

SAUNDERS MARSHALL

THE STORY OF
THE
GRAVELYS

Marshall Saunders

The Story of the Gravelys

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The Story of the Gravelys / A Tale for Girls

“A child’s needless tear is a blood-blot upon this earth.”
—*Cardinal Manning*

CHAPTER I. THE QUARREL

"I won't live on my brother-in-law," said the slight, dark girl.

"Yes, you will," said the fair-haired beauty, her sister, who was standing over her in a somewhat theatrical attitude.

"I will not," said Berty again. "You think because you have just been married you are going to run the family. I tell you, I will not do it. I will not live with you."

"I don't want to run the family, but I am a year and a half older than you, and I know what is for your good better than you do."

"You do not—you butterfly!"

"Alberta Mary Francesca Gravelly—you ought to be ashamed of yourself," said the beauty, in concentrated wrath.

"I'm not ashamed of myself," replied her sister, scornfully. "I'm ashamed of you. You're just as extravagant as you can be. You spend every cent of your husband's income, and now you want to saddle him with a big boy, a girl, and an—"

"An old lady," said Margaretta.

"Grandma isn't old. She's only sixty-five."

"Sixty-five is old."

"It is not."

"Well, now, can you call her young?" said Margaretta. "Can you say she is a girl?"

"Yes," replied Berty, obstinately, "I can call her a girl, or a duck, or anything I like, and I can call you a goose."

"A goose!" repeated Mrs. Stanisfield, chokingly; "oh, this is too much. I wish my husband were here."

"I wish he were," said Berty, wickedly, "so he could be sorry he mar—"

"Children," said a sudden voice, "what are you quarrelling about?"

Both girls turned their flushed faces toward the doorway. A little shrewd old lady stood there. This was Grandma, one of their bones of contention, and this particular bone in deep amusement wanted to laugh, but knew better than to do so.

"Won't you sit down, Margaretta?" she said, calmly coming into the room and taking a chair near Berty, who was lounging provokingly on the foot of the bed.

It was Grandma's bed, and they were in Grandma's room. She had brought them up—her two dear orphan granddaughters, together with their brother Boniface.

"What are you quarrelling about?" repeated the little old lady, taking a silk stocking from her pocket, and beginning to knit in a leisurely way.

"We're quarrelling about keeping the family together," said Margaretta, vehemently, "and I find that family honour is nothing but a rag in Berty's estimation."

"Well, I'd rather have it a nice clean rag put out of sight," said Berty, sharply, "than a great, big, red flag shaken in everybody's face."

"Sit down, Margaretta," said Grandma, soothingly.

"Oh, I am too angry to sit down," said Margaretta, shaking herself slightly. "I got your note saying you had lost your money. I came to sympathize and was met with insults. It's dreadful!"

"Sit down, dear," said Grandma, gently, pushing a rocking-chair toward her.

Margaretta took the chair, and, wiping her white forehead with a morsel of lace and muslin, glared angrily at her sister.

"Roger says," she went on, excitedly, "that you are all—"

“All!” groaned Berty.

“All,” repeated Margaretta, furiously, “or one or two, whichever you like, to come and live with us. He insists.”

“No, *you* insist,” interrupted Berty. “He has too much sense.”

Margaretta gave a low cry. “Isn’t this ingratitude abominable—I hear of your misfortune, I come flying to your relief—”

“Dear child,” said Grandma, “I knew you’d come.”

“But what do you make of Berty, Grandma? Do say something cutting. You could if you tried. The trouble is, you don’t try.”

Grandma tried not to laugh. She, too, had a tiny handkerchief that she pressed against her face, but the merriment would break through.

“You laugh,” said Margaretta, in awe, “and you have just lost every cent you own!”

Grandma recovered herself. “Thank fortune, I never chained my affections to a house and furniture and a bank-account.”

“Roger says you are the bravest woman he ever saw,” murmured Margaretta.

“Did he say that?” replied Grandma, with twinkling eyes.

“Yes, yes, dear Grandma,” said Margaretta, fondly, “and he told me to offer you all a home with us.”

The little old lady smiled again, and this time there was a dimple in her cheek. “What a dear grandson-in-law! What a good man!”

“He is just perfection,” said Margaretta, enthusiastically, “but, Grandma, darling, tell me your plans! I am just dying to know, and Berty has been so provoking.”

“Berty is the mainstay of the family now,” said Grandma, good-naturedly; “don’t abuse her.”

“The mainstay!” repeated Margaretta, with a bewildered air; “oh, yes, I see. You mean that the little annuity left her by our great-aunt, your sister, is all that you have to depend on.”

“Just those few hundred dollars,” said Grandma, tranquilly, “and a little more.”

“That is why she is so toploftical,” said Margaretta. “However, it is well that she was named for great-aunt Alberta—but, Grandma, dear, don’t knit.”

“Why not?”

“It is so prosaic, after all you have gone through,” said Margaretta. “When I think of your trials, it makes me sick.”

“My trials are nothing to what Job had,” remarked her grandmother. “I read of his tribulations and they make mine seem very insignificant.”

“Poor Grandma, you have had about as many as Job.”

“What have I had?” asked the old lady, softly.

Margaretta made a gesture of despair. “Your mother died at your birth.”

“The Lord took her,” said the old lady, gently, “and when I needed a mother he sent me a good stepmother.”

“Your father perished in a burning hotel,” said the girl, in a low voice.

“And went to heaven in a chariot of fire,” replied Grandma, firmly.

“You married and were happy with your husband.”

“Yes, bless the Lord!”

“But your daughter, our mother, kissed you good-bye one day to go on a pleasure excursion with her husband, and never came back—oh, it breaks my heart to think of that day—my father and mother lost, both at once!” and, dropping miserably on her knees, Margaretta hid her face in her grandmother’s lap.

The old lady’s lip trembled, but she said, steadily, “The Lord giveth—He also taketh away.”

“And now,” said Margaretta, falteringly, “you are not old, but you have come to an age when you are beginning to think about getting old, and you have lost everything—everything.”

“All save the greatest thing in the world,” said Grandma, patting the bowed head.

“You always had that,” exclaimed Margaretta, lifting her tear-stained face. “Everybody has loved you since you were born—how could any one help it?”

“If everybody loves me, why is it?” inquired Grandma, guilelessly, as she again took up her knitting.

Margaretta wrinkled her fair brows. “I don’t know—I guess it is because you don’t talk much, and you seem to like every one, and you don’t contradict. You’re exceedingly canny, Grandma.”

“Canny, child?”

“Yes, canny. I don’t know what the Scottish people mean by it, but I mean clever, and shrewd, and smart, and quiet, and you keep out of scrapes. Now, when I’m with that provoking creature there,” and she looked disdainfully at Bertie, “I feel as if I were a fifty-cornered sort of person. *You* make me feel as if I were round, and smooth, and easy to get on with.”

Grandma picked up a dropped stitch and said nothing.

“If you’d talk more, I’d like it better,” said Margaretta, dolefully, “but I dare say I should not get on so well with you.”

“Women do talk too much,” said Grandma, shortly; “we thresh everything out with our tongues.”

“Grandma, dear, what are you going to do?” asked Margaretta, coaxingly. “Do tell me.”

“Keep the family together,” said Grandma, serenely.

“The old cry,” exclaimed Margaretta. “I’ve heard that ever since I was born. What makes you say it so much?”

“Shall I tell you?”

“Yes, yes—it is a regular watchword with you.”

