gaines and Bob Humphrey, and thus it was treachery to his friend as well as unfairness to the pretty heiress, to which the young lawyer had allowed himself to be bribed by the deacon's promised fee.

A deep fellow was Joe Gaines, and a marvelous manipulator of social affairs. Again and again, as days and weeks and months went by, did Deacon Pilsley congratulate himself on his admirable selection, and chuckle in his inmost being as he witnessed the well-contrived success of Joe's manoeuvres. There were picnics and drives and parties, and entertainments of various kinds, but in vain did Bob Humphrey invite or propose, the young lawyer was sure to be beforehand with him, and it almost seemed as if a sweet, unassuming, quiet little

Maggie Pilsley herself, the deacon's daughter, had joined the secret league against her friend Irene, so often was some excuse devised by which she was made to appear in the latter's stead.

Then, too, there were the home evenings at the deacon's house, when the subtle-minded old plotter could have hugged himself with satisfaction as he sat by and witnessed with his own eyes the admirable manner in which Joe Gaines worked for his fee.

"It takes a lawyer, after all," he said to himself. "I don't care much what he charges. I only hope he'll keep it up that way till Scott gets home again. And then to see Bob Humphrey! Why, the feller's got the perseverance of the saint, but he ain't nowhere with Joe Gaines."

As for Irene Wyrer herself, her red lips laughed and pointed, and her bright black eyes sparkled and deepened, and her life seemed flowing onward very pleasantly, as if no deep-laid plots and schemings had any power over her or her happiness. Moreover, through it all Joe Gaines seemed to maintain the most complete external semblance of frank-hearted friendship with Bob Humphrey. Odd as it may seem, the young lawyer also found that his practice had undergone a very sensible increase, caused mainly by the warm, though covert, encomiums which the good deacon's heart compelled him to utter here and there, in his keen appreciation of his young friend's tact and management.

Time will fly, however, and the mails at last brought to the Pilsley homestead the welcome news that its absent boy and heir would shortly return. There were letters from Scott Pilsley to his mother and his sister Maggie, and to Irene Wyrer, and even to his old cronies and schoolmates, Joe Gaines and Bob Humphrey, and to each one he had doubtless some matter of special interest to communicate.

No noisy, smoky, disgusting railway trains as yet vexed the retirement and repose of the village, but at last, on a morning when all things were in a state of almost painful expectancy of his arrival, not the ordinary stage-coach, but a private hired carriage, heavy with trunks and packages, bore Scott Pilsley to the door of his father's home.

In an instant the little veranda was full of those who awaited him, but when the deacon's tall sun-burned and bushy-bearded son sprang out upon the grass, he turned his back to the veranda for a moment, while he aided the movements of a graceful well-favored, dark-featured young lady, who followed him and whom, even in the first warmth of his "welcome home," he introduced as "my wife, my Lucia."

Maggie Pilsley hugged her and kissed her, and so did Irene Wyrer, and so, in a moment more, did old Mrs. Pilsley, and the deacon was too wise a man to seem altogether astonished, while Joe Gaines and Bob Humphrey were fairly boisterous. In fact, Scott Pilsley's California bride was so overcome by the warmth of her greeting, that the poor young thing forgot her pride and burst into tears. In half a minute after that there wasn't a lady visible, and then Bob and Joe knew enough to leave the deacon and his son to themselves. The two young men walked off arm in arm, but they were back again before the day was over.

The deacon's face was a trifle serious, but not exactly cloudy, and before long he managed to get Joe Gaines off by himself for a bit of private conversation.

"And so, Joe," he said, "you and the rest knew all about this matter of Scott's some time ago?"

"Well, yes; Irene told me in confidence, and then, when they wrote and told Scott how matters were here, he wrote to congratulate us, and begged us not to spoil his surprise to you. We couldn't tell after all that, you know."

"Ahem! well—no—I can't say; but perhaps not. I can't be mad with Scott, for she's brought him a big ranche and a mine; but what am I to do with you now? I like Bob Humphrey first-rate—I allers did like Bob Humphreys first-rate—and now it can't be Scott, I don't see as I ort to interfere. You've earned your fee, and I'll pay it; but, then, you see, there ain't no more use—"

"Oh! no; not a bit," interrupted Joe. "Bob is a good fellow, and he and Maggie are just suited. Irene and I think that Maggie couldn't have had a better match, and we think Scott has done splendidly well."

