

# WON AT LAST

By Bernard Bigsby.

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Yet not long was it before Elsie had all the little ones round her, talking pleasantly and hopefully of to-morrow's lessons.

It was at this propitious moment that the door opened and Mrs. Grindlay entered the room.

In a moment Babel broke loose again. The clamorous children gathered round their mother, screaming their troubles in her ears.

"She pinched my arm and made me stand in the corner." "She won't call brother 'Master George.'" She made us sit still, and wouldn't let us speak."

"You sweet little rebels, will you be quiet?" the silly mother whined, appealingly; but the luncheon bell ringing, they fled to the dining-room without ceremony, leaving Elsie face to face with her employer.

"I'm afraid you'll find them a little troublesome — they have such high spirits," the great lady simpered.

"They utterly lack discipline," Elsie said, gravely and bravely. "They would be much happier if you would allow the person in charge of them complete control of their actions. In fact, if they are not to be taught wholesome obedience, I shall decline at once the office of governess."

"Good gracious! What an extraordinary young person you are. Do you know that you are talking to a mother of seven? Do you think that Fifth avenue children are to be brought up in accordance with the rules and habits of humbler homes?"

"I only know, madam, that the question of remaining in your service is of vital importance to me; but, unless you let me teach those little ones order, self-control and cheerful obedience to proper suggestions, I will not undertake the charge."

Mrs. Grindlay looked nonplussed.

"I see, madam, that you do not approve of my sentiments," Elsie continued. "I see that you do not realize

"Of course you would," he continued soothingly. "So we'll make a beginning by securing the friendship and help of this young lady—is it a bargain?"

And thus Elsie gained a little triumph over the illfortune that had dogged her footsteps. Her position, while full of small crosses, was ameliorated by the continued support of the old gentleman who had so opportunely offered her protection. The children, quick to appreciate the new state of affairs, accorded their young teacher first sullen obedience, then willing respect, and at last, won by the evenness of her temper, and gentle, affectionate disposition, loved her with all the ardor of their young natures.

Long before Uncle Marcus' visit came to an end Mrs. Grindlay had begun to see what a treasure she had in her governess; but Elsie's heart was troubled, for the kind old man who had done her such service announced his determination to leave them.

"I cannot tell you, my dear," he said on his farewell visit to the schoolroom,



"NOW GOOD-BY; GOD BLESS YOU."

"how much I appreciate what you are doing for my niece's family. Now I want you to feel that you have a permanent friend in me."

"For which, sir, I am indeed grateful."

"Now if an emergency happens, if your path is a little too full of thorns, I want you to promise to write to me—Marcus Woodgrove, Buffalo. The address will not be difficult to remember."

"Oh, I shall never forget you."

"I wish my dear wife were near at hand to offer you her counsel. Well, who knows? Perhaps some day you may come on a visit with the children. So now, good-by. God bless you, my dear."

And he was gone.

If Elsie Whitford had heard him chant her praises in his home in Buffalo, she would have blushed crimson with honest pride. According to him there never was so pretty, so charming, so sensible a young woman as his niece's new governess. Mrs. Woodgrove declared that she was getting quite jealous of this gay Lothario of a husband of hers, and that a divorce court was looming up very largely in the near future.

"Aye, Grey!" the old man chuckled, "if you could only win such a girl for a wife you'd be the luckiest dog in the union. Tell you what, I'd a good mind to invite her down here. It would be all up with you, man, if once you saw her."

"Frank," suggested Mrs. Woodgrove, "is engaged already."

"I'm sorry for it, for I'm more than half in earnest."

CHAPTER XVII  
DRAINING THE CUP OF SORROW.

Winter—one of the hardest, bitterest winters known to the memory of man—has bound the semi-arctic region of Lake Superior in its frozen grasp. Snow lies to an unheard of depth. Animals perish miserably in the woods, while human beings scarcely less wretched groan under the fierce rigors of this northern clime, the rich only being in a position to hibernate with comfort. During the long, light night the howl of wolves is heard, driven to the doors of their natural enemy, man, by the pangs of hunger.

Black care shrouds in gloom the once happy home of the prospector, who sits in his snug parlor, haggard and wan, gazing dejectedly at the portrait of his darling lost boy. On the wall hangs a big-printed poster, which reads:

"ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD.  
"Lost, a boy five years of age. Has light curling hair, blue eyes and the scar of a burn under his left arm below the elbow. Wore when missing a black cloth knickerbocker suit, straw hat with dark-blue ribbon, blue-grey stockings and low shoes. Linen marked W. W. Answers to the name of Willie. Address J. Wilders, Oretown, or Richard Sutton, superintendent of police, Marquette, Mich."

"Oh, Millie, Millie, is there a God that such things can be?" groans the unhappy man. "My Willie, my boy whom I loved dearer than life, perhaps now in want and suffering, perhaps lying dead, in some lonely spot without

even a grave to cover him."

"Hush, dear," Millie says softly. "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away. Can you not say with me: 'Blessed be the name of the Lord?'"

"I cannot, wife. If God gave me that child to love, why torture my soul by taking him from me?"

"Have courage, Jack. I do not know why, but I have a strange presentiment that we will see him again."

But Wilders was not to be comforted.

Presently he looked up despondently and said:

"Is Susan Green come?"

"She's in the kitchen, dear; shall I call her?"

"Aye, do."

