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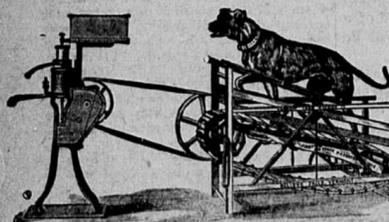
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He went out after a few words with the family and saw all the other injured men. By the time he had finished these visits it was dark, and he eagerly turned home, exhausted with the day's experience, feeling as if he had lived in a new world and at the same time wondering at the rapidity with which the time had fled.

He sighed almost contentedly to himself as he thought of the evening with his family and how he would enjoy it after the disquiet of the day. His wife was there to greet him, and Alice and Clara and Bess clung about him as he took off his coat and came into the beautiful room where a cheerful fire was blazing. Will came down stairs as his father came in, and in the brief interval before supper was ready Mr. Hardy related the scenes of the day.

They were all shocked to hear of Scoville's death, and Mrs. Hardy at once began to discuss some plans for relieving the family. Bess volunteered to give up half her room to one of the children, and Alice quietly outlined a plan which immediately appeared to her father businesslike and feasible. In the midst of this discussion supper was announced, and they all sat down.

"Where is George?" asked Mr. Hardy. Ordinarily he would have gone on with the meal without any reference to the boy, because he was so often absent from the table. Tonight he felt an irresistible longing to have all his children with him.

"He said he was invited out to supper with the Bramleys," said Clara.

Mr. Hardy received the announcement in silence. He felt the bitterness of such indifference on the part of his older son. "What!" he said to himself. "When he knows I had such a little while left, could he not be at home?" Then almost immediately flashed into him the self reproach even stronger than his condemnation of his boy. "How much have I done for him these last ten years to win his love and protect him from evil?"

After supper Mr. Hardy sat down by his wife, and in the very act he blushed with shame at the thought that he could not recall when he had spent an evening thus. He looked into her face and asked gently:

"Mary, what do you want me to do? Shall I read as we used to in the old days?"

"No; let us talk together," replied Mrs. Hardy, bravely driving back her tears. "I cannot realize what it all means. I have been praying all day. Do you still have the impression you had this morning?"

"Mary, I am if anything even more convinced that God has spoken to me, since his love has been deepening within me all day. When I looked into poor Scoville's face, the terrible nature of my past selfish life almost overwhelmed me. Oh, why have I abused God's goodness to me so awfully?"

There was silence a moment. Then Mr. Hardy grew more calm. He began to discuss what he would do the second day. He related more fully the interview with the men in the shop and his visits to the injured. He drew Clara to him and began to inquire into her troubles in such a tender, loving way that Clara's proud, passionate, willful nature broke down, and she sobbed out her story to him as she had to her mother the night before.

Mr. Hardy promised Clara that he would see James the next day. It was true that James Caxton had only a week before approached Mr. Hardy and told him in very manful fashion of his love for his daughter, but Mr. Hardy had treated it as a child's affair, and in accordance with his usual policy in family matters had simply told Clara and Bess to discontinue their visits at the old neighbor's. But now that he heard the story from the lips of his own daughter he saw the seriousness of it, and crowding back all his former pride and hatred of the elder Caxton he promised Clara to see James the next day.

Clara clung to her father in loving surprise. She was bewildered, as were all the rest, by the strange event that had happened to her father, but she never had so felt his love before, and, forgetting for awhile the significance of his wonderful dream, she felt happy in his presence and in his affection for her.

The evening had sped on with surprising rapidity while all these matters



There was his son George, too drunk to stand alone. were being discussed, and as it drew near to midnight again Robert Hardy felt almost happy in the atmosphere of that home and the thought that he could still for a little while create joy for those who loved him. Suddenly he spoke of his other son:

"I wish George would come in. Then our family circle would be complete. But it is bedtime for you, Bess, and all of us, for that matter."

It was just then that steps were

heard on the front porch, and voices were heard as if talking in whispers. The bell rang. Mr. Hardy rose to go to the door. His wife clung to him terrified.

"Oh, don't go, Robert! I am afraid for you."

"Why, Mary, it cannot be anything to harm me. Don't be alarmed."

