## MRS. COWSLIP'S REPENTANCE

In her narrow quarters off the end of the assembly room the matron was knitting a red hood when the clang of the bell summoned her to the desk. It was early in the evening, and the night's crop of offenders had not yet begun to be gathered in by the harvesting police. Two hours earlier it would probably have been a shoplifter; two hours later the matron would have been sure of a poor, hard-featured outcast of the streets, or of one drunken, sodden or shrieking. At eight o'clock, however, there was room for speculation as to what awaited her. When she saw, her professional stolidity was for the moshaken.

Iron-rimmed spectacles walled in a pair of clear, snapping, kindly old brown eyes; hair, soft and white as the silk of the thistle, was primly parted beneath a close, country-made bonnet, and was drawn across the wrinkled forehead and back to a tight little knot; the cheeks and chin where age had set its crepe-like markings were fair with applebloom tints which the matron never saw on even the youngest faces in that grim hall. The slack, decent black frock, the big brooch woven of sunny hair, the cashmere shawl about the slim, elderly shoulders, the valise of embroidered canvas—all these were new in the matron's experience.

The sergeant somewhat gruffly stated the charge against the old lady. She was lost. She had been found wandering near the Pennsylvania ferry, inquiring the way to Mystic, Conn. She was Mrs. Elvira Cowslip, and she seemed to be without funds.

"Take her and search her," he commanded, exasperatedly. "And try to get her to give you some address to telephone or to telegraph to, if she's telling the truth. She may be just dotty."

"You'll search a long time, young woman," said Mrs. Elvira Cowslip, firmly, and as if the matron's forty-five arduous years were a decade or two of summers, "before you find out anything more than I told that young man."

"Why," said the matron, gently, as she led the old woman away, "what would your folks think if they knew you were in a place like this, a police station?"

"Serve 'em right!" said Mrs. Cowslip, with a glitter of defiance behind her glasses.

The search revealed nothing of importance. There were a few cents in a limp purse. A tidy flannel nightdress and a sober combing jacket were rolled together with a pair of knitted slippers in the bag, and a pressed glass butter dish were carefully swathed in tissue paper in one corner of it. Mrs. Cowslip's eyes clouded as this was drawn ruthlessly out.

"I'm bringin' it," she faltered, "to my own daughter that I'm on my way to see at Mystic. It's my own; I always had the egg money, an' I bought tea with enough of it to get that dish as a premium. Real handsome, ain't it?"

The matron nodded appreciatively. "But your daughter will be awfully worried when you don't come and she doesn't hear from you," she urged. Mrs. Cowslip smiled superior.

"She don't know I'm comin', my dear," she whispered. "An' if I'd told that young policeman in there her name an' let him telephone to Mystic, she'd just up an' telegraph her father back in—back in where I come from this mornin'. An' I won't have that." The matron tried sterner tactics.

"Oh, very well," she said, with an air of elaborate indifference. "Just as you please. But I'll have to put you in a cell. This is my room, and there's no place in it for you to sleep or anything. But I'll make you as comfortable as I can in a cell."

"A cell!" Mrs. Cowslip grew perceptibly taller.

"Yes." The matron nodded with her most business-like manner. "I won't lock you up. It isn't a crime to get lost. And you can come around here if you get lonesome or frightened in the night. But there's no other place for you. This isn't a hotel, you know."

Mrs. Cowslip seemed to waver in her purpose of silence. Then she compressed her lips in token of unchanging resolution and stalwartly followed the matron to the whitewashed dungeon in the women's quarter of the prison. But the sight of it unnerved her.

"Oh, I can't, I can't!" she cried, clutching the matron's arm and looking through the grated door in which the key was turning ominously.

"Then just tell us where to telegraph," said the matron, kindly. "And if—if everything's all right, we'll send you on ourselves."

"Oh, you don't understand, you don't understand," half sobbed the older woman.

"Then you come back to my room and tell me all about it, and we'll see if I can't persuade you to let your people know."

The grimy little room, blocked to overflowing with its stove, its chair, its table, and its shelf where the tea-kettle stood, seemed homelike to Mrs. Cowslip after the sepulchral whiteness of the empty cell. She warmed her hands at the fire—it was a cold evening in the early autumn — and cast a wistful glance at the kettle. The matron observed it.

