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## PETER OF CORTONA.

BY MRS. G. HALL.

Two hundred and fifty years ago this very month, a poor boy of twelve years stood before the door of one of the most elegant residences in the city of Florence. Why he was standing there does not appear. One thing was certain, however, that it was not as a beggar; for, being in the employ of a very rich and influential Cardinal, of course he had all he wanted to eat.

Gazing listlessly at what was passing around him, a sudden tap upon his shoulder caused him to look up, and there, to his astonishment, stood a boy from Cortona, from which place he had migrated some four years before.

'Why, Peter, that you? What in the world brought you to Florence? How's the folks?'

The boy shook his thick hair back, and crushed his hat into a shapeless mass, as he looked up at his old friend, Thomas, while the tears coursed each other rapidly down his cheeks.

'You know mother's dead since you came away. I can't stay now she's gone. I hope I'll never have to go back; I am so lonely there. I want to be a painter, Tom, now I've got to take care of myself, and they say that Florence is the best place to learn how, and that there's a school where they teach you all about it.'

'Yes, but it takes money, Peter; have you got any?' asked his friend, believing from his general appearance that he hadn't.

'Not a cent.' At this confession poor Peter hung his head.

'Then, of course, you can't do anything. Suppose you try to get a place in the Palace where I live. At any rate I'll promise you enough to eat, if you don't have enough ready money.'

'Do you really get enough to eat,' asked Peter earnestly, as if conscious that it took a great deal to satisfy a growing boy.

'I guess you'd think so; but come and try for yourself and I'll warrant you, you won't be sorry.'

'I can't take a position! Tom indeed I can't. I must be a painter; I came all the way to Florence for that, and I can't give it up, but I'll tell you what you might do, Tom. If you have so much more than you need, suppose you take me on trust and share with me, and when I'm a painter, grown up and famous you know, I'll pay the whole bill with interest. How'll that do?'

'I'll do it, old fellow; at any rate we'll try and see how the thing works. Come home with me to the garret where I sleep and I'll give you a part of my dinner to-night.'

So the two boys made tracks for the little room in the attic where Thomas slept. It was so small that a low straw bed and a table and a three legged stool completely filled it up. The only redeemable thing about it was the wonderfully white walls on all sides.

'Don't you get skeery, Pete. I'll be back before you can wink your eye,' as he folded up his old coat to make rest for his head, and begged him to lie down. He looked so miserable that he almost repented of his bargain, when he thought of the chances of having a puny, sickly boy to care for altogether, but Peter's wistful, appealing eyes reassured him, and he ran off as quickly as his old shoes would carry him. Thomas was in high favor with the cooks and after his work was done and the meals were over they would always give him a good opportunity among the broken meats; and to-night, to his great delight, he was more lucky than usual, for he found among other things a half of a pigeon pie, which he carried off triumphantly to his friend up among the chimney-pots.

How the poor boy did enjoy it, for he had scarcely tasted food all that day, or the day before. But this did not satisfy all his cravings, for to be a painter was first and foremost in his mind. Food would not furnish him paper and pencils, and colors and brushes, and how should he get them? He must have credit for these, too; could he muster courage after all Tom's kindness to ask him if he had any money? 'I can pay this back, too, some day,' he thought and so he ventured.

'Indeed I haven't, I shant be paid for three long years to come. I've engaged for that time, and I don't get paid until I quit.'

'Oh, dear! sighed poor Peter, then there's no use in

trying! What shall I do? What shall I do?'

'I'll tell you what you may do, you feel so bad about it. I'll get you a piece of charcoal, and you may draw on my wall's all you want to. Will that do?'

This was all, then, that could be done at present; so Peter, glad to exercise his talent, even with a piece of charcoal, set earnestly to work, and there was no end to the figures of every conceivable kind and species, until the walls were absolutely covered!

