

The Surprised Father.

HOWARD SIMPSON and Loraine Bliss, two young men of great intimacy and of dissipated habits, were on the way to a gambling saloon, where the night previous they had won considerable, and on passing a church, the doors of which were open, paused a moment by the steps peering in out of idle curiosity, just as the minister was giving out his text—"As ye sow, so shall ye reap."

"We are not farmers, so we do not sow anything to reap," said Howard, the older and more profligate of the two; but Loraine looked thoughtful, and kept silent as they walked along toward the place of their night's debauch. And often during the jubilant gayety of the revelers that passage, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap," flashed into his mind.

"It is as my good mother tells me," thought he; "we must suffer for every evil deed done in the body, and my deeds are constantly evil. But from this night I will do differently. I will not be caught in this place again."

"What ails you, Bliss? You are as dull as a November hoe," said Gay-bright, one of the ringleaders of the company.

"Guess he's thinking about reaping what he sows," answered Simpson, and then about a dozen rude men burst into a loud fit of laughter.

"What did you mean by that remark?" one of them presently asked.

He then told them of the text given out by the minister as they were passing the church.

"The minister go to—and he surely will," said Roardon, one of the most blasphemous of the whole gang.

This profane remark, with others no better, grated harshly on the mind of Loraine, for he was really feeling more serious than he had ever felt before; but he made no reply, knowing if he did it would only serve to bring forth still harsher language.

He left as early as he could, which was not till one o'clock, and after he got home crept to his chamber as noiselessly as possible lest he might awaken his father, who at times was very harsh to him. Then, for the first time in his life, he offered a sincere prayer to God, beseeching him to give him strength to turn from the evil way into which he had been led.

Meantime, his father having heard him enter the house, was denouncing him in the severest terms.

"Do not be harsh with him," pleaded the mother. "I hope he will soon learn to do better; he is young and wild, though not vicious, I trust."

But the old gentleman could see naught but wrong in his boy.

"He shall leave the house! I will disinheritor him if he does not stay at home nights; he is a disgrace to the family. Think of the money I have paid out for him—sent him to college, given him the privilege of studying law with me in my office. But no, he chooses to spend his time carousing with a set of loafers."

"Perhaps if we were gentle with him," tremblingly whispered his mother.

But the old gentleman did not heed this advice, for the next morning his first salutation to Loraine was—

"Where did you stay so late last night, you scapegrace? Unless you mend your ways, you'll leave these premises for good and all."

Loraine, who had been penitent through the night, resolving to do better in the future, now felt his temper and resolution melting away, and he sat down to the table in a sullen mood. But he shortly after made up his mind to go to meeting that evening and return home at 9 or 10 o'clock. Therefore at 7:30 he started for church, and on meeting three or four of his associates, told them of his plan.

"Well, come with us first, just for a few minutes, to the club rooms," said they.

"No, no, not to-night," he replied. "I have to be home early and I cannot possibly go with you."

But they dragged him along, and it was impossible to get away from them; and once there, there was no such thing as leaving, for in the excitement of the place he was induced to drink, and as the liquor was drugged, he soon felt no inclination to move from the charmed spot.

So the hours moved on until late into the night before he went home. When he reached that place it was three o'clock. His mother was at the door; she had not slept a moment, she said, from watching for him, and his father had awakened three or four times, angrily inquiring for him. But he was now asleep, and she wanted Loraine to creep noiselessly to bed, so he might not awake him. But, alas! he did awake, and the scene that ensued was awful. Meeting the stupefied boy on the stair landing, he ordered him to leave the house at once; he could stay only at the peril of his life. The poor mother begged that he might be allowed to remain

till morning; but no; in the street he was driven, with the threat that if he ever entered the house again he should be expelled with greater harshness.

Loraine crept silently to the most convenient shelter, which was the carriage house, and there slept on the carriage cushions till morning. There his mother found him, as she arose before her husband.

"My dear boy," she said, winding her arms about his neck, "it will not answer for your father to find you here, so I will bring you some money with which to get out of this town, where you have had so many vile associates, and I hope you will find something to do and become good and steady. After a few days write me where you are, and I will send a trunk of clothes and another of books. In future shun evil company, and when you next meet your father, let him see one who has entirely reformed, and who will bring him no further dishonor."

"I will, dear mother, do just as you say. I did not mean to get into disgrace last night. I started for church, and should have been at home at an early hour, only that I was fairly dragged in another direction by my companions. I think if father had taken a different course with me I would not be where I am now. You know how stern and crabbed he has been, and never, since I left college, have I felt that I could enter his office and study under his tuition. Had he been kind and gentle like you, dear mother, he might have induced me to do just what he wished; but after this I will endeavor to do right. That text, 'As ye sow, so shall ye reap,' is continually in my mind, and I am going to begin anew and try to do right."