"Bless my soul!" she cried, energetically. "When did you have your lunch?"

"I—I left home in such a hurry—"

"We'll have you a cup of tea in a jiffy," declared the proprietor of the teapot, as hospitably as if the city paid her to dispense food and drink to her charges. "Now tell me all about everything while I put the water on to boil."

But Mrs. Cowslip did not begin until she had sipped a cup of the steaming beverage and had eaten a slice of the matron's emergency loaf. Then she spoke with heat and bitterness.

"I've stood everything from Luella Johnson—she's Luella Cowslip now, for she married my son John, Dr. John Cowslip he is, and, if I do say it myself, the finest doctor and the best son in—in our part of the country. I've stood everything from her! 'Twas her persuaded father—that's my husband—that we was too old to stay out on the farm alone any longer, an' that we'd better come into the village an' live with her an' John. Now, I knew well enough that I didn't want to live in any other woman's house, but Pa—well, Pa's sort of easy-going."

"So I should imagine," nodded the matron, as she took note of Mrs. Cowslip's resolute chin.

"Any one can wind him around their little finger, an' he sets a good deal of store by Luella. An' I don't say that she wasn't sought after right an' left before John married her. But, anyway, Pa was gettin' old, an' we moves down to Luella's."

The sunken lips grew a grim line now.

"That girl had more notions than any one I ever saw. What's that bell, my dear?"

But the matron had vanished to receive the next of her poor prizes from the sergeant. When she returned, she said briefly, "A prisoner—drunk." But as she volunteered no more, Mrs. Cowslip went on.

"Didn't believe in fried food—Luella didn't, an' set no store by pies. If that's what comes of sendin' girls to college, I'm glad my Josephine never went, but got married when she was nineteen. But, anyway, when the baby came, it's a blessing Luella didn't kill him. No rockin' him to sleep, she said. No cradle at all, just a crib. Rockin' would make him nervous! Nervous! A baby nervous! Did you ever hear the like of that? An' if he hollers, let him holler! An inhuman mother, I called her, an' an inhuman mother she was."

The matron shook her head gently. "They have new ways nowadays," she said. "Best let them try them, don't you think?"

"No, I don't! Not on my grandson!" snapped Mrs. Cowslip, her eyes flashing little sparks behind her spectacles. "Mercy on us! Ain't I brought up three children—one of them the Apaches killed, my dear; he was a soldier, my oldest boy, and only twenty-two, only twenty-two—an' ain't I buried three babies? What experience has Luella Johnson had alongside of me?"

The drunken lady, safe behind the bars, began discordantly to relate the adventures of some one who stood between love and duty. Mrs. Cowslip listened, her face divided between repugnance, fascination and righteous judgment.

"I never saw a drunken woman in all my life," she said, solemnly and a little fearfully. "Oh, it's awful! It's awful! But maybe, if I could see her, I could say something to her to lead her to a better life."

The matron's discreet lids fluttered down over her shrewd eyes.

"I'm afraid not," she said, refraining from even an inflectional comment on the connection between missionary zeal and curiosity. "She's an old hand. But go on about the baby."

"Oh, he's a dear boy, Mrs.—Mrs. Matron! You'd love him. You've got children of your own, I guess"—she nodded towards the red hood in the matron's indefatigable fingers—"an' you couldn't help but love him. So round an' rosy an' sound an' good natured! But Luella has got no more feelin' for him than a clock—not a bit. Feeds him on the hour, puts him to sleep on the hour, airs him by the hour! Ugh!"

"For you'll never know a blessing like a mother's love!" carrolled the old offender from the corridor of cells, with inebriate pathos.

"Are you sure I couldn't exhort her?" begged Mrs. Cowslip. "Our minister—maybe you've heard of him, the Rev. Orlando Green? No? Well, he says I have a real gift of exhortin' an' that he often wouldn't be able to get a prayer meetin' started if it wasn't for me."

The matron shook her head. "About the baby?" she reminded her guest.

