

Alystyne's Victory

(By Margaret A. Richard.)

In a southern farm house a woman bent with years and with toil was reading aloud to a man and a young girl a letter she had just received. Her voice trembled with pride and delight as she read; pride was visible, too, on the old man's face, though he sought to hide it from his wife and daughter. The latter paused in her task of preparing fruit for the morrow's preserving, and a red, curling peeling from the apple she held fell over a hand not white and dainty as the hands of idle maids are, but browned by indoor and outdoor labor and by exposure to sun and air. The rays of the lamp penetrated to the frailest corner of the big, unglazed kitchen, in which the stillness was unbroken except by the woman's voice as she read:

College, June 7, 1899.

My dear Mother—Just to think! I will soon be home for the summer holidays. I can scarcely wait until the thirteenth to see you home folks, though I know the time will pass quickly, as we have so much to do between now and then.

Did I tell you that the Daughters of the Revolution have offered a prize—a gold medal—to the boy in college who shall write the best essay on the subject: "Young America?" We had to hand in our manuscript last week, and from them the professors have selected the three they think best, which are to be read by their respective writers on the evening of the twelfth—just before the awarding of diplomas to the graduating class. A committee of ladies, members of the Daughters of the Revolution, will decide which of the three is deserving of the prize and the medal to be awarded that night. You will be surprised to learn that your humble servant is one of the fortunate three.

The boys are much interested in the contest, and anxious to know what the result will be. As for yourself, father and Sadie, I know what will be your hopes in regard to the outcome, but you must not set your hearts too much upon my success.

With much love for them, but the lion's share for yourself, I am,
Lovingly your son,
Alystyne.

"Pretty good for our Al!" said Mr. Burt, assuming an indifference he did not feel.

"Pretty good. Why, father," protested his wife (she had called him "father" ever since their boy came, nearly twenty years before); "you should remember he won it over three hundred boys."

"Three hundred and twenty-nine," corrected Sadie, who was always precise in her statements.

"I always knew," went on the mother, "that Alystyne would do great things if we gave him the chance. We must let him finish, father!"

"Tut! tut! Are you not yet tired of toiling and scripping for him?" And the man bent over to pinch the worn cheek of his wife as he added: "You are growing old and wrinkled, and I'm saving for him, when you ought to be spending something on yourself—ought to go off on a trip or something."

At that Sadie sprang up, letting fall, as she did so, the pan of apple peelings; but she disregarded them entirely, and, kneeling before her mother, cried delightedly: "Oh, do, mother! Alystyne says he can scarcely wait till the thirteenth to see us, and he would be so glad if you would go to the city, and be at the college when he reads his essay. Please, mother!"

But Mrs. Burt shook her head. For years she had not been beyond the limits of their neighborhood, and she felt she would be afraid in a strange place, among strange people.

"But Alystyne will be there," persisted her daughter, as though there was nothing to dread where Alystyne was, "and you need not go till the last day, and you two can come home together. Think of hearing Alystyne read his beautiful essay! I know it will be beautiful, for everything he does is as it should be, is it not, mother?"

Mrs. Burt affectionately stroked her daughter's hair, as she answered: "We certainly have cause to feel proud of him, but that is no excuse for my taking an extravagant journey to hear his essay, when he can read it for us at home."

"Oh, no, no!" And the girl put a hand playfully over her mother's lips, as if she would not listen to a refusal. It seemed to her she detected signs of yielding in the voice of Mrs. Burt, and she was hopeful of carrying her point.

"You know, father," she said, turning to him, "that it will not be so extravagant, that it will cost very little. Why may she not go?"

"Tut, tut!" he answered, "Just to wear a flowery something about a new America—imagined by the boys? But I don't care, maybe a change will do her good."

And so it was settled. They talked it over with many anticipations of delight, deciding it would be more pleasant not to let the son and

brother know of their plans. Mrs. Burt would go on the twelfth to the city, arriving there about eight in the evening, and be driven at once to the college. What a pleasant surprise it would be for Alystyne!

At half-past eight o'clock—the hour for beginning the commencement exercises—the auditorium of the college was nearly filled. The rays from the electric lights overhead and on all sides flashed upon rich dresses and costly jewels, for the elite of the city were there. On the stage sat some prominent men of the state, the members of the college faculty, and those belonging to the graduating class, as well as the three students who were to compete for the medal.

Alystyne, handsome and manly looking, was letting his glances wander idly over the sea of faces before him, when a fellow student touched him on the shoulder, and said with laughter in his voice: "Do look! Old country has come."

He turned in the direction indicated, and beheld an old lady, who seemed almost afraid of the vast assemblage of persons among whom she suddenly found herself when being escorted up the aisle. The common brown dress she wore, and the little plaid shawl which she never went without, even in summer time, seemed strangely out of place in that scene of fashion and beauty.

