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Children's Corner.

CONQUERING BY LOVE.

I.

"Oh, mother, we've had such a jolly time!"

Theo Wimborne threw himself panting and out of breath in a chair by the window.

"I'm glad to hear it, dear, but now go and make yourself ready for tea. I expect we shall both be glad of some this warm afternoon."

Mrs. Wimborne laid aside her sewing as Theo left the room, bounding up the small staircase three steps at a time.

"Dear boy!" she said, speaking her thoughts aloud. "He throws himself so earnestly into everything he undertakes that sometimes I almost tremble for the discipline that may be waiting for him. And now he is growing out of childhood, he needs more than ever a father's careful training."

The mother gave a little sigh as she thought of the restless waves that still surged above the only grave in the household. For Theo's father had been drowned at sea long ago one stormy night, whilst the mother rocked her baby to sleep at home, little thinking of the lonely years that were to follow that sudden tempest.

Her musings were interrupted by Theo's entrance. He was hot and tired and excited, tremendously hungry and dreadfully thirsty, and for some moments Mrs. Wimborne was occupied in supplying his various wants.

"And how did you get on this afternoon?" she asked presently.

"First-rate, mother! I did so wish you had been there, for I beat everyone in the 'long jump' and the 'handicap,' even Mason himself! I really do think, and so do all the other fellows, that I stand a good chance of winning one race at least!"

"Don't set your heart too much on it," the mother said, feeling it hard to damp the ardour of the young enthusiastic spirit. "I don't want to discourage you, my child, but run for the

sake of running and the good it does you, and not only because you want to gain a prize."

"Oh, no, mother, of course not!" Theo answered carelessly, and then went on to give further details of the afternoon's recreation.

"Mason is the only fellow I'm really afraid of!" he said confidently, passing on his cup for a third instalment. "He's fifteen, more than a year older than I am, and sometimes puts the pace on like fury. I wish I wasn't to run with him, for I hate him so!"

"Whatever for?"

"Everyone does. I don't know how it is, but not a fellow in our school has a good word for him. He's up to such mean tricks and dodges that I'm sure, if we could, we'd black-ball him from the sports altogether!"

"Well, for his own sake I think it is just as well you cannot," Mrs. Wimborne returned.

"Hate is rather a strong word to use, my boy."

"Not when it concerns him!" Theo replied, eager on this point as in everything else. "I don't believe even you would like him, mother!"

This was very convincing, but Mrs. Wimborne passed by the innocent flattery, and asked "What sort of a home has he?"

"Oh, I don't know exactly. His mother's dead, and he's mortally afraid of his father."

"And is he the only child?"

"I think there's a sister, but she's away at school somewhere."

"Poor children! If they are afraid of their own father no wonder they are up to 'all sorts of mean tricks and dodges,'" Mrs. Wimborne said pitifully. "And now, dear, if you have finished, ring the bell for the table to be cleared. It is arithmetic night, is it not?"

The May twilight faded outside unnoticed, whilst mother and son pored over books and writing together. When the lessons were finished and put away, Mrs. Wimborne brought out her work-basket again, which was hailed by a cry of joy from Theo.

"How capitally you are getting on, mother! Don't you think pink-and-white go well together? I'm so glad now you chose those colours for me!"

"Half-an-hour's work will finish everything!" Mrs. Wimborne said, smiling. "You can try them on if you like when you go to bed, so that I can see if any alteration is necessary."

Theo ran out into the little square garden, there to work off excitement by racing numberless times round the trim-kept lawn.

When an hour or so later, he bounded down stairs in the neatly fitting white flannel suit

with its pale pink belt and borderings, his mother might be excused for feeling some pride in the dark, glowing face, and athletic figure, and the success of her own clever handiwork.

"I had no idea it would all look so well!" she said admiringly: "and I was really afraid to give the order at Saunders'. A bill is so soon run up, and not so quickly paid."

Theo, who had been brought up to understand fully the importance of keeping clear from debt, cordially agreed; and after a few capers about the room, thereby endangering the lives of many china ornaments, took himself off to bed.

The athletic club, composed chiefly of Theo's school-fellows, was not to give its annual sports until Saturday afternoon, and this was only Tuesday evening. Three clear days therefore intervened between to-night and the important event, and Theo hoped to make practice perfect before another day dawned.

Mrs. Wimborne was seated at work waiting for Theo's return on Wednesday evening. Tea was all ready, six o'clock had struck, and though it was some minutes after his usual time Theo had not yet appeared.

"I suppose he has got too much excited in his practice to think of the time!" Mrs. Wimborne thought. "But it is not like him to be so unpunctual, and I hope nothing has gone wrong."

She turned to the tea-table, and began cutting thin slices of bread and butter, trying to forget her uneasy thoughts in change of occupation. But it would not do. A quarter-of-an-hour slipped by, and in spite of self-blame for her vague fears, Mrs. Wimborne ran out to the little garden gate, and anxiously scanned the quiet road.

There was not a sign of Theo visible anywhere, she was on the point of returning to the house, when the quick trot of a horse's hoofs and the roll of swift wheels attracted her attention.

A carriage and Theo could have no possible connection, of course, except in her own mind, yet there she stood shading her eyes with her hand, until the doctor's well-known buggy and its occupants were at recognition distance.

After all, the mother's instincts were right. Beside the doctor on the front-seat was actually Theo himself, his face looking paler by many degrees than when she had seen it last.

What had happened?

(To be continued.)

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