

"Taint the money," just then Don observed, in an audible mutter to Aleck, giving the stable door a kick as he spoke.

The boys had let nothing escape them. Don had been reading his father's thoughts. The kick called Squire Dexter back to the present. He looked up at the boys. His sons were sharp like himself, he reflected. Could he afford it? He determined to shift the responsibility of the bargain upon the boys. They should decide. As he turned to speak, the old man quavered behind him. The hesitation had worried him.

"I thought it was a good bargain, squire. I'll have to sell her. I might take—"

The squire had whispered to his boys: "I could get the horse for sixty dollars. She is worth three hundred dollars. Shall I beat him down to sixty? I leave it to you."

"But, pa," interposed Don, with a frown; "would that be just right when we took the refusal at seventy-five?"

"And he's got lots of things to get," said Aleck.

"I say he ought to get what's right," said Don, stoutly, and Aleck nodded a vigorous assent.

"Mr. Dick!" The squire pulled his coat about him and wheeled upon the old man. "Don't say a thing. I can't afford the price." The peremptory tone made old Mr. Dick shrink.

"Eben!" The squire turned back to the door. "Step here!"

Eben Dexter had thought it best not to be seen in the transaction. He was used to bargaining and he thought the sight of a stranger might raise the price. He did not know what kind of a man Mr. Dick was. Then he had wanted to enjoy his cigar. But he, too, had been observing some of the very things the squire had observed, and the cigar had lost its flavor.

He threw it aside in disgust as he stepped inside at his brother's call, and saw the white-haired, bent, shabby old man trying to hide disappointment in unnecessary attentions to the animal in the stall.

"This is my brother, Mr. Dick." The squire's tone was cool and even. The old man raised his faded, misty eyes and bowed silently. "Holl make you an offer for your horse."

Eben Dexter looked in surprise at his brother. "Not going to buy it yourself?"

"We can't afford it." The squire made a comprehensive gesture that took in the wondering boys, Mr. Dick and himself. "Make him the offer you made me."

Eben Dexter raised his shaggy eyebrows, glanced at the boys, who were staring straight into their father's eyes, looked once more at his brother, took hold of his own coat-collar and shook himself up. "Mr. Dick, I'll buy your horse for two hundred dollars."

"What!" The old man gasped.

"I guess I can add a hundred on my own account," said Eben Dexter, coolly, nodding sturdily back at his brother, and then laughing encouragingly as he saw old Mr. Dick clinging trembling to the manger. "That'll make three. That is what your horse is worth."

"And I could not afford to give what she is worth," said the squire, recovering his most matter-of-fact manner.

The Dexters were prompt to act when a decision was reached. A check was drawn on the spot, while the squire tried to ward off the broken thanks that Mr. Dick attempted to utter.

"No poorhouse, no poorhouse," he murmured, again and again, causing both men to shuffle about uneasily, and sending Don and Aleck outside for a violent wrestling-match by way of concealing their emotion.

"You'll have a horse when I can afford it," the squire simply said to the boys, as the two men came out to find them thus joyously engaged, and to send them back for Doll. He knew that his sons understood.

"I'm glad a Dexter's got him," reiterated old man Dick, his bent form straightened up, his eyes beaming, as he stepped spryly about making preparations for Doll's departure. "It ain't so hard to let her go now. Oh, but it's what a man takes along when he makes a bargain that shows his religion. You should be proud of your father, boys."

"We are," Don promptly answered, elevating his chin proudly. "It's better than even having Doll our own selves."

But Aleck could not refrain from a boast at the tea-table. "I tell you," said he, "it takes a Dexter to make a bargain, though, and this is the best one yet."

The squire looked across at his wife and she smiled with loving approval.

—F. G. GRANT, in *Youth's Companion*.

1898		July					1898	
Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.		
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1898		August					1898	
Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.		
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