

to write. I've got the letter I showed you Thanksgiving'; said he was busy an' had a scheme on hand to make consider'ble money durin' the winter, an' that he wouldn't be home 'fore spring. 'Twon't be long now.'

'You sent him some money?'

'Y-e-s,' answered the old woman, reluctantly, 'twenty dollars. He was needin' some warm clothes for winter.'

'And yet Harry is twenty-seven years old,' said the minister, gravely. 'You gave him a good education and good trade. He ought to be able to earn his own livin.'

'He's had consider'ble bad luck, Harry has,' and as the needles once more began to click energetically, her eyes moved from the work to his face with a troubled, anxious expression. 'But he writ he was doin' pretty well, an' that he was expectin' to make money an' come home in the spring. Dear child! we'll all be glad to see him. Harry used to be wild an' careless, Parson, like—like Tom an' Wilbur—but I think he's been steadyin' down some lately. You knew Tom an' Wilbur?'

'Tom and I went to the same school.'

'Yes, I remember now. Poor Tom!'

'I think Harry's steadyin' down some lately,' she repeated after a few moments, softly. 'His letter said so. An' then there's Nelly. I used to be almost afraid to look ahead. But 'tain't so now. The good Lord makes up for all the trouble an' waitin' we meet.'

The minister rose hastily. It was not easy to lead to the communication he wished to make. The depth was too abysmal.

'I had a letter—about Harry this afternoon,' he began, desperately. 'It was written by the—the sheriff who captured him. Harry's arm was broken, so he could not write. I would have kept it from you if I could have seen my way to it,' as he noted her whitening face, 'but I felt that you would like to know the worst.'

'Yes, I would like to know the worst,' she said, steadily. 'Let me have the letter.'

He gave it to her and then walked to a window, gazing out across the shifting snow, but seeing nothing save the white, stricken face bending over the letter.

Five minutes passed—ten—then he turned back into the room. She was sitting there, gazing stonily into the fire, but with her lips moving in inaudible prayer.

'Can?—is there anything I can do?' he asked, feeling how weak and inadequate were words in the face of such grief.

'No, only go away. I want to be alone now. I shall be all right. Jenny will be over to do the chorin' after a while.'

As he crossed the room he noticed that she was already oblivious of his presence, and before he closed the door softly behind him he heard her say: 'Two thousand dollars, an' if it's paid they won't prosecute. Poor Harry! The old place ain't worth it, but I'll write to Nelly.'

A few weeks later a young man was sitting in a cell, two or three hundred miles away, gazing gloomily into a prison corridor through the bars of his cell door. He was strongly built and handsome, but with a reckless dissipated face, which just now was shadowed by his thoughts.

'Oh, well, it don't matter now whether I made a mistake or not,' he at length cried impatiently. 'Maybe they're not to blame. But wait till I get out,' his an-

flaming up, 'won't I get even with the man who sent me here. Maybe I can't do much, but I can try to square up that account. Hello, who's there?' as a key suddenly grated in his door.

He stood up as the door swung open and two women entered. One of them walked with a crutch.

'Why—mother! Nelly!' he gasped, after the first stare of bewilderment. 'You here?'

The crutch rattled to the floor.

'Oh, Harry! my boy! my boy!' and involuntarily he opened his arms and received her, and felt a strange tremor of mingled tenderness and consternation as her arms encircled his neck and her cheek pressed against his. 'My boy! my little one!' she whispered, softly, 'it is two years since I saw you—two whole years, Harry. We would have come sooner after readin' your letter—an' by the way, you ought to have written to me, your own mother, instead of to the minister—but I had the rheumatiz, an' I had to write to Nelly, an' then there was the place to sell.'

'The place to sell!' he echoed, stepping back and looking from one to the other inquiringly. 'Not the old farm?'

'Yes,' beamingly, 'we had nothin' else to raise money by. There's the two thousand dollars, you know, Harry.'

'But the place wouldn't bring half that.'

