

"You Might Have Said, 'Oh!'"

I WAS hard at work in my study
When I heard a gentle tap;
"Come in!" and in came my Josie,
Tearful from some mishap,
And I knew that she was longing
To be cuddled in my lap.

"I bruised my finger orful,
And, papa, it does ache so!"
"Well, well, run away to mamma,
For I can't help it, Jo."
She raised her tear-wet lashes—
"Papa, you might have said, 'Oh!'"

The study door closed softly,
And I was left alone,
With nothing to hinder my writing
But the thought of a tender tone,
So loving and so reproachful
'T would have touched a heart of stone.

And I sat and looked at my paper,
But somehow I couldn't write.
And there broke on me in the silence
The dawn of a clearer light;
The touch of that aching finger
Had given me my sight.

Have a tender word, my brothers,
For the little troubles and pains;
It was not beneath our Master,
It is far above our gains;
It will hasten the heavenly kingdom,
Where only love remains.

PUDDIN'

An Edinburgh Story.

BY

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CHAPTER V.

WITH the beginning of each year Jo's position was improved. He never had occasion to ask for an advancement, for he had come to know that on each "Hansel Monday," when Mr. Inglis gave him a few pounds as a present, he always mentioned the increased salary he meant to give him for the ensuing year.

"Thank you," Jo would say; "it's very good of you."

"Not at all; I wadna gie ye it if ye didna deserve it, an' a man yin can trust as I can trust you is worth far mair, for it's like an extra lease o' life to me gettin' the worry ta'en off my hands. I'm no' sae able for't a'no, an' Mrs. Inglis wad never gang out if I didna tak' her, so we'll say nae mair about it. You're pleased an' I'm pleased, an' there's nae ither body to study."

Jo, although far from being extravagant, now felt that his position, as well as consideration for his mother, required that he should remove to a better house. He was keeping well within his income, and had—determined he would not any longer endanger his father's idleness and intemperance by relieving him of his duties to his wife and family, so when he had fixed on a house he took occasion during his mother's absence to acquaint him with his intentions, though it took him several days to screw up his courage and speak as he felt he must.

"I've ta'en a new hoose," he began, "an' I'm gaun to tak' my mother an' Maggie, an' if you're willin' to work an' pay yer share reglar, ye can come too."

"I see," his father replied. "Ye want to turn me oot o' the hoose; I'm no' guid enough for ye noo."

"I dinna want to turn ye oot o' the hoose, ye ken that fine. I've teit ye afore that if ye wad only keep straight it wad mak' us a' happier, but ye canna expect me to keep the hoose as I've been daein', an' encouragin' you to spend a' yer siller on yersel'."

He had warmed up as he spoke, and in the order to relieve the embarrassment of the situation he went out, leaving his father to his thoughts.

It seemed to be understood that any unpleasantness such as this was to be kept between themselves, and when, a few days before the term, Jo's father explained that he had got employment at the North Bridge, which would necessitate his taking lodgings in the country, Jo did not know whether to put down the circumstance as a refusal to accept his offer or an attempt to resume work in earnest, but he was glad his mother had no suspicion to add to her grief in parting for the first time from her husband; but as he had been, she regretted his going, the comforts of the new house making her more sorry that he was not with them to share them, instead of being neglected and uncared-for in miserable lodgings, or what was worse, in a bothy with its incentives to drink.

"It's a pity yer father has to leave us when we've got this fine hoose," she said.

Jo felt like a culprit, and was unable to make a reply, though he felt justified in the course he had taken, and then he thought, by way of consolation, perhaps what he said had not been the means of his taking work from home, it might have happened in any case, and he would be welcome to return when he was prepared to do his duty.

No doubt he often occupied their thoughts, and he though he was seldom spoken of, and he neither visited them nor wrote. Jo had half expected and hoped he would send something out of his earnings, which would have been taken as a wish to improve himself in their estimation, and as showing a desire to return, which Jo would have met by calling on him; but in this he was disappointed, and his mother noticing, the effect of her allusions to her husband, had ceased to speak of him before Jo. The road between Edinburgh and Queensferry was thickly strewn with all sorts of conveyances filled with people anxious to see the wonderful structure, and much as Jo would have liked to see it and take his party, he avoided that route in his weekly outings, feeling that the place could not fail to make his mother depressed with the thought of her self-banished husband, or perhaps shocked with the sight of him among the drunken crowd which thronged the street on Saturday afternoons.

