

BOYS AND GIRLS

Saved.

(By Florida Twichell.)

"There is the Cathedral bell. Wake up, stranger, and make your toilet for church."

Ernest Clayton arose from his hard bed in the old city prison and rubbed his swollen eyes, and looked about him in a dazed way. He tried to recall the events that had preceded his long, drunken sleep. He had a confused remembrance of some trouble the night before, but of his arrest he could remember nothing.

He occupied one of a long row of cells opening into a narrow corridor. The door of his cell was already unlocked, and he found that about twenty-five men had passed the night in the place. Some were serving short sentences for loitering and drunkenness, some, like himself, had been brought in the night before in a state of intoxication. He found his money was all gone, and he concluded his prospects for spending the day in the place, perhaps several days, were very good.

Ernest Clayton was a young man little past twenty, fairly well dressed, and in spite of his dissipated appearance, there was an air of refinement about him.

The fellow who had addressed him was come to be regarded as a 'regular,' at the prison, and he usually tried to get what amusement he could out of the rather monotonous days he spent there. He was specially cordial and officious with strangers. "Where 'am I?" young Clayton asked.

"Oh, this is your first, is it? One never forgets the place after a little stay here; sort of cherishes the memory. I am college-bred myself (you would not think it, though), and I could as soon forget my beloved 'Alma Mater,' as this old city prison. The tears fill my eyes when I recall my days and nights here. The gentle murmur of the river as it washes the grim old walls outside, the tender, bewitching music of the crickets in the chinks of the floor, the friendship of the faithful cockroaches as they wander about my pillowless head or stroll on the moonlit floor. Yes, it is a wonderful place here. And some wonderful people drop in here for a night or two. But you'd better get ready for church."

"Church?"

"Yes, the missionaries will be here soon." "I am not anxious to see them," replied Ernest Clayton, indifferently. "It is bad enough to be here, if we are let alone."

"I used to feel that way. I thought if I could get along without the gospel outside I could in here, but I am glad to see them now. There is no cant about them. They are real square genuine men and women."

Just then the big iron door swung open, and several ladies and two young men entered the corridor. Coming half-way down the range, they began to sing a familiar hymn. A middle-aged lady, with a sweet, sympathetic face, acted as leader. Several of the men greeted her familiarly, calling her Mrs. Dean.

She said, "I see some strangers here, and I will explain to you why we come here. We always come at this hour for a little service. The day seems long here, with nothing to do, so we have brought you some papers to read, and we are going to stay and sing and pray and tell you a little about the Christ who is so precious to us. I am sure we all come this morning from choice, and because we love our Master and we love the dear souls he died to save."

After several hymns, in which the men joined heartily, and prayers offered by the young men and women, Mrs. Dean asked one

of the young ladies to speak to the men. "I am sure you will enjoy listening to Miss Weston. The children at our mission love her, and her name has become a household word in many homes. The children seldom make a mistake in their friendships."

Miss Weston read the old story of Jesus walking on the stormy Galilee, when he went to his disciples over the waves.

No ecclesiastical body had commissioned her to preach the gospel, yet that little talk might have moved many an audience that sat in cushioned pews that Sabbath morning, napping or dreaming through a long theological discourse.

The men drew nearer and listened with tearful eyes.

Ernest Clayton forgot the old prison walls. Once more he seemed to stand in the dear old home among those who loved him, when he knelt at his mother's side in prayer, and once more he seemed to feel her good-night kisses on his lips. He saw his golden-haired sisters, who had been so proud of him before the demon of drink had robbed that home of its dearest treasure.

At the close of her talk Miss Weston said: "He is here to-day, my brother, the very same Jesus who walked on the strong waves of Galilee. He comes to you over the dark billows of sin and doubt and despair. He stretches out his hands to you to-day. Will you not come to him? Let him break the power of sin and habit. I wish all who want to seek him would kneel with us in prayer."

Among those who knelt on the damp stone floor was Ernest Clayton. Mrs. Dean went and knelt at his side, and laid her hand gently on his shoulder.

