

# MR. DODSON'S HAND-MIRROR.

BY EMMA A. OPPER.

Slade & Co's immense dry-goods store was crowded. Charming ladies swarmed about the counters; harassed saleswomen pulled down innumerable boxes and answered unlimited questions; and the little baskets chased one another along the wires to the cashier's desk.

At a further counter, where pretty toilet articles held sway, Annie Rogers stood gazing at her own fair image in a plate-glass hand-mirror with Russia-leather back.

"He'll be sure to like it," she said, looking up at the young man who stood waiting at her side. "I'll take it," she added, turning to the girl behind the counter and producing her purse. "It's his birthday, you know," she went on, as the hand-glass went flying down a wire. "We always make birthday presents to each other. Dear old Uncle Dodson!"

"Uncle Dodson" he has always been to her, though she was only an orphaned relative of his dead wife, adopted in her infancy.

"He's a lucky person, with you to care for him," said Howard Canby, taking charge of the hand-mirror as it reappeared in its neat wrappings. "You'll let me walk home with you?" he went on, as they stepped out into the crowded street.

More than one hurrying shopper noted them admiringly as they walked slowly down the avenue together—the graceful girl, in her soft, light dress, her cheeks grown pink and her eyes bright in the fresh air, and the tall young man, not far behind her in personal advantages, bending to talk to her.

But they were not aware of these approving glances; they were not conscious of anything beyond their own absorbing conversation, a hint of which may be gathered from their parting words. For, as they mounted the broad steps of the big Dodson house, Annie was murmuring:

"What will Uncle Dodson say?"

"He'll give us his consent and blessing, of course, my dear girl," said Howard, cheerfully.

And he gave Mr. Dodson's birthday present into her possession, pressed her hand with a whispered word, and went down the steps reluctantly.

A large valise stood in the hall, and an unfamiliar hat hung on the rack. Annie looked at them sharply. Probably it was some friend of Uncle Dodson come to see him—he was something of an invalid.

But the hat—a smart, speckled straw, with a blue band—had an unmistakably youthful air. She ran up the stairs wondering.

Mr. Dodson was sitting in a large arm-chair before the window, where most of his time was spent. A young man of two and twenty, or thereabouts, noticeable for nothing unless for the cheerfulness of his rather boyish face, sat near him.

Mr. Dodson looked up with a welcoming smile, as Annie entered.

"My nephew, Dudley Howard, my dear," he said.

The young man rose and bowed—rather constrainedly, Annie thought. Mr. Dodson regarded her anxiously. "Sit down," he said.

Annie sat down at his side, feeling that something unpleasant was coming; and the young man quietly withdrew.

"He is my nephew—my only relative," Mr. Dodson began. "He will inherit my property, my dear."

"Well?" said Annie, cheerfully.

"Well," Mr. Dodson repeated, stroking her hand, "he will inherit my property, but you must be provided for, too. There seems to me but one way. I have thought of it much; but the best way seems to me—that you should marry. So I have sent for him," said Mr. Dodson, going on hurriedly. "And—we have been talking of it, my dear."

Poor Annie had listened silently. Was this kind-hearted Uncle Dodson who was saying these dreadful things?

"A little too business-like to suit you, eh?" said Mr. Dodson, noting her distressed face. "Yes, of course, I expected that. Young folks nowadays have an idea that their elders shouldn't have a word to say about these things—not a word! But don't you see, my dear, I went on, kindly, 'that it's all the same thing? Suppose I had got Dudley here without mentioning my little plan? Well, you'd have been pretty sure to fall in love with each other. He's as nice a fellow as you'll find, Annie, and he knows a pretty girl when he sees one. I imagine. Well, then, why should you hold back, either of you, merely because I give a little push to a sure-enough affair?"

The girl at his side turned her troubled face away hastily.

It was a very simple thing, surely, to put an end to all this. The mere mention of Howard Canby would do it, she was sure, for Uncle Dodson was not an ogre.

And yet, how could she meet his possible displeasure and his certain disappointment?

The words died away on her lips. "A bashful pair of youngsters you are, I vow!" said Mr. Dodson, with a laugh. "If Dudley didn't behave the same way! Oh, well, you'll get over it."

Annie opened her lips, hesitated,

closed them again, with a weakness and cowardice of which she was painfully conscious, and rose, with helpless tears dropping.

Her recent purchase was still in her hands.

"I have brought a little present for your birthday, Uncle Dodson," she said, chokingly, and she laid it on his knees.

It was not until a rather late hour that afternoon that Annie found courage to visit Mr. Dodson's room again. She had carefully avoided Mr. Hobart.

