

'Oh, Ruth, I can't. I can't go to her!' he cried.

His sister's eyes widened incredulously. 'Stirling, you don't understand,' she began, but he cried out in a voice full of misery.

'I do, I do, Ruth, but I've got a letter that I must deliver. Mr. Evans said it might mean life or death, and—he trusted me.'

They had both stopped in the middle of the sidewalk. Unmindful of the passers-by casting curious glances at them through the gathering dusk, they stared for an instant into each other's white, agonized faces.

'But a letter, only a letter—and mother,' the girl moaned.

Stirling drew himself up and his voice thrilled his sister strangely as he repeated, 'A letter that may mean life or death, Ruth, and mother told me to be faithful. Hurry back—hurry, Ruth, and tell her I'll be there just as soon as I can.'

Without another word he turned and sprang on a passing car without stopping it; but never had he known such misery as filled his heart when, standing on the platform he saw the space widen between himself and that slender little figure hurrying back to the mother whose voice he might never again hear.

The car sped onward; but to the boy it seemed to crawl. He was tempted to leap off; it seemed to him that he could run twice as fast as the car went, but he knew better. When, after what seemed to him hours, he stopped the car at the corner nearest Mr. Gardner's house, he did run at the top of his speed, and the peal that he rang on the door bell brought the dignified man-servant to the door, with marked disapproval in his stolid countenance.

'Is Mr. Gardner in?' the boy questioned, and then pushed hastily by the man. 'Tell him I want to see him, quick—quick! I come from his lawyer, Mr. Evans,' he added hastily.

The man was not used to be hurried, but something in this boy's tense voice—something imploring in his white face, stirred him out of his stiff, slow, formality.

'This way,' he said briefly, and led the boy up the broad polished stairway to a beautiful library on the second floor. 'Wait here,' he added, and disappeared.

Stirling waited, but he could not sit or stand still. He walked restlessly up and down the room, and again the moments seemed ages while his thoughts flew back to the little home where Ruth and mother—ah, was mother there yet, he wondered; and it seemed as if he could not stay there another instant.

Then a grave voice behind him said, 'You have a message for me? I am Mr. Gardner,' and he turned swiftly and held out the letter.

'Mr. Evans told me to give it to you, and I've done it,' he said, and was half way down the stairs when he heard the gentleman call to him in astonished disapproval.

'But wait—there may be an answer.'

'You must send it by some one else, then. I can't wait!' the boy called back, plunging down two steps at a time.

The next instant the door slammed behind him and Mr. Gardner turned back with a frown into his library.

Through the darkness without the boy

dashed recklessly along the street. When he reached the corner there was no car in sight, and he could not wait for one; so on he ran, glancing back now and then to see if one was in sight. He had run half the way before a car overtook him. But the hardest of all was when he left it and hurried breathlessly across to that little house, where his heart had been through all that long terrible-hour. If he could only know! How could he go in—not knowing!

When he reached the house the doctor's carriage was standing there. Stirling ran up the steps, opened the door, and then he stopped short in the little hall, where no one had remembered to light the gas. He listened—there was no sound. Then he began to creep slowly, silently, up the stairs. From his mother's room a light shone out upon the landing, but what did that awful silence mean?

Half way up the boy stopped again. It seemed to him that he could not take another step. Then suddenly he heard the doctor's voice. He was speaking to Ruth, and Ruth answered in a low tone. Slowly the boy climbed step by step until he could look into the room; then suddenly he dropped down on the stairs and buried his face in his hands, but the sobs that shook him from head to foot were not for sorrow. He thought he had never before known what great joy was—for he had looked once more into his mother's face and heard her dear voice breathe his name—and he had been true to his trust.

Luck Versus Labor

'George is always lucky. 'Course he'd win the prize,' complained Jim.

'I imagine it was something else besides luck that made him win,' said Aunt Louise, one of the summer boarders at Jim's house. The boy that Jim was envying had won the prize in the rowing contest on the lake the day before. One of the summer visitors, a young man who had come to this summer resort for his college vacation rest, had offered a half-eagle to the best boatman; and George had won it.

'George is always just that way, just as lucky,' went on Jim, grumbling. 'Just look at that new bike he's got, a regular beauty; and of course he got the paper-route I wanted, 'cause he'd a bike and I haven't. So, of course, I can't get round the place fast enough.'

'Is that the wheel that was offered at such a bargain a fortnight ago?' asked Aunt Louise.

Jim nodded disconsolately.

'Pa said he was too hard up to let me have anything toward it, and I've only got five dollars to my name.'

'How did George manage to raise the amount?' queried Aunt Louise. 'His father is lame and helpless, you know; and I've heard that George had to help the family, as the pension was not enough to support them all.'

'Oh, George sells water-lilies every day at the 9.40 and the 1.30 trains, and the folks buy every lily he takes down to the station. I s'pose it's so hot they look nice and cool. He fixes 'em up in a big basket of wet moss, to keep 'em fresh, you know. He can't get enough to supply 'em all, he says, anyhow.'

'Seems to me,' mused Aunt Louise, 'that George works for what he gets. He gets

practice in rowing, going for his lilies. He won his bicycle and the paper-route by gathering and selling the water-lilies. Why don't you go into the lily business with George? You say the supply is not equal to the demand?'

'Me?' queried the surprised Jim. 'Why, Aunt Louise, the idea! I've got all I can do, anyhow; and this is vacation. By 'n' by I'll have to go back to school. If I got lilies to sell, I'd have to get up 'bout three or four o'clock, same's George does, to go for 'em. That's too much of a good thing, I tell you!'

'Was it luck or labor that gave Watt his engine, Fulton his steamboat, Morse his telegraph, Goodyear his rubber, Bell his telephone, Edison his phonograph—or even George his prize and his wheel!' asked Aunt Louise, significantly. But I'm sorry to say that Jim still complains of George's 'luck.'—Exchange.

My Own Master.

'I am my own master!' cried a young man, proudly, when a friend tried to persuade him from an enterprise which he had on hand. 'I am my own master!'

'Did you ever consider what a responsible post that is?' asked his friend.

'Responsible—is it?'

'A master must lay out the work which he wants done, and see that it is done all right. He should try to secure the best ends by the best means. He must keep on the lookout against obstacles and accidents, and watch that everything goes straight, or else he must fail.'

'Well?'

'To be master of yourself you have your conscience to keep clear, your heart to cultivate, your temper to govern, your will to direct, and your judgment to instruct. You are master over a hard lot, and if you don't master them they will master you.'

'That is so,' said the young man.

'Now, I could undertake no such thing,' said his friend. 'I should fail, sure, if I did. Saul wanted to be his own master, and failed. Herod did. Judas did. No man is fit for it. "One is my master, even Christ." I work under his direction. He is regular, and where he is master all goes right.'—'The Spectator,' Melbourne.

Your Example Counts.

A railway conductor once went with a large company of conductors on an excursion to a Southern city. They arrived on Saturday night. An attractive trip had been planned for the next day. In the morning, this gentleman was observed to be taking more than usual care with his attire, and a friend said to him:

'Of course, you are going with us on the excursion?'

'No,' he replied quietly: 'I am going to church; that is my habit on Sunday.'

Another questioner received the same reply.

Soon comment on it began to pass around, and discussion followed. When he set out for church, he was accompanied by one hundred and fifty men whom his quiet example had turned from Sunday excursion to the place of worship.

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