

What a Listener Heard.

A Story For Parents.

TWENTY years ago Peter Raymond owned a hard, stony farm, eighteen miles from Hartford.

Philip, his eldest son, was there, and Clinton Dexter, a son of the man at whose house he had been to call.

"Well, Phil, my father is just as inconsiderate as your father is. I don't think he remembers he was ever a boy."

"I hesitated a good while, Clint," Phil replied, "before I decided to speak to you about it; but I made up my mind in haying time that it was the last summer that I should stay at home and help hay it and fare as I did then."

"And Peter Raymond crept away from the barn as though he was a sneak thief and hurried home as fast as he could, not once thinking of his bride."

Philip got up to go to bed. Mr. Raymond said: "Don't hurry, Phillip, I'm thinking how to get that heifer home."

Clinton, as true as I live and breathe, after his promising that I should go to Hartford with him the first time that he went after haying and then breaking his word and leaving me to work hard all day, the first thing he said to me was: 'What are you sitting there reading for?'

What a variety of feelings Peter Raymond had in the fifteen minutes he stood behind that barn door and listened. At first he was utterly surprised, he could hardly believe his own ears, but as he took it all in—as he comprehended what his son contemplated doing, he was in high dudgeon; he unconsciously clenched his teeth very firmly and clenched his right fist tightly.

"Don't love him?" he repeated to himself, "the ungrateful rascal! Haven't I been scrubbing along as savagely as possible and privately putting little sums in the savings bank so that I could send him away in a year or two, and give him a better chance for an education than I ever had? Haven't I often said to my friends that he was one of the most faithful, trusty boys in the world? and that I could leave home any time, day or night, and never worry about things as long as he was there to take care of? If he does doubt my love, up to this time I have loved him and have been proud of him. I haven't been very demonstrative about it, to be sure. I never thought it was wise to pet and praise children."

And Peter Raymond crept away from the barn as though he was a sneak thief and hurried home as fast as he could, not once thinking of his bride. He had hardly got seated in his big arm chair before Philip came in. Philip expected his father would say, gruffly: "It is high time you were in bed."

"What's up, Phil? What has happened? Has your father found out anything?" Philip hurriedly whispered back. "You don't suppose, Clint, he'd be taking us to Hartford to-morrow if he had? It's all right, but it's the strangest thing that ever happened—I'll tell you all about it to-morrow—can't stay long enough now."

Mr. Raymond took up a newspaper and bowed his head over it as soon as his son started for Mr. Dexter's, but if his wife had observed him closely she would have seen that he did very little reading and there was a troubled expression on his countenance.

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Clinton Dexter would come to the barn at midnight, and—

Philip was arrested in his cogitations by his father's saying: "I have so many cares, so many things to think of that I can hardly keep track of my children's ages."

Philip started the second time to go, but just as he got his hand on the door latch, his father said: "Wait a minute, Phillip. If you had some one to keep your company from Skidmore's and help you drive the heifer, I wouldn't mind staying till night before we left the city."

Philip said: "Yes, sir," and took up his hat and went into the hall; but before he got to the outside door, his father called out: "One thing more, Phillip. I left my bridle hanging on a bar-post down by the sheep-barn this afternoon. If you'll come back across lots and bring it up, it'll save going for it in the morning."

"Lucky thing it did," Philip said to himself, as he stepped out of the door. "If he had come around that way and heard Clint and me talking in that barn, I guess he wouldn't be in so gentle a mood to-night."

On his way over to Mr. Dexter's, Philip had a great variety of feelings and as great a conflict with them as his father had while standing behind the barn door; but before he got there, the summing up was, that he was an ungrateful scamp and that his father was all right, only he had so many cares and anxieties that it sometimes made him a little stern and crabbed.

Mr. Dexter was always ready to oblige his neighbor Raymond and he cheerfully gave his consent to Clinton's going. Clinton didn't know what to make of this sudden turn of affairs. As he went with Philip to the door, he whispered: "What's up, Phil? What has happened? Has your father found out anything?"

