

## PRUDENCE OF THE PARSONAGE

by  
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ILLUSTRATED BY  
**W. C. TANNER**



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**IT WAS A LUSCIOUS APPLE THAT GOT OLD MOTHER EVE INTO TROUBLE, AND APPLES IT IS THAT MAKE TROUBLE FOR CONNIE AND THE TWINS.**

Mr. Starr, a widower Methodist minister, has been assigned to the congregation at Mount Mark, Ia. He has five daughters, Prudence, the eldest, who keeps house; Fairy, Carol and Lark, who are twins, and Constance. Their advent stirs the curiosity of all Mount Mark, and members of the Ladies' Aid lose no time in getting acquainted and asking a million questions. Prudence, who is nineteen, has her hands full with the mischievous twins and Connie, but is moved to defend them valiantly when some of the good ladies of the congregation suggest that an older woman is needed to run the family.

**CHAPTER III—Continued.**

"Indeed they are not," cried Prudence loyally. "They are young, lively, mischievous, I know—and I am glad of it. But I have lived with them ever since they were born, and I ought to know them. They are unselfish, they are sympathetic, they are always generous. They do foolish and irritating things—but never things that are hateful and mean. They are all right at heart, and that is all that counts. They are not bad girls! What have they done today? They were exasperating, and humiliating, too, but what did they do that was really mean? They embarrassed and mortified me, but not intentionally! I can't punish them for the effect on me, you know! Would that be just or fair? At heart, they meant no harm."

It must be confessed that there were many serious faces among the Ladies. Some cheeks were flushed, some eyes were downcast, some lips were compressed and some were trembling. Every mother there was asking in her heart, "Did I punish my children just for the effect on me? Did I judge my children by what was in their hearts, or just by the trouble they made me?"

And the silence lasted so long that it became awkward. Finally Mrs. Prentiss crossed the room and stood by Prudence's side. She laid a hand tenderly on the young girl's arm, and said in a voice that was slightly tremulous: "I believe you are right, my dear. It is what girls are at heart that really counts. I believe your sisters are all you say they are. And one thing I am very sure of—they are happy girls to have a sister so patient and loving and just. Not all real mothers have as much to their credit!"

**CHAPTER IV.**

**A Secret Society.**

Carol and Lark, in keeping with their twinning, were the dearest chums and comrades. To them the great, rambling barn back of the parsonage was a most delightful place. It had a big cowshed on one side, and horse stalls on the other, with a "heavenly" haymow over all, and with "chutes" for the descent of hay—and twigs!

Now the twins had a secret society—of which they were the founders, the officers and the membership body. Its name was Skull and Crossbones. Lark furnished the brain power for the organization, but her sister was an enthusiastic and energetic leader. Carol's club name was Lady Gwendolyn, and Lark's was Sir Alfred Angelcourt ordinarily, although subject to frequent change. The old barn saw stirring times after the coming of the new parsonage family.

"Hark! Hark!" sounded a hissing whisper from the corncrib, and Connie, enveloping outside the barn, shivered sympathetically.

"What is it! Oh, what is it?" wailed the unfortunate lady.

"Look! Look! Run for your life!" Then while Connie clutched the barn door in a frenzy, there was a sound of rattling corn as the twins scrambled upward, a silence, a low thud, and an unromantic "Ouch!" as Carol bumped her head and stumbled.

"Are you assaulted?" shouted the bold Sir Alfred, and Connie heard a wild scuffle as he rescued his companion from the clutches of the old halter on which she had stumbled. Up the haymow ladder they hurried, and then slid recklessly down the hay chutes. Presently the barn door was flung open, and the "society" knocked Connie flying backward, ran madly around the barn a few times, and scurried under the fence and into the chicken coop.

A little later Connie, assailed with shots of corncobs, ran bitterly toward the house. "Peeking" was strictly forbidden when the twins were engaged in Skull and Crossbones activities.

