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A Sudden Temptation

BY MARY B. SLRIGHT.

It was four years that Dan Foster had been paying 'Squire Denby 6 per cent interest on a five hundred dollar loan. When he borrowed the money he had good reason to think that he would be able to repay it at the end of the year; but his affairs grew steadily worse, and again and again he had to ask for an extension of time. And the 'squire had been very accommodating—to be sure he was his mother's cousin, and that may have been a difference, though relatives are sometimes the hardest of creditors—but of late he, too, had been somewhat straitened, and one morning Dan had a note from him saying that he felt compelled to call in the loan. It seemed to Dan he could not have called for it at a more inconvenient time. Five hundred dollars taken out of his business just then would practically ruin him. Two hundred was the most that could be spared, and he knew of no one who would be willing to loan him the remainder. He made one or two applications without success, and it ended in his putting a mortgage on his house. But he said nothing to his wife about it, she having taken such comfort in thinking the place was free from debt.

The 'squire was an old man, with neither wife nor children. His wife had died suddenly two years before, and he had never quite rallied from the shock. Dan, when shown in that evening, found him sitting alone, with his thin hands stretched out over a sluggish fire. There were two or three servants in the house, but it was easy to see that there was no mistress; and Dan, thinking of his own hearth, where he had left his little wife seething rations for Thanksgiving pies, while she trilled a lullaby to their boy, couldn't help feeling sorry for the 'squire.

"Oh, that loan," said the old gentleman, when Dan told his errand. "It's too bad to hurry you, but I have some payments to make myself in the course of a day or two." And when he had signed a receipt he went on chatting as if unwilling to have him go.

"It's a cheerless way for a man to live, alone with servants," he said. Then suddenly he pressed his hand to his side and sank back in his chair.

"My old trouble," he gasped. And Dan remembered hearing that he was subject to attacks of heart failure.

"What can I do for you, 'squire?" he asked, springing to his help. But he got no answer. There was a quick-drawn, fluttering breath, and the 'squire's kindly face grew pale and rigid.

To summon Cato, the 'squire's man, and dispatch him for a doctor took but a moment, and Dan hastened back to the library. The 'squire had not changed his position and the strange stillness that surrounded him made Dan shudder. He tried the pulse and then laid his ear against the heart, but there were no signs of life.

As he lifted his head he saw the money that he had but a moment before paid to the 'squire, lying in a pile on the table, and not knowing where the 'squire kept his safe, and thinking that it might not be wise to leave it for the servants to look after, he hastily placed it in the envelope in which he had brought it and put it into his pocket, saying to himself that he would give it back to the 'squire as soon as he recovered consciousness.

At the same moment he caught sight of a bottle of brandy, and while he was trying to force a few drops between the 'squire's lips Dr. Burton hurried in, followed by Cato.

"He is past help," said the doctor, with his finger on the pulseless wrist. "I have been afraid of this for the last six months. You were here when the attack came on, Mr.—?"

"Foster, doctor; my name is Foster. Yes, I sat here talking with him, and he had just remarked that it was a cheerless way for a man to live."

"And so it was," said the doctor. "I've been telling him for a year that he ought to have some one in the house besides the servants; but there are none of his own except a grandson, who is in college. By the way, we must telegraph him at once."

"Give me the address and I'll see to sending off a message," said Dan, glad of an excuse to get away.

This strange thing that had happened, this sudden passing of a soul without an instant's warning, gave him a dazed feeling, and he could hardly make himself believe that he was not dreaming. But the crisp night air and contact with living people helped to restore his mental poise.

But when he told his wife of the 'squire's death he mentioned no particulars in regard to his errand. He merely said that he had called at the house on business. Rhoda was not given to vexing a man with needless questions. Then he remembered the 'squire's money.

"Tomorrow," he said to himself, "I will find out who is his executor."

