

Choice Literature.

GLENN WYNTHROP'S "CALL" — A MORAL.

"O, mother, mother!
For your son—believe it, O believe it,
Most dangerously you have with him prevailed."
—*Coriolanus, Act IV, Scene 4.*

The Wyntrops were a very old family, but they had not always been a very rich one. As Patrick might express it, their antiquity was ancient; but their real dispensation of wealth did not come about until Glenn's father, old John Wyntrop, bought a quantity of stock of the F. N. & L. R. R., about the year 1843. The said F. N. & L. R. R. soon became the great passenger route of the day. In consequence, a removal to the big and gay city, a sumptuous country home, carriages and horses in abundance, European travel, and a liberal education, were among the good things that fell to the lot of John's three sons and four daughters.

The latest of the first-named group, Glenn, was the son of a second wife. Old John had picked and chosen, with some covert hesitation, for his second nuptials, as his fortune suggested his doing—and he chose well—a stately, resolute lady, of distinct social position, with an "I will" lurking in the curves of her smiling mouth. Possessed of extreme tact, as well as firmness, the new Mrs. Wyntrop saw her step-children growing up much attached to her. More still, they grew up doers and thinkers of almost exactly what she chose to influence them to do and to think, while never suspecting for an instant their independence. Consequently, a more united, concordant and better-conducted household one ever could enter. Mrs. Wyntrop was its pivot.

When I, Mark Lawson, who quickly became Glenn Wyntrop's most intimate friend, first met our hero, Glenn and half-a-hundred of us were at the Fortescue together. The Fortescue Institute was as thorough a collegiate school as "parent or guardian" could desire. Glenn, as I recollect him, sitting in his Sallust and Homer recitations, a dark handsome lad of fifteen, was not a quick scholar. He was a perfect type of the hard-working, mechanical learner. His foundation, though built by very narrow daily courses, was solid. His mind seemed to possess a species of brass or steel consistency that enabled it to steadily force its way forward, slowly, but without ever losing a tenth of an inch of the ground traversed.

His greatest bug-bear was just that literary composition which schoolboys have to undertake, and which they, as a general thing, most cordially hate. Glenn's crude, grudgingly-extended essays were the grief of his tutor in Hart. "But don't you see," Glenn would exclaim, after one of their periodic contests, "don't you see that, in this business, you don't give me anything whatever to start from: no rules, no problems? It isn't in me, I tell you, this thinking out a lot of stuff in the first place, and then spelling it down afterwards. I don't know where to think it from." And that was just the case. His mind was purely receptive, not productive.

He was soon *princeps*, not *fautie princeps*, at the Fortescue. In his out-of-classroom companionship he had admirers, but few friends. He lacked sunniness. He was brusque; not ill-natured, but often tyrannic on the campus and in the gymnasium, through his splendid strength and skill. For that campus and that gymnasium our friend developed a genuine passion. Much of what appeared hauteur and reserve was veritable diffidence and self-consciousness. Glenn's disposition reminded me of a gray, breezy day—not cold, but chilly and clear, and with shadows brought out softly everywhere.

Just before he left the Fortescue a religious revival left him united with the First Presbyterian Church. That a fulness of belief had come with profession is to be hoped; also, that the heart is felt to have truly entered upon a new relation with God. How often does it seem to have unaltered the temperament, so far as concerns a man's daily walk and conversation as towards his fellowman? So it was with Glenn.

There is probably extant to-day, in Glenn's escritoire, a certain letter from Mrs. Wyntrop, written at this time. This letter I heard and heeded. In well-selected words, suave Mrs. Wyntrop expressed her pleasure at Glenn's late step. "Indeed, I have almost ventured," she wrote, "my dear son, to allow an old dream of mine to flit through my mind—that is, at some future day, I would see you a minister—as I am so proud to remember, and to remind you, were your grandfather, and your great-grandfather before you. The day when that noblest calling became yours would be my happiness. But I am foolish to speak again of this quiet desire of mine which, I have no doubt, will never be realized. I should above all regret to influence"—and so on. Ah! astute Mrs. Wyntrop! When did dutiful Glenn forget one suggestion that you saw fit to make to him, from the length of his jacket, or the number of homeopathic pills he must take for a cold in the head, to—such a sentence in a letter.

