

him asking a place, not for himself, but for a friend. There was in the young man's face a certain strength that promised well for the future.

"I might take your name and address, and if anything should happen to change the situation, I could write to you."

The face of the young man brightened in a very cheery way. "That would be kind of you," he said, taking the pencil Mr. Ames handed him. "I suppose you think I am too persistent in asking what I have for Billy; but if I didn't know him so well, maybe I would not urge so hard."

"You say he is ill just now, anyway?"

"Yes. It would be all right if he could find a place six weeks from now. He was hurt dreadfully not long ago. And that's another reason why I am so anxious that he should win. It was for me he was injured."

Mr. Ames came back to his desk and sat down. "Won't you take that chair and tell me more about it? I am very busy, but this will not take long. I feel interested in this case."

David Gray took the seat Mr. Ames pointed to him. "There isn't very much to tell, sir. It will be a short story. You see, Billy and I have always been chums. Went to school together and all that. And we have been studying lately on a little machine for making rivets, and bolts, and such things. My father had a small shop where he worked. He's been dead several years, father has, and I have not been old enough to do much with the shop until quite lately, and now it's gone."

A shadow fell over David's face for a moment, and he looked out of the window.

"We had the machine almost finished, and were trying it one night."

"Was it Billy's invention?" Mr. Ames interrupted. His interest was increasing.

"We were partners in it. I suppose the idea was not altogether his," David replied, modestly. But we called it our machine, because we had worked it out together. He really did most of the work."

"And the plan was yours. I see."

"We worked at it almost all night that night. It did not do just as he would have liked to have it. Just what the trouble was we could not find out for a long time. Billy made the discovery at last. One of the bearings was a little too tight, that was all. It was almost morning when we got it to working. By that time we were both pretty tired. Billy says that he dropped to sleep first. He takes the blame all upon himself. I don't think he ought to, for I was just as much at fault as he was. Anyway, the next I knew I felt a suffocating breath of air from the little engine-room. For the time I could not stir or think very well. I tried hard to rouse myself, but some way, the smoke held me down."

"I am sure I never would have stirred again had it not been for Billy. He had strength enough to drag me out of the shop. The building burned with all in it. The fire caught in the engine-room, and Billy says he left the door open the last time he was down to see to the fire. It had gone down low, and he thought if he gave it a little more draft it would come up all right. He worked like a tiger to put the fire out, and, while he was doing so, he slipped and fell. One of his legs was broken, sir."

There were tears in David's eyes now, and Mr. Ames went to the window, blowing his nose quite vigorously. When he came back, he asked:—

"You think he will be around again, shortly?"

"Oh, I am sure he will. We could not have it any other way. We, mother and I, took him right over to our house and nursed him as best

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we could. Billy has no home, you understand. That makes it all the worse for him. He has had such a hard time all the way, and now this. The doctor says he may be lame all his life. I hope it may not be so bad as that. But, anyway, he will need something to do. We were going to give him a place in the little factory if the machine was a success, as we thought it would be. That would have been fine; for Billy can do so many things I can't, sir. He is a good scholar, and can write beautifully. He was going to do the work in the office, see to the business part, and I was to look after the other part."

"You had no insurance on the shop?"

"It ran out a week or two before the fire. We had almost enough money to take out a new policy, but the fire came too soon for us."

"And the machine was not patented?"

"We thought it better to wait until it was perfect."

"Could you do it over again—make the machine, I mean?"

Mr. Ames watched keenly for the answer.

"Oh, yes, sir. It is every bit of it in my mind now."

The superintendent sat for a moment with his head on his breast.

"The best place for Billy would be in the office, then?"

"He can do anything, but, maybe, that would be most to his liking."

David had gasped at the changed voice in which Mr. Ames was speaking, and leaned over the desk toward the great man.

"Billy will do well, sir. I know it. He is honest and true. You could trust him everywhere."

It was worth something to have a friend like David. Mr. Ames looked into the young man's clear eyes and saw there more than lay in David's words. While he was pleading so bravely for Billy, he was revealing his own character in terms that could not be mistaken.

"And I thought all men selfish!" the superintendent said, half to himself. Then in a louder tone he went on: "I told you what was strictly true, David. We have no vacancies. A factory like this never has. But when your friend is strong enough, you may bring him up here. I think

we shall have something for him to do."

David had risen now, and had seized the hand of Mr. Ames. But the superintendent would not let him speak until he had added:—

"And, David, you make your plans to come, too. And be sure to have that new machine all in your mind's eye. We will see what we can do to help you with it."

If you could have seen the joy in David's face then! Then, too, if you could have been where you could have watched Billy and his friend when David broke the news to him! I know you would have been made stronger and better. Surely this was a friendship that counted, a friendship enduring for all time.—Young People.

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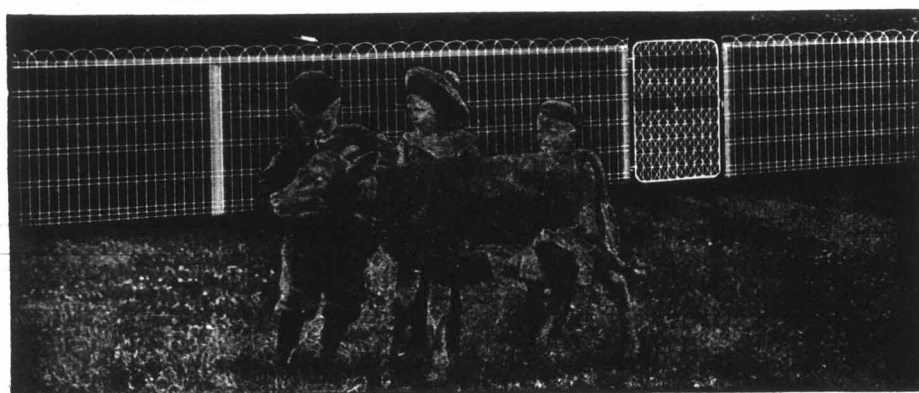
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