

THE MINISTER'S OLD COAT.

"Ministers' sons are very apt to turn out badly," said to a gentleman who sat next to me in the car. We had met in the train, bound for Chicago, and had struck up an acquaintance. He stopped me with his hand on my arm and with an earnest look which I shall never forget. I paused at once in what I was saying, and it seemed for a moment almost as if the rushing train had stopped to listen too.

"Let me tell you a story," he said. "I know it is a common belief that ministers' sons are wild, but that is because people talk about the bad ones, while those who turn out well are taken as a matter of course. I gathered statistics about them, once, and found that out of a thousand sons of ministers, there were very few who did not grow up useful and industrious men."

"But what is your story?" I asked, settling back in my seat.

"Well," said he, "it begins with a class superintendent in Boston, a dozen years ago. A number of old college friends had gathered in the evening for their annual reunion. Among them was a rich merchant, J. E. Williston, who had heard of him—and a poor pastor of a country church in Elm bank village, out in Western Massachusetts, whose name was Blake. A good many of the class had died, and the dozen or so elderly men who were left felt more tender than ever toward each other as they thought of the bright days at Harvard, and how soon no one would be left on earth who shared in that happy time. The dishes came and went, the light glowed brightly, and the host of the evening grew quite gay. But the tender feeling I have spoken of would come uppermost, now and then; and in one of these musing moments Williston's eye was attracted by something glistening about the coat which his friend Blake, who sat next to him, had on. He looked closer, and saw that the black cloth of which the coat was made had been worn so thin and smooth that it was very shiny.

"Well, Blake," said he, suddenly, taking hold of his friend's arm cordially (which he somehow had not been doing before), "how has the world gone with you, lately?"

"Blake had a naturally sad and thoughtful face; but he looked around quickly, with a warm smile.

"No need to ask," he said, laughingly. You can read the whole story on my back. This old coat is a sort of balance-sheet, which shows my financial condition to a T."

"Then he spoke more seriously, adding: 'It is a pretty hard life, Williston, that of a country pastor. I don't complain of my lot, though sometimes I'm distressed for my family. The fact is, this coat I've got on is hardly fit for a man of my profession to appear in; but I'm going to send my boy Sam to Harvard this year, and must pinch here and there to do it. I really ought to be thankful, though, that I can get such advantages for him by a few little sacrifices of personal appearance and convenience.'

"Don't you give a thought of your coat, old fellow," returned Williston. 'Nobody who knows you will ever imagine that the heart inside of it is threadbare, however the garment may look.'

"Blake was pleased with this kindly expression; and both men, after that exchange of confidence, felt happier. But, among the various incidents of the evening, this one almost passed out of the minister's mind by the next day, when he started for Elm bank. Speedily as his return was, however, he was surprised for him had got to his destination before him. It was a letter. Taking it up he broke open the envelope, and found inside a few words from Williston, with a check for \$500 to defray the first year's college expenses of his old classmate's son.

"You are a stranger to me, sir," said my traveling companion, at this point. "But I think you will appreciate the feeling with which poor Mr. Blake stood in his bare and dingy study in the old farm house parsonage holding that letter in his hand, and lifting his faithful eyes in thankfulness to God."

"Yes," I replied. "Williston did just the right thing, too. And how was it? Did the son show that he deserved the help?"

"My acquaintance looked away from me at the rich country through which we were passing. Then he said: 'Sam Blake was a good-natured, obedient fellow enough, and was greatly pleased to have the expense of his first college year taken off his father's shoulders; but his sense of duty didn't stop there. Remember Mr. Blake bought a new coat, and Sam entered Harvard that fall; and there matters stopped for awhile.'

"A freshman has a great deal to learn, as you know; but I think the chief thing Sam learned in that term was the great difference there is between Harvard and a little village like Elm bank, and the great difficulty of working and playing at the same time. Here he had society meetings to attend, and rooms of his own, with a chum, where a good deal of smoking was indulged in by himself and friends. And then there was base ball, into which it appeared indispensable for the honor of the class that he should enter actively, on account of his strong legs, wonderful wind and ground batting. He could not refuse to go to the theater occasionally, with his richer companions. Sam took a natural interest in the society of young ladies, too, and had to give up some time to its cultivation. He also thought a moderate amount of practice in the gymnasium was desirable, to prevent his health breaking down under the confinement of study. So, on the whole, the actual work that he did in the college was not very extensive. This didn't seem to have any bad effect till well along in the winter, when the habit of shirked work had grown so strong, without his noticing it, that he fell easily into reading novels when he ought to have been in the recitation-room. Gymnasium, theater, billiards, smoking—and I am afraid I must say a little drinking—friction."