Nevertheless he was a little startled. The day had been a trying one for him. He went to the door, his wife and the children following him close behind. He threw it wide open, and there, supported by two of his companions, one of them the young man Mr. Hardy had seen in the hotel lobby at noon, was his son George, too drunk to stand alone. He leered into the face of his father and mother with a drunken look that froze their souls with despair as the blaze of the hall lamp fell upon him reeling there.

And so the first of Robert Hardy's seven days came to an end.

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Hardy was a man of great will power, but this scene with his drunken son crushed him for a moment and seemed to take the very soul out of him. Mrs. Hardy at first uttered a wild cry and then ran forward and, seizing her elder boy, almost dragged him into the house, while Mr. Hardy, recovering from his first shock, looked sternly at the companions of the boy and then shut the door. That night was a night of sorrow in that family. The sorrow of death is not to be compared with it.

But morning came, as it comes alike to the condemned criminal and to the pure hearted child on a holiday, and after a brief and troubled rest Mr. Hardy awoke to his second day, the memory of the night coming to him at first as an ugly dream, but afterward as a terrible reality. His boy drunk! He could not make it seem possible. Yet there in the next room he lay in a drunken stupor, sleeping off the effects of his debauch of the night before. Mr. Hardy fell on his knees and prayed for mercy, again repeating the words, "Almighty God, help me to use the remaining days in the wisest and best manner." Then calming himself by a tremendous effort he rose up and faced the day's work as bravely as any man under such circumstances could.

After a family council, in which all of them were drawn nearer together than they ever had been before on account of their troubles, Mr. Hardy outlined the day's work something as follows:

First, he would go and see James Caxton and talk over the affair with him and Clara. Then he would go down to the office and arrange some necessary details of his business. If possible, he would come home to lunch. In the afternoon he would go to poor Scoville's funeral, which had been arranged for 2 o'clock. Mrs. Hardy announced her intention to go also. Then Mr. Hardy thought he would have a visit with George and spend the evening at home arranging matters with reference to his own death. With this programme in mind he finally went away after an affectionate leave taking with his wife and children.

George slept heavily until the middle of the forenoon and then awoke with a raging headache. Bess had several times during the morning stolen into the room to see if her brother were awake. When he did finally turn over and open his eyes, he saw the young girl standing by the bedside. He groaned as he recalled the night and his mother's look, and Bess said timidly as she laid her hand on his forehead: "George, I'm so sorry for you! Don't you feel well?"

"I feel as if my head would split open. It aches as if some one was chopping wood inside of it."

"What makes you feel so?" asked Bess innocently. "Did you eat too much supper at the Bramleys'?"

Bess had never seen any one drunk before, and when George was helped to bed the night before by his father and mother she did not understand his condition. She had always adored her big brother. It was not strange she had no idea of his habits.

George looked at his small sister curiously; then, under an impulse he could not explain, he drew her nearer to him and said:

"Bess, I'm a bad fellow. I was drunk last night! Drunk—do you understand? And I've nearly killed mother!"

Bess was aghast at the confession. She put out her hand again.

"Oh, no, George!" Then with a swift revulsion of feeling she drew back and said, "How could you, with father feeling as he does?"

And little Bess, who was a creature of very impulsive emotions, sat down crying on what she supposed was a cushion, but which was George's tall hat, accidentally covered with one end of a comforter which had slipped off the bed. Bess was a very plump little creature, and as she picked herself up and held up the hat George angrily exclaimed:

"You're always smashing my things!" But the next minute he was sorry for the words.

Bess retreated toward the door, quivering under the injustice of the charge. At the door she halted. She had something of Clara's passionate temper, and once in awhile she let even her adored brother George feel it, small as she was.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A Question of Grammar.

"Ain't you got any sense?" asked the 4-year-old daughter of the man who doesn't believe in corporal punishment.

"Why, my dear," said the father reprovingly, "aren't you ashamed to talk to papa that way?"

"Excuse me, papa," she answered. "I meant to say isn't you got any sense?" —Indianapolis News.

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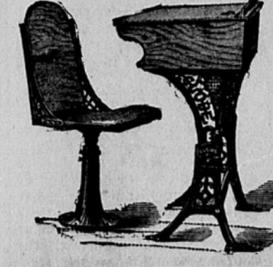
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