And Connie's soul burned with desire. She felt that this secret society was threatening not only her happiness, but also her health, for she could not sleep for horrid dreams of Skulls and Crossbones at night, and could not eat for envying the twins their "secret" and mysterious joys. Finally she applied to Prudence, and received assistance.

The afternoon mail brought to the parsonage an envelope addressed to "Misses Carol and Lark Starr, the Methodist Parsonage, Mount Mark, Iowa," and in the lower left-hand corner was a suggestive drawing of a Skull and Crossbones. The eyes of the mischievous twins twinkled with delight when they saw it, and they carried it to the barn for prompt perusal. It read as follows:

Miss Constance Starr humbly and respectfully craves assistance into the Ancient and Honorable Organization of Skull and Crossbones.

The twins pondered long on a fitting reply, and the next afternoon the postman brought a letter for Connie, waiting impatiently for it. She had just approached the twins about it at noon that day.

"Did you get my application?" she had whispered nervously.

But the twins had stared her out of countenance, and Connie realized that she had committed a serious breach of secret society etiquette.

But here was the letter! Her fingers trembled as she opened it. It was decorated lavishly with skulls and crossbones, splashed with red ink, supposedly blood, and written in the same suggestive color.

Skull and Crossbones, great in mercy and in clemency, has listened graciously to the prayer of Constance, the Seeker. Hear the will of the Great Spirit! If the Seeker will, for the length of two weeks, submit herself to the will of Skull and Crossbones, she shall be admitted into the Ancient and Honorable Order.

The week that followed was a gala one for the twins of Skull and Crossbones. Constance swept their room, made their bed, washed their dishes, did their chores, and in every way behaved as a model pledge of the ancient and honorable. The twins were gracious but firm. There was no arguing and no faltering. "It is the will of Skull and Crossbones that the damsel do this," they would say. And the damsel did it.

Prudence did not feel it was a case that called for her interference. So she sat back and watched, while the twins told stories, read and frolicked, and Constance did their daily tasks.

A week passed, ten days, and twelve. Then came a golden October afternoon when the twins sat in the haymow looking out upon a meadow world. Constance was in the yard, reading a fairy story. The situation was a tense one, for the twins were hungry, and time was heavy on their hands.

"The apple trees in Avery's orchard are just loaded," said Lark. "And there are lots on the ground, too. I saw them when I was out in the field this morning."

Carol gazed down into the yard where Constance was absorbed in her book. "Constance oughtn't to read as much as she does," she argued. "It's so bad for the eyes."

"Yes, and what's more, she's been getting off too easy for the last few days. The time is nearly up."

"That's so," said Lark. "Let's call her up here." This was done at once, and the unfortunate Constance stood before them respectfully, as they had instructed her to stand. The twins hesitated, each secretly hoping the other would voice the order. But Lark, as usual, was obliged to be the spokesman.

"Damsel," she said, "it is the will of Skull and Crossbones that you lie yonder to yonder orchard—Avery's I mean—and bring hither some of the golden apples basking in the sun."

"What?" ejaculated Connie, started out of her respect.

Carol frowned.

Connie hastened to modify her tone. "Did they say you might have them?" she inquired politely.

"That concerns thee not: 'tis for thee only to render obedience to the orders of the Society. Go out through our field and sneak under the fence where the wires are loose, and hurry back. We're awfully hungry. The trees are near the fence. There isn't any danger."

"But it's stealing," objected Connie. "What will Prudence—"

"Damsel!" And Connie turned to obey with despair in her heart.

"Bring twelve," Carol called after her. "That'll be four apiece. And hurry, Connie. And see they don't catch you while you're about it."

After she had gone the twins lay back thoughtfully on the hay and stared at the cobwebby roof above them in silence for a while. Something was hurting them, but whether it was their fear of the wrath of Prudence, or the twinges of tender consciences—who can say?

"She's an unearthly long time about it," exclaimed Lark at last. "Do you suppose they caught her?"