"One horrible snowy, sleety morning when he had got up too late for prayers, the postman brought him a note—from the faculty—an 'admonition.' He dropped the pipe he was just lighting and bolted out of the building. But he 'deadened' immediately and that discouraged him. He soon began to make light of the warning, and did himself no credit in his studies. Though he managed to squeeze through the examination at the end of the freshman year, he came out far down toward the foot of his class. He wasn't quite contented with himself, and thought he'd try to do better the next

year. But during the journey home he recovered his usual spirits.

"When he walked up to the village toward the parsonage farm, he was thinking that since he was a sophomore now—he would buy the knottiest, biggest-headed cane in Cambridge when he should go back there. And what was the first thing that met him at home? It was his father out in the field digging for new potatoes, his coat off and his spectacles fast perspiring. The sight struck home into the boy. He vaulted the fence, and running up with hardly a pause of greeting, cried:

"O, father, let me do that! I don't like to see you at such work."

Mr. Blake stopped, and looked earnestly and rather sadly at him.

"Well, Sam, I think that's about as good a How-do-you-do? as you could have offered me. There's something right about you after all."

It hadn't occurred to Sam that there was any doubt about that point before. He blushed as he asked:

"Where's the hired man?"

"I've discharged him. I can't afford one at present, my son," was the answer.

"Sam was rather puzzled and began to reflect.

"They went into the house, and there, when the minister re-appeared after making his toilet, his son noticed that he wore the old shabby, shiny coat. At this he was more than ever astonished. The supper, also, notwithstanding that it was the first night of the prodigal's return, was very meager. Not a single extra luxury was on the table, and Sam observed that his mother took no sugar nor butter. His own appetite began to fail at seeing this, and his perception was sharpened accordingly. He was now, as well as sad. Suddenly he laid down his knife, and exclaimed to his sister Katy:

"Sis, what does all this mean? This going without the hired man, and starving yourself?"

"His sister looked at him, then glanced at Mr. Blake and her mother, and made no answer.

"I thought," said Sam, petulantly, "that Williston's money was going to make it easy for you, father; and here the pinching is going on five times more than ever."

"I don't own my friend Williston's money," said the minister, quietly.

"Of course not, but the five hundred dol—"

"Sam stopped abruptly on an entreating gesture from his sister.

"The subject was not resumed. But before he went to bed Sam obtained an interview with his sister alone. He felt, secretly, that he was responsible for the depression and trouble which seemed to fill the household, but that only made him speak more indignantly.

"Now, sis," he began, "can I get two words of sense out of you?"

"Not until you ask politely," she replied.

"Well, then, please tell me what the mystery is."

"It oughtn't to be a mystery to you, Sam, that you haven't done well at college. Papa is terribly disappointed."

"I don't see why he should commit suicide if he is," Sam retorted. "I haven't cost him much this year."

"Oh, yes, you have. Do you know he actually sold his new coat?"

"Why? Sam frowned.

"Because he's been trying every way to save money since he began to get reports of how you were wasting your time."

"What for?" asked Sam, though he began to suspect.

"Well, you know—now should I know? Don't you see? He's ashamed to have that money from his old classmate, and he's nearly saved enough, and he's going to pay it all back. There, I was to keep it quiet, and now I've told you."

"And his sister burst into tears. 'You've nearly broken his heart, Sam—poor papa!'

"The next day Mr. Blake's son went off directly after breakfast and was not seen again until afternoon. Coming back, he overtook his father coming from the postoffice.

"I know all about it!" he exclaimed, in his excitement. 'Katy told me last night. I wish, though, you'd held out to the new coat awhile.'

"Why?" asked Mr. Blake, imperturbably.

"Because," said Sam, "I'm going to pay my own way, but that he'd better day and hired out for the season to Farmer Hedgeburton. You won't send that money to Williston, will you, father?"

"You are too late," was the minister's answer. 'I've just mailed the letter to him.'

"In fact, next day the kind merchant's eyes were dimmed as he read these words:

Dear Williston:—My boy—it almost breaks my heart to say so, but I've decided to return your money for him last year, and you will find a draft enclosed for that amount."