Friend reader, pardon the minuteness with which I enter into this analysis of Glenn's early self and life. Such details as I set down are of significance in the logic of this little history, as you will admit if you pursue it to the end.

College life opened its arms to Glenn. There it was the same story as to study. Whatever my friend undertook in tongues or talies distinguished him. At the University, too, broke forth his fine elocutionary gift. He rose to the honour of crack speaker of the "Varsity," first prize-man in oratory. His resonant voice, his facial play, his splendid articulation, drew a crowd whenever he spoke. But he did not appreciate sentiment in prose or verse sufficiently to originate his "points." Most of them were suggested by Professor Roberts, the tutor in the art. Moreover, pathos, sympathy, sweetness in his speech was there none. The elocution class would hear Glenn declaim *Coriolanus'* Farewell to Volturnus and Virgilia, and make out of it a complete *repet mortuus*. The same evening he would be a more thrilling Iago than many a stock actor.

His distaste, or, rather, indifference to literary work of any kind, and to literature in general remained unmitigated during his college course. Glenn never read anything except his text-books, his morning paper, a college story or his Bible—of a Sabbath. His spare time went for the gymnasium or the ball-field or a horseback ride. I may add here that, while he was a sophomore and junior, Glenn drifted into a somewhat fast and extravagant set. He quite gave up church-going, recognized Sunday as a bore, because there were no athletics practicable except under surreptitious conditions, and was generally minded after the ways of the world. Of course, this phase of thought and bearing is not unusual to men of latently strong principle for some portion of their college days.

His muscular arm, so collegians asserted, won for his Alma Mater that famous race of 1872. And in that year of our Lord Glenn Wyntrop graduated. Graduated with prizes on well-nigh everything. There were prizes for Greek, prizes for mathematics, for the winning of the long jump and the putting up of the heavy weight, for the greatest number of high marks in declamation throughout the year: it was hard to tell for what virtue our hero was not rewarded. But it may be stated here that a particular deficiency hampered Glenn until the eleventh hour, and his valedictory oration (which he delivered superbly) was written to order for him by an impecunious friend possessed of an ampler measure of literary talent.

It can be well supposed that in these long years of Glenn's University dalliance and discipline, some few of his friends who had not shared it with him, to say nothing of the fewer still who had not managed to keep keys to the lovable side of his nature, were extremely anxious to know into what work in the great Doing called Life, Glenn proposed to throw himself when once all this study of classics, this boat-racing and college preamble should be fairly over. Two weeks after the valedictory, I passed a quiet Sabbath down at Klein Villa. We two sat out on the wide lawn in the pleasant afternoon. "And now do tell me," I said, suddenly, "just toward what you propose to seriously turn, Glenn, as your profession? I have meant to ask you again by a letter. You recollect that you were entirely undecided so long as you said, you had so much daily duty to occupy you at the 'Varsity. Have you really found at last something that your man's hand can do with a man's might? Heavens, haven't you been a college-boy a long time, though? Black with his magazine, and Skinner with his law-office, and I with my factory and a wedding-day on me next month. Hurry up, old fellow, or one of us'll think—of adopting you!"

"Well," replied Glenn, leisurely, "I do feel a bit like a laggard, I suppose; but see here, Lawrence, you needn't think I'm going to worry on that tiresome point just now. You see I am about done up, completely done up, after this long grind all these years. My mind really isn't half so strong as it ought to be, perhaps, a over-exercised a trifle. I intend to do nothing until September except rest. When autumn comes, you can depend upon it. I shall have surely settled down on something to do, and then I will start into it this winter. See! My mother has begged me under no circumstances to hurry foolishly in deciding. I am only twenty-four. Ah, how I wish—"

"Wish what?" I queried, sharply.