This was an awful thought, and the girls were temporarily suffocated. But they heard the barn door swinging beneath them, and sighed with relief. It was Connie! She climbed the ladder skillfully, and poured her golden treasure before the arch-thieves, Skull and Crossbones.

There were eight big, tempting apples.

"Hum! Eight!" said Carol sternly. "I said twelve."

"Yes, but I was afraid someone was coming. I heard such a noise through the grapevines, so I got what I could and ran for it. There's three apiece for you, and two for me," said Connie, sitting down sociably beside them on the hay.

But Carol rose. "Damsel, begone," she ordered. "When Skull and Crossbones feast, thou canst not yet share the festive board. Rise thee, and speed."

Connie rose, and walked soberly toward the ladder. But before she disappeared she fired this parting shot, "I don't want any of them. Stolen apples don't taste very good, I reckon." Carol and Lark had the grace to

flush a little at this, but however the stolen apples tasted, the twins had no difficulty in disposing of them. Then, full almost beyond the point of comfort, they slid down the hay chutes, went out the back way, turned the corner, and came quietly in through the front door of the parsonage.

Prudence was in the kitchen preparing the evening meal. Fairy was in the sitting room, busy with her books. The twins set the table conscientiously, filled the woodbox, and in every way labored irreproachably. But Prudence had no word of praise for them that evening. She hardly seemed to know they were about the place. She went about her work with a pale face, and never a smile to be seen.

Supper was nearly ready when Connie sauntered in from the barn. After leaving the haymow, she had found a cozy corner in the corncrib, with two heavy laprobes discarded by the twins in their flight from wolves, and had settled down there to finish her story. As she stepped into the kitchen Prudence turned to her with such a sorry, reproachful gaze that Connie was frightened.

"Are you sick, Prue?" she gasped.

Prudence did not answer. She went to the door and called Fairy. "Finish getting supper, will you, Fairy? And when you are all ready, you and the twins go right on eating. Don't wait for father—he isn't coming home until evening. Come upstairs with me, Connie; I want to talk to you."

Connie followed her sister soberly, and the twins flashed at each other startling and questioning looks.

The three girls were at table when Prudence came into the dining room alone. She fixed a tray-supper quietly and carried it off upstairs. Then she came back and sat down by the table. But her face bore marks of tears, and she had no appetite. The twins had felt small liking for their food before, now each mouthful seemed to choke them. But they dared not ask a question. They were devoutly thankful when Fairy finally voiced their interest.

"What is the matter? Has Connie been in mischief?"

"It's worse than that," faltered Prudence, tears rushing to her eyes again.

"Why, Prudence! What in the world has she done?"

"I may as well tell you, I suppose—you'll have to know it sooner or later. She went out into Avery's orchard and stole some apples this afternoon. I was back in the alley seeing if Mrs. Moon could do the washing, and I saw her from the other side. She went

from tree to tree, and when she got through the fence she ran. There's no mistake about it—she confessed." The twins looked up in agony, but Prudence's face reassured them. Constance had told no tales. "I have told her she must spend all of her time upstairs alone for a week, taking her meals there, too. She will go to school, of course, but that is all. I want her to see the awfulness of it. I told her I didn't think we wanted to eat with a thief—just yet! I said we must get used to the idea of it first. She is heartbroken, but—I must make her see it!"

**"I Got What I Could and Ran."**



If you were in Prudence's place would you turn in and give Connie and the twins each a sound spanking—as the most effective sort of punishment?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

**Pleasure in Well-Doing.**

Pleasure has a way of coming indirectly, when least you look for her and when least you expect her. She lurks in the happiness of work well done. She lingers in the consciousness of honest bookkeeping with life, and she always is to be found in the joy of growth and progress. In all these ways honest pleasure is to be found.

This isn't meant to be a dull preachment against anything but work. But it does mean to say that happiness lies in doing and the consciousness of well-doing.