"Irene and you?" exclaimed the deacon. "Yes, of course. I've explained to Irene that I can't afford to lose my fee. I told her so at the beginning, and she said I must earn it. Seems to me I've done that; but I'll let you up."

"Done it!" exclaimed the deacon. "Well, yes, Joe; on the whole, I should rather be inclined to say you had, and have done me too."

But there was no use of getting mad about it and so the deacon good-humoredly consented to the marriage of Joe and Irene; while everybody present at the double wedding which shortly took place, said that Bob Humphrey and Maggie were a very pretty couple.

The deacon had decided that as a plotter, he is not a success, especially when women and lawyers are his opponents.

A WARNING TO YOUNG MEN.

IN response to a letter from a man of "twenty years experience in business," of "unimpeachable character," and sound health" who, with his family, is reduced to lowest straits, and probably hardly sees his way to his daily bread, the New York "Times" prints the following:

"The writer of this letter is, no doubt as he himself says, a type of a large class in this city. They cannot dig, and to beg they are ashamed." They have not muscular power for the branches of work always calling for workers, and their own field is crowded with competitors. It is easy to tell them to go West, but the West does not want them. It has plenty of such men. Every Western city is crowded with people of precisely these capacities, who are half starved. The applications for clerkships and small business positions are as numerous in Chicago and St. Louis, in proportion, as in New York. No one wishing to be an accountant, or clerk or petty tradesman should rush to a Western town, unless he has a capital. He may, indeed, find a place there, as he may here, but the chances are thirty to one that he will be left out in the cold, and find himself in a few years in the condition of our "impecunious" correspondent.

"Thousands of men in this city, and in all the cities of the country, are settling gradually down in this hopeless and useless condition. They grow poorer every year; their families often suffer more than those of the avowed poor; their children sink lower and lower in the social grade, and they themselves wander about in the worn garments of better days, seeking employment which does not come, until hope and strength both break, and they die, if not in an almshouse, at least in the wretched garret of some tenement house. The simple explanation is that all the lower mercantile positions are too much crowded already. The competition is too intense, and unless the new comer has influential acquaintances or some profitable talent, he has no chance in the rush for employment. Since the speculations during the war, there has been a thronging to the cities, of young men who have abandoned the best pursuits of the country—trades and farming—and have sought for mercantile positions. The market is over stocked with them, and each unsuccessful one must suffer.

"Much as we pity the condition of such as our correspondent, we rejoice that it is being understood that all mercantile positions are not prizes. The healthful and independent occupations in this country are the trades and labor on farms. It is extraordinary, when we see the comfortable fortunes made now by tobacco-raisers in Connecticut, by fruiters in New Jersey, by dairymen in New York, and general farmers in the Central West, and the immense wages and independent positions of carpenters, builders, plumbers, masons, furniture-makers and the like, that any young man should be willing to stand behind the counter for twenty years, and accept such a fate as our correspondent's. No reasonable parent now, unless he has business of his own, or very influential friends, should think for a moment of a clerkship for his son. Let him apprentice him to a good trade, or put him on a Western farm or in an 'Eastern' garden, and then leave him to his energies and the natural development of all those lines of production.

The growth of population insures that farming in the West shall be profitable, and that farm lands must rise in value. The same cause makes many of the trades a sure and permanent support. The most independent person in this city is the skilled mechanic. He has, too, the assistance of the 'unions' for a time of need. No young man of industry and good character could fail of reasonable success either on a Western farm or in an 'Eastern' trade.

More novelties are the result of accident than is generally supposed. The origin of blue-tinted paper came about by a mere slip of the hand, William East, an English paper maker, once upon a time set his men to work, and went away on business. While the men were at dinner Mrs. East accidentally let a blue bag fall into one of the vats of pulp. Alarmed at the occurrence she determined to say nothing about it. Great was the astonishment of the workmen when they saw the peculiar color of the paper, and great the anger of Mr. East when he returned and found that a whole vat of pulp had been spoiled. After giving the paper made from it warehouse room for four years, Mr. East sent it up to his agent in London to be sold "for what it would fetch." "For what it will fetch!" said the agent, misunderstanding the meaning; "well it certainly is a novelty, but he must not expect too much." So he sold the whole at an advance upon the market price, and wrote to the mills for as much more as he could get. The surprise of Mr. East may be imagined. He hastened to his wife, who found courage to confess her share in the fortunate accident, and to claim a reward, which she received in the shape of a new cloak. Mr. East kept his secret for a short time, supplied the market with the novel tint until the demand far exceeded the supply, and other makers discovering the means used, competed with him.