"Here I interrupted the narrator. 'Doesn't your story prove what I said at the beginning?'

"No; for that isn't the end of it. Sam went down to Boston in the autumn with a few dollars of earnings in his pocket. He had decided to give up college, and so applied to Mr. Williston for a clerkship."

"He told him: 'I proved myself unworthy, as my father said. Now give me a chance to show myself worthy.'

"Williston gave him a position and he worked there two years. Then an opportunity offered to go West and take a partnership in—what do you think? Tidy clothing business? Sam jumped at it; and you may believe he sent his father the next Christmas the finest coat that concern could produce."

"I am a well-to-do man now, sir," continued my acquaintance, suddenly turning to me in the first person. "and when we get to Chicago, if you will come to my establishment, I will show you my father's (the minister's) old shiny coat, which I preserve because it was the beginning of my fortune, and a sign of my manhood."

"Then," I exclaimed, taking him by the hand, "it is yourself you have been talking about all this time. You are—"

"Sam," continued my new friend, nodding and smiling.

Of the late Bishop Ames, the following anecdote is related: While presiding over a certain conference in the west, a member began a tirade against the universities, education, etc., thanking God that he had never been corrupted by contact with a college. After proceeding thus for a few minutes, the bishop interrupted him with the question: "Do I understand that the brother there thanked God for his ignorance?"

"Well, yes," was the answer. "You can put it that way if you want to."

"Well, all I have to say," said the bishop, in his sweet, musical tones, "all I have to say is that the brother has a great deal to thank God for."

THE LADY'S BRIDGE.

"The archbishop has determined to rebuild the bridge."

"The news is too good to be true."

"It is true, for I am the messenger to the architect to whom the work is to be committed."

Toledo will pray forever for Don Pedro Tenorio, if he carries out this design."

Such was a fragment of conversation in the streets of Toledo, in the year 1890. The ancient bridge, broken down by the floods of 1808, and afterward rebuilt, was now to be restored with great magnificence. The architect was one whose fame had extended far and wide, but this promised to be the crowning achievement of his art.

"Spare not," said the archbishop, "but let the bridge be worthy of the town, of its artist and of its founder. Let it typify my munificence, thy genius, and the strength and beauty of the city."

"It shall be worthy of all three," responded the artist.

Troops of workmen were now engaged, piles were driven, immense stones selected with great care were brought to the river banks and wrought into shape. The architect spent much of his time in watching the gradual realization in concrete form of his design. At first he was blithe and cheerful, animating the men with his own spirit, and all the difficulties that arise to impede such undertakings; but after a while his manner changed, and in proportion as the bridge advanced to completion, he became sad and quite moody. One day he sat and gazed for hours at the bridge, wrapped in sorrowful thought, taking no heed of the by-standers, like one in an evil dream. A soft hand was placed on his shoulder, a low, shy voice gave gentle utterance to his name.

"Juanita!"

It was the girl to whom he was betrothed, and whose fate was to be linked to his own on the completion of the bridge.

"Why are you so sad, Louis?" What is the meaning of this sorrow that seems to darken all your life? Am I the cause? Do you no longer love me?"

"I love you dearer than life."

She gave a little sigh of pleasure and relief.

"I was afraid some stately dame had stolen your heart away from poor Juanita."

"Impossible. I have no heart. It is in your keeping."

"That's a pretty compliment, but it is not true; for if I had your heart I could read in it the secret cause which has converted my gay, loving into a moody, melancholy man."

"I will tell you the cause, Juanita, and my confidence will show you how much I love you, for it places my life and honor in your hands. Both, alas! will soon be blasted."

"Oh, say not so, Louis. I know you are incapable of crime, and everything else can be remedied."

"Find me a remedy for this. In the plans for the construction of the bridge I have made a fatal oversight. The mistake is known only to myself, and I only became conscious of it after all possibility of correcting was gone. The bridge is now enmeshed in a network of scaffolding, shoring and supports of every kind; but the moment these are cleared away the center of the structure will fall in the river, and that which was to have been the monument of my skill will be a hideous ruin, a fit symbol of my folly and disgrace."