The subject gave Jo much conflicting thought. Was he too proud to acknowledge his father? No, he felt he could not lay that blame to himself; but he was too proud to expose him before others, and then, he reasoned, "Why should his mother suffer any more? In what he felt certain was a useless cause? Still, reason as he might, and justify himself as he might, he could not banish the subject from his mind. Was it not his duty to leave nothing undone to save his father from misery and ruin, and try if possible to bring about that which would remove his mother's care? Yes, he would make the attempt.

The Saturday following his resolution, therefore, he was rather pleased than otherwise to see a drizzling rain, as it would afford him an excuse, which he much wanted, for dispensing with his usual companions.

"I doot there's nae use thinkin' of gaun oot the day," he said at dinner. "It's no' like to clear up, an' besides, I have something to attend to."

"No, no, laddie; we get oot mair than maist folk, an' I needna tell ye no' to neglect business, for ye wadna dae that."

"An' I sent a note ower to Mary," Jo added, in case his mother might have any thought of the two going alone, "tellin' her no' to expect us."

The usual whinnying welcome he got from the horse, on entering the stable, nearly caused him to break down.

"Puir Tam," he said, "ye'll no' get yer usual nibble the day, an' we'll no' hae the usual company, but I hope we'll bring yin to add to't."

It was a dreary journey for Jo, not only through the contrast with other Saturdays, but with the small hope he had of the success of his undertaking, and the holiday gaiety of those who passed him on the way added to his solitude.

Arrived at the height where the first sight of the bridge is obtained, the tremendous undertaking helped to crush out any little hope he had of finding his father, and prepared him to some extent for the answers he got to his inquiries.

None of the men he asked knew of his father, they were only acquainted with the few who worked close beside them; he might be working on the other side of the river, or more likely, on one of the railway cuttings in Fife.

Jo saw the hopelessness of further inquiry at this place; it was impossible his father was engaged on the bridge, he must look elsewhere for him.

"Come on, Tam," he said, "we'll awa' hame again."

At the top of the hill Jo could see a stretch of the Fife coast, which set him wondering what part his father would be working at, and if he was now spending his wages in a public-house, or sitting in an ill-ventilated bothy such as he had visited, among dirt and discomfort.

"Ye're weel-off, Tam," he continued with a sigh; "ye hae naething to worry ye, mair than the want o' a nibble at the gress. But I'll no' disappoint ye; we'll tak' a short cut by Blackha', an' I'll let ye get a bite at a quiet corner."

It was long past the usual tea-time when he returned, but his thoughts had banished hunger from him till he sat down to the meal his mother had prepared.

"Ye're late, Jo," she said, as she filled his cup.

Jo felt that the remark demanded an explanation of where he had been, and he was not altogether prepared for it.

wait till it was ower. Whaur's Maggie? That was said to get off the unpleasant subject.

"Mary cam' ower to ask you and her to tea an' spend the nicht wi' them, an' you're tea an' sae soon's ye can."

Though anxious to see Mary, he did not feel in a mood to present himself before company. However, he had had plenty of experience, since he was a boy, in the art of keeping his sorrows to himself, and when he entered the room where the company were enjoying themselves with parlour games, he soon became as merry as any of them.

Never had he seen Mary look so well; the excitement of the simple games they were engaged in had given her cheeks an extra colour, and her eyes an additional sparkle. One or two, however, troubled him; he felt that he was not the only one who observed this. Another young man was monopolizing the conversation with her. No love had passed between them—at least in words; in fact, it was only now occurring to him how much she was to him, that was the meaning of his delight in her company, and his anxiety to appear at his best in her presence.

These conflicting ideas were whirling through his mind in a jumble. He would take the first opportunity to let her know his feelings, and ascertain hers. No, he could not do that; while his mother was dependent on him, he would support her, and he must not think of asking Mary to bind herself indefinitely to him. It was hard to think that another would claim her.

He had now another motive for wishing he had found his father. If he would return and do his duty it might be different, but in the meantime he must conceal his feelings. It was difficult to do, as he could not bear the thought of the risk he was running of losing her; still, it was his duty to his mother and Maggie. There was nothing for it but to wait. Jo, however, had made his calculations and resolutions without taking other influences, in the shape of Mary, into his consideration.

Whatever Mary said must have been with the best tact, for Jo's face gradually assumed more than its normal brightness; but when he was alone at home, his reflections brought back the serious expression to his face.

"I believe Mary sees that I like her," he murmured, "by the way she spoke the night. It's an awfu' pity; I wish she hadna thoct o' that,—for awhile anyway—for I canna think o' mairryin' for a long time, an' Mary's young enough yet, an' can wait. I maun try to speak to her, though."

This resolution Jo found more difficult to carry out in Mary's presence than he had imagined. The first time he had an opportunity of talking with her, it was natural that the conversation should turn on the "party."