"Tell me about it, my boy. Are you really coming back to the Father's house this morning?"

In broken sentences the young man told her of his former life, his loving mother, his faithful sisters; of his wild, sinful career. How he had wandered from home completely discouraged, trying to break away from the power of drink, then falling again, till he had determined never to go home again.

"I thought every good impulse was dead till you came in this morning. The old hymns brought it all back to me, and your kind, motherly words thrilled me with a new hope, and I listened to the gospel message. If it is true, there is hope for me, and I am going to try."

In a few words Mrs. Dean poured in his ear the old, old story of Jesus' pardoning love and sustaining grace; and like sweetest music came the voice that called over the waves of Galilee, hushing all doubts and fears, and a faith born of the need of the hour, came to Ernest Clayton, and he stepped out on the promises of God; he went to the waiting Saviour over the dark waves of sin.

Away in a distant State a mother bowing in prayer for her wandering boy, felt a sweet sense of peace and trust.

The bells from a dozen churches in the city rang out to the clear morning air, calling to the regular morning service crowds of people who hurried to their places of worship with devotion and reverence, and a dim sense of the real meaning of Jesus' life and death, but knowing little of the real Christ, who stood that morning with the little company bowed in the old city prison, touching into new-life the soul that was dead in sin. And angels carried to heaven the glad news that the wandering boy had come home.

In the first peace and joy that the knowledge of forgiveness and deliverance from the power of appetite brought, Ernest

Clayton, forgot the perplexing question of his future. But he soon remembered that he would be turned out from the prison penniless, homeless, and hungry, with his reputation gone and a command to leave the city at once or be re-arrested for loitering.

But his new-found hope seemed too precious to lose. Mrs. Dean had said: "Come to the mission when you are free." One of the Christian young men had whispered, "Don't be discouraged; I was a hopeless drunkard, and the Lord saved me, and has kept me five long years."

After a few days our hero was discharged with the advice to leave the city at once. Standing at the door of the prison a sorry hero he seemed. But there was a new purpose in his heart. He was weak from his bread-and-water diet, and lame from lying on a hard bed in the damp cells, and the future looked anything but hopeful.

"You might get lodging and board at the mission," one of the men had said to him, "but who wants to work five hours a day for that? Why, I have seen the time when I could earn my four dollars a day. You won't catch me coming down to that. You are too tony a chap to sleep in their bunks there."

"I would think it would be infinitely better than our beds here," said Ernest.

Yet it cost him a severe struggle to go to the lodging-house. But he went and applied for work with a manly spirit that won the confidence of the gentleman in charge.

He felt so free and glad in his deliverance from drink and the dreary old prison that the work seemed no drudgery. The meetings in the mission hall were a delight to him. Mrs. Dean recognized him, and gave him a kind, motherly greeting, and sought every little opportunity to make his acquaintance. He was given a place of trust in his work and for a few weeks all went well.

One evening Mrs. Dean missed him from the meeting; he came in late, however, but on the next night he was again absent.

"Do you know where Ernest Clayton is?" she asked the janitor.

"I am not certain," was the reply. "He went down town on an errand. Some one said he was in Mankin's saloon last night. You know there is a fellow tending bar there who used to be here."

A little later Mrs. Dean and Miss Weston slipped out quietly and turned down a side street, and went directly to the saloon in question.

"You are not going in, Mrs. Dean," said her companion.

"That depends on whether it is necessary. If he is there I shall see him before I come away. Satan has come straight into our ranks and snatched the poor boy away, and I can't stand with folded hands and see him go back into the life he has been saved from."

The women knocked at the saloon door. A young man opened it with apparent surprise.

"Is Ernest Clayton here?" asked Mrs. Dean. "I will see," was the reply.

"Who wants him?" said the proprietor.

"Some of those mission women."

"Tell 'em 'no.'"

Mrs. Dean pushed the door open and stepped inside. She was not mistaken, Ernest was there.

He sprang to his feet.

"We want to see you, Ernest," said Mrs. Dean, quietly. Without a word the young man followed the ladies outside.

"Let us walk down the street a little," said