Her bonnet, whose plainness was relieved only by loops of ribbon above the face, and by a scant bow under the chin, was not a fit de siècle affair, and caused smiles to ripple over the faces of thoughtless girls and women. She felt instinctively that she was attracting more attention than is usually given a newcomer, and looked vainly about for a vacant seat into which to sink and hide herself.

Alystyne, looking on, saw her being led almost to the very front; saw the young lady by whom she was finally seated—one to whom he had recently shown some attention—cast a meaningful glance at her companion, then draw her dainty dress closer about her. His mother's eyes at that moment met his own, and the light of recognition illumined her face.

She would have smiled a greeting, no doubt, but he turned quickly away, as if he did not know her. He did not mean to slight his mother, he told himself, but the fellow student who had called her "old country" was watching her, and might laugh should he now acknowledge her presence. He felt ashamed, whether of himself for his weakness, or of his mother's dress and appearance, he scarcely knew. He was debating the question within himself when his name was called, and he arose to face the audience.

He was so young compared with the two who were to compete against him, and there was something so attractive in his fresh and boyish appearance, that sympathy was at once enlisted in his behalf, and all listened attentively while he read. Without so winning a personality, however, he would have made his power felt — so thoughtful was his essay, so beautiful the language in which it was clothed, and so natural and earnest his manner of reading. Presently he came to a paragraph treating of the manhood of America, in which he said that youth is the time for decision as regards a life work, and expressed himself as grateful that so many noble colleges are accessible to the young men of our country, in which to make preparation for what they sought to achieve.

Then he paused for an instant, for something seemed to ask: "How came they accessible to you—a poor boy?" Like a flash came a picture of the farm house among the pines, and of the sacrifices they who dwelt there had made for him, that he might be prepared to make something of his future; of the mother's toil stained hands and bent body; of the cheap dress and plain bonnet she had worn for so long, while he—what had he not had?

The paper fell to his side, and his voice became tense with feeling as he spoke of the mother of the American boy, of all she was willing to bear and sacrifice to help her son to a place of honor in life. He knew then of whom he should have been ashamed a few minutes ago, and, forgetting all save that he would make amends to the poorly dressed woman who had borne him, he spoke such eulogiums of motherhood as brought tears to all eyes. The audience felt, and those who had read his composition, knew that what he was giving expression to had never been put upon paper, but came spontaneously from the heart.

Mrs. Burt listened with feelings of mingled emotion. She knew Alystyne must have seen her when she came in, but in her heart was no resentment for his not having recognized her. She heard the richly dressed young lady sitting next to her speak of him as a friend, and thought she could understand how his sensitive nature would shrink from having her know the woman at her side was his mother. She would not humiliate him; she would slip out quickly and quietly when the people began to stir, and never let him know her mother-heart was breaking because of this abyss which had suddenly shown itself as existing between them. She scarcely heard what the other two young men read; she scarcely when the diplomas were awarded to the graduating class; but she knew presently that the medal for the best essay was being presented to her son, and that he had never seemed more worthy of admiration.

The programme was ended at last, and she turned her face resolutely toward the door, but could make no

progress, because of the crowd about her. She did not see Alystyne come quickly down the rostrum to make his way toward her; she did not hear when he asked the young lady to touch his mother for him, to attract her attention.

"Your mother?" she asked in surprise.

"Yes, my mother," he answered. "I would like to introduce you to her."

She leaned over, and touching Mrs. Burt on the shoulder, said respectfully: "Your son wishes to speak to you."

Then she acknowledged the introduction gracefully, and made room for the old lady to pass to the young man. Alystyne bent down and kissed her, then led her to the president of the college, with whom he was a favorite.

"This is my mother, Dr. Shulter," he said.

The president bowed low over her hand in greeting: "I am glad to meet the mother of such a son—a mother of whom he has just given a beautiful word picture. It must have been a pleasure to you, Mrs. Burt, to be near him in his hour of triumph."

But, though they knew it not, Alystyne had triumphed over more than his fellow students that night; he had gained a victory over self.—American Boy.

A VICIOUS EVIL.

Of all the evils prevalent among young men, we know of none more blighting in the moral effects than to speak lightly of the virtue of women. Nor is there anything in which young men are so thoroughly mistaken, as to the low estimate they form of the integrity of women—not of their own mothers and sisters. As a rule, no person who surrenders to this debasing habit is to be trusted with the enterprise requiring integrity of character. Plain words should be spoken on this point, for the evil is a general one and deep-rooted. If young men are sometimes thrown into the society of thoughtless or depraved women they have no more right to measure other women by those, than they would have to estimate the character of honest and respectful citizens by the department of crime in our police courts. Let the young men remember that their chief happiness depends in utter faith in women. No world wisdom, no misanthropic philosophy can cover or weaken this fundamental truth. It stands like a record of God itself, for it is nothing less than this—and should put an everlasting seal upon lips that are wont to speak disparagingly of woman-kind.