Now Susan was the weak-eyed maiden who had given such damaging testimony against Frank Grey at that star-chamber trial in the high school.

She had furthermore gained the notoriety of being the luckless individual who had charge of Willie, when the poor child was lost. Again and again she had been summoned into Jack Wilders' presence for cross-examination, and on the present occasion was full of a restive determination to put an end to the annoyance.

"Now," said the prospector, "tell me once more, Susan, how you came to take the child from its nurse."

"Oh dear!" Miss Green whimpered, "I'm sure I've told you all I know one hundred times at least. Well, if you must have it over again, this is how it was:"

"Yes, go on, Susan."

"I met Alma Miggs out for a walk with the boy in the North woods. 'Susan,' she says, 'Willie wants to go round to the cave. I'm lame,' says she, 'and can't take him.' Says I: 'Let the little precious come with me.' Says she: 'I will.' So we went. Willie ran, shouting and laughing. I saw him turn the corner of the road and I never set eyes on him again. He was gone just as though he'd vanished."

"Did you hear no cry?"

"I never heard nothing."

"Think a moment, girl," the prospector said, sternly. "Was there no crackling of the bushes? no sound of wild animals or of man?"

"Nary a sound."

"And you searched everywhere?"

"Wish I may die if I didn't, Mr. Wilders. I ran up and down screaming 'Willie' for hours and hours. I'm sure I tore my dress all to shreds, an' as for my shoes, they was that sodden you wouldn't have picked 'em up if you'd seen them a-lying in the street."

We will leave poor Susan to the tender mercies of the prospector's cross-questions and take a peep at the Whitford house and its inmates.

Wilders' loss had created a stirring sympathy in the neighborhood, and no one's kindly emotions were more aroused than Mrs. Whitford's. Like many others, too, this good lady had suggestions to make, which, to her intense disgust, nobody would pay serious attention to. To her the solution lay in a nutshell. At Marquette was a wise woman, an old crone, who told fortunes and revealed the past and future, an exceedingly sagacious person, who did a roaring business in the divination way.

To this ancient Sybil the worthy dame resolved to go on her own account and probe the mystery of the lost boy to its bottom, so accordingly she has impressed the corporal's services, and the twain have started for Marquette, leaving the house in charge of Jacob Gregson and Mr. Dodd, who do not seem to be having too pleasant a time of it.

Unaccustomed to the severity of such a season, they are sitting shivering over the big stove, cursing with much heartiness the intense cold and wishing themselves a thousand miles from the desolate country.

"That gold mine didn't pan out as you expected," Mr. Gregson cheerfully observed.

"No," snarled Dodd, "they knew too much to bite."

"Been there too often, eh?"

"Guess so."

"Well, what's the next move?"

"Skip."

"I would if I were you. I heard yesterday of a fellow who salted a mine here once, an' they caught him an' sat him down on a red hot stove, an' held him there till he confessed, an' then took him out an' hanged him."

"Ugh! The savages. Say, Jake, I'm off as soon as it is dark."

"Sorry to lose you, Tony, but the best of friends must part."

"It's a bad time to be hard up. Isn't it?"

"It is," Gregson replied, impervious to the hint.

"You'll let me have a hundred dollars?"

"Can't possibly."

"Must. No bones about it, I say you must."

"If thirty would do, Tony, I could manage it."

"It will have to do, I suppose," Dodd said, without much expression of gratitude in his tones.

"Well, then, I'll go to my room an' get it for you; an' while I'm gone, just mix us a couple of stiff glasses of hot grog, an' let us try to thaw ourselves out. My bones ache with the cold."

As he turned his back Dodd's eyes gleamed with satisfaction.

The big whisky bottle was on the table in a minute flanked by glasses and sugar bowl.

Mr. Dodd was very careful in his preparations.

First he mixed the sugar and spirits,

[CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.]

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that for me to do your children good I must first enjoy their respect, as to a constituted authority, and that this can only be accomplished by your cordial support."

"Ah, and what next?"

"And that if I remained I should insist on there be no tale bearing, no impertinence, no rude conduct, no smallness of any kind. They must be trained to habits of neatness, gentleness and courteous bearing."

"The most extraordinary young person I ever met," for the third time Mrs. Grindlay gasped.

"And the most sensible!" a man's voice added, with loud-toned emphasis.

The ladies started in surprise, for they had not noticed anyone's approach.

"Oh, Uncle Marcus, how you made me jump!" Mrs. Grindlay ejaculated with a little move of petulance. "Why do you come creeping in in this fashion?"

The newcomer was an old man with strongly marked features, plainly dressed, but who bore an air of authority that bade Elsie hope for an ally, who would be able and willing to defend her.

"My dear Marion," the elderly man said decisively, "you may thank your fortune that your old uncle did come in at this minute, for you were about to lose an opportunity which might not occur again in your lifetime. If you have any regard for me you will not hesitate to secure this young lady's valuable services."

"I am sure," pouted the lady, "I would do anything to oblige you, but the present extraordinary conduct—"

"Nay, no buts; let me have my own way in this matter. Since poor Clarence's death your children have run riot. You are, like hundreds of other American mammas, spoiling them, my dear. Why, if they were angels instead of little bits of human clay, you —"

"Oh, Uncle Marcus, how can you go on so? I'm sure I would do anything to promote the happiness of the little darlings," Mrs. Grindlay sobbed.