

THE BEGINNING OF THE END; AN ENGLISH TALE.

BY A. A. CLEVELAND.

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CHAPTER VIII.

"Rose," said Phil, with a repentant air, "I don't want to talk about it. I feel like I fancy the Prodigal Son felt when he returned to his father. You have indeed killed for me the fatted calf; perhaps the only one you had. Five hundred pounds is a large sum, Rose. Maybe it's all you have."

"No; I have more than that, Phil," said Rose, with a smile. "You are welcome to it. Still, it is all I can possibly spare out of my business."

"It's strange, Rose; but it's lucky. That is just the sum I wished for, but had no idea of getting. It's just the amount it will take to start me nicely. I am so much obliged to you, my dear."

"Now," said Rose, rising from the table, "I must go to the office, and I will write you a check for the money. Who shall I make it payable to?"

"To me, Rose. I am a reformed man, and do not intend to be ashamed of my name. Shall I go with you to the office? I should like to see your factory. The truth is, you will have a business rival in me. I intend to go into that business myself."

"Oh, Phil, is that true?" said Rose, delighted. "I am so glad! It is a good business, and I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll make your fortune—our fortune—Phil. I will give you my secret for preparing straw. It is very valuable. Messrs. Bedford & Co., of Stratton, offered five thousand pounds for it. I'll give it to you, and as soon as you get started I can find you sale for all you can manufacture. Why, I could sell double the quantity of straw goods I now make."

"Why not increase your facilities?" said Phil. "Get a larger factory and more machinery."

"I did intend to," replied Rose. "But I'll go on as I am for a while and let you have the money. And if you will only reform, I'll be the happiest woman in the world."

Together they walked to the factory, and Rose showed and explained to him everything connected with the establishment; and, as he walked by her side, treating her with the greatest respect, and speaking so pleasantly and courteously to the employes, Rose really in her heart felt proud of him.

Repairing at length to the office, Rose wrote a check payable to Mr. Philip Hanson, and handed it to him, saying:

"I am not the first woman who has helped a man to reform, or the first one to help a man to fortune and happiness. And here is the secret for preparing straw. It's my own to give. I studied it out myself, and I have no one to thank for even a hint. Now, good-bye. May God bless you and make us both happy."

"Good-bye, Rose. When I get started in business, don't wait longer than you can help before you come to me."

Phil left the office with a strange smile upon his face, saying to himself:

"That was a good idea about my going into the straw business. Yes, I am going into it, and sooner than she thinks. Now to get the check cashed, and then to business."

Going to the bank, he presented the check to the cashier.

"This is payable to Mr. Philip Hanson. Are you the gentleman? If so, you will please identify yourself. I have not the pleasure of knowing you, sir."

"Well, I declare! I never once thought about that. But I might have known. I will soon do so, though. I suppose you are acquainted with my wife, Mrs. Hanson? I will bring her to introduce me. That will be sufficient, I suppose?"

The cashier replied with a bow, and Phil left the bank and proceeded to the factory to find his wife. Entering the office, he found Rose sitting gazing out of the window in deep thought, with a look of mingled pain and tenderness upon her face, and there were traces of tears upon her cheeks. She turned quickly on hearing the office door open, and appeared surprised at beholding her husband again.

"Don't be alarmed, dear," he said, with a kindly smile. "I presented your check at the bank, and the cashier refused to pay me unless you came yourself; and although I am sorry to trouble you, I will have to ask you to be kind enough to walk down there with me."

"Why, certainly I'll go. I did not think of you having to identify yourself."

A little later they entered the bank together, and Rose said, with a business air:

"Mr. Cook, allow me to introduce Mr. Hanson to you. He is the holder of a check drawn by me, which you will please cash at once."

"I'm glad to know you, Mr. Hanson," replied the cashier. "This is your husband, I suppose, Mrs. Hanson?"

"Yes; this is my husband, Mr. Cook."

"Yes," added Phil; "I've been away for some years, and wife has had to attend to business. But now we are both going into the straw business, are we not, my dear?"

"That is the intention, I believe, if nothing happens to prevent it."

"And I hope," said Phil, as he took up the gold the cashier had counted out to him, "to find it

more pleasant than living on the continent. Good-day, Mr. Cook."

And with a bow and a smile he left the bank, accompanied by his wife. On reaching the door, Phil said:

"Shall I walk back with you, dear?"

"Oh, no," said Rose. "I can go alone just as well. And now, Phil, start your business as soon as you can, for I am almost sick to be with you again. Give me some proof—ever so little—that you are going to be good, and if you want me I will come. Nay, I will come and ask you to take me to your heart again."