“When my father found himself trapped in that burning building,” said Grandma, knitting a little more rapidly than before, “he looked down from his window into the street and saw a man that he knew. ‘Jefferson,’ he called out, ‘will you take a message to my wife?’

“‘I’ll take fifty, sir,’ answered the man, in an agony.

“My father was quite calm. ‘Then, Jefferson,’ he went on, ‘tell my wife that I said “God bless her,” with my last breath, and that I want her to keep the family together. Mind, Jefferson, she is to keep the family together.’

“‘I’ll tell her,’ said the man, and, groaning and dazed with the heat, he turned away. Now, that wife was my stepmother, but she did as her husband bade her. She kept the family together, in sickness and in health, in adversity and in prosperity.”

Margaretta was crying nervously.

“If you will compose yourself, I will go on,” said Grandma.

Margaretta dried her tears.

“Those four dying, living words were branded on my memory, and your mother was taught to lisp them with her earliest breath, though she was an only child. When she left me that sunny spring day to go on her long, last journey, she may have had a presentiment—I do not know—but I do know that as she pressed her blooming face to mine, she glanced at her three children playing on the grass, and whispered, lovingly, ‘Keep the family together.’”

“And you did it,” cried Margaretta, flinging up her head, “you did it nobly. You have been father, mother, grandfather and grandmother to us. You are a darling.” And seizing the little, nimble hands busy with the stocking, she kissed them fervently.

Grandma smiled at her, picked up her work, and went on, briskly: “Keep the family together, and you keep the clan together. Keep the clan together, and you keep the nation together. Foster national love and national pride, and you increase the brotherhood of man.”

“Then the family is the rock on which the nation is built,” said Margaretta, her beautiful face a flood of colour.

“Certainly.”

“Then I am a helping stone in the building of a nation,” continued Margaretta. “I, only a young woman in a small city of this great Union?”

“You are a wife,” said Grandma, composedly, “a young and inexperienced one, but still the head of a family.”

Margaretta shivered. “What a responsibility—what kind of a wife am I?”

Grandma maintained a discreet silence.

“Berty says I am extravagant,” exclaimed Margaretta, with a gesture toward the bed.

Again her grandmother said nothing.

“Am I, Grandma, darling, am I?” asked the young woman, in a wheedling voice.

Grandma’s lips trembled, and her dimple displayed itself again.

“I am,” cried Margaretta, springing up and clasping her hands despairingly. “I spend all Roger gives me. We have no fortune back of us, only his excellent income from the iron works. If that were to fail, we should be ruined. I am a careless, poorly-turned stone in the foundation of this mighty nation. I must shape and strengthen myself, and, Grandma, dear, let me begin by helping you and Berty and Bonny. You will have to give up this house—oh, my darling Grandma, how can you—this handsome house that grandfather built for you? What will you do without your velvet carpets, and lace curtains, and palms and roses? Oh, you will come to me! I shall save enough to keep you, and I shall lose my reason if you don’t.”

CHAPTER II.

GRANDMA'S WATCHWORD

"See here," said Grandma, feeling in her pocket. "Look at these telegrams."

Margaretta hastily ran her eye over them. "I don't understand."

"Let me explain," said Grandma, softly. "Brother John sends regrets for loss—will guarantee so many hundreds a year. Brother Henry sympathizes deeply to the extent of a tenth of his income. Sister Mary and Sister Lucy will come to see me as soon as possible. Substantial financial aid to be reckoned on."

"Oh, Grandma! Grandma!" said the girl, still only half-enlightened. "What do they mean?"

Grandma smiled complacently. "You notice that not one of them offers me a home, though, Heaven knows, their homes are as wide as their hearts. They are not rich, not one is exceedingly rich, yet they all offer me a good part of their respective incomes. That is the outcome of 'Keep the family together.'"

"Oh! oh! oh!" exclaimed Margaretta. "They know how you love us. They want you to keep up a home for us. They will support you."

"Exactly," said Grandma.

"And will you take all that money?"

"No, child, not all; some of it, though. I have helped them. I will do it again, if I can."

"Isn't that lovely!" cried Margaretta. "It is almost worth while being unfortunate to call out such goodness as that. Now, Grandma, dear, let us talk seriously. You will have to give up this house."

"It is given up. My lawyer was here this morning."

"Roger is coming this evening to see you—will you sell all the furniture?"

"I shall have to."

"Oh, dear! Well, you won't need it with us."

"We cannot go to you, Margaretta," said Grandma, quietly.

"Oh, why not?"

"It would be too great a burden on Roger."

"Only three persons, Grandma."

"Roger is a young man. He has lately started housekeeping and family life. Let him work out his plans along his own lines. It will be better not to join households unless necessary."

"He just loves you, Grandma."

"And I reciprocate, but I think it better not to amalgamate my quicksilver Bertie with another stronger metal just now."

"Where is she?" asked Margaretta, turning her head.

"She slipped out some time ago."

"Roger gets on well with her, Grandma."

"I know he does. By stronger metal, I meant you. Being the elder, you have rather absorbed Bertie. She will develop more quickly alone."

"Do you want to board?"

"There are two kinds of life in America," said Grandma, "boarding-house life and home-life. Boarding-house life vulgarizes, home life ennobles. As long as God gives me breath, I'll keep house, if I have only three rooms to do it in."

"But, Grandma, dear, you will have so little to keep house on. Wouldn't it be better to go to some first-class boarding-house with just a few nice people?"

"Who might be my dearest foes," said Grandma, tranquilly. "I've rubbed shoulders with such people in hotels before now."

“Grandma, you haven’t any enemies.”

“Anybody that is worth anything has enemies.”

“Well,” said Margaretta, with a sigh, “what are you going to do? You can’t afford to keep house in such style as this. You won’t want to go into a poor neighbourhood.”

“Give me a house and I’ll make the neighbourhood,” said Grandma, decidedly.

“You have already decided on one?” said her granddaughter, suspiciously.

Grandma smiled. “Not altogether decided.”

“I don’t like your tone,” exclaimed Margaretta. “You have something dreadful to tell me.”

“Berty was out this morning and found a large, old-fashioned house with big open fireplaces. From it we would have a fine view of the river.”

“Tell me where it is,” said Margaretta, brokenly.

“It is where the first people of the town used to live when I was a girl.”

“It isn’t down by the fish-market—oh, don’t tell me that!”

“Just a block away from it, dear.”

Mrs. Roger Stanisfield gave a subdued shriek. “This is Berty’s doing.”

Her grandmother laid down her knitting. “Margaretta, imagine Berty in a fashionable boarding-house—in two rooms, for we could not afford to take more. Imagine the boarding-house keeper when Berty would come in trailing a lame dog or sick cat? The Lord has given me grace to put up with these things, and even to sympathize and admire, but I have had a large house and several servants.”

“But some boarding-house people are agreeable,” moaned Margaretta.

“Agreeable!—they are martyrs, but I am not going to help martyrize them.”

“I quarrel with Berty,” murmured Margaretta, “but I always make up with her. She is my own dear sister.”

“Keep the family together,” said Grandma, shrewdly, “and in order to keep it together let it sometimes drift apart.”

“Grandma, you speak in riddles.”

“Margaretta, you are too direct. I want Berty to stand alone for awhile. She has as much character as you.”

“She has more,” sighed Margaretta. “She won’t mind a word I say—she looks just like you, Grandma, dear. You like her better than you do me.”

“Perhaps I do,” said the old lady, calmly. “Perhaps she needs it.”

“And you are going to let her drag you down to that awful neighbourhood.”