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Further fear that he would attempt to give him the slip that night.

Mr. Raymond and Philip rode up to Mr. Dexter's door for Clinton the next morning, just as the sun was peeping over the hills. It was as delightful a September morning as they could desire.

"Now, boys, you must keep your eyes open—see all there is to be seen and get all the enjoyment out of going that you can. We don't have holidays very often and we must make the most of them when we do have them."

It did not escape Mr. Raymond's observation that his remarks caused the lads to glance at each other in blank astonishment, and it cut him to the quick. "What kind of a father have I been," he asked himself, "not to be able to speak a few civil and kind words to my son without having it received with such surprise. Poor boy! Wonder, pleasure, guilt and grief are all depicted in his countenance to-day."

Mr. Raymond spared no pains to have the boys enjoy their first trip to Hartford. He called their attention to every thing that he thought would interest them on their way. He told them who owned such and such a farm when he was a boy—what the land was worth an acre then, and what was its market value now—who built this house and that, and he pointed out where General—was born, and where Hon.—lived till he went to college.

Sometimes Philip looked at his father in dumb bewilderment, wondering if they really were in Hartford or if it were all a dream. How social and interesting his father was! He felt as if he was never acquainted with him before. What a delightful time he should have if he had not been planning to do so mean a thing. If father knew it how he would despise him; he looked at him so earnestly sometimes, he was afraid that he saw guilt in his countenance.

Thus the day wore away and Philip was not sorry when it was time to start for home. After Mr. Raymond had left the lads to follow on with a heifer they talked over the events of the last twenty-four hours together, and they were both very decidedly of the opinion that they had a very narrow and providential escape from committing a very disgraceful act; and they both agreed, after a little discussion on that point, that they would never divulge to any human being that they had ever dreamed of running away.

It was half-past nine when Philip drove the heifer into his father's barn-yard. After he had his supper, his father asked him to step out to the shed and get a package that was under the wagon-seat. When he brought it, Mr. Raymond opened it and took from it "Webster's Unabridged Dictionary," and sat down and wrote on the fly leaf:

"Presented to Philip C. Raymond on his fifteenth birthday, by his father, Peter Raymond," and then without closing the book he passed it over to Philip.

Philip could bear no more. Tears that had come to his eyes twenty times had been forced back, now overflowed his eye lids and ran down his cheeks.—He stammered:

"You are too kind to me, father; I do not deserve this."

"Do not deserve it, Phillip?" exclaimed Mr. Raymond, with apparent surprise. "I think you'd better leave that to my judgment. I should like to know what boy does not deserve the kindness from his father if you don't? If I had a dozen sons I could not ask them to be more faithful and industrious than you have been. There, there! don't shed any tears over it—you're tired—better get to bed soon, so as to feel fresh, in the morning. If it's a good day to-morrow we must secure that roven."

"Thank you, father," Philip said, with a quivering voice, and went immediately up-stairs. If he had been a little less overcome himself he would have noticed that his father's voice was a little shaky; and if he had looked back as he passed out of the door he would have seen his father hastily brush a tear or two from his own eyes.

idence, sympathy and affection between Mr. Raymond and Philip, and, by reason of a private interview that Mr. Raymond had with Clinton Dexter's father, Clinton's life was much more agreeable than heretofore.

Philip has always looked back to his fifteenth birthday as a remarkable epoch in his life; and he never ceased—until his aged father recently visited him and heard him speak rather harshly to his own little son—to marvel at the wonderful change that came over his father, himself, or both at that time.—Then his father told him the story, and cautioned him against growing into the habit of speaking in that way to his children.

"Always remember, Phillip," he said, "that crustiness and unhappiness are no more agreeable to a child's feelings than they are to a grown person's and that they are more likely to lead any one out of the right path than into it, and they never will forget love."

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