Juanita was stunned by this unexpected revelation. The vague fear inspired by her lover's changed demeanor had determined her course, but she had not dreamed of a ruin so near and so complete. In a moment she saw fade from view all the happiness of the future that had been living in her day-dreams and giving a roseate hue to the winding hours of romance. How little did she think of life changed before her eyes into the blackness of death and despair. Then, with the woman's instinct that seeks to comfort others, regardless of her own anguish, she sought to console him.

"How cruel I have been to reproach you! How little did I think of the how terrible a cause! But tell me, Louis, can you devise no remedy?"

"None."

"Nothing but taking down the bridge and rebuilding it?"

"That is the only way."

"Well, let us trust in God. Perhaps he will point out some way of escape. For me, I will go and pray to our Lady for her help and guidance. I feel sure that this evil will be averted."

There was no foundation for her hope, and yet it comforted him.

It was the night before the day fixed for the final inspection of the bridge. To-morrow the archbishop will pronounce his solemn blessing on the work; to-morrow the scaffolding and trusses will be removed; to-morrow the bridge will stand forth in all its glory, a proud addition to the many bridges of the city; to-morrow the night was stormy; the wind and rain had swollen the river into a torrent, and Louis, as he tossed restlessly upon his bed, almost prayed that his force might sweep away the entire structure. It would be a less disgrace than that which awaited him on the morrow. He arose, and stood at the window of his room. He looked out into the night. His eyes naturally sought the direction of the great bridge, but there was nothing to be seen but blackness. Stay! What was that wandering flame? His heart stood still as a dim white figure, bearing in its hand a burning torch, passed over the bridge. A light was thrown over one of the parapets. As the figure glided over the doomed bridge, its progress was marked by the springing up of lurid flames. Then the white and mystic figure vanished from sight, and—the bridge was on fire.

The timber-work burned fiercely; the wind fanned the flames into fury, and the mad, mad quaking, seemed to stimulate its power. Then the fire began to feed itself with its lurid light, the city awoke. The great alarm bell was ringing, and hundreds of anxious citizens thronged the river's banks, anxious to help and save. It was in vain. Among the latest arrivals were the architect and archbishop.

"This is a sad end of your work, my son," said the ecclesiastic, "but be not cast down. The bridge shall be rebuilt, and if in the course of the erection of this one you have found anything that could be improved, the new one shall be even more magnificent than we had purposed this to be."

As the architect was gratefully acknowledging the archbishop's generosity, he saw Juanita with her father, approaching.

"You are saved," she whispered.

"And you are my preserver, he returned."

The destroyed bridge was replaced by one of greater beauty, and there was no fatal flaw in the second design made by Louis. As for the beautiful incendiary, she became the wife of the architect. Before the marriage she sought the place of the archbishop, and, under the seal of confession, revealed the secret of her action.

The good prelate, moved by the courage and devotion with which Louis had inspired her, not only forgave her crime, but caused her image to be carved upon the stone above the keystone of the arch, as an emblem of loyal love. There it stands to this day upon the Lady's Bridge.

A Popular Mistake Corrected.

Getting married is not altogether the one-sided affair that many people have supposed. The popular idea that all the young women are just crazy to marry anybody that will come along, and that the reason they don't get married is because nobody will ask them, seems to be a mistaken one. A St. Louis girl—and a St. Louis girl is as apt to have good sense as any other girl—has been making some calculations which are of much interest. Young men who now have their powerful intellects centered upon the subject of spring pantaloons and the newest shade in neckties might contemplate the matter with some profit if they make their minds reach around it. The St. Louis young woman is like most other young women in complaining of the scarcity of marriageable men, but she has some reason about it. She figures out that she knows perhaps 100 young men, in round numbers. Of these she thinks she knows about 30 intimately, and of these thirty there are not more than four whom she would consent to marry for love or money on the spur of the moment. It may not be a pleasant way of putting it, but what she says is that, taking 100 young men as they come and go, only one of every 25 can be set down as unobjectionable and able to make a living for himself and wife. This is an awful thing for those other 24 young men to think of, and it is not necessary for one to be altogether a philosopher to suspect that the St. Louis girl is about right. She is evidently tired of hearing the endless complaints about the uselessness of the average young man when she knows that the average young man is quite as much out of place in this world. In fact, a useless young man does stand a chance of growing up to something or another, but a useless young man doesn't do that even by any sort of accident. Young men have got to make a change in themselves in some way; they are liable to be wanted for something besides partners for the next waltz.—Philadelphia Times.