“It isn’t awful—a dose of River Street will be a fitting antidote to a somewhat enervating existence here on Grand Avenue.”

“You want to make a philanthropist or a city missionary of my poor sister.”

“She might do worse,” said Grandma, coolly.

“But she won’t be one,” said Margaretta, desperately. “She is too self-centred. She is taken with the large house and the good view. She will be disgusted with the dirty people.”

“We shall see,” said Grandma, calmly.

“You will only take the house for a short time, of course.”

“I shall probably stay there until eternity claims me.”

“Grandma!”

“One little old woman in this big republic will not encourage home faithlessness,” said Grandma, firmly.

“Dearest of grandmothers, what do you mean?”

“How the old homes must suffer,” said Grandma, musingly. “Families are being reared within their walls, then suddenly the mother takes a caprice—we must move.”

“But all houses are not equally convenient.”

“Make them so,” said the little lady, emphatically. “Have some affection for your roof-tree, your hearthstone. Have one home, not a dozen. Let your children pin their memories to one place.”

Margaretta fell into silence, and sat for a long time watching in fascination the quick, active fingers manipulating the silk stocking.

“You are a wonderful woman,” she said, at last.

“Do you really think so?”

“Oh, yes, yes,” said Margaretta, enthusiastically. “You let people find out things for themselves. Now I don’t believe in your heart of hearts you want to go to River Street.”

For the first time a shade of sadness came over the face of the older woman. “Set not your affections on earthly things,” she said, “and yet I love my home— However, it is all right, Margaretta. If the Lord sends me to River Street, I can go. If He tells me to love River Street, I shall make a point of doing so. If I feel that River Street discipline is not necessary for me at my time of life, I shall console myself with the thought that it is necessary for Bertie.”

“Once,” said Margaretta, keenly, “there was a young girl who teased her grandmother to take her to Paris in the dead of winter. The grandmother didn’t want to go, but she went, and when the girl found herself shut up below on a plunging steamer that was trying to weather a cyclonic gale, she said, ‘Grandma, I’ll never overpersuade you again.’”

“And did she keep her promise?” asked Grandma, meaningly.

Margaretta sprang to her feet, laughing nervously. “Dearest,” she said, “go to River Street, take your house. I’ll help you to the best of my ability. I see in advance what you are doing it for. Not only Bertie, but the whole family will be benefited. You think we have been too prosperous, too self-satisfied—now, don’t you?”

Grandma smiled mischievously. “Well, child, since you ask me, I must say that since your marriage I don’t see in you much passion for the good of others. Roger spoils you,” she added, apologetically.

“I will be better,” said the beautiful girl, “and, Grandma, why haven’t you talked more to me—preached more. I don’t remember any sermons, except ‘Keep the family together.’”

“It was all there, only the time hadn’t come for you to see it. You know how it is in this new invention of wireless telegraphy—a receiver must be tuned to the same pitch as that of the transmitter, or a message cannot pass between.”

A brilliant expression burst like a flood of sunlight over the girl’s face. “I’m tuned,” she said, gaily. “I’m getting older and have more sense. I can take the message, and even pass it on. Good-bye, best of Grandmas. I’m going to make my peace with Bertie.”

“Keep the family together,” said Grandma, demurely.

“Bertie, Bertie, where are you?” cried Margaretta, whisking her draperies out into the hall and down-stairs. “I am such a sinner. I was abominably sharp with you.”

“Hush,” said Bertie, suddenly.

She had come into the hall below and was standing holding something in her hand.

“What is it?” asked Margaretta. “Oh!” and she gave a little scream, “a mouse!”

“He is dead,” said Bertie, quickly, “nothing matters to him now. Poor little thing, how he suffered. He was caught in a cruel trap.”

Margaretta gazed scrutinizingly at her. “You have a good heart, Bertie. I’m sorry I quarrelled with you.”

“I forgot all about it,” said Bertie, simply, “but I don’t like to quarrel with you, Margaretta. It usually gives me a bad feeling inside me.”

“You want to go to River Street?” said Margaretta, abruptly.

“Oh, yes, we shall be so near the river. I am going to keep my boat and canoe. The launch will have to go.”

Margaretta suppressed a smile. “How about the neighbourhood?”

“Don’t like it, but we shall keep to ourselves.”

“And keep the family together,” said Margareta.

“Yes,” said Berty, soberly. “Trust Grandma to do that. I wish you and Roger could live with us.”

“Bless your heart,” said Margareta, affectionately throwing an arm around her.

“But you’ll come to see us often?” said Berty, anxiously.

“Every day; and, Berty, I prophesy peace and prosperity to you and Grandma—and now good-bye, I’m going home to save.”

“To save?”

“Yes, to save money—to keep my family together,” and holding her head well in the air, Margareta tripped through the long, cool hall out into the sunlight.

“Thank God they have made up their quarrel,” said Grandma, who was leaning over the stair railing. “Nothing conquers a united family! And now will Margareta have the strength of mind to keep to her new resolution?”

CHAPTER III. A SUDDEN COUNTERMARCH

Roger Stanisfield was plodding wearily along the avenue. He was not aware what an exquisite summer evening it was. He carried his own troubled atmosphere with him.

Slowly going up the broad flight of steps leading to his house, he drew out his latch-key. As he unlocked the door, a bevy of girls came trooping through the hall—some of his wife's friends. His face cleared as he took off his hat and stood aside for them to pass.

For a minute the air was gay with merry parting, then the girls were gone, and he went slowly up to his room.

"Mrs. Stanisfield is in the dining-room, sir," said a servant, addressing him a few minutes later, as he stood in the hall with an air of great abstraction. "Dinner has just been served."

"Oh, Roger," said his wife, as he entered the room where she sat at the table, "I didn't know you'd come! You told me not to wait for you. I shall be glad when you take up your old habit of coming home in the middle of the afternoon."

"I am very busy now," he muttered, as he took his place.

"Does your head ache?" inquired Margaretta, when several courses had been passed through in silence on his part.

"Yes, it is splitting."

Young Mrs. Stanisfield bent her fair head over her plate, and discreetly made only an occasional remark until the pudding was removed, and the table-maid had withdrawn from the room. Then she surreptitiously examined her husband's face.

He was thoughtfully surveying the fruit on the table.

"Margaretta," he said, boyishly, "I don't care much for puddings and pastry."

"Neither do I," she said, demurely.

"I was wondering," he said, hesitatingly, "whether we couldn't do without puddings for awhile and just have nuts and raisins, or fruit—What are you laughing at?"

"At your new rôle of housekeeper. You usually don't seem to know what is on the table."

"I have a good appetite."

"Yes, but you don't criticize. You just eat what is set before you. I am sure it has escaped your masculine observation that for several weeks past we have had only one dish in the pastry course."

"Well, what of it?"

"Why, we always used to have two or three—pudding, pie, and jelly or creams. Now we never have pudding and pie at the same time."

"What is that for?" he asked.

"Oh, for something," she said, quietly. "Now tell me what has gone wrong with you."

"Nothing has gone wrong with me," he said, irritably.

"With your business then."

He did not reply, and, rising, she said, "This sitting at table is tiresome when one eats nothing. Let us go to the drawing-room and have coffee."

"I don't want coffee," he said, sauntering after her.

"Neither do I," she replied. "Shall we go out in the garden? It was delightfully cool there before dinner."

"What a crowd of women you had here," he said, a little peevishly, as he followed her.

"Hadn't I?" and she smiled. "They had all been at a garden-party at the Everests, and as I wasn't there they came to find out the reason."