"Well," Mrs. Cowslip's face settled into lines of grievance, "yesterday Luella went to a meetin' of the woman's club of—of the place where I came from this mornin'. She left me an' the hired girl—Luella keeps hired help an' John keeps a man; he needs one, of course, for the barn work, but as I tell her, I always got along without hired help, an' I had a big family to hers; not but John can afford it, though. Anyway, she left us to take care of little Jacky. He was colicky an' cross. He fretted an' worried, an' I dandled him an' rocked him, but it didn't seem to do no manner of good. So I told Emma — she's the help—to go to the apothecary's an' get me a little paregoric. She was scared to, for Luella had made her as notional as she is herself about paregoric; but I told her I was mistress there when her mistress wasn't at home, an' she went. An' I was just puttin' away the bottle when Luella came in. She came early because she was anxious about baby."

"Be it ever so humble," quavered the voice from the corridor, "there's no place like home."

"Well, what Luella said to me, an' what my son, John, stood by her in sayin', an' what my own husband — my own husband, Mrs. Matron, that ain't crossed me before in forty years —not since we was first married — what he stood by her in sayin', I — I—"

Her fine pride and ire gave way. Her lips lost their determined line and shook; her firm old chin quivered and she sobbed.

"So this mornin' I took the egg money," she went on brokenly. "I kept the hens at John's—an' started for my daughter's. I didn't go to our station, for they'd find out from Dan Simms that keeps it that I'd come to New York. I walked—an' it's four miles an' there are two hills, too—to—to the next village. Twice I was scared. The Fowlers were gathering in their pumpkins down at their roadside patch, an' I thought if Sam Fowler saw me he could tell Pa which way I had gone, but he didn't. An' the Lahey children were up in an apple tree near the fence, but they didn't see me either. Nobody stopped me. I went on, past our own farm, that I'd left to be—to have my own husband stand by Luella Johnson against me — an' I'd have gone in there an' never left it again, but the people that rent it—I could just see some of them up around the dooryard; weedin' out my chrysanthemum border, maybe! Well, anyway, I went on to—to the next station an' bought my ticket, an' then I had only seventeen cents left. But I wouldn't go back. They shan't know, none of them, where I am, till I'm with Josephine. She'll stand by me, not by Luella Johnson. An' do you think she'll like the butter dish?"

The song stage of inebriety had passed from the occupant of the cell, and she demanded to know, with many objurgations, why she found herself in surroundings so distasteful to her. But the old lady, lost in the bitter recollection of how another had ruled in her stead, no longer listened.

The hideous night wore on, and the curiosity of the earlier evening returned to her. The alarm in the matron's room kept clanging. The offscourings of the city were gathered up. Mrs. Cowslip watched through a crack in the door of the matron's room, in which she was finally allowed by that good-natured woman to stay. The procession of erect, painted creatures and of shambling, dishevelled ones passed by, this with a purple stain on her cheek where she had fallen, those with the marks of each other's fingers on throat and forehead. The whole shocking array she saw. She heard the screams, the oaths, the songs from the corridor into which they passed, in the firm, unmoved charge of the small, kind, unsentimental matron. Her ruling passion mounted high. She wished to address, exhort, improve, direct them.

Finally she persuaded the matron to let her walk through the prison before the tiers of cells. At the sight of her a silence fell, so strange an apparition was she in that place, in her home, grandmotherly garb, with all the records of a clean and simple life set fair upon her. When she had passed, some laughed harshly and broke into singing, that none might deem them weak, but others silently turned their faces towards the whitewashed wall against which their boards were propped, and his their faces.

Before the cell of the early comer the matron paused.

"This is the one you heard singing earlier in the night," she told Mrs. Cowslip. "Maggie, this is a lady from the country who was lost too late to go on with her journey, and she is looking about her. It makes her very sad to see you foolish girls, and the trouble you bring on yourselves."

Maggie had been asleep for some hours. She had waked to address some pointed observations to her unseen companions on the subject of their noisiness. Now she eyed Mrs. Cowslip surlily.

"If it makes her so sad, she ain't under any force to look, is she?"

"For shame, Maggie! Have you no respect for gray hairs?"

"