But the morrow proved so busy a day that he had no time to make enquiries, and just as he was leaving the office a letter was received inclosing a bill for one hundred dollars that would have to be paid early the follow-

ing week. Dan groaned as he read it, for he knew that there were several other bills that would soon fall due, and he could see no prospect of being able to meet them.

The next day was Sunday, but the skies were a trifle overcast, and Dan decided that he would not venture out. He stood at the window with a sombre face and watched his wife as she started for the morning service with their boy trudging at her side.

"I'm sorry you don't feel like going," she said, gently, as she gave him a good-bye kiss. If he could have made a hundred dollars by going, he would have gone quickly enough. It was that hundred dollars that he must pay the coming week that was setting him wild. One thing was certain, there would be no turkey on the bill of fare for Thanksgiving, nor could Rhoda ask her father and mother to dinner, as she wanted to do, unless affairs took a turn for the better. What right had a man who was up to his ears in debt to be feasting his friends? And what did he have to give thanks for with nothing but ruin ahead? If by any possibility he could raise that hundred dollars he might be able to see his way out. To be sure, he could put another mortgage on his house, but he hated to think of it; one was bad enough. By the way, there was that money of the 'squire's! He had almost forgotten that he had it. And—why should he be in any haste to return it? The 'squire himself had said that he would not have called on him for it if he had not needed it, and surely he had no need of it now. Besides, no one knows anything about it but you, and you have the receipt for it," whispered the tempter. But Dan scorned that suggestion. He was not a thief. He wanted only to borrow the money to tide him over his present difficulties. When once on his feet he would pay back every penny of it. What an easy way out of his trouble it seemed. And—why not? If the 'squire had left wife or children needing the money, it would be different.

By evening he had very nearly succeeded in convincing himself that it would be no wrong to any one for him to keep the money for another year, paying interest on it, of course, as before. And pacing up and down the room, with his hands behind him, he soon had the whole five hundred mentally disposed of.

Meanwhile, in the rocker by the hearth, sat Rhoda, getting Bob ready for bed. And presently Dan heard the little fellow whisper, "Now I lay me down to sleep."

"An' now, deah, let's say 'Our Father,' " begged the boy, raising his rosy face from clasped hands, and together mother and child began to repeat the Master's prayer.

Of a sudden Rob, who was given to springing unexpected questions, came to a stop.

"What's 'at mean, deah?" he asked; "had us not into temptation?"

"It means keep from being naughty," said the wise little mother.

"Oh," said Bob, sagely. "Had us not into temptation, 'teep us from bein' naughty." And, nodding his curly head, he began again.

But Dan seized his hat and rushed out of the house. "Lead us not into temptation." The words haunted him, for he knew very well that he was walking straight into temptation of his own free will. As he was crossing the street he met Dr. Burton. He would have passed him without speaking, but the doctor recognized him.

"I was just on my way to call on you," he said. "I thought you might like to know that the 'squire's grandson has come and that the funeral is to be tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock."

"And who is the executor?" asked Dan, with a mighty effort.

"Oh, the grandson is heir and executor both, so I hear."

For an instant Dan set his teeth together. What need had this young fellow, who had no family and who was to inherit all the rest of the property, of that five hundred? But "Lead us not into temptation," he heard his wife and boy repeating, and the next instant he had his heel on the dragon's neck.

"Lown," he said, "come with me to the 'squire's, if you can spare the time. I have a payment to make to the estate, and I have never met the grandson."

The doctor faced about at once; and on the way Dan explained the matter, saying that he disliked carrying so much money about him. The doctor thought that he had done wisely in not leaving it where the servants would find it.

After the funeral the next day he was asked to stay to hear the will read. It was not a long document—the 'squire was not given to wasting words. The grandson was named as the principal heir, and there was a generous legacy for each of the servants; then came a brief codicil: "To my kinsman, Dan Foster, I leave the five hundred dollars that I loaned him in 1890. I paid before my death, he is to receive, in addition to the five hundred, whatever interest has been paid on it."