"You don't mean to say you missed a social function?" said her husband, sarcastically.

“Yes, dear boy, I did, and I have before, and I am going to again.”

Mr. Stanisfield laughed shortly. “You sound like your sister Bertie.”

“Well, I should love to be like her. She is a dear little sister.”

“But not as dear as her sister.”

“Thank you,” said Margaretta, prettily, turning and curtsying to him, as he followed her along the garden paths. “Now, here we are among the roses. Just drag out those two chairs from the arbour, or will you get into the hammock?”

“I’ll take the hammock,” he said, wearily. “I feel as if I were falling to pieces.”

“Let me arrange some cushions under your head so—this cool breeze will soon drive the business fog from your brain.”

“No, it won’t—the fog is too heavy.”

“What kind of a fog is it?” asked Margaretta, cautiously.

Her husband sat up in the hammock, and stared at her with feverish eyes. “Margaretta, I think we had better give up this house and take a smaller one.”

“I knew it,” said Margaretta, triumphantly. “I knew you were worried about your affairs!”

“Then you won’t feel so surprised,” he said, “when I tell you that we can’t stand this pace. We’ve had some heavy losses down at the iron works lately—mind you don’t say anything about it.”

“Indeed I won’t,” she replied, proudly.

“Father and I finished going over the books to-day with Mackintosh. We’ve got to put on the brakes. I—I hate to tell you,” and he averted his face. “You are so young.”

Margaretta did not reply to him, and, eager to see her face, he presently turned his own.

The sun had set, but she was radiant in a kind of afterglow.

“Margaretta, you don’t understand,” he faltered. “It will be a tremendous struggle for you to give up luxuries to which you have been accustomed, but we’ve either got to come down to bare poles here, or move to a smaller house.”

“What a misfortune!” she said.

His face fell.

“For you to have a headache about this matter,” she went on, gleefully. “I don’t call it a small one, for it isn’t, but if you knew everything!”

“I know enough to make me feel like a cheat,” he blurted, wriggling about in the hammock. “I took you from a good home. I never wanted you to feel an anxiety, and now the first thing I’ve got to put you down to rigid economy. You see, father and I have to spend a certain amount on the business, or we’d be out of it in the war of competition, and we’ve both decided that expenses must be curtailed in our homes rather than in the iron works.”

“That shows you are good business men,” said Margaretta, promptly. “You are as good business men as husbands.”

“Margaretta,” said her husband, “you puzzle me. I expected a scene, and upon my word you look happy over it—but you don’t realize it, poor child!”

Margaretta smiled silently at him for a few seconds, then she said, roguishly, “I am going to give you a little surprise. You didn’t see me snatch this sheet of paper from my new cabinet when we left the house?”

“No, I did not.”

“Oh, what a nice little paper! What a precious little paper!” said Margaretta, gaily, clasping it. “Can you see what is written on it, Roger? No, you can’t very well in this light.”

“Yes, I can,” said the young man, with a weary, amused smile. “Give it to me.”

She drew her seat closer to the hammock, and both bent their heads over the paper.

“Animus saved by Mrs. Roger Stanisfield during the month of July,” read Roger, stumblingly—“to be poured on my head, I suppose.”

“No, no, not animus—amounts.”

“Oh, I see, you want to comfort me by showing what an economist you are. I dare say you have saved five whole dollars through the month. What is the first item? Saved on new dress, one hundred dollars. Good gracious—how much did the dress cost?”

“I didn’t get it,” she replied, with immense satisfaction. “I needed one, or thought I did, and Madame Bouvard, that French dressmaker from New York, who came here last year, said she would make me one for one hundred dollars. Now some time ago, just after dear Grandma lost her money, she gave me a great shock.”

“Grandma did?” asked her husband, in surprise.

“No, she didn’t, she made me give it to myself. That is Grandma’s way, you know. She doesn’t preach. Well, after this electric shock I was horrified to find out that I was a frivolous, extravagant person. I began to think hard, then I got this little piece of paper—and, oh, Roger, won’t you get me a regular business book, and make red lines down the sides, and show me how to keep proper accounts?”

“I will, but what about the dress?”

“I had ordered it, but I went to Madame Bouvard. I said, frankly, ‘I can’t pay as much as a hundred dollars for a gown.’

“‘You shall have it for eighty,’ she said.

“I said, ‘Please let me off altogether. I want to save a little on my outfit this summer, but I promise to come to you the first time I want a gown.’

“As soon as I said it I bit my lip. ‘Oh, Madame Bouvard,’ I said, ‘you are the most satisfactory dressmaker I have ever had, but I don’t know whether I can afford to come to you again.’

“She is just a plain little woman, but when she saw how badly I felt, her face lighted up like an angel’s. ‘Madame,’ she said, ‘do not take your custom from me. You have been the best lady I have worked for in Riverport. Why, my girls say when your fair head passes the glass door of the workroom that it casts a ray of sunshine in upon them’—just think of that, Roger,—a ray of sunshine. I was quite pleased.”

CHAPTER IV. A LIFTED BURDEN

He laid a hand on the fair head, then hastily bent over the paper.

"I was pleased, Roger, because I didn't know that dressmakers or their sewing-girls ever cared for the people they work for; and what do you think she went on to say?—'Madame, don't go to a second-class establishment. I know you like first-class things. Come to me when you want a gown, and it shall be given to you at cost price, with just a trifle to satisfy you for my work'—wasn't that sweet in her, Roger? I just caught her hand and squeezed it, and then she laid a finger on her lips—'Not a word of this to any one, madame.' I sent her a basket of flowers the next day."

"You are a good child," said her husband, huskily.

"Now go on to the next item," said Margaretta, jubilantly.

"'Butter, twenty dollars'—what in the name of common sense does that mean?"

"Queer, isn't it?" laughed Margaretta. "I'll go back to the beginning and explain. You know, Roger, I am not such a terribly strong person, and I do love to lie in bed in the morning. It is so delicious when you know you ought to get up, to roll yourself in the soft clothes and have another nap! You remember that I had got into a great way of having my breakfast in bed. Well, madam in bed meant carelessness in the kitchen. We have honest servants, Roger, but they are heedless. After my shock from Grandma about economy, I said, 'I will reform. I will watch the cents, and the cents will watch the dollars.'

"Now, to catch the first stray cent, it was necessary to get up early. I just hated to do it, but I made myself. I sprang out of bed in the morning, had my cold plunge, and was down before you, and it was far more interesting to have company for breakfast than to have no one, wasn't it?"

"Well, rather."

"You good boy. You never complained. Well, cook was immensely surprised to have a call from me before breakfast. One morning I found her making pastry, and putting the most delicious-looking yellow butter in it. 'Why, that's our table butter,' I said, 'isn't it, that comes from Cloverdale, and costs a ridiculous amount?'"

"She said it was.

"'Why don't you use cooking-butter, Jane?' I asked; 'it's just as good, isn't it?'"

"'Well, ma'am, there's nothing impure about it,' she said, 'but I know you like everything of the best, so I put this in.'

"'Jane,' I said, 'never do it again. I'm going to economize, and I want you to help me. If you can't, I must send you away and get some one else.'

"She laughed—you know what a fat, good-natured creature she is—and seemed to think it a kind of joke that I should want to economize.

"'Jane,' I said, 'I'm in earnest.'

"Then she sobered down. 'Truth, and I'll help you, ma'am, if you really want me to. There's lots of ways I can save for you, but I thought you didn't care. You always seem so open-handed.'