Negro Eloquence.

In reviewing our Texas exchanges in one of them, the Dallas Times, if we are not mistaken, are recited the details of a case that certainly presents some of the most remarkable features in the history of jurisprudence in this country.

It occurred in Waco, Tex., during the last term of the Ellis county District Court. A colored man had been indicted for entering into a conspiracy to murder. He was brought to trial, the evidence was strong, and in spite of the good fight made by his defense by his attorney he was convicted. A motion for a new trial was made, and the judge, seeing that no error of law had been made, and believing the evidence was sufficient, promptly overruled the motion. When the prisoners were brought in to be sentenced, this negro was among them.

When asked if he had anything to say, why sentence should not be passed upon him, he said he knew nothing he might say would have no weight with the court, as all the forms of the law had been complied with, and he knew he must go.

He then said that he had something to say for the benefit of his colored friends, and with the permission of the court he would make a few remarks.

The court told him that he would listen.

The negro started off slowly and deliberately, reviewing the testimony, showing the inconsistencies of witnesses' statements, and then, carried away with the idea of the wrong done him, he burst into a strain of eloquence seldom heard.

When he sat down the Judge said: "Sam, I thought you guilty; I don't believe so now, and will set aside the judgment overruling your motion for a new trial, and give you another chance."

So eloquently had the negro presented his case that the County Attorney dismissed the case, and the negro walked out of the court-room a free man.

This is the first case, in Texas at least, where a man brought up to be sentenced, turned next day when he appeared for present says that the effort was the finest ever heard. The negro was uneducated and a common field hand.

Drinking Ice Water.

There is no more doubt that drinking ice water arrests digestion than there is that a refrigerator would arrest perspiration. It drives from the stomach its natural heat, suspends the flow of gastric juice and shocks and weakens the delicate organs with which it comes in contact. An able writer on human diseases says habitual ice drinkers are usually flabby about the regions of the stomach. They complain that their food leaves a heavy taste in the mouth. They taste their dinner for hours after it is bolted. They cultivate the use of stimulants to aid digestion. If they are intelligent, they read upon food and what the physiologists has to say about it,—how long it takes cabbage, and pork, and beef, and potatoes, and other meats and vegetables, to go through the process of assimilation. They roar at new bread, hot cakes and fried meat, imagining these to have been the cause of their maladies. But the ice water goes down all the same, and finally friends are called in to take a farewell look at one whom a mysterious Providence has called to a clime where, as far as is known, ice water is not used. The number of immortal beings who go hence, to return no more, on account of an injudicious use of ice water, can hardly be estimated.—Baltimore Sun.

A Chapter on Flirts.

If, by the term "prospects," as applied to a young lady, you mean the probabilities of her getting a husband, then she whose admirers may be called legions, has very much poorer prospects than another whose friends of the opposite sex may be counted on the fingers of a hand.

Now, it may be true that everybody patronizes the identical mode and fashion which everybody else supports, for it is the easiest and most useful thing in the world to follow the crowd. But that is not to say that a young man wants for a wife a girl who count her beaux by the score and her conquests by the dozen.

It is true that every chicken in a brood will leave a good dinner and go in pursuit of the same object, if it sees one of its flock running away with a large sized crumb, or after an imaginary worm. But it is not true that a young man will forsake the modest, gentle girl whose society he can enjoy without rivalry to compete with a score of others for the company of a young lady whose smiles are free to all. There is indeed a class of men who pay assiduous court to the latter.

This pet of society generally possesses many attractions. She has a fine instrument and plays tolerably. Possibly she sings; invariably she dances. She is always extremely pleasant to submit one's self occasionally to be handsomely entertained. But I would not, on any account, have it supposed that I am looking in that direction for a wife. By no means.

Thus these gallants are wont to speak, and, as a rule, they are not marrying men. But when one of them would take to himself a wife, he goes East or West, or North or South—anywhere, to find a girl unspoiled by society, and who has not, in his presence, played the agreeable to a score of others, and whom he strongly suspects any of them could have had for the asking.

The worst thing for a girl, unless she wants to live and die an old maid, is to have too many beaux. She may be pretty, stylish, accomplished, graceful—everything you please, but she is a little thing. The very fact that she has been the recipient of attention from more men than she would need to know in the course of a lifetime, places her on a parallel with a worn out bootjack, desirable only to those who can't get better.

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