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Spirit of the Doctor

(Concluded from page 10.)

would you? You must have one in your mind."

There was one lying unfinished on his table. It had run half its cynical course when the ill-advised house-party had abruptly interrupted its growth. Chet's work, of late, had become bitterer, harder, more brilliant. He gloried in the brilliance to such an extent that he quite forgot to deplore the bitterness. His young intellect was experiencing its growing pains; therefore, its cynicism seemed praiseworthy to Chet.

"I have a story, but you wouldn't like it," he said.

"Perhaps we can improve it," urged Jamie.

With another gay laugh, Chet began his tale. He followed closely the unfinished manuscript, which was lying on his table at home, his retentive memory making it no effort for him to "talk it out" verbatim.

Jamie lay back in his chair, with his eyes closed, and a rapt expression on his little white face. Sometimes, he smiled when he particularly liked some speech. Then, he frowned, and shook his head ever so slightly in silent disapprobation of an irony that hurt.

As Chet neared his climax, the boy grew suddenly nervous. He opened his eyes and glanced bashfully at his visitor, then at a small stand beside his own chair. Finally, he interrupted:

"Chet, I'm an awful nuisance; but it's time for my tonic, and my water-pitcher is empty. Would you—"

"You dear little boy," cried Chet, springing up. "Why didn't you choke me off sooner?"

He ran to the kitchen and pumped and pumped until the water flowed clear and cold. He caught sight of his face in the little mirror over the sink and smiled back in answer to the friendliness of the reflection.

"Some of the Doctor's spirit, I wonder?" he mused, as he poured out Jamie's tonic and settled him a bit more comfortably amongst his pillows.

"Shall we go on with the story?" he asked.

"O, yes, please," said the boy.

It was not easy for Chet to tell the ending that he had in mind. He stumbled, and went back, came to his former point again, advanced, changed a speech in the making, omitted a line of brilliant casuistry, and reached the turning-point.

The boy raised his head from the pillow as far as his pitiful measure of strength would allow. His eyes were bright with excitement.

"Don't let him do it, Chet! Don't let him do it!" he pleaded, in a perfect agony of suspense. "Just think how many people, like me, perhaps, you'd make unhappy."

Chet drew in his breath sharply. The tragedy in the boy's face was a live, vital thing.

"Dear chap," he said, "does it mean as much as that to you?"

The boy nodded eagerly.

"We'll have to do it all over again from the beginning, you and I. Will you help?" asked the author.

"Oh!" gasped Jamie.

Mrs. Morrison came in at that moment. Her eyes lighted with pleasure as she saw the happiness in her boy's face.

"Jamie is helping me with a story," said Chet, simply. "We will finish it another time, soon."

Chet stood on the wide door-step a moment in the gathering darkness. A tender little crescent moon hung in the dark velvet of the sky. A sleigh-bell tinkled merrily far down the road. He watched the smoke from the village chimneys rising straight into the still, frozen air, while in his heart was a happiness that was akin to tears.

With head held high, he started on his homeward walk. "I will work tonight at something new; the old one belongs to Jamie," he said, happily.

Suddenly, he stopped. "There is something more important than work," he breathed; "and I dare it now."

He faced about. With a smile on his lips, a song in his heart, he took the road to Anne's house.



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