"'Well, Jane,' I said, 'I don't want to be mean, and I don't want adulterated food, but my husband and I are young, and we want to save something for old age. Now you'll help us, won't you?'"

"'Honour bright, I will, ma'am,' she said, and I believed her. I can't stay in the kitchen and watch her, but she watches herself, and just read that list of groceries and see what else she has saved."

"How have you found out the exact list of your economies?" asked Roger, curiously.

"By comparing my bills of this month with those of the month before. For instance, sugar was so many dollars in June; in July it is so many dollars less. Of course, we must take into account that we have been entertaining less. Have you noticed it?"

“Yes, but I thought it only a passing whim.”

“Some whims don’t pass, they stay,” said Margaretta, shaking her head. “Go on, Roger.”

“One hundred and fifty dollars saved in not entertaining Miss Gregory—pray who is Miss Gregory?”

“That society belle from Newport who has been staying with the Darley-Jameses.”

“How does she come into your expenditures?”

“She doesn’t come in,” said Margaretta, with satisfaction. “I haven’t done a thing for her beyond being polite and talking to her whenever I get a chance, and, oh, yes—I did give her a drive.”

“Well, but—”

“Let me explain. If I hadn’t been taken with a fit of economy, I would, in the natural order of things, have made a dinner for Miss Gregory. I would have had a picnic, and perhaps a big evening party. Think what it would have cost—you remember Mrs. Handfell?”

Her husband made a face.

“You never liked her, and I did wrong to have her here so much. Well, Roger, do you know I spent a large sum of money in entertaining that woman? I am ashamed to tell you how much. I had her here, morning, noon, and night. I took her up the river—you remember the decorated boats and the delightful music. It was charming, but we could not afford it, and when I went to New York she met me on Fifth Avenue, and said, ‘Oh, how do you do—so glad to see you. Be sure to call while you are here. My day is Friday.’ Then she swept away. That was a society woman who had graciously allowed me to amuse her during her summer trip to Maine. I was so hurt about it that I never told you.”

“What an empty head,” said Roger, picking up the list.

“It taught me a lesson,” continued his wife. “Now go on—do read the other things.”

His eyes had run down to the total. “Whew, Margaretta!—you don’t mean to say you have saved all this in a month?”

“Yes, I do.”

“I haven’t felt any tightening in your household arrangements. Why, at what a rate were we living?”

“At a careless rate,” said Margaretta, seriously, “a careless, slipshod rate. I bought everything I wanted. Flowers, in spite of our greenhouse, fruit and vegetables out of season, in spite of our garden, but now I look in the shop windows and say with a person I was reading about the other day, ‘Why, how many things there are I can do without,’—and with all my economy I have yet managed to squeeze out something for Grandma. I just made her take it.”

Roger’s face flushed. “Margaretta, if you will keep this thing going, we won’t have to give up this house.”

“I’ll keep it going,” said Margaretta, solemnly, “you shall not leave this house. It would be a blow to your honest pride.”

The young man was deeply moved, and, lifting his face to the pale, rising young moon, he murmured, “Thank God for a good wife.” Then he turned to her. “I wish some other men starting out in life had such a helper as you.”

“Oh, wish them a better one,” said Margaretta, humbly; “but I know what you mean, Roger. A man cannot succeed unless his wife helps him.”

“Sometimes it makes me furious,” said Roger, warmly. “I see fellows down-town, young fellows, too, working early and late, straining every nerve to keep up the extravagance of some thoughtless young wife. Why don’t the women think? Men hate to complain.”

Margaretta hung her head. Then she lifted it, and said, apologetically, “Perhaps they haven’t had wise grandmothers.”

Roger smiled. “Upon my word, a man in choosing a wife ought to look first at the girl’s grandmother.”

“My grandma lives on yonder little green,
Fine old lady as ever was seen.”

chanted a gay voice.

“Bonny,” exclaimed Margaretta, flying out of her seat.

They were a remarkable pair as they came up the gravel walk together—the tall lad and the tall girl, both light-haired, both blue of eyes, and pink, and white, and smooth as to complexion like a pair of babies.

The elder man stared at them admiringly. Bonny was the baby of the orphan family that the sterling old grandmother had brought up. Strange that the grandson of such a woman had so little character, and Roger sighed slightly. Bonny was a mere boy, thoughtless, fond of fun, and too much of a favourite with the gay lads about the town. However, he might develop, and Roger’s face brightened.

“Oh, you dear Bonny,” said Margaretta, pressing his arm, “it was so good in you to remember your promise to come and tell me about your afternoon on the river. You had a pleasant time, of course.”

“Glorious,” said the lad. “The water was like glass, and we had a regular fleet of canoes. I say, Margaretta, I like that chap from Boston. Do something for him, won’t you?”

“Certainly, Bonny, what do you want me to do?”

“Make him some kind of a water-party.”

Margaretta became troubled. “How many people do you want to invite?”

“Oh, about sixty.”

“Don’t you think if we had three or four of your chosen friends he would enjoy it just as much?”

“No, I don’t; what do you think, Roger?”

“I don’t know about him. I hate crowds myself.”

“I like them,” said Bonny. “Come, Margaretta, decide.”

“Oh, my dear, spoiled boy,” said the girl, in perplexity, “I would give a party to all Riverport if it would please you, but I am trying dreadfully hard to economize. Those large things cost so much.”

Bonny opened wide his big blue eyes. “You are not getting mean, Margaretta?”

“No, no, my heart feels more generous than ever, but I see that this eternal entertaining on a big scale doesn’t amount to much. Once in awhile a huge affair is nice, but to keep it up week after week is a waste of time and energy, and you don’t make real friends.”

“All right,” said Bonny, good-naturedly. “I’ll take him for a swim. That won’t cost anything.”

“Now, Bonny,” said Margaretta, in an injured voice, “don’t misunderstand me. We’ll have a little excursion on the river, if you like, with half a dozen of your friends, and I’ll give you a good big party this summer—you would rather have it later on, wouldn’t you, when there are more girls visiting here?”

“Yes, indeed, let us wait for the girls,” said Bonny.

“And in the meantime,” continued Margaretta, “bring the Boston boy here as often as you like, to drop in to meals. I shall be delighted to see him, and so will you, Roger, won’t you?”

“Don’t know what you’re talking about,” said the young man, who had gone off into a reverie, “but it’s all right if you say so.”

Bonny laughed at him, then, jumping up, said, “I must be going.”

“Where’s the dog, Margaretta?” asked Roger. “I’ll walk home with the boy.”

“But your headache,” said his wife.

“Is all gone—that prescription cured it,” said the young man, with a meaning glance at the sheet of note-paper clasped in his wife’s hand.

She smiled and waved it at him. “Wives’ cold cash salve for the cure of husbands’ headaches.”

“What kind of a salve is that?” asked Bonny, curiously.

“Wait till you have a house of your own, Bonny,” said his sister, caressingly, “and I will tell you.”

Then, as the man and the boy walked slowly away, she slipped into the hammock and turned her face up to the lovely evening sky.

“Little moon, I call you to witness I have begun a countermarch. I’m never more going to spend all the money I get, even if I have to earn some of it with my own hands!”

CHAPTER V. THE TRAINING OF A BOY

Roger, sitting in his office at the iron works, from time to time raised his grave face to look at Bonny, who was fidgeting restlessly about the room.

Next to his wife, Roger loved his young brother-in-law,—the fair-haired, genial lad, everybody's favourite, no one's enemy but his own.

He wondered why the boy had come to him. Probably he was in some scrape and wanted help.