"Well," he returned, half-smiling, "that I could stick to college and the fellows and the tutors and the campus all my days! Great Scott! Wouldn't that be pretty nice, Lawrence? But, of course, I've got to work like the rest of you. I'm sorry for myself, that's all."

That same afternoon I drifted into a diplomatic half-hour with handsome, serene Mrs. Wyntrop herself.

"So Glenn does not seem to have determined precisely what the world wants him to do for it," I remarked lightly. "I recollect that, long ago, you used to suggest the ministry to him, Mrs. Wyntrop. Do you think he may possibly lean toward that, some day?"

Mrs. Wyntrop looked at me for a second, and then responded. "Oh! I really do not know, Mr. Lawrence, anything about that. Of course, I would be pleased to see any son of mine in a pulpit. But I fancy that Glenn will choose possesses the elements of character suited to make a successful minister; but that solemn work seldom wins such minds some decidedly less spiritual calling. I have fancied that the as my son's, to-day, it seems to me. However, Glenn's decision on a profession will be a slow and careful one."

"H'm," thought I, "I wonder whether you have ever cherished the scheme, my dear Mrs. Wyntrop, of retarding Glenn's choice until he turns to the Church as a veritable 'profession' and *denarii resort*. I will wager that old wish still rules you; rules you enough to blind your eyes in the questionable line of conduct that you adopt. If you keep on indulging his passion for college life, if you, by quietly promoting its atmosphere about Glenn, keep all outside influences still away from him, why, then, I believe I shall see Glenn Wyntrop a minister—made such by his mother's address."

That summer passed. In July, Mrs. Wyntrop became the head of the household by her husband's death. I ran down to Klein Villa in August. I wanted to see Glenn, and I was determined to know more of his plans for the future.

"Oh! now, my dear fellow," he exclaimed gaily, when I "tackled" him. "But, you see, I have entirely avoided all that fearfully perplexing business for another whole year. I am going back to the University to take a post-graduate course. I really could not bear to tear myself loose from the dear old college and the fun and study just yet. A year don't count for much. My mother is delighted with the idea. In fact, she rather put me up to it."

A year not counting for much! And Glenn was twenty-four; and not one stroke of world-work had that strong arm of his yet done. It had won a college regatta instead. I was now quite out of patience.

"You are making a great mistake," I insisted. "You know too much Latin and Greek already. As for any more athletics, do you propose becoming a circus-rider?"

Our friend entered upon his post-graduate and fifth college year. His mother had deliberately effected his re-entrance

into a life that was already a second nature to him; that he must utterly forget for his own well-being! I wrote him: "Your love for study and college sport is now a flat vice. You know that you have simply yielded once more to a reluctance to put away childish things."

Glenn worked like a locomotive at all the new learning dished up for his mind. His Kolby for languages suggested Hebrew, and Hebrew fascinated him. Expensive manuscripts were bought for him in Europe. He liked expensive manuscripts. Mrs. Wyntrop presented him with quite a complete little library in Hebrew tradition and criticism on his birthday. As for social life at this period, that had already grown a trifle stale to Glenn, who had always danced with more vigour than grace, and who could look expressively, but never talk fluently to a pretty girl at a party, unless she were interested in athletics or courses of study. He became more and more sedate. Mrs. Wyntrop invited eminent theological lights, who loved good dinners and a little secular relaxation, to her handsome house. They were very much interested in her son. Glenn wrote an essay on the Septuagint—favourably noticed. It displayed small literary nicety (in fact, Glenn was forced to ask a professor's help in casting sentences and paragraphs), but it was very erudite!

Soon there were actual, blunt rumours that Glenn Wyntrop had decided to study for the ministry.

I wrote him a letter directly. His answer came after a week or so.