Hobart! It was certainly the ugliest name she had ever heard.

She had taken lunch in her room, and she had not been out of it since. At 4 o'clock a messenger-boy had brought a very small parcel, addressed to herself in Hobart's well-known writing, which, when she had opened it eagerly, had found to contain a little band of gold, set with a glittering stone.

It is a most unnatural proceeding for a young lady to burst into tears at the first sight of her engagement-ring; but that is what Annie did.

For the pretty, shining thing seemed only the symbol of her trouble and perplexity.

She knew perfectly that her right course was to put the ring on the proper finger, go boldly to Mr. Dodson and explain its position there.

She did, indeed, get as far as putting it on, and gazing at it fondly and admiringly, and tearfully, from every conceivable point of view; but there her courage failed her.

Dear old Uncle Dodson! how could she dash his well-meaning hopes to the ground with a cruel word or two? He was so far from strong, besides. Sudden disappointments always did him harm.

She dried her eyes, as these despairing thoughts came over her, and started for Mr. Dodson's room.

Mr. Dodson sat facing the window, as usual. His head was thrown back and his eyes were closed.

Annie drew a sigh of relief; he was asleep.

Dudley Hobart was sitting in a back corner of the room, with a newspaper in his hand, and his feet disposed comfortably, if not gracefully, on a second chair. He rose hastily as Annie entered.

"He is asleep," he remarked, after a timid pause.

"I had observed it," said Annie, shortly, not deigning to look at the speaker.

The young man looked confused. He laid down his newspaper, and passed his hand over his closely-cropped head in a troubled way, and finally offered her a chair.

There seemed to be nothing else to do, and Annie sat down stiffly.

Mr. Hobart took the other chair. If Annie had glanced at him, she might have seen that a pleading look filled his boyish face; but she looked coldly over his head at the wall-paper.

There was silence for several moments.

Then the young man, with a nervous clutch of his chair-back, and with a visible effort, began desperately:

"He said he had told you this—his plan."

Annie was cruelly unresponsive.

"May I inquire what you think of it?" said Mr. Hobart, with a face grown pale with agonized embarrassment.

Annie rose sharply.

"Words would not express what I think of it!" she said, flashing an indignant glance toward the young man. "It can't possibly be!"

The occupant of the arm-chair moved restlessly; he was waking up.

Annie lowered her voice as she went on, severely:

"I am already engaged. I—"

She paused in bewilderment. The face of her listener had been suddenly transformed with unmistakable relief and joy. He seized her hands warmly.

"I have Howard's picture in the album down stairs," said Annie. "I'll run down and get it."

She tripped away softly, and came hurrying back breathless, with the plush covered book in her hand.

"He looks as though he had some get-up to him," was Dud's masculine comment.

"Well, he has," said Annie with a proud smile. "Of course," she went on, hesitatingly, "we must tell Uncle Dodson."

"Of course!" said Dud, rather faintly.

"Their eyes met; they smiled guiltily. 'To tell the truth,' said the young man, candidly, 'I'd rather be shot!'"

"My case exactly," Annie responded. "You see," said Dud, looking anxious, "he means it all as a favor, a benefit to us; and to go and knock all his plans endways in that style—I'd just as lief be let out of it for my part!"

"Precisely as I feel," murmured Annie. "What shall we do?"

"Don't ask me," said Dud, entreatingly.

An uneasy pause ensued, filled by a helpless contemplation of each other with wrinkled brows.

"Of course we must tell him," Annie repeated, irresolutely.

"Of course," said Dud again.

But that was as far as he went. A rustling sound from Mr. Dodson's arm-chair roused them to a sudden sense of his presence.

"Are you awake, Uncle Dodson?" said Annie, getting up slowly to go to him. Dud followed.

"Wide awake, my dear," said Mr. Dodson, promptly.

"Does your head ache?" said Annie, bending over his chair and feeling deeply hypocritical.

Mr. Dodson's reply was a strange one. It was a short, rather sarcastic, laugh.

Annie and Dud exchanged startled glances. Could he have overheard them? No; it was impossible.

But he turned upon them abruptly. "So you've gone and encouraged that good-for-nothing young Canby, have you, miss?" he began, fixing Annie with humorously stern gaze—"thrown yourself away on that young upstart, eh?"

Poor Annie could only stare, bewildered.

"And you, sir," Mr. Dodson went on, turning to his nephew—"you've tied yourself to some little chit of a school-girl not out of bits yet, I suppose? A nice pair you are!"

His listeners stood speechless.