Presently the boy flung himself round upon him. "Roger—why don't some of you good people try to reform me?"

Roger leaned back in his chair and stared at the disturbed young face.

"Come, now, don't say that you don't think I need reformation," said the boy, mockingly.

"I guess we all need that," replied his brother-in-law, soberly, "but you come of pretty good stock, Bonny."

"The stock's all right. That's why I'm afraid of breaking loose and disgracing it."

"What have you been doing?" asked Roger, kindly.

"I haven't been doing anything," said the boy, sullenly. "It's what I may do that I'm afraid of."

Roger said nothing. He was just casting about in his mind for a suitable reply, when the boy went on. "If you've been brought up just like a parson, and had all kinds of sentiments and good thoughts lived at you, and then don't rise to the goodness you're bursting with, it's bound to rebel and give you a bad time."

The man, having got a clue to the boy's mental trouble, hastened to say, "You act all right. I shouldn't say you were unhappy."

"Act!" repeated the boy. "Act, acting, actors, actresses,—that's what we all are. Now I'd like to have a good time. I don't think I'm far out of the way; but there's Grandma—she just makes me rage. Such goings on!"

"What has your grandmother been doing?"

"She hasn't done much, and she hasn't said a word, but, hang it! there's more in what Grandma doesn't say than there is in what other women do say."

"You're right there, my boy."

"Now, what did she want to go give me a latch-key for?" asked the boy, in an aggrieved tone, "just after I'd started coming in a little later than usual? Why don't she say, 'My dear boy, you are on the road to ruin. Staying out late is the first step. May I not beg of you to do better, my dear young grandson? Otherwise you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.'"

"This is what she didn't say?" asked Roger, gravely.

"This is what she didn't say," repeated the boy, crossly, "but this is what she felt. I know her! The latch-key was a bit of tomfoolery. An extra lump of sugar in my coffee is more tomfoolery."

"Do you want her to preach to you?"

"No," snarled the handsome lad. "I don't want her to preach, and I don't want you to preach, and I don't want my sisters to preach, but I want some one to do something for me."

"State your case in a more businesslike way," said the elder man, gravely. "I don't understand."

"You know I'm in the National Bank," said Bonny, shortly.

"Certainly I know that."

"Grandma put me there a year ago. I don't object to the bank, if I've got to work. It's as easy as anything I could get, and I hate study."

Roger nodded.

“Being in the bank, I’d like to rise,” Bonny went on, irritably, “but somehow or other there seems a little prejudice in the air against me. Has any one said anything to you?”

“Not a word.”

The boy drew a long breath. “Perhaps it’s partly imagination. They’re very down on fun in our bank. Now when hours are over, and I come out, there’s a whole gang of nice fellows ready to do anything that’s going. Sometimes we play billiards. On fine days we’re always on the river. There’s no harm in that, is there?”

“Not that I see,” observed Roger, cautiously.

“Then, when evening comes, and we want to sit down somewhere, we have a quiet little game of cards. There’s no harm in that, is there?”

“Do you play for money?”

“Sometimes—well, perhaps nearly always, but there’s no harm in that, is there?”

“Let me hear the rest of your story.”

“Sometimes I’m late getting home. We get interested, but that’s nothing. I’m almost a man. Five hours’ sleep is enough for me.”

A long pause followed, broken finally by Roger, who said, calmly, “You have given an account of your time. What is wrong with it?”

“It’s all wrong,” blurted the boy, “and you know it.”

“I haven’t said so.”

“But you feel it. You’re just like Grandma—bother it! Don’t I know she thinks I ought to spend my evenings at home, reading about banking, so as to work myself up to a president’s chair?”

“Don’t you get any time for reading through the day?”

“How can I?” said the boy, eloquently, “when I was almost brought up out-of-doors, and as soon as the bank closes every square inch of flesh of me is squealing to get on the river. Now what do you think I ought to do?”

“It’s a puzzling case,” said Roger, with a slow shake of his head. “According to your own account, you are leading a blameless life. Yet, according to the same account, you are not happy in it, though no one is finding fault with you.”

“No one finding fault!” said the boy, sulkily. “Why, the very stones in the street stare at me and say, ‘Animal! Animal! you don’t care for anything but fun. You’d skip the bank every day if you dared.’”

“Why don’t you?”

Bonny gave himself a resounding thwack on the chest. “Because,” he said, “Grandma has planted something here that won’t be downed. Something that won’t let me have a good time when I know she isn’t pleased with me. Sometimes I get so mad that I think I will run away, but that wouldn’t do any good, for she’d run with me. She’d haunt my dreams—I don’t know what I’m going to do!”

Roger, carefully concealing all signs of compassion, gazed steadily at the distressed face. “Do you want to break away from your set?” he asked, at last.

“No, I don’t. They’re good fellows.”

“Well, what are you going to do about that bad feeling inside of you?”

“I don’t know,” said Bonny, bitterly. “I know Grandma thinks I’m going to be like Walt Everest, big and fat and jolly, and everybody’s chum, who can sing a song, and dance a jig, and never does any business, and never will amount to anything.”

“Did she ever say so?”

“No,” growled the boy, “but don’t I tell you I know what Grandma’s thinking about?”

“How does your sister Berty take you?” asked Roger.

“Just like Grandma,” blazed the boy, in sudden wrath, “never says a word but a pleasant one, catches me in a corner and kisses me—kisses me!—just think of it!”

Roger thought deeply for a few minutes, while Bonny took up his miserable ramble about the room.

“Look here, boy,” he said, finally. “You do as I tell you for a week. Begin from this minute. Read that magazine, then go home with me to dinner. After dinner come back here and help me. I’m working on some accounts for a time. That will be an excuse to the boys for not playing cards.”

Bonny’s face was clearing. “A good excuse, too,” he muttered. “If I said I was going with Grandma or the girls, they’d laugh at me.”

“You tell them you are working on my books, and I am paying you. That will shut their mouths, and you’ll not object to the extra money.”

“I guess I won’t. I’m hard pushed all the time.”

“Don’t you save anything from your salary for Grandma?” asked Roger, keenly.

“How can I?” said the boy, indignantly. “She has brought me up to be clean. It takes nearly everything I get to pay my laundry bill—I dare say you think I’m a brute to be so selfish.”

“I’ll send you home every night at ten, and mind you go to bed,” said Roger, calmly. “Five hours’ sleep is not enough for a boy of eighteen. Get up in the morning and go to the bank. As soon as it closes in the afternoon I’ll have business in Cloverdale that will take you on a drive there.”

“You’re a daisy, Roger,” said Bonny, in a low voice.

Roger cast down his eyes. That flushed, disturbed face reminded him of his own beautiful Margaretta. Pray Heaven, he would never see such trouble and dissatisfaction in her blue eyes.

Bonny had already thrown himself into a deep leather-covered armchair, and was apparently absorbed in the magazine. Presently he looked up. “Roger, don’t you tell the girls what I’ve been saying.”

“No, I won’t.”

“Nor Grandma.”

“No, nor Grandma.”

But Grandma knew. There was no hoodwinking that dear, shrewd old lady, and when next she met Roger, which was the following morning, as he was on his way to his office, and she was on her way to call on his wife, her deep-set eyes glistened strangely, and instead of saying “Good morning, dear grandson-in-law,” as she usually did, she said “Good morning, dear son.” She considered him as much one of the family as her three beloved orphan grandchildren.

Yes, Grandma knew, and Grandma approved of what he was doing for her poor, wilful, troubled Bonny.