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CHILDREN'S CORNER

THE ELEPHANTEATER.

"Nonsense Verse" in St. Nicholas. An Elephanteater, in search of his prey, Found two maiden aunts very much in his way. When they took to their heels, with a series of squeals, He remarked, "I'm especially hungry to-day!"

THE FEAST OF THE DOLL.

Nora Archibald Smith in St. Nicholas. In flow'ry Japan, the home of the fan, The land of the parasol, Each month has its feast, from greatest to least, And March is the Feast of the Doll-doll-doll, And March is the Feast of the Doll.

The wee, slipp'ed maid in gown of brocade, The baby with shaven poll, The little brown lad in embroid'ry clad, All troop to the Feast of the Doll-doll-doll, All troop to the Feast of the Doll.

How pleasant 'twould be, 'neath an almond-tree, In sunshine and perfume to loll, Forget our own spring with its wind and its sting, And sing to the praise of the Doll-doll-doll, And sing to the praise of the Doll!

Come, sweet Tippytoes, as pink as a rose, And I will get Betty and Moll; Let us follow the plan of the folk in Japan, And dance for your Feast, little Doll-doll-doll, And dance for your Feast, little Doll.

"DIOGENES THE WISE."

Eleanor Lewis in March St. Nicholas. With all his faults, the old philosopher of Athens was often called "Diogenes the Wise." Whether his wisdom was really so great as to deserve that title may be doubted. But his worst faults seem to have been good qualities carried to excess. In opposing too much luxury, he cut himself off from the comforts of life; in his eagerness to make life simple, he lost sight of its gentilities; he was saving at the expense of neatness, truthful at the cost of courtesy, and plain-spoken even to rudeness. One would say that he was coarse-grained by nature; but he showed signs of tenderness, and even refinement, which proved that the grain was not entirely coarse, and which make us wonder at an age that could produce two men so wise and yet so different as Diogenes, the rude, "walking philosopher" of his time, and Plato the polished and aristocratic gentleman.

NATURE'S SLEEPING GARDEN.

Nature and Science for Young Folks in St. Nicholas.

Those who find pleasure in watching "the round of the seasons" regard spring as the beginning and winter as the end. From that point of view March 1 is the naturalist's New Year's Day. Accordingly it seemed quite fitting that in February we should make our last study of the 1902 nature's garden—the "dried garden." This month we may look forward to the 1903 garden, that is even now in existence, though dormant and not readily seen.

THE POOR UNFORTUNATE HOTTENTOT.

(Laura E. Richards in St. Nicholas.) This poor unfortunate Hottentot, He was not content with his lottentot; Quoth he, "For my dinner, As I am a sinner, There's nothing to put in the pottentot!"

This poor unfortunate Hottentot Cried: "Yield to starvation I'll nottentot; I'll get me a cantaloup, Or else a young antelope, One who'll enjoy being shottentot." This poor unfortunate Hottentot

His bow and his arrows he gottentot; And being stout-hearted, At once he departed, And struck through the bush at a trottentot.

This poor unfortunate Hottentot When several miles from his cottentot, He chanced to set eyes on A snake that was p'ison, A'tying itself in a knottentot.

Then this poor unfortunate Hottentot Remarked: "This for me is no spottentot! I'd better be going, There's really no knowing If he's trying to charm me, or what-tentot!"

This poor unfortunate Hottentot Was turning to flee to his grottentot, When a lioness met him, And suddenly "et" him,

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MORAL:

This poor unfortunate Hottentot Had better have borne with his lottentot, And grown even thinner For lack of a dinner. But I should have had, then, no pottentot!

COMPREHENSIVE SIGNS.

The London Pall Mall Gazette, in an amusing article entitled "Old Signboards," reproduces some inscriptions which still make their plea for patronage. A study of some of them suggests the origin of the New England "general store" and the modern American department store of the large cities.

In Falmouth the writer of the article saw the following inscription on a sign:

TEMPERANCE HOTEL.
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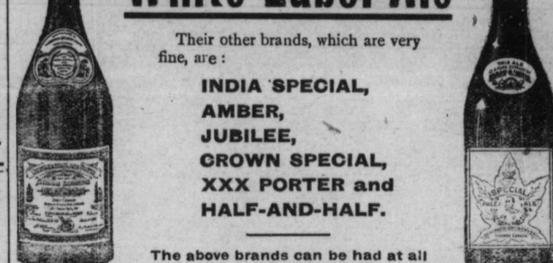
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Men they have many faults, But woman has but two; And nothing's right they do.

Nothing's right that they say. From a village in Gloucestershire he unearths another of the same nature: Johnny Overy lives here, teaches music by steam; egg merchant, and parish clerk, pig killer and bellman. J. O. sells red-herrings and raisins, parasols and pistols, barm and sand, fiddiestrings and flour, tripe, dubbing and all kinds of hardware but treacle.