

"Have you ever tried?"

Boys are not much in the habit of reading moral lectures to one another, so it is not likely Ned would have enlarged on the subject, even if they had not just then been ready to carry in their string of fish, to be duly admired by Ned's mother.

But Ned's lightly spoken and quickly, by him, forgotten question returned to Will's mind as, later, he walked alone in the direction of his own home—"Have you ever tried?"

"Well, I haven't—that's a fact. But," he gave a little laugh, "the idea of bringing flowers to Aunt Susan! Fancy her stare! She would not know what to make of it."

But the remembrance of Ned's grateful thought of his mother, and the sweetness of the caressing tenderness between mother and son, had touched the conscience as well as the heart of the motherless boy.

"If it wasn't flowers, I suppose it might be something else. She's as stiff and proper as a poker, and I suppose a boy might smile, and bow, and be polite all his life, and she'd never know but what he was cutting up some new kind of pranks. But, then, perhaps it's no wonder. She doesn't know much about any boys but me. I guess she thinks all they're good for is to carry mud in on their shoes, and slam doors, and leave the fly-screens open, and be late at meals. But, I say!—I've a great mind to try Ned's way; that is, partly—just for the fun of seeing how she'll take it."

With which determination Will walked around the house, to find his aunt approaching the side door with a huge parcel in her arms. At any other time he would not have troubled himself about this, but now he stepped up and opened the door for her. She took little notice of him except to ask:

"Do you know where Hiram is?"

"No, I don't."

"I've been looking for him. I want to send this bundle down to Mrs. Brown's."

She passed on through the hall as if speaking more to herself than to any one else. Will was rushing up to his room, two steps at a time, when he suddenly paused.

"I'll take it to her, Aunt Susan."

She stopped and looked at him unsmilingly, concluding at once, in her own mind, that he had business of his own that way, yet still surprised that he should be willing to include in it a service for herself.

"Well, if it won't bother you," she said.

More intercourse with Ned awakened in Will a more honest resolution to make the best of himself in the matter of grace of manner and behavior. It is a pity that every boy should not reflect how largely his conduct influences those among whom he is thrown. Will increased his efforts to avoid small annoyances to his aunt, and began showing her small attentions, which sometimes won for him an approving smile.

He began to feel touched and conscience smitten at perceiving that what he had begun in an unworthy spirit of fun should be making the impression on Aunt Susan which should belong only to honest effort. It was pleasant to the boy, whose home life was so lonely, to find himself looking for Aunt Susan's smile and for the softened voice in which she answered his good-morning. And one day he ran up to his room, and laughed by himself until he was out of breath.

"I took off my hat to her as I met her on the corner, and she actually turned red with astonishment."

"More shame for me that it should take her off her feet so," came with sober reflection.

"If I've done it in fun before, I'll do it in earnest now. I think it pays for a boy to be decent in his ways, whether anybody notices it or not. It pays just in the feeling he has himself."

Which was as wise a conclusion as a boy often arrives at.

Months later Will went away from home on a visit. On his return Aunt Susan stood on the steps with a face which, in its welcoming expression, might almost have belonged to Ned's mother.

"Oh, my dear boy!" she exclaimed. "I have needed you so much. No one to hunt for my glasses. No one to bring me the paper. No one to have flowers on the table before I come down. No one to care whether I am waited on or not. I could not have believed I should miss you so."

Will went upstairs with the warmth of her kiss upon his cheek, trying to remember when anybody had kissed him before. The tears came very near his eyes as he saw about his room more than one evidence of Aunt Susan's very tender thought of him. "It was well worth trying," he said to himself.—*The Interior.*

OH, my God, punish far rather with pestilence, with all the terrible sickness on earth, with war, with anything, rather than that Thou be silent to us.—*Luther.*

DOING AND NOT DOING.

"SIR," said a lad, coming down to some of the wharves in Boston, and addressing a well-known merchant, "have you any berth on your ship? I want to earn something."

"What can you do?" asked the gentleman.

"I can try my best to do whatever I am put to do," answered the boy.

"What have you done?"

"I have sawed and split all mother's wood for nigh on two years."

"What have you not done?" asked the gentleman, who was a queer sort of a questioner.

"Well, sir," answered the boy, after a moment's pause, "I have not whispered in school once for a whole year."

"That's enough," said the gentleman; "you may ship aboard this vessel, and I hope to see you the master of her some day. A boy who can master a wood pile and bridle his tongue must be made of good stuff."—*Selected.*

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