For the first few minutes Dan could hardly persuade himself that he was in his right mind. Then a chill went over him. What if he had withheld the money! There was the receipt, it was true, to show for it, and possibly, had he kept his own counsel, another five hundred might have been paid him, and no questions asked. But the mere suggestion made him feel like a criminal.

"Thank God," he repeated under his breath, as he passed out. And before night he had paid the mortgage and invited to the Thanksgiving dinner not only Rhoda's father and mother, but two or three lonely old folks who were not likely to be invited anywhere else.

"When a man has been saved from perdition," he said to himself, "it's a pity if he can't do something to show his gratitude."

And none of the happy company at the table that day guessed why it was that his voice suddenly broke when he said: "Let us give thanks"—Advance.

How Did it End?

BY ANNA D. WALKER.

Two little girls, Edith and Clare, one Sabbath day started together for church. Edith was ten years old, as bright and merry a child as one might wish to see, but she was so easily led that she sometimes went astray, and this caused her dear mother grief and anxiety.

Clare was one year older than her companion, and had a strong will, so that she had a great influence over her friend.

When Clare stopped at Edith's house she noticed that Mrs. Marsh, Edith's mamma, gave her little daughter a nickel for the collection. After they were on the way she said suggestively, "Five cents is too much for a little girl to put on the plate; I'm only going to give a penny!"

"Oh," cried Edith, "sometimes I give ten cents!"

"Well, I'll be ashamed if you give so much when I'm with you. I won't go with you if you do. Give a penny, won't you?" and Clare spoke persuasively.

"But how can I get the change?" asked the little tempted one, her face full of perplexity.

"Why, you know, Mr. Barles, who passes the plate in our aisle, is so good to us always, and you can hold up the nickel and whisper, 'Wait a minute,' then put in the money and pick out four pennies, don't you see?"

"Yes," answered Edith, doubtfully.

"Then," exclaimed Clare, "we'll have all that money to spend!"

"Shall we?" and Edith started guiltily. She knew it would be wrong and yet she carried out the plan and came out of church with the four pennies grasped tightly in her hand. Mr. Barles being acquainted with the children had allowed the strange proceeding. Edith rather stoutly objected to going to a candy store, but Clare's stronger will prevailed and the two went together into a showy shop where the confectionery looked particularly inviting.

After careful consultation the pennies were spent for taffy and cocoanut candy. And Clare exultantly produced from her pocket a fifth penny, explaining that her mother had given her two instead of one, and that she had kept one for the treat.

Edith took the packages in hand, regarding it as her right to carry them. She forgot all about the holy Sabbath day and came out of the shop with her fair little face wreathed in smiles.

The naughty children concluded to walk to the grove about half a mile distant, and there enjoy their treat. When they were upon a street crossing Clare suddenly cried out, "Oh, Edith! there's a runaway horse, hurry, hurry!"

Edith looked in the direction indicated and saw a horse and carriage which was indeed coming with alarming rapidity toward them. Fright lent them wings and they fairly flew over the crossing, but alas, just before they reached the sidewalk, down came Edith flat upon the muddy crossing. That was bad enough, but the packages, the precious packages, were thrown violently into the gutter, which was half full of not over-clean water.

"Oh, Edith! Edith! what have you done?" cried Clare; "careless thing! you've thrown all the candy away, after all my pains!"

Edith covered with mud, for there had been a shower in the morning, picked herself up and answered, sobbing, "You—don't—care—for—my—trouble. Just look at my dress! And—what—what—will mamma—say?"

"For pity's sake!" cried Clare, "you are not going to tell your mamma, are you? Here let me clean your dress!" and dipping her handkerchief into the muddy water she proceeded to rub out the "bad spots" from the dress; but, oh, it looked worse than before! And poor Edith surveyed it with a broken heart.

Clare's suggestion of proceeding was thoroughly worried. Her mother would have to know all, for Edith would conceal nothing, and she knew that some