"What is he?" said Jo rather abruptly.

"Who?" said Mary, though she guessed how his thoughts were running.

"Ye young fellow that was sitting sae much beside ye."

"I think he's in a bank; he's a friend o' my brother's."

"No, a bad-lookin' chap," said Jo, anxious to get Mary's opinion.

"Maybe no', but I dinna care for him."

"He seems to care for you, though."

Mary smiled, and said, "He needna fash."

"What way? Wad ye no' hae 'um?"

"No, I wadna. I wad like a mair manly man than him; but it's time enough for me to think o' that twa-three years after this."

There was a pause, Jo thinking, and perhaps correctly, that Mary understood his position and was anxious to allay his doubts. At last he said, "Wad ye wait that time for onybody ye liked?"

"I mean to wait, at any rate; for I'm ower young to marry yet, an' I've never thought much about it."

Jo's mind was now at rest, and he liked Mary better than ever. She had evidently seen his difficulty, and helped him out of it as he could not have done himself. He would not ask her now to bind herself to him, but trusted with the fullest confidence to her waiting.

(To be continued.)

ALL IN ONE DAY.

NANNIE sat at the table in her high-chair, waiting for Mary Ann, who had gone downstairs for some more crackers. As she looked down into her cup of beautiful milk she heard somebody talking in a sweet, pleasant voice that seemed to come from behind the screen. "Nannie has been very good to-day," said the voice. "She kept her baby brother amused by telling him stories for twenty minutes."

"Yes," answered another voice, "but was somewhat sterner than the first; but afterwards she made him cry by taking away all his blocks and sitting on them."

As Nannie heard this she looked down in her cup again, wondering who was talking. The voice certainly did not belong to Aunt Julia or Mary Ann or the cook, nor yet to her mother, although the sweet voice was something like hers.

"I know she was naughty then," said the first sweet voice; "but afterwards she ran several errands for her mother, and never once said she was too tired."

At this Nannie smiled.

But the second voice continued: "That was something, really; but you must remember that, when she was through, she went out into the yard and nearly scared the old mother hen into fits by chasing the little chickens."

"But the old hen scared her nearly as much when she flew at her and made her fall down and bump her head," said the sweet voice, which seemed very anxious to say whatever was possible in praise of the little girl; "and Nannie was very sorry, and won't do so any more."

"No, I won't," called Nannie, looking up.

But the owners of the voices paid no attention to her, and the second voice went on. Nannie did not like this stern one, because it related all that she had done that was naughty; but she listened attentively to what was said.

"The old hen surely punished her enough," said the voice that was stern; "but she went crying to her mother, while it never would have happened had she behaved herself in the first place. Then at lunch she had to be sent away from the table because she cried for more cake than was good for her; and afterwards she bothered her poor nurse to go walking in the hot sun."

"That is so," said the first voice, with a sigh, while Nannie cried out, "Was I all that naughty in one day?"

At that moment Mary Ann entered with the crackers, and Nannie finished her supper without saying anything. She was thinking over the naughty things she had done which had been recalled to her, and when supper was over she ran to her mother and told her all about what she had heard. Her mother took her up in her arms tenderly and kissed her. "It was probably your conscience that was speaking, my little daughter," whispered mamma, "and you tried to think of all the things you did during the day. But there was one thing that you forgot all about: that was, when mamma and little brother were asleep you kept as still as a mouse for one whole hour, so as not to disturb them."

Nannie had forgotten all about this, but she raised her head and smiled when mamma spoke of it. "I'm going to be real good to-morrow," she whispered, "so that only the sweet voice like yours will have something to say. I did not know how much could be done all in one day."

Then when Mary Ann came to put her to bed she went without saying a word, and fell asleep, waiting to hear again from the sweet, loving voice. And the next day she remembered all about it, and did not tease her little brother, nor bother the poor old mother hen, who didn't know anything about the voices, however, and ran out of the way as soon as she saw Nannie coming. All day long she remembered her promise; and when supper-time came she was very happy, although she did not hear either of the voices again. But that was probably because Mary Ann was in the room all the time.—*Harper's Young People.*

DON'T MENTION THE BRIERS.

A MAN met a little fellow on the road carrying a basket of blackberries, and said to him: "Sammy, where did you get such nice berries?"

"Over there, sir, in the briers."

"Won't your mother be glad to see you come home with a basketful of such nice, ripe fruit?"

"Yes, sir," said Sammy, "she always seems glad when I hold up the berries, and I don't tell anything about the briers in my feet."

The man rode on. Sammy's remarks had given him a lesson, and he resolved that henceforth he would try to hold up the berries and say nothing about the briers.