"You are a good woman, Rose. You have been unkind only in one thing; you have not allowed me to see Bessie."

"No, Phil; I did not refuse to let you see her. You can see her any time on the street, going to and from school. But I shall never show her to you or bring her where you are. I asked you once to look at her, you remember, and you said she was no relation of yours. I will never ask you to look at her unless you say, 'I believe she is my child;' and then, Phil, you will have lifted a load from my heart that it has carried for many weary years."

"Rose, before God, who hears me, I swear that I believe Bessie—your child—is mine. Upon my soul, I believe it, and always did believe it."

Rose looked like one transfixed. Her face shone with a transparent light. She trembled with emotion, and seizing one of Phil's hands, covered it with kisses.

"Oh, thank you! Bless you, Phil, my husband! You have taken the load off my heart. Let me go now and tell grandma all this good news. And when I come to see you, Phil, I'll bring Bessie to see her father."

She turned away, her heart filled with joy unspeakable.

"That's well over," said Phil to himself. "Now to business. I have some letters to write."

Let us look over his shoulder as he writes, and learn enough to interest our readers.

National Banking Co.—Gents:—You are hereby notified not to pay any orders or checks bearing the signature of Rose Hanson, my wife. In future, all orders or checks must bear my signature. You will please forward to me a statement of accounts, and oblige, obediently yours,

PHILIP HANSON.

Messrs. Bedford & Co.—Gents:—Some time ago, you offered Mrs. Rose Hanson, my wife, during my absence abroad, the sum of five thousand pounds for the process of preparing straw, which, as I was not at home, she refused. We are about to retire from the business, and consequently I will make you an offer, viz.: To sign and deliver to you all the machinery in the factory, together with the method of preparing the straw, for the sum of seven thousand five hundred pounds. Possession can be had in one week. Mrs. Hanson tells me that you were here a short time ago. Everything is as it was then. Answer as soon as possible, as in case you refuse I wish to communicate with other parties. Respectfully yours,

PHILIP HANSON.

Poor Rose had gone home full of joy to tell grandma the glad tidings that Phil had sworn to her that he believed that he was Bessie's father.

"And oh, grandma!" she cried, "I can't help it, but I love him yet; so dearly that everything seems past. All his cruelty and unkindness seem so far back I can hardly recall it when I see him. It is a noble thing to do to reform a man; to be to him a counselor, a friend, a something for him to lean upon. I will be that friend. He shall lean on me. I will uphold him. He shall not fall again."

Ah, poor misguided woman! If you did but know what he is doing now—not ill treating you, but just taking all your hard earnings according to law—you would not talk like that; for thus sayeth the law:

The husband may seize for his own use anything which she may earn, or anything which may be given to her.

The next day, as Rose was writing in her office, Mr. Cook was announced.

"Mrs. Hanson," said he, "I fear I have unpleasant tidings for you. I trust you will bear up as bravely as you can. Allow me to assure you beforehand that you have the heartfelt sympathy of the directors and of myself in this great trial."

Rose could not speak. She turned ashy pale and her heart stood still.

"This morning," continued Mr. Cook, "we received a letter from Mr. Philip Hanson, notifying us not to honor your orders or checks, and in future all orders or checks must be signed by him. I understood from you yesterday that he is your husband. If so, he has a right to demand an account from us by law. I grieve to tell you, but the law will require that in future you must have your checks signed by him."

Rose stood like one stunned, but only for an instant. Rallying, she exclaimed:

"Not honor my checks! I earned every penny I have entrusted to you myself. And I gave him—made him a present—of five hundred pounds only yesterday. He will not dare to touch the money in your hands. Oh, Mr. Cook, what can I do?"

"My dear Mrs. Hanson, I am sorry for you. Go and consult your attorney immediately. I cannot stay. Good-day. I wish you well out of your trouble."

"The scoundrel!" he muttered, as he walked toward the bank; "to rob her in that manner."

Do you wonder, reader, that women have raised their voices in solemn protest against such injustice—such crime? For it is a crime to take the earnings of another, whether legally or not. It is this crime that fills our penitentiaries and city jails. To prevent this, our police force is organized. It is a crime in the eyes of the law to stop a man on the highway, and with finger on the trigger demand his money. But to leave a woman

all alone after she has taken the responsibility of maternity, and then, when she has struggled day and night to acquire a little of this world's goods, to come and take it from her by the force of the law, is no crime. O Justice, how you are mocked in the name of Law!

Immediately after Mr. Cook was gone, Rose donned her hat and shawl and proceeded to the attorney's office, where she explained everything, and then waited for legal advice.