**Missouri's Lead Output.**

The demand from Europe in 1915 for lead to be used for war purposes caused the output of Missouri mines to break all previous records in the quantity of lead ore placed on the market that year, the amount being 195,624 tons in smelted or refined shape, which was worth \$18,380,000, or just about enough to build and equip an up-to-date dreadnaught for the United States navy.

**Cane Nearly Century Old.**

William A. J. Giles of Concord, N. H., bought a cane in an auction shop, some weeks ago, to help him in his lameness. He supposed it was an ordinary cane, but William H. Harris, when inspecting it, pulled off the handle, and with it a steel blade about 15 inches in length. On the blade was engraved the words: "William Mattocks, June 2, 1832."

## CORMORANT FISHING IN JAPAN



FISHING BOAT STARTING OUT

FISHING with cormorants is not entirely foreign to the English people, as early in the seventeenth century it was commonly done in Old England, where the master of cormorants was one of the officers of the royal household. In Japan this way of fishing has been practiced merely for economic purposes, not for sporting ones as it was in England, says Kiyoshi Sakamoto in an article in Country Life. Its origin here dates, indeed, from as far back as 800 B. C.; that is conclusively proved by the "uta" composed by very early Japanese poets. In ancient times civilization came into Japan from China, but I think this utilization of the "feathered fishers" must have been exported, on the contrary, to the middle kingdom, for there is documentary evidence in China to show that it was first practiced there early in the sixteenth century.

In Japan this practice has been safely handed down to the present day, protected by the law laid down by Iyeyasu (the first Shogun of the Tokugawa dynasty), that prohibited anything that would be likely to hinder the practice of the fishing. There is another reason why the operation, though primitive in its way, is still carried out in our country. The bird has by instinct the faculty of choosing the fish which are the best as table delicacies. The fish caught by the cormorant are far more delicious than those secured by any other method. The Imperial household department, with a view to protecting this old practice of fishing, pays now 25 yens or 20 yen per year as pension to the professional fishers, and offers them free access to the dead pine trees in the Imperial forests as fuel for the braziers.

The cormorant is chiefly used in Japan to catch ayu (literally, "fragrant fish"), which is a kind of sweet fish, and is known to ichthyologists as plecoGLOSSUS altivelis T. and S. Some of them measure more than a foot in length, but generally 6 or 7 inches. The season for the fishing is from May to October, during which time rivers are visited by the small migratory fish. As to the ayu, Mr. C. Ingram states: "The Japanese epicures praise the ayu very highly as a table delicacy, though it must be admitted that the uneducated occidental palate usually fails to detect its culinary merits; in fact, when I tasted it I thought it compared rather unfavorably with the smelt, a fish it superficially resembles." I am told that a great number of the ayu caught in the River Nagara are sent every summer to the Imperial household through the local governor, as boiled ayu is one of the Mikado's favorite dishes.

**Birds Not Hard to Train.**

The cormorant (the best species for the purpose is phalacrocorax capillatus)



WHEN THEIR WORK IS DONE

**Canadian Fox Industry.**

A very large number of fox skins are being taken off by the ranchers of the Charlottetown district, writes Consul William A. Pierce, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada. This will continue until the end of the killing season in January. The pelt of the Prince Edward Island black fox reaches prime condition for length, luster, and thickness about December.

**Lost Art of Traveling.**

Traveling went out with railways. We are all tourists now, and tourists who come home with tales of the chef at the Metropole and the rifting of one's boxes on those Mediterranean lines. When Dante and Chaucer, Froissart or Cellini traveled in Europe, they had a far harder task; but they really lived among the people they visited. Milton only traveled once in Italy, and Voltaire only came once to England; and Goethe, Byron and Shelley never saw a tenth part of the countries that any Oxford tutor scampers across in a few vacations. But these men took time, took pains, found means to be admitted into the societies they met, and lived long enough in each place to saturate themselves with its spirit.—Frederic Harrison.

**Hard to Reach.**

Some men's meanness consists of their stinginess with their means. When they give up their meanness they will be willing to give up more of their means. Such men, however, are pretty hard to convert.

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