'No, it only brought nine hundred. But Nelly had a hundred an' fifty saved up for her music, an' I had a hundred and fifty saved up for Nelly. An' then we sold the old pianner for a hundred, an' there was the furnitoor an' 'hay an' farm tools an' poultry. They all fetched four hundred more. That made seventeen.'

'Why, mother, I—I—' Harry's face was working convulsively now, and he paused to choke back something in his throat. 'I never meant the letter—that way. I never dreamed of anyone trying to raise the money. I knew you didn't have it, and there was nobody else. I had the letter written to the minister out of mere bravado. The last time I saw him he gave me a lot of advice, and reminded me that I used to be his model Sunday-school scholar. In my letter I said I was the scholar graduated. It was mean, but he oughtn't to have lectured me.'

'He did it because he was your friend, Harry. Let me tell you something. I didn't say anything to him about the house, but after seein' the letter, of course he knew what it was sold for. He was over at the sale an' found out from Nelly how much we got. That afternoon I had a letter with three hundred dollars in it. There wasn't no name, but I knew the handwritin', an' a note said that Harry could pay it back when he got able. Why, Harry boy! what's the matter? You mustn't be so upset,' for he had thrown himself upon the bed and was now sobbing unrestrainedly.

'I—I thought everybody had gone back on me, mother. I knew you loved me because—because you were my mother, but I believed you despised me in your heart. And now you have given up everything for me, and Nelly has given up everything, and the minister has helped. Oh, mother, I am not worthy! Why did you do it?—the dear old place, and Nelly's piano, and—and everything!'

'Harry!' with sudden indignation in her voice, 'don't let me ever hear you say that

ag'in. You're more to Nelly an' me than everything else in the world. What do we care for the farm an' things as long as we have you. An' I don't b'leve the minister'll even think of his three hundred dollars ag'in, if it helps get you back. But come along, deary. Don't let's stay in this awful place no longer. Things are all fixed up, an' a man said there wa'nt nothin' more to hinder you goin' with us. There, there, deary; don't take on so. It's all right now.' She stroked his head in a chiding, distressed sort of way, and at length tried to force the blanket from his face.

'Come, deary, let's get away from this place. You belong to us now.'

He lifted his head suddenly, but instead of rising to his feet as she expected, he slipped down upon his knees beside the small bed.

'Come, mother; kneel down with me and hear what I wish to say. I haven't prayed since I was a little boy with you—long, long ago.'

Then, 'Oh, God! be with me now, and give me the strength I need. Help me, for Christ's sake, to devote my life to these dear ones, and to doing some good in return for the good that has been done to me. Amen.'

The Prodigal

A young man, a member of the Life Saving Service, was one night patrolling his lonely beat under the starlit skies. He, alone, was awake. The silence was solemn and oppressive.

In the past he had enjoyed a good home and a praying mother. Now these all lay behind him, and he realized that he was out in a desert land, soul-starved, like the prodigal. His sacred promise given his mother on her death-bed, that he would seek the only safe paths, under the guidance of the strong Helper, had been broken. He realized in the silence and loneliness, that he was a lost sinner, far from the Father's house of grace. He could never find his way home in the darkness his sins had brought upon him.

Then he remembered that his mother used to pray. Memory brought with vivid distinctness many a hard place from which she had been delivered by a prayer-hearing God. Dared he appeal to this slighted, insulted Jesus?

Thanks to his well-instructed childhood, he knew that along the world's highway there was a cross, where divine Love and perfect Purity paid the penalty of a broken law. His heart melted. There, in his lonely beat, he fell on his knees in the dust. 'Father,' he cried, 'Father which art in heaven, help me to return to thee! I am tired of the wilderness wanderings of sin; take me into sonship.'

The answer was not delayed. Light, not from star or moon, but from the face of a reconciled Father, illumed his soul, and he was at peace. The Holy Spirit had put a sudden impulse in his heart, and following it he arose and came to his Father.—S.S. Lesson Illustrator.'

From Madeira came the report that the ships bound to South Africa which touched there in one week carried over five million dollars' worth of liquor. The Boer war was bad, the Filipino war a bad blot, but—the liquor assault is worse than anything that can be done with swords and guns.