On hearing this, Mrs. Bliss was overjoyed.

"Then I shall feel quite easy about you and feel that my prayers are answered, my dearest boy. Perhaps God is taking this way to remove you from wicked companions."

Then she went to the house and brought him some food; he soon ate it, and bidding her an affectionate farewell, and promising to write her often, directing his letters to a fictitious name known only to themselves, he left her in time to take the early train for somewhere. Where that somewhere was he had not yet decided.

Once aboard the train, he kept on until he reached the city of Scranton, about fifty miles from his home. There he stopped and looked around, and in a few days was able to write his mother that he had found a situation as clerk in a dry goods store at a moderate salary. This did not look very ambitious, but it gratified his mother to learn that he was in a respectable employment. Then, when his day's work was done, instead of going to gambling saloons and other dens of iniquity, he went to church, and ere long became a member of it, after which he made up his mind to study for the ministry. His mother sent him money from time to time to pay the expenses of his theological course, and in the course of time his future career looked a promising one.

Four years passed, and his name had never been mentioned in his father's house in his hearing. And just four years from the day he left home, a Mr. Bliss, from no one knew where, made an appointment to preach at the Congregational church which Loraine's parents attended. On this occasion the old gentleman said to his wife:

"We must go to hear this Mr. Bliss; perhaps he may be a relation of ours, although I have never known a relative of mine to be a minister."

"Yes, we will go," said Mrs. Bliss; "and if he is a relative, we must ask him to come home with us and spend the night."

"I do not know that I would object to that," her husband replied.

Somehow he seemed in a more melting mood than usual; probably he was reminded that it was the anniversary of the fourth year since he left them; at all events, on his way to the church that evening, he spoke Loraine's name for the first time in his wife's hearing.

"It is four years to-day," he said, "since Loraine left us; isn't it?"

"Yes," she said, mournfully.

"Wonder where he is now? Sometimes, wife, I think I was too hasty with him."

"Then you would be glad to see him, perhaps."

"If I could be sure he had reformed."

By this time they had reached the church, finding they were a little late, as the minister was giving out his text, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap." Quietly they entered, and for a moment Mr. Bliss stood speechless, then tremblingly moved along to his seat, where his wife was sitting with her head leaning on her hand. Could it be possible, he asked himself, that the long lost one stood before him—that he beheld him again—not as before, but still the same? Yes, it was his son whom he had driven from his door, clothed in the garb of

holiness, a commissioner from God. And he, listening to him, stood like a guilty wretch, transfixed to the spot. His past injustice to the one now superior to him rose before him, and he felt condemned.

It was observed, too, by the audience that the preacher was becoming deeply affected as he looked in the direction of the old remembered pew, and each moment was waxing more and more eloquent as he enlarged upon the subject of his text, "As ye sow, so shall ye reap."

"Yes," thought the old gentleman, "as I sowed, so I have reaped. For the last four years I have lived in constant regret of my unjust treatment, my harsh language to thee my son. Had I been kind and forbearing with him from the first, he would not have been led away to the haunts of dissipation, which came so near proving his ruin. But by his mother's gentle conduct and the grace of God, his feet have been arrested in the slippery, downward course he once pursued."

After the services ended Mr. and Mrs. Bliss remained in their pew until a part of the congregation had left the aisle, and then moved toward the pulpit to meet their son and pour their tears upon his neck. Then all was forgiven, and he went with them to their home, never to be turned from their doors again.

An Unlucky Patch.

JOHNNY TADSBURY has had many accidents to befall him during his boyish career, but perhaps the most serious which ever occurred to ruffle his placid life happened to him last spring when he was on a visit to his grandmother in the country. During his stay with his aged relative Johnny was never known to go down stairs on his feet, but invariably made the descent by sliding on the banisters. If he would have been a good boy, and one who would run a whole block to give his cake money to a blind beggar, the chances are that he would have fallen from the banisters and got killed, but, as he was not that sort of a boy, his sliding only resulted in his pants being worn out in a place where patching was absolutely necessary.

"Lawsy me!" said his grandmother, one Saturday night, as she turned him round and scrutinized the mutilated condition of his trousers. "Ain't you ashamed, child, to go and ruin your best pair of pants, when I wanted to take you to church in the morning to hear Parson Sprague's sermon. The Simms' boys and the Jones' will be there all dressed up in their Sunday clothes. And just think, I've got to patch your pants before you can move out of this house."

"I don't want to go to church," sniffled Johnny; "me and Jim Crawford wants to go coon-hunting back of his pa's field, and—"

"You go with that trifling Crawford's boy," interrupted the old lady; "that nasty little rascal who put powder in the church stove last winter and scared Parson Peterson so that he jumped over the pulpit and came nigh killing old Sister Wilson—poor old soul—and she a lone widow with six children? Lor' sakes! the idea of you going coon-hunting on Sunday with that vile Jim Crawford. No, my child, you shall not be contaminated by that depraved boy. I'll patch your pants this very night and have you ready for church to-morrow."