"Did you—overhear us?" murmured Dud, at last finding his voice with an effort.

"Not a word, sir—not a word!" said Mr. Dodson, coolly.

"You're a clairvoyant, then?" ejaculated the young man, half believing it.

Mr. Dodson laughed again, in evident enjoyment of their confusion.

"And you were afraid to tell me, eh?" said he. "You were going to deceive a poor, helpless, old man?"

"No, no!" said Dud, in weak protestation.

But Annie's face expressed only a growing wonder.

"How did you know, Uncle Dodson?" she said, beseechingly.

For answer, Mr. Dodson took up the hand-mirror—Annie's birthday present—from its staid little case, held it before his eyes, and motioned the two to look into it.

It reflected, with wonderful distinctness, the entire rear of the room, including the chairs in which they had sat.

"When I saw you, my dear," said Mr. Dodson, looking up with twinkling eyes into Annie's astonished face—"when I saw you exhibiting a diamond ring which appeared to be a recent acquisition, and bringing up the album to show—well, let us say old Mrs. Presley's picture—and when I saw you, sir, whipping out an absurd little tin type and actually talking about it as though it were something worth looking at—I drew my own conclusion."

"You aren't angry, dear Uncle Dodson?" said Annie, timidly, a queer mixture of relief and apprehension in her face.

"But I am," said Mr. Dodson, with a smile which refuted his words, "and I think I shall leave my money to—well, say to a Home for Destitute Dogs. Neither of you deserves it!"

"But neither of us want it," said Annie, tenderly. "You'll enjoy it yourself for a long time yet."

Dud echoed her words.

"I suppose I shall divide it equally between you," said Mr. Dodson, musingly, "but you don't deserve it!"

Mr. Dodson was among the liveliest of the gay gathering at Annie's wedding, a few months later.

He gave away the bride; he made a stirring speech, and he led a quadrille. But his word of congratulation to young Mrs. Canby was a puzzle to the bystanders:

"You owe it all to the hand-mirror, my dear!"—Saturday Night.

What "We" Means.

Somebody has explained the significance of the editorial "we." It may have a variety of meanings. For example, when you read "We expect our wife home today," "we" refers to the editor; "We are a little late with our work" includes the whole office force, even the devil and the towel; in "We are having a boom," the town is meant; "We received over 100,000 emigrants last year," embraces the nation; but "We have hog cholera in our midst" means that the man who takes our paper and does not pay for it is ill.—Wall Lake (La.) Blade.

## DR. TALMAGE'S SERMON

SUNDAY'S DISCOURSE BY THE NOTED DIVINE.

Subject: The Welfare of Others—We Should Banish Selfishness—Job Delivered From Evil When He Prayed For Friends—Happy From Doing Good.

(Copyright 1904.)

WASHINGTON, D. C.—In this discourse Dr. Talmage was on narrowness of view, and urges a life helpful to others; text, Job xlii, 10, "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends."

Comparatively few people read this last chapter of the book of Job. The earlier chapters are so full of thrilling incidents, of events so dramatically portrayed, of awful ailments and terrific disaster, of domestic infelicity, of staccato passage, of resounding address, of omnipotence proclaimed, of utterances showing Job to have been the greatest scientist of his day, an expert in mining and precious stones, astronomer, and geographer, and zoologist, and electrician, and poet, that most readers stop before they get to the text, which, strangely and mysteriously, announces that "the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends."

Now, will you please explain to me how Job's prayer for his friends halted his catastrophes? Give me some good reason why Job on his knees in behalf of the welfare of others arrested the long procession of calamities. Mind you, it was not prayer for himself, for then the cessation of his troubles would have been only another instance of prayer answered, but the portfolio of his disaster was rolled up while he supplicated God in behalf of Elihu the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. I must confess to you that I had to read the text over and over again before I got its full meaning—"And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends."

Well, if you will not explain it to me, I will explain it to you. The healthiest, the most recuperative thing on earth to do is to stop thinking about ourselves, and go to thinking about the welfare of others. Job had been studying his misfortunes, but the more he thought about his bankruptcy the poorer he seemed, the more he thought of his calamities the worse they hurt, the more he thought of his unfortunate marriage the more intolerable became the conjugal relation, the more he thought of his loss of money the more terrific seemed the cyclone. His misfortunes grew blacker and blacker, but there was to come a reversal of these sad conditions. One day he said to himself: "I have been dwelling too much upon my bodily ailments and my wife's temper and my bereavements. It is time I began to think about others and do something for others, and I will start now to stop thinking about myself, and go to thinking about the welfare of others. 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