Every evening for five evenings the lad came to the iron works, and steadfastly set his young face to the sober, unexciting examination of dull rows of figures, stretching indefinitely across white pages.

On the fifth night something went wrong with him. In the first place, he was late in coming. In the second place, his nerves seemed to be stretched to their utmost tension.

“What’s up with you?” asked Roger, when, after a few minutes’ work Bonny pushed aside the big books, and said, “I’m going home.”

“I’m tired,” said Bonny. “I hate this bookkeeping.”

“All right,” said his brother-in-law, composedly. “I’m tired myself. Let’s have a game of chess.”

“I hate chess,” said Bonny, sulkily.

“I wonder whether it’s too early for supper?” asked Roger, good-humouredly getting up and going to a closet.

He looked over his shoulder at Bonny as he spoke. Every night at half-past nine he was in the habit of producing cakes, candy, syrup, fruit, and nuts for the boy’s supper. It was not very long since he had been a boy himself, and he remembered his chronic craving for sweet things.

“You’re always stuffing me,” replied Bonny, disagreeably. “You think you’ll make me good-natured.”

“What’s the matter with you, Bonny?” asked Roger, closing the door and returning to his seat.

“I don’t know what’s the matter with me,” snarled Bonny, miserably, rolling his head about on his folded arms resting on the table. “I hate everything and everybody. I could kill you, Roger.”

“All right—there’s a pair of Indian clubs over there in the corner,” said his brother-in-law, cheerfully.

“I thought I’d be an angel after a few nights’ association with you,” continued the lad, “and you make me feel worse than ever.”

“Looks as if I were a bad sort of a fellow, doesn’t it?” remarked Roger, philosophically.

“You’re not bad,” snapped Bonny. “You’re a tremendous good sort. I’m the brute. Roger, why don’t you preach to me?”

For some time Roger stared at him in silence; then he said, “Seems to me you can preach better to yourself. If I were going to set up for a preacher I’d only hold forth to the impenitent.”

“The fellows are going to a dance at Hickey’s to-night,” said Bonny, suddenly pounding on the table with his fist, “and I’m not in it, and then at midnight they’re going to see the circus arrive, and I’m not in that.”

“At Hickey’s—where is that?”

“Up the road; don’t you know?”

“Oh, yes; rather gay people, aren’t they?”

“Well, they’re not in Margaretta’s set; but then she is mighty particular.”

“Would you take her there if she cared to go?”

“No, I wouldn’t—well, go on, Roger.”

“Go on where?” asked the elder man, in slight bewilderment.

“To embrace your opportunity—administer a rebuke—cuff a sinner,” sneered Bonny.

Roger grinned at him.

“My dear boy,” began Bonny, in an exasperated tone, “let me exhort, admonish, and counsel you never to go to any place, or visit any resort, or indulge in any society where you could not take your venerable grandmother and your beloved sisters.”

“Not bad for a beginner,” said Roger, patronizingly.

“I’m going,” said the boy, abruptly jumping up. “I feel as if I should fly in fifty pieces if I stayed here any longer—till I see you again, Roger.”

He was already on the threshold, but Roger sauntered after him. “Hold on a bit—four days ago you came to me in something of a pickle.”

“You bet your iron works I did,” replied Bonny.

“I helped you out of it.”

“I guess you did.”

“For four evenings you have come here and helped me, and I am going to pay you well for it.”

“Glory on your head, you are,” said Bonny, wildly.

“In these four days,” continued Roger, “you have been early at the bank—you have done your work faithfully there. You have not shirked.”

“Not a hair’s breadth, and mighty tired I am of it. I’m sick of reformation. I’m going to be just as bad as I can be. Hurrah for Hickey’s,” and he was just about darting off, when Roger caught him by the arm.

“Listen to me for a minute. I ask you to give me one day more. Stay here with me to-night. Do your work as usual. Go home to bed. Fill in to-morrow properly, then in the evening, at this time, if you want to go back to your old silly tricks, go. I wash my hands of you.”

Bonny turned his face longingly toward the city, thought deeply for a few minutes, then retraced his steps. “I’ll be good to-night,” he said, threateningly, “but just you wait till to-morrow night comes.”

“You’ve got a conscience,” said Roger, sternly; “if you choose to choke it and play the fool, no one is strong enough to hold you—pass me that ledger, will you?”

“Oh, shut up,” blurted Bonny, under his breath. However, he sat down quietly enough, and did his work until the clock struck ten.

Then he stifled a yawn, jumped up, and said, “I’m going now.”

“Mind, seven-thirty to-morrow evening,” said Roger, stiffly.

“All right; seven-thirty for once more, and only once,” said Bonny, with glistening eyes, “for once more and only once! I’m tired of your stuffy old office, and strait-laced ways.”

“Good night,” said Roger, kindly, “and don’t be a fool.”

Bonny ran like a fox down the long lane leading to the city. “He’s making for his burrow,” said Roger, with a weary smile. “He’s a scamp, but you can trust him if he once gives his word. I wish I were a better sort of a man,” and with mingled reverence and humility he lifted his gaze to the stars. “If that boy is going to be saved, something has got to be done mighty quick!”

CHAPTER VI. BONNY'S ORDEAL

"What's the matter, Roger?" asked his wife, when he went home.

"Nothing," said the young man, wearily, but he went to bed early, and, rising early the next morning, strode off to the iron works without taking his breakfast.

How he loved the handsome lad, his wife's double. What could he do, what could he say? Until now he had considered the boy inferior in character to his two sisters. But, as he had often assured himself, the stock was good, and the strength and energy latent in Bonny were now looming to the fore. He was emerging from boyhood into manhood, and his childish, happy-go-lucky disposition of youth was warring with the growing forces of more mature age.

The morning wore on, and his gloominess increased, until his father shortly told him that he didn't look well, and he had better go home.

"I'm all right," Roger was saying, almost harshly, when there was a ring at his telephone. The National Bank wanted to speak to him.

"Hello," said Roger.

"Can you come up to the bank?" asked some one, in a jerky voice. "Have had a robbery—your young Gravely hurt."

Roger dashed from his seat, seized his hat, and with a hurried word to his father, rushed outside.

A delivery-cart was standing before the door. He did not stop to see whose it was, but seizing the reins, urged the horse toward the centre of the city.

There was a crowd around the bank, but the cordon of police let him through. Inside was a group of bank officials, reporters, and detectives.

The president's face was flushed and angry. "Yes we have had a loss," he said to Roger. "Oh, young Gravely—his grandmother came for him."

Roger elbowed his way out and took a cab to River Street.

Here it was quiet. The noise of the bank robbery had not reached this neighbourhood. He ran up-stairs three steps at a time to Bonny's large room in the top of the house, and softly pushed open the door.

Bonny was in bed. Grandma, Bertie, a woman of the neighbourhood, and a doctor were bending over him.

Roger could see that the boy's face was pale and bandaged.

"Bonny," he said, involuntarily.

The boy heard him and opened his eyes.

"All right, Roger," he murmured, feebly. "I stood by the fort, but I—guess—you'll—have—to—excuse—me—to-night," and his voice trailed off into unconsciousness.

The doctor looked impatiently over his shoulder, and Roger crept out into the hall.

Grandma sent Bertie after him. "Oh, Roger," she whispered, "we had such a fright."

"What is it—how was it?" asked Roger, eagerly.

"Why, the circus-parade was passing the bank. Every clerk but Bonny left his desk to go look at it. They don't seem to know why he stayed. When the parade passed, and the clerks went back, he was lying on the floor with his face and head cut."