A Good Grunter.

The following story of John Smith of California, and his son Virgil, is said to be a "true bill." Smith had a very promising young horse now for the first time in training for the track, (that's definite enough.) The other day Virgil, a bright little chap some ten years of age, was speeding the colt around the track, and was making the run in gallant style, when the colt suddenly shied and threw the boy off.

The cause of this was a young porker that had stowed himself in some brush close by the track, a quiet spectator of the colt's performance, until the latter got almost opposite to him, when, hog-like, he made a violent rush, with the result mentioned. By the time his anxious father reached the ground the boy was on his feet, unharmed.

Said the father: "Virgil, you don't know how to ride a colt, to let a little pig like that throw you off. I don't want the colt spoiled. I want him to go around the track, and I'll show you that a pig can't prevent him." "I'll bet you," said Virgil, "he'll throw you, too, if the pig makes him jump like he did with me." "No he won't Virgil; you can get in the bush there, and when I ride him around you can grunt like a pig. I'll show how it's done," said elder Smith.

Accordingly, the colt was caught and mounted by Smith the elder, the boy in the meantime having taken his position in the brush to play the role of pig, in which he succeeded to perfection, for when the sire after a rattling run, had reached the proper place, he snorted like a young grizzly, and tearing out of the brush, caused the panic-stricken colt to pile his rider gloriously in the dust. Gathering himself up he said savagely: "What did you do that for? I told you to grunt like a little pig, not like a darned old hog."

Beecher on Grammar.

Mrs. Stowe gives a characteristic account of grammatical exercise at which her brother Henry Ward Beecher assisted in his school days. Young Beecher was about eleven years old and as full of fun and mischief as at present. The teacher was drilling her children in the rudiments:

"Now, Henry," said she, "A is the indefinite article, you see, and must be used only with the singular number. You can say 'a man,' but you can't say 'a men,' can you?"

"Yes, I can say 'amen,' too," was the rejoinder. "Father says it always at the end of prayers."

"Come, Henry, don't be joking; define 'he.'"

"Ye see, 'his' is possessive. Now you can say 'his book,' but you cannot say 'him book.'"

"Yes, I do say 'hymn book,' too," said the impracticable pupil, with a quizzical twinkle.

Each one of these sallies made his young teacher laugh, which was the victory he wanted.

"But, now, Henry, seriously, just attend to the active and passive voice. No, 'I strike' is active you see, because if you strike, you do something. But 'I am struck' is passive, because if you are struck, you don't do anything, do you?"

"Yes, I do; I strike back again."

After about six months, Henry was returned on his parents' hands, with the reputation of being an inveterate joker and indifferent scholar.

There is a man in Darby, Pa., who purchased a bull dog, which he proposed to turn loose in his store at night in order to scare away the burglars. The first evening after he obtained the dog he locked it in the store and went away a happy man. The next morning, early he went around to the store and unlocked the door. The dog was vigilant—the man was surprised to perceive how very vigilant the dog was—for no sooner was the door open than the dog seized its owner by the leg, suddenly, and seemed to be animated by an earnest and vigorous resolution not to let go until it had removed at least one good mouthful. And the man pushed the dog back and shut the door on its ribs until the animal relaxed its jaws; and then the man kicked the dog into the store and shut the door as if he was in a hurry to do something. Then he suspended business for a week, and spent the vacation firing at that dog through the windows, and down the chimney, and up through the cellar ceiling, with a shot-gun, trying to exterminate him. And the mercantile establishment did not open for trade until the man had paid twice the first cost of the dog to the dog's former owner to come and take it home; and then, when he got in he found that during the bombardment holes had been shot through mackerel barrels and molasses cans and coal oil kegs so that there was misery and ruin everywhere.

A clergyman created quite a merriment the other day, on one of our steamboats, going over to lay a new Camp Meeting Resort, by the inquiry: "What positive proof is there that King David and his son Solomon were tailors?" No one in the crowd could answer, and the humorous Divine quoted the familiar passage: "And Solomon mended the breeches which David his father had made!"

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