Johnny's grandmother, unfortunately, happened to be very near-sighted, and after he had gone to bed she secured his pants. Then going to the bureau drawer and taking out what she supposed was a piece of strong, dark cloth, she sewed it into the seat of his trousers.

The next morning Johnny slipped into his newly mended garment, and a few hours later was in church, sitting on a hard bench beside his grandmother.

The day was warm and sultry, and as the sermon was going on Johnny began to feel a burning sensation between him and the bench. He squirmed a little and sat more on one side, but soon he was compelled to yank himself over on the other, while every moment the bench grew hotter, until it seemed to him that he was seated on a blast furnace.

"Johnny," whispered his grandmother, "you must keep still. Don't fidget about so, my child. Recollect that you are in church." But Johnny only wiggled and twisted the more, and bobbed about on the bench as if he had the St. Vitus dance, while the tears trickled down his nose in streams.

"What in the world is the matter with you, Johnny?" inquired the old lady in surprise.

"Gran'ma, boo! hoo! something is 'er hurting me."

"Something hurts you?"

"Yes'm, boo! hoo!"

"Where, my child?"

"It's—it's, boo! hoo! hoo! in—in my pants, an' it's 'er stinging an' 'er burning of me wusser'n 'er yellin' jacket. It's right here," and Johnny placed his hand on the injured part.

"Mercy me!" said the old lady to herself, "what if the poor child has caught the erysipelas, or the king's evil, or some other disease," and the next moment she got up and left the church, followed by Johnny, who walked with his legs wide apart, sobbing loudly.

When he reached home his grandmother investigated the cause of his pain, and was horrified to learn that through her near-sightedness she had patched his pants with a fly bilster. For a long while Johnny remained indoors, encumbered with a pad of soothing salve and soft cotton, but he never forgave his grandmother for causing the accident.

A Midnight Vigil.

THE night is dark, the air is raw, and chilly and damp, and the storm is raging. An old and eminently respectable citizen, out on North Hill, is sleeping the sleep of the just with the snore of the wicked, and the private clocks on their respective brackets and mantles throughout the city are tolling, as well as they know how to toll it, the hour of 1:30 A. M.

A violent jangling at the door bell awakens the eminently respectable citizen.

Shuddering, he crawls out of bed; muttering, he gropes across the floor.

Swearing under his breath, he falls over a rocking chair.

At last he finds a match, lights a lamp and descending the stairs, opens the hall door, and admits a gust of wind that blows out the lamp, and a torrent of rain that drenches him to the skin.

"What is wanted?" the respectable citizen asks.

"Are you the resident owner of this property?" promptly inquired the caller.

"I am," wonderingly replies the eminently respectable citizen.

"Were you in bed when I rang?"

"I was," replies the eminently respectable.

"That was right," cheerfully explains the caller; "that is the place for a man of your age at this time of night. I am surprised to see you out of it. Get back to it, and pleasant dreams—"

All is silent after the crash that ensues, save the mocking smile that dies away in the distance. The fragments of the lamp that are revealed on the sidewalk by the coming of the dawn indicates either that the lamp fell out of a balcony at the height of about twenty-nine miles, or was hurled at some object with great force. When will the mystery be solved?

A Parrot as a Witness.

A parrot took the witness stand in a London police court a fortnight ago. The bird was claimed by Mrs. Tanner, who said that it escaped from its cage and had been caught by Mr. Isaacs, who refused to give it up. Mr. Isaacs admitted that he caught the parrot but disputed Mrs. Tanner's ownership.

Mrs. Tanner said the bird could not talk much, but could say "Mother" quite plainly. Mr. Isaacs said it was in the habit of saying "My Lord." The Magistrate directed that the parrot should be kept for some hours, to see if it verified either statement. During the afternoon the bird gave such satisfactory evidence in favor of Mrs. Tanner's statement that the magistrate said there was not a doubt but that it belonged to her, and he therefore ordered it to be restored to her.

His Answer.

They tell it on one of our citizens who was ambling toward his place of business, that he was approached by a lady acquaintance of the family, who said: "Mr. —, I hear you are suffering from rheumatism, is it so?" "Rumor 'tis m'm" said our citizen of few words, as he proceeded on his way. Over in Chicopee our neighbors and friends have been having quite a time with rheumatism; but according to reports received by our representative the flurry is over, as the sure antidote has been used and thus commented upon: "Mr. C. N. Manchester, Cutler street, says relative to his experience: I have used St. Jacobs Oil, and esteem it the best remedy for rheumatism I have ever tried. It acts like magic, and I cannot over estimate its value, when I pronounce it the greatest rheumatic remedy of the age.—Springfield. (Mass.) Daily Union."

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