"I know why he stayed," muttered Roger. "He was trying to do his duty. Thank God, he was not killed. Is he much hurt?"

"Some bad flesh wounds. The doctor says he must be kept quiet, but he doesn't think his brain is injured. Oh, Roger, we are so thankful his life was spared."

“Probably the thieves didn’t try to kill him. If I can do nothing, I’ll go find out something about the affair. I must telephone Margaretta. She will be upset if she hears from strangers.”

“Yes, go,” said Bert, “and ask her to come to us.”

Late that evening, the doctor, to quiet his feverish patient, permitted him to have five minutes’ conversation with his brother-in-law.

Roger seized the hand lying on the coverlet, and pressed it silently.

“Did they catch the thieves?” asked Bonny, huskily.

“One of them, my boy—how do you think the detectives made sure of him?”

“Don’t know.”

“He was hanging around the circus-crowd, trying to mix up with it—he had some of your yellow hairs on his coat-sleeve.”

Bonny smiled faintly.

“The police expect him to turn State’s evidence,” continued Roger.

“How much did the bank lose?”

“Fifteen thousand dollars.”

“But they’ll get it back, Roger?”

“Yes, if they catch the other fellow, and they’re sure to do it. Bonny, you’re not to talk. Just tell me if this is straight—I want it for the papers. You stood at your desk, all the others ran to the street door. Then—”

“Then,” said Bonny, “I was mad. I wanted to look at the circus, but I had promised you not to shirk. But I just gritted my teeth as I stood there. I was staring after the others when I heard a little noise in the president’s room. I turned round, and saw a man peeping out. I had no revolver, and I didn’t know where Danvers kept his, and like an idiot I never thought to scream. I just grabbed for Buckley’s camera. You know he is a photographic fiend.”

“Yes,” smiled Roger, and he thought of what the captured thief had asked one of the policemen guarding him: “How’s that gritty little demon that tried to snap us?”

“I was just pressing the button,” went on Bonny, “when the man leaped like a cat, and, first thing I knew, he was smashing me over the head with that camera. There was such a row in the street that the others didn’t hear it.”

“Five minutes are up,” said the doctor, coming into the room.

“One minute, Roger,” said the boy, feebly. “I had a second before I got whacked, and in that second I thought, ‘Here’s a specimen of the leisure class toward which I am drifting. I’ll stay with the workers,’ so, Roger, we’ll not call off that contract of ours to-night.”

“All right,” said Roger, beaming on him, and backing toward the door. “It’s to stand—for how long?”

“For ever!” said the boy, with sudden force, just as the doctor gently pushed him back on his pillow, and, putting a teaspoonful of medicine to his lips, said, “Now, young sir, you take this.”

Roger, with a smiling face, sought Grandma and Bert on the veranda at the back of the house. “He’ll be all right in a day or two.”

“Yes, it is the shock that has upset him more than the wounds,” said Bert. “The burglars only wanted to silence him.”

“Grandma, do you know the bank is going to discharge every man-Jack but Bonny?” said Roger. Grandma’s eyes sparkled, then she became thoughtful.

“What, all those old fellows?” exclaimed Bert.

“Bonny won’t stay,” said Grandma, quietly. “He would feel like a prig.”

“I am going to take him in the iron works with me,” said Roger. “I won’t be denied. He will make a first-class business man.”

“Under your tuition,” said Grandma, with a proud look at him.

“Hush,” said Bert, “the newsboys are calling an extra.”

They all listened. “Extry edeetion *Evening Noose*—cap-tchure of the second burrgg-lar of the great bank robbery.”

“Good,” cried Bert, “they’ve caught the second man. Roger, dear, go get us a paper.”

The young man ran nimbly down-stairs.

“How he loves Bonny!” said Bert. “What a good brother-in-law!”

Grandma said nothing, but her inscrutable gaze went away down the river.

“And, Grandma,” went on Bert, “let me tell you what Bonny whispered to me before I left the room. He said, ‘I’ve sometimes got mad with Grandma for always harping on keeping the family together, but I see now that if you keep your own family together, you keep your business family together.’”

Grandma did not reply. Her gaze was still down the river, but the girl, watching her lips, saw them softly form the words, “Thank God!”

Bonny’s ordeal was past, and it had better fitted him for other and perhaps more severe ordeals in his life to come.

CHAPTER VII.

BERTY IMPARTS INFORMATION

Mrs. Stanisfield was making her way to her roof-garden.

"If any callers come," she said to her parlour-maid, "bring them up here."

Presently there was an exclamation, "What cheer!"

Margaretta looked around. Her irrepressible sister Berty stood in the French window, her dark head thrust forward inquiringly.

"Come out, dear," said Mrs. Stanisfield, "I am alone."

"I want to have a talk," said Berty, coming forward, "and have you anything to eat? I am hungry as a guinea-pig."

"There is a freezer of ice-cream over there behind those azaleas—the cake is in a covered dish."

Berty dipped out a saucerful of ice-cream, cut herself a good-sized piece of cake, and then took a low seat near her sister, who was examining her curiously.

"Berty," said Margaretta, suddenly, "you have something to tell me."

Berty laughed. "How queer things are. Two months ago we had plenty of money. Then Grandma lost everything. We had to go and live in that old gone-to-seed mansion on River Street—you know what a dirty street it is?"

"Yes, I know—I wish I didn't."

"I'm not sorry we went. I've had such experiences. I thought I wouldn't tell you, Margaretta, till all was over. You might worry."

"What have you been doing?" asked Margaretta, anxiously.

"You remember how the neighbours thought we were missionaries when we first moved to the street?"

"Yes, I do."

"And when I spoke sharply to a slow workman, an impudent boy called out that the missionary was mad?"

"Yes, I recall it—what neighbours!"

"I shall never forget that first evening," said Berty, musingly. "Grandma and I were sitting by the fire—so tired after the moving—when a dozen of those half-washed women came edging in with Bibles and hymn-books under their arms."

"It was detestable," said Margaretta, with a shrug of her shoulders, "but does it not worry you to repeat all this?"

"No, dearest, I am working up to something. You remember the women informed us in a mousie way that they had come to have a prayer-meeting, and I cuttingly told them that we weren't ready for callers. Dear Grandma tried to smooth it over by saying that while we had a great respect for religious workers, we did not belong to them, but her salve didn't cover the wound my tongue had made."

"What do you mean?" asked Margaretta.

"Here begins the part that is new to you," said Berty, jubilantly. "To snub one's neighbours is a dangerous thing. Every tin can and every decrepit vegetable in our yard next morning eloquently proclaimed this truth."

"You don't mean to say they had dared—"

"Had dared and done—and our yard had just been so nicely cleaned. Well, I was pretty mad, but I said nothing. Next morning there was more rubbish—I went into the street. There was no policeman in sight, so I went to the city hall. Underneath is a place, you know, where policemen lounge till they have to go on their beats."

"No, I don't know. I never was in the city hall in my life. You didn't go alone, Berty?"

“Yes, I did—why shouldn’t I? I’m a free-born American citizen. Our grandfather was one of the leading men of this city. His taxes helped to build that hall. I’ve a right there, if I want to go.”

“But without a chaperon, and you are so young, and—and—”

“Beautiful.”

“I was going to say pretty,” remarked Margaretta, severely.

“Beautiful is stronger,” said Bert, calmly. “What a lovely view you have from this roof-garden, Margaretta. How it must tranquillize you to gaze at those trees and flower-beds when anything worries you.”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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