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A CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM.

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Two children were playing on a lawn in front of a white cottage. Around the porch and windows climbed roses and honeysuckles. Smooth walks, bordered with flowers, ran through the lawn; and everything about the cottage and grounds had an air of taste and comfort.

A little way off, and across the road, stood another cottage; but very different in appearance. The lawn in front was overgrown with weeds, and the walks with coarse grass. The fence that enclosed the lawn was broken in many places, and the gate, held only by the lower hinge, stood half open and awry. No roses or vines hung their green and crimson curtains about the window, or clambered up the porch. The cottage had once been white, white as that before which the children played; but now it was dingy and soiled, and looked forlorn and comfortless.

There was as much difference in the appearance of the children as in the two cottages. One was neatly and cleanly dressed, and had a happy face. The clothes of the other were torn and soiled, and his face had a sober look. One played with hearty enjoyment, laughing and shouting at times; the other in a quiet and subdued way.

Why this difference between the two cottages and the two children? When first built, the cottages and grounds were alike in size and beauty, and they that dwelt in them alike happy.

It is sorrowful to give the reason. You will know it soon.

"Jim, isn't that your father?" asked the well-dressed boy, as a man appeared coming down the road a little way off.

Jim started in a half-scared manner, and turned towards the road. He stood very still for a moment or two, looking at the man, and then with a face now red and now very pale, shrunk away and laid himself close down upon the grass under some currant bushes, saying as he did so, in a choking voice,

"Don't, Freddy, please, tell him I'm here."

Light and joy went out of Freddy's face also. He understood too well what all this meant.

Staggering down the road came Mr. Harwood, Jim's father. What a sad sight it was. As he drew nearer, and Freddy Wilson, held to the spot where he was standing as if bound there by a spell, saw his red and swollen face, and heard him muttering and swearing to himself, he shuddered with a feeling of horror.

As Mr. Harwood was passing the gate he saw Freddy and stopped. Freddy began to tremble. His first thought was to run back to the house; but he was a brave little boy, and it went against his feelings to run away from anything. So he did not move.

"Is my boy Jim here?" asked Mr. Harwood, in an angry voice. Some men when drunk are always ill-natured and cruel, and Jim's father was one of these.

Seeing Freddy, and knowing that the two boys played much together, he naturally thought of his own son.

Freddy did not answer. He could not tell a lie, and so he said nothing.

"Did you hear me?" growled Mr. Harwood more angrily.

Still Freddy looked at him and said nothing. He knew that if Jim's father found him there, he would kick and cuff him all the way home. Not that Jim was in any fault, or had disobeyed his father; but Mr. Harwood, as I have said, was full of anger and cruelty when drunk, and took a savage pleasure in abusing his little boy.

Freddy began to feel braver now, because he wished to save Jim from harm. This is usually the way. The moment we forget ourselves, when in danger, and become anxious about others, fear leaves us, and we grow calm and brave.

There was a bolt on the inside of the gate near which Freddy was standing. With a stealthy motion, not seen by the drunken man, he slipped this bolt and fastened the gate. It was not done an instant

too soon, for Mr. Harwood, growing furious, made a dash towards the boy, and tried to get at him through the gate.

"You young dog?" he cried, "I'll teach you manners! Why don't you answer me? Where's Jim?"

Mr. Harwood rattled the gate violently, and tried, with his unsteady hands, to find the bolt on the inside. But his efforts were in vain. He could not reach the little fellow, who stood close up to him, with a brave but sorrowful face.

"You'd better go home, sir. I'll tell my father of this." There was a manly firmness in the air of Freddy, and a rebuking tone in his voice, that had their effect upon the drunken man.

"Who cares for your father? I don't!" he replied, moving back a step or two from the gate, muttering and swearing.

"But I say, youngster!" and he came toward Freddy again, with a scowling look on his swollen and disfigured face. "Just answer me one thing. Say yes or no. Is that young scamp of mine here?"

"I don't know any young scamp of yours, Mr. Harwood," replied Freddy.

"You don't, hey! Now that's cool for a model young gentleman like Master Wilson. Don't know my Jim?"

"I know your Jim very well," said Freddy. "But he's a good little boy and not a young scamp; and I don't think you are a kind father to call him such an ugly name."

