

BOYS AND GIRLS

A Modern Prodigal Son

(Frank H. Sweet, in 'The Ram's Horn,')

'Mother, our boy has gone wrong.'

The open letter was allowed to fall upon the kitchen table, and then the grey head sank down beside it. Mrs. Crandall laid aside her knitting and crossed over to his side.

'Is it very bad, John?' she asked, tremulously.

'Yes, he is in prison.'

She took the letter and read it through slowly. When she finished she began to stroke the bowed head. 'What shall we do, John?' she asked.

'We must raise the money. It is the only

and had left home at an early age to seek fortune in the city. Occasionally rumors came back of lawlessness and extravagance, and the old folks had heard them apprehensively, and had tried to quiet each other's fears by saying the boy was young and would improve as he grew older. And as the years went by their hopes seemed about to be realized. The boy quieted down and applied himself vigorously to learning a business. He was naturally quick and energetic, and rose gradually from one position to another until he became head book-keeper for his firm. The old folks waited and hoped, and tried to hide their misgivings. Charlie was in receipt of a large salary now; but he never

There was a moment's silence, then:

'Why did you come here? Talking will do no good; and, besides, I don't care to rake the thing over. If I have played the fool it is my own lookout; I don't wish to be told of it.' He waited a moment, but as his father did not speak, asked, with a slight change in his voice:

'Is—mother well?'

'Yes, she and your grandmother are waiting at the hotel. They wanted to come here, but I told 'em they'd better not. Here's your paper.'

The young man took it mechanically.

'What? A receipt from the house?' he cried, wonderingly.

'Yes, they've agreed not to proceed against you. I talked with the lawyer, an' the rest of 'em; but they say there's some forms to go through with. They can't set you free till to-morrow. I done the best I could, Charlie.' He spoke anxiously, as though fearing he might have omitted something.

'But I don't understand, father. How could you get this? You had no money.'

'I sold the farm an' stock for a pretty good price; and then your mother had a hundred dollars or so put aside. Of course, even that wouldn't have been enough, but your grandmother put in all she had. We managed to make it up between us.'

The young man threw out his arms with a quick, stifled cry.

'Sold the farm! and granny given up her little fortune! Oh, father! father!' All the hardness and bitterness and cynicism were gone from his face now, and with sudden self-loathing he turned to the wall and began to sob passionately. His father looked at him anxiously, then with alarm. He could not remember when he had seen his boy lose control of himself before.

'Charlie! Charlie boy!' he urged; 'don't cry so. It's all right now. You'll be free to-morrow. Please don't cry.'

He threw his arms across the trembling shoulders and drew the young man toward him. 'It's all right now,' he whispered tenderly; 'we'll go off by ourselves and commence all over again, won't we, Charlie boy?'

'Anything—you like—father,' came in stifled accents from the wall. 'I will do whatever you say.'

Different Minds.

(Richard Chenevix Trench.)

Some murmur when their sky is clear
And wholly bright to view,
If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue;
And some with thankful love are filled
If but one streak of light,
One ray of God's good mercy, gild
The darkness of their night.

In palaces are hearts that ask,
In discontent and pride,
Why life is such a dreary task,
And all good things denied;
And hearts in poorest huts admire
How Love has in their aid
(Love that not ever seems to tire)
Such rich provisions made.

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ONE DAY HIS CELL DOOR OPENED.

thing that will save the boy now. If he's sentenced, he will never get over it.'

'Can we?' An eager light came into her eyes.

'We must. Your mother will let us have what she has. You know she always called Charlie her boy.'

He rose and folded the letter carefully and placed it in the top bureau drawer with the three or four others he had received during the last half-dozen years. Then he walked to a window and looked out. It was a picture of bare hillside and rocky fields that he saw, of rambling stone walls and mossy, isolated farm buildings. On one side an apple orchard crept round behind a gable of the house, and in the distance was the glint of quiet water. But he did not see the beauty now, and he was not thinking of the long life he had spent on the farm, nor of the father and grandfather who had lived on it before him. He only saw a prison wall and the bowed, hopeless figure of a man, waiting grimly for his sentence.

Charles Crandall had been a wilful boy.

seemed to be out of debt, and his letters were usually applications for assistance. Then had come rumors of dishonesty and disclosure, and now this letter.

He had not asked for assistance this time. The amount was too large—more than the value of the farm and his father's entire possessions. He had merely stated the fact, doggedly, and had added that he would necessarily be sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.

He had gone to his cell with apparent indifference, and with a smile on his face. His nature had always been a queer combination of recklessness and strength, and except for a certain added hardness to his lips and eyes he showed little outward concern for his disgrace. He was as scrupulously neat and fastidious in his dress as ever, and confinement seemed to have only the effect of making him more cynical and reserved.

One day his cell door opened and an eager, grey-haired man entered.

'Charlie!'

'Father!'