"I really don't know where all this talk comes from," it ran. "I have not thought seriously of any such step, although lately, I confess, I've been wondering why I haven't. My mother laughs at the gossip; but I know would be glad enough, if I did consider the business as seriously as a fellow ought before he turns parson."

When June came and the post-graduate was over, Glenn could not deny that he would enormously enjoy the years which he could spend so closely attached to his beloved college if he entered its seminary, and that he had "seriously considered turning parson," all unwilling as he was to say farewell to his campus and his gymnasium and his Hebrew and Chaldee manuscripts. From the press of jostling, practical life, among his fellow-men, he shrank, with all his manly thews and sinews.

"What!" exclaimed I, as I turned over the pages of a long letter from Glenn. "What! That most terribly solemn and terribly great of all life-work; that task toward the undying soul of man's fellow-man to which he should not set hand except his soul and lips burn with a live coal from the altar; that duty which writes between God and a creature's spirit a great supplementary page of record—this, Glenn Wyntrop proposes to take upon himself for the following reasons." And I read:

"You see, my dear Lawrence, I like to speak, and I guess I could interest my audience and do them some good. Professor Roberts has improved me immensely in elocution. I should, of course, be glad to stick to the 'Varsity for a year or so yet. I like it, and the Seminoles mix in all the jujinks. I am anxious to go ahead in Hebrew and Assyrian history. As to writing sermons and all that kind of thing, why, I never was a fat at that; but everybody says that they grind a man out a pretty decent handler of English up at the Sem. Besides all this, I've been really sort of called to be a minister. Things have come around that way. I don't exactly see how. My mother's sentiments you can guess. (Yes, Glenn, without difficulty.) I have, as it were so to speak, slipped along until this seems the best possible thing for me to do (exactly), and I think I can make a reputation and a success. We play the Red Jackets on Saturday. Can't you come down and see us wax them off?" etc., etc.

Yes, there it was! Too late to open your eyes to what you were about, friend Glenn! For years your whole vision has been suffering increased distortion. What should be the excuse of any who has aided the mischief? Original temperament, an overstay in the narrow college world, a relish for study as an art, the consciousness of oratorical talent, and the knowledge that wealth would win him every annual advantage in his "profession"; and these things all stimulated and reinforced by the unwavering influence of one near and dear. These drew Glenn Wyntrop to be of the number of those whose "feet are beautiful upon the mountains." God forgive me, if so cold, so probable an analysis of motive be aught but truth. The Church as "a profession," "interest my audience," "improved me immensely in elocution," "grind me out a pretty decent handler of English," and—oh! arch influence of all—"my mother,"—such was your "call" to stand up and proclaim life everlasting to men and women who think neither of it nor death himself, until he fairly faces them down!

Glenn spent the summer in Europe and returned to enter the great Snow Theological Seminary. I had a long and by no means pleasant interview with him just after this. It is always a thankless task to attack a man's motive in a matter where there ought to be no possible doubt of it. I tried to show him how he had merely drifted, not set sail and turned rudder. It was folly to do so, of course.

The conclusion of this bit of biography is near. By the end of our friend's second year in the seminary the dry bones of dogma, of catechism, concordance and creed and commentary, of each limb of the vast body of divinity—these had got hold upon him like a polypus. He worked over creeds and garmen until dawn; he disputed on doctrine with his chum until cockcrow. His sermons were stiff, bristling with analysis, rich in excerpts from his library of theology, or else full of popular phrases, war stories, occasionally slang, all inserted with the best intents. This same time, however, he played a football match one Saturday afternoon, in which his kicks covered him with glory, and which was so prolonged that he had to run in his knickerbockers, bag in hand, to take the train for the town where he was to preach next morning.

"I have learned how to put together a goodish kind of a sermon at last," he wrote to me, "and if I do say it myself, I let I can preach it so as to suit a congregation, even if it were a good sight worse."

And so he could. For the writer heard Glenn, not long ago, officiating as pastor of his first charge, which is a highly fashionable church in one of our large towns. His discourse had