"We can do nothing, Mrs. Hanson," the legal advisor said. "We might smuggle a few pounds, perhaps. I would advise you to get a divorce from him, if you can show cause. But you know the only thing to prove is adultery. He can beat you—starve you; almost—I am sorry to say, and the way the laws read now you could not get a divorce for that. But I can obtain a divorce for you. I am in possession of facts, and can substantiate them by witnesses whose testimony is unimpeachable; facts, I repeat, that are sufficient to obtain a divorce for you. You must lose all you have acquired if he demands it; for thus reads the law. But, after all, you have everything left—your child, and the secret for the preparation of straw. You will yet do well. I'll undertake your case, and make him pay the expenses if I can. If not, pay me when you are able. If that time never comes, I shall feel satisfied at having done a good action in freeing you from the clutches of a villain."

"Oh, I can't think!" said Rose. "I don't know what to do. Oh, sir, I need an advisor, a friend. Do what you think is right and best for me. Oh, Bessie! Bessie! how can I care for you now?"

"Don't fear for the child. You can rest easy. Go home now, and try and compose yourself. Leave everything with me."

Rose went home to relate all her troubles to her best friend, the old grandmother.

That same afternoon Phil Hanson received a telegram as follows:

Mr. Philip Hanson—Your offer is accepted. Agent is dispatched to see you. BEDFORD & CO.

The agent arrived the same day, and in a short time everything was signed and delivered, and once more Phil Hanson was triumphant.

Things went on as usual for a day or two, and then a notice was served upon Philip Hanson citing him to appear and show cause why the bond of matrimony existing between himself and Rose should not be canceled and the care and custody of the child be given to its mother.

"Well!" exclaimed Phil. "That's about the dirtiest trick I ever heard of, to drag my name before the public in this manner! Has the woman no shame? Oh, the jade! I'll make it hot for her! If she had behaved herself, I'd have lived with her, and she should have had a share of the money. Now she'll not get a penny. I'll sell her out again, every stitch she's got!"

And he kept his word. For the second time Rose was homeless.

After performing this manly and protective act, Phil Hanson said to himself:

"Now let us see what money will do. I'll go and see her lawyer. The lawyer that cannot be bought with gold exists only in the imagination. A thousand pounds will buy him."

To the lawyer's office he bent his steps. He sent in his name, requesting an interview, and was admitted to the legal presence at once.

"Mr. Hanson, I presume," said the attorney. "I wish you to distinctly understand that I am engaged on the other side, or rather, I should have said, retained by Mrs. Hanson, and—"

"Oh, yes, I know that," said Phil, interrupting him. "But listen to me. There's no use in wasting powder and shot on a dead bird. She has not got a penny to pay you with, and I am 'too fly' for you to get anything out of me. You work for money, don't you?"

"Yes," said the lawyer. "I work for money."

"Well, sir, I am the man to pay you money. I'll give you a thousand pounds to let me win this suit—to turn the tables on her."

"Ah, sir," said the lawyer, "the case is too strong against you. I don't see how it can be done."

"You have charged me with adultery. Turn the tables on her. We'll charge it to her, and prove it, too."

"Why, how can that be proven? Everyone knows her to be a good, moral and virtuous woman."

"Oh, come! I see what you want. You want another thousand to buy up your witnesses. You can get men to do anything, swear to anything, for money. You've had to do it often before, I'll be bound. Now, is it a bargain?"

"Let me understand you fully. You want to deny the adultery, and you want me to assist you to hire witnesses to perjure themselves, to swear away her character?"

"That's it!" said Phil. "And get the child from her. Then I've got her."

The lawyer rose from his chair and straightened himself to his fullest height.

"When you first came in," he said, "I warned you that I was retained by Mrs. Hanson; and after that warning you saw fit to talk about your affairs to me. You low, contemptible dog! Some one ought to kill you! You're a viper! Get out of my office this minute! I can't trust myself with you. I might kill you! A woman, as good as she is, to be ruined by your perjured witnesses, indeed! You seek to bribe me, you hound! I have your plan now, and I'll foil you, you brute!"

"Oh, you have my plan, have you?" said Phil, with a cunning leer. "Who is going to believe you? My oath is as good as yours. Do you think

I am a fool? Where is your witness, eh? Where is your witness?"

A deep voice answered behind him:

"He is here!"

And turning, Phil beheld Will Brownly, his eyes like two coals of fire, and his hands clenched.

With a yell of rage, Phil fled from the room ere Will could close upon him, and escaped from the office.

[To be continued.]

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