This rebuke was felt by Harwood, drunk as he was. He could not stand Freddy's clear eyes and steady look. Then away down in his heart, almost covered up and lost, was an old feeling of fatherly pride, and this stirred at the words of praise spoken about him. "A good little boy."

The anger went out of Mr. Harwood's face.

"He was a good little boy once," said he, with something so like tenderness in his voice that Jim, who was lying close by, hidden under the current bushes, listening to every word, sobbed out aloud.

"What's that?" asked Mr. Harwood, leaning forward and looking toward the currant bushes.

But the sound was hushed in a moment. Jim had choked down his feelings.

"He's a good little boy now," said Freddy, speaking in a very firm voice, and not seeming to hear the sob, or the question, of Jim's father. "A good little boy," he repeated; and added, to make his assertion stronger, "There isn't a better one anywhere about here, if his father does beat him about, and let him go ragged when he ought to have good clothes like the rest of us."

Mr. Harwood didn't stop to hear anything farther, but turned from the gate toward the poor cottage across the road, walking more steadily than he had done a short time before. Then Freddy went behind the currant bushes where Jim still lay on the ground.

"He's gone," said Freddy.

The pent up grief of Jim's sad heart could be restrained no longer. He burst out into a wild fit of crying, that continued for several minutes. Freddy said all that he could to comfort his little friend; and when he had grown calm, asked with the soberness of one who felt in earnest,

"Can't something be done, Jim?"

Jim shook his head in a hopeless way.

"Something ought to be done! I'm sure something could be done if we just knew what it was. Oh! isn't drinking an awful thing!"

"It's the worst thing in the world," said Jim, and it's no wonder he thought so. "When father is sober," he went on, "he's just as kind as he can be; but when he's drunk—oh dear! it's dreadful to think of!"

"Does he get drunk very often?" asked Freddy.

"Now he does. He's drunk 'most all the time. But it wasn't so always. Oh dear!" And Jim's tears ran over his cheeks again. He used to be so good to us," he sobbed, "and take us out with him sometimes, and buy us nice things. He never does it now. 'Most all the money he gets is spent at the tavern. But I must run home. Mother is sick, and father is so cross

when he's been drinking; and she's weak and can't bear it."

Jim got up from behind the currant bushes and walked toward the gate.

"Aren't you afraid he'll beat you?" He was in a dreadful rage at you about something just now," said Freddy.

"May be he will and may be he won't," answered Jim. "But I mustn't stop to think of that. Mother is sick and weak, and father will be so cross to her." And he started off and passed through the gate.

Freddy, remembering how his defense and praise of Jim had cooled Mr. Harwood's anger, said to himself, "May be I can do some good," and started after his little friend, resolved to face the drunken man again in the hope of turning away his wrath.

The two lads entered Jim's poor home together, and stood face to face with Mr. Harwood.

"O father!" exclaimed Jim, as he saw, with glad surprise, a look of almost tenderness on his father's countenance; and as he spoke, he sprang forward and caught his hand, clinging to it tightly.

This was too much for Mr. Harwood, who was not yet sober enough to control his feelings, and he turned away with a choking sob, trying to draw his hand out of Jim's; but the boy would not let go his hold. And now Freddy spoke out in behalf of his little friend.

"Jim's a good boy, Mr. Harwood. I know all the boys around here, and there isn't one of them better than Jim. Father says so too; and lets me have him over at our house whenever I please."

"Who said he wasn't a good boy?" answered Mr. Harwood, turning round upon Freddy with a half angry manner. "I'd just like to hear anybody speak against him, I would!"

And he sat down, drawing Jim between his knees as he spoke.

A pale, thin, half-frightened woman, Jim's mother, now came in from the next room, wondering what all this could mean. Her eager eyes ran hurriedly from face to face.

"Don't be scared, Ellen," said Mr. Harwood, kindly. "There isn't anything wrong. I'm only having a little talk with these boys."

He was almost sober now; excitement of feeling had cleared his stupid brain. Looking from one to the other of the lads, he could not help noticing the painful contrast; one so clean and well dressed, the other soiled and ragged.

He knit his brows closely, and sat very still, like one arguing with himself.

"I'll tell you what it is, mother," and he turned toward Mrs. Harwood, "I am not going to have Jim running about looking like a beggar's child. He's just as good as any of the boys around here, and I'll not have him ashamed to be seen with the best of them."