But God opens the way for those who earnestly desire to do, and one day while walking along the streets Peter picked up, at his feet, a small wallet with quite a sum of money in it. Great as his need was, he was an honest boy, and he made diligent search for its owner, but without success. He went to the attic to tell the news to his friend, who had so sheltered and fed him. Pencils and paper, in fact the whole paraphernalia of an artist's outfit were speedily obtained, you may be sure, and then he went everywhere in Florence where there were handsome churches, other public buildings or statues, and drew them, and when too dark to work any longer he would go back to the humble lodgings where he was always welcome, and where, if Thomas was not there, he would find his dinner tucked away under the straw bed on purpose to be kept good and warm.

For two years here Peter ate and slept. No one seemed to find it out, and yet it was often remarked by the servants that Thomas had a most uncommon appetite, even for a boy, and wondered out of it all that he should not grow more, he was so very small!

At the expiration of that time the Cardinal desirous of making some alterations in his palace, accompanied an architect over certain parts of the building where he had never been before. They came to the attic at last. Imagine his astonishment when he found his carefully whitewashed walls covered with various paintings that were by no means to be despised.

'Who in the world could have done this? Who sleeps here, pray?'

'No! it cannot be; call the boy at once! What a genius!'

Poor Thomas came before the Cardinal with fear and trembling. In fact he had never been in his presence before. His face turned pale, then red, as he looked first at the pictures on the wall and then at the face of his employer. 'No longer do you serve in this kitchen, Thomas,' he said kindly; but the boy implored that he should not send him away, falling in despair upon his knees. 'I have no home and I shall starve, your reverence, and what shall become of Peter? There was always a sparkle in his eye when he mentioned Peter's name, he had grown to be so fond of him, and so proud, withal!

Why, who is Peter?

'Only one of my boy friends from Cortona, who came here to Florence to learn to be a painter. He drew those pictures on the wall. I couldn't have done them! I know he'll die if he can't be a painter. He's just like a girl now, he's got such a soft heart and quiet ways.'

'Where do you keep him, Thomas?'

'I suppose he is out trying to find something to draw. He stays all day and then comes here at night, I've taken him on trust!'

What that meant the Cardinal did not know, of course, until it was explained.

'Bring him to me when he comes to night. Such genius must not go unrewarded.'

But Peter did not come back that night, or the next, or the next. In fact two weeks passed by, and then he came hurriedly, to report to his tried and trusted friend, that happening to be near a convent, and going in from idle curiosity, he had seen a beautiful head of Raphael which was on exhibition there and had asked the privilege of copying it. The monks, charmed with his personal appearance and his apparent genius, allowed him to do it, and had lodged and fed him every day in all that time.

But did poor Peter get the long craved teaching, you ask? Yes, he did; for the Cardinal became so much interested in him that he used his influence and his purse as well, to place him in one of the best art schools in Florence, while Thomas, whose noble spirit toward the poor little artist had so pleased him was raised to a position of greater trust, and had masters to instruct him also in all the learning of the day.

Thus was Peter's vagabond life ended, and could you have looked into one of the most elegant houses in Florence a half a century later, where the elite of all nations were often entertained, you would have found two peaceful old men—life-long and trusty friends—living there together. The one 'Peter of Cortona,' as he was called, the 'greatest painter of his time,' who with a choke in his voice, as the tender memories of his boyhood often occurred to him, would tell you, pointing tenderly to his dear friend Thomas, of whom it was always said: 'Happy is the man who can claim his friendship,' that the great success of his life began on that cold, cheerless evening, when fainting and hungry, he became a lodger in the little attic room!

Long ago the weighty debt he then incurred was paid with interest. The weightier debt of gratitude has been cancelled also, at the bar of God, by one who has said: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

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## A FAITHFUL SHEPHERD BOY.

