

A FAIR BACKSLIDER

By James Arthur Cook

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It was Saturday afternoon, and Miss Meeson, the good looking schoolteacher of district No. 4, was at the schoolhouse to see a book she had left the day before. She was sitting down to rest after her walk of a mile or more when a shadow darkened the open door and she looked up to find a tramp on the threshold. There was no mistaking his avocation, he was lean and ragged and hungry looking; he was unshorn and uncombed. It was half a mile to the nearest farmhouse, and yet after the first thirty or so steps the schoolmarm was not frightened. On the contrary, she saw the opportunity to read a fellow being a moral lesson and she was rather pleased.

"Come in here and sit down," she said to the tramp, to show him she was not afraid.

"Yes, ma'am," he humbly replied as he timidly advanced and took a seat.

"Now, then," she continued after looking him over, "you are a lazy good for nothing and wouldn't work if work was offered."

"K'rect, miss," he answered. "You got tramping up and down the country, and you do not hesitate to steal as well as beg."

"Perfectly true, miss," he replied. "You've probably been in jail?"

"A dozen times," he answered. "I thought so. You have a red nose, and I've no doubt you drink."

"Like a fish, miss, when I can get it," he answered. "A pretty specimen of a man you are, she continued as she warmed to her subject. 'A vagrant, a beggar, a thief and a drunkard. You are also a jailbird, and I don't suppose you ever speak the truth except by accident.'"

"You've hit it, miss," replied the tramp, "with a feeling smile. 'Cost in the mold of a man, yet witness the degradation,' sighed the schoolmarm. 'As if you hadn't got it? Enough, you have been fighting. No doubt you also used profane words.'"

"I did, miss. I did. You see, it was this way: I meets a weary dove here

you must, then put up your dukes, or whatever they are! See! They are tearing the seats out!"

"And one thing more," continued the courtier. "I've got to take a drink of whisky to brace me up. It's one to three, and I'll need a brace."

"Then take it—take it!" she exclaimed as the trio began to crowd closer.

"And can I leave out the bath and wash up and work?"

"Yes, yes! Protected me! I'll do it, miss, and here goes."

"Her tramp reached for his bottle and took a hearty swig, and as he restored it at the rate of seventy-five swears words a minute, he swore and swore till the schoolmarm held her hands over her ears. Then he pushed up his greasy sleeves, 'put up his dukes,' and while Miss Meeson prayed he sailed in and slammed bang. He got many a bang in return before victory perched upon his banner, but his cause was just and he finally put the one to sleep and stood over his body and told the half dead girl that the way was open. She hurried to the door, but passed in the twinkling of an eye, and was unshorn and uncombed. It was half a mile to the nearest farmhouse, and yet after the first thirty or so steps the schoolmarm was not frightened. On the contrary, she saw the opportunity to read a fellow being a moral lesson and she was rather pleased.

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By a Hair's Breadth

By D. H. TALMADGE

Copyright, 1901, by D. H. Talmadge

It once happened that a boy wandered away from his home, this producing distraction therein. He was a child the boy, and his years were few. He was gone for hours, many hours, of daylight and darkness, and during the interval between his going and his return he was in peril of death. His mother was prostrated with nervous apprehension and his father's face aged plainly. The alarm bells were rung; this community postponed its business affairs and joined in the search; the schools were dismissed, and children went with men and women and were missing, but they were unsuccessful.

"You did, miss," he replied. "And you'll continue to swear and fight and drink whisky and—"

"I think I'd better, ma'am—for the cause of education. 'Pears to be the other way all bolter.'"

"That was a slight long to be remembered in the town. It was a night of speechless agony in the boy's home and of sorrow broken slumber in the homes of other boys. There is something peculiar and in the thought of a child's fear alone in black waters under a starless sky—or is this the fault of hope—in the thought of a child wandering alone in the darkness, crying out his terrified little heart, stumbling here and there, not knowing which way to turn.

"Tears were main in the town that night, but none flowed in the boy's home. Eyes were dry there and hot lips were dry and burning. Hour after hour the father paced the floor, looking neither to the right nor to the left, his sweat cold hands clinched, his breath bursting from him from time to time as he uttered words of endurance at some manual undertaking.

The clocks struck 3. The front door opened and closed with bang. A cry, indistinguishable from the cry of a child, was in his father's arms.

"Dear old Fred! To see him married today, and to think when he was only five years old they brought him to see me, his baby sister! I wonder if he thinks of it now?"

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three weeks. He should, for the sake of the story, have gone into the world a better man. It was on the afternoon of the week afterward he was arrested in another city on a charge of burglary, convicted and sentenced to seven years' penal servitude.

"The father of the boy read the letter several times and pondered much. 'The man's bad tendencies,' he told himself, 'outweigh the good by only the fraction of a hair. Poor fellow!'

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YOUNG PLUM TREES.

Described and Trained Practically

Illustrated.

Plum trees are of many kinds, and the horticultural department of the Vilmorin Experiment station for some time has devoted a large share of its attention to plums, covering the whole range of plum knowledge, from varieties of plum culture. This gives them an opportunity to speak with more than usual assurance in offering general practical directions, from which only those relating to pruning and training are here reproduced.

"The old notion used to be that plums preferred a heavy clay soil. This is still true for certain classes of plums, but for others it is not so."

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of poles or posts were grown if the land would not receive additional fertilizer material is applied. After the garden is planted and the plants thin where needed at least nine-tenths of all the trees necessary to keep the land healthy on the surface and free from weeds should be done by inter-tillage with a horse implement. If this is managed as it should be and the implements are suited to their work, almost no hand work will be required. The garden will always look trim, and if the various plants wanted for the crop are not taken care of from their insect enemies you should have a continuous table supply of all vegetables and small fruits in their season. The grapes and large fruits are not taken care of in the garden. At each end of the garden leave ten or twelve feet of grass on which to turn.

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HELPLESS HUSBANDS

HOW HELPLESS HUSBANDS HAVE BECOME HELPLESS

Never does a man feel so helpless as when he looks upon the suffering of the wife he loves and knows that he is powerless to prevent it. And when, as is often the case, he has exhausted every means at his disposal in the vain effort to restore his wife to health, his despair almost equals her suffering. There are husbands who have passed through this experience and have found a way to be helpful to their wives who physicians had absolutely failed to cure, and been

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