Jim covered his face with his hands, but could not hide the tears of joy that came trickling through his fingers. His father saw them. Laying his hand on the boy's head, he made this promise, speaking in a solemn voice.

"I will drink nothing stronger than tea or coffee while I live, God being my helper!"

"Oh, thank God!" almost wildly exclaimed Jim's mother, dropping upon her knees and clasping her husband's neck. "Oh, thanks be to God!" she repeated. "He will be your helper. In him is all compassion and all strength; but without him our poor resolves are as flax in the fire!"

Freddy stood looking on for a little while, greatly moved by what was passing; then he walked quietly to the door, and was going out, when Mr. Harwood called to him, saying:

"Just one word before you go. I'm sorry to say it; but it's in my thought now, and I feel it had better come out. May be I wouldn't say it another time."

Freddy stopped and turned toward Mr. Harwood.

"I'm sorry to say it, Freddy, I am, for you're a nice boy and have always been

good to Jim. But you'll thank me for it, may be, one of these days."

There was something in Mr. Harwood's manner that sent a feeling of alarm to Freddy's heart. He stood still, waiting, every pulse-beat sounding in his ears.

"May be your father's head is stronger than mine was five years ago," said Mr. Harwood, "but I've seen him at the Black Horse too often of late, going on just as I began. It isn't safe, Freddy! It isn't safe! And I don't like to see him there. Look at what I've come to! But there was a time when I could hold my head as high as Mr. Wilson or any body else in the neighborhood."

Freddy waited to hear no more. It seemed as if night had fallen suddenly on his young spirit, and as if the air would suffocate him. He turned and ran wildly away, such a weight on, and such a pain in his heart that it seemed as if he would die.

Mr. Wilson was coming along the road, and near his own gate when he saw Freddy hurrying across from Mr. Harwood's cottage, his face white as a sheet and strongly agitated.

"My son! what ails you?" he cried, in alarm.

"O father!" It was all Freddy could say, as he stopped before him and looked up with a strange, sad, grieving expression on his countenance.

"I don't believe it!" he cried, after a few moments, bursting into tears and hiding his wet face in his father's hands. "It's all a lie of Mr. Harwood's!"

"Don't believe what?" asked Mr. Wilson, wondering at all this. "A lie of Mr. Harwood's! What has that drunken wretch dared to say?" His voice changed to an angry tone.

"I can't tell you, father. It would choke me. But it's all a lie. Oh, I wish I hadn't said anything about it! But I felt so miserable, and you came right on me."

Mr. Wilson led Freddy within the gate to a seat under one of the trees.

"Now, my son," he said, in a kind, firm voice, "tell me just what Mr. Harwood said."

Freddy then related all about the drunken man coming to the gate, and what occurred there; and all that he saw and heard when he went home with Jim, even to the warning words of Mr. Harwood.

As Freddy came to this last part, Mr. Wilson turned his face so far away that his son could not see it; but Freddy felt his father's arm that was around him draw more tightly. At least a minute passed in dead silence. Then Mr. Wilson laid his lips closely and with a long pressure on Freddy's forehead.

"I will talk with Mr. Harwood about this," he said, in subdued tones, as they arose and went toward the house. "Poor man! he was nearly lost. But there is one more chance to save him."

And he was saved. Mr. Wilson went to see him that very day. Their interview was affecting to both, and good for both. The warning sentences had not come a moment too soon, and Mr. Wilson felt this so deeply that he could not be angry with his poor friend. No one ever saw either of them at the Black Horse after that; nor did they ever again permit the cup of confusion to come nigh their lips.

The Providence (R. I.) Journal lifts a warning voice against immoderate muscular exercise, of which there is some danger in the present passion for base ball, rowing &c. That these pastimes may be followed to an injurious excess, it says, is shown by facts developed in connection with the recent death of a student of Brown University, Mr. Lemuel Grosvenor Perry. A post mortem examination of his remains showed that the death was caused by an abscess resulting from inflammation of the psoas muscles, brought on by excessive exercise at the time of the University match game of base ball, between the students of Harvard and Brown some two weeks since, in which he engaged with great ardor. He had been a remarkably healthy and vigorous young man; but after the day when he engaged in this game, he left the house no more.