Gerhardt, a German shepherd boy, was one day watching his flock, which was feeding in a valley on the borders of a forest, when a hunter came out of the woods and asked, 'How far is it to the nearest village?' 'Six miles, sir,' answered the boy; 'but the road is only a sheep track, and very easily missed.' The hunter looked at the crooked track and said, 'My lad, I am very hungry and thirsty; I have lost my companions and missed my way. Leave your sheep and show me the road; I will pay you well.'

'I cannot leave my sheep, sir,' rejoined Gerhardt, 'they will stray into the woods, and may be eaten by wolves or stolen by robbers.' 'Well, what of that?' queried the hunter. 'They are not your sheep. The loss of one or two would not be much to your master, and I'll give you more than you have earned in a whole year.' 'I cannot go, sir,' replied Gerhardt very firmly. 'My master pays me for my time, and he trusts me with his sheep. If I were to sell my time, which does not belong to me, and the sheep should get lost, it would be the same as if I had stolen them.'

'Well,' said the hunter, 'you will trust your sheep with me while you go to the village and get me some food, drink and a guide? I will take care of them for you.'

The boy shook his head. 'The sheep,' said he, 'do not know your voice, and—' He stopped speaking.

'And what? Can't you trust me? Do I look like a dishonest man?' asked the hunter angrily.

'Sir,' said the boy, 'you tried to make me false to my master. How do I know that you would keep your word?'

The hunter laughed, for he felt that the lad had fairly cornered him. He said, 'See, my lad, that you are a good, faithful boy. I will not forget you. Show me the road, and I will try to make it out myself.'

Gerhardt then offered the contents of his scrip to the hungry man, who, coarse as it was, ate it gladly. Presently his attendants came up, and then Gerhardt, to his surprise, found that the hunter was the Grand Duke, who owned all the country around. The Duke was so pleased with the boy's honesty that he sent for him shortly after that, and had him educated.

In after years Gerhardt became a very great and powerful man; but remained honest and true to his dying day.

## SHIRKING DUTY.

The habit of shirking is a great evil in our land. Sad and bitter are the experiences of multitudes who have lost positions of emolument and trust by shirking duties and responsibilities devolving upon them. They saw their mistake after it was too late. It is a bad sign to see a young man contracting the habit of shirking. You may get it down at once that soon-

er or later he will be a drone in the great hive of human industry, living without any purpose in life and scorned by all who have willing hands and follow up whatever they can find to do. Young men, if you want to gain the confidence and esteem of your employer, never shrink from a duty. If overtaken, lay in your complaints, and you will always get a hearing. If you begin life a shirk, you may set it down as a fixed fact that the habit will follow you through life, and instead of a 'success' you will be an utter failure!

## GOOD LANGUAGE.

As soon as a child begins to use its first broken sentence its education should begin. If its are formed which will exist to a greater or less degree throughout life. Such being the case, the conversation of the older members of the family should be carefully guarded, lest the little ones hear and learn ungrammatical expressions and slang, which, sad to say, is so rife among our young people of the present day. The servants, with whom children spend much of their time, should be chosen with reference to this matter. A mother should feel it her duty to point out any grammatical mistake made by them and insist upon their language being correct, respectful at all times. It is exceedingly difficult to break children of habits once formed, and care in this direction will save much trouble and annoyance. One way to cultivate the use of language, and at the same time to learn of the occupations and companions of her children, is for the mother to encourage the daily narration of what they have seen, heard, and enjoyed, and the telling of their little experiences. The study of pictures, moreover, in which every child delights, may be used as a great provocation of language. Children always love to look at pictures, and can almost always be induced to talk about them. This study teaches them observation, and how to accurately describe whatever they see. When stories are read to children they should be obliged to reproduce them, using as far as possible the language of the book. The memory is strengthened in this way, a habit of attention formed and the power of expression increased. If such plans as these are systematically carried out, they will prove a wonderful help in the thorough education of a child. The constant, careful searching and kind suggestions of parents will accomplish a work which can never be performed by study and in after years such early home training will show itself in a ready command of language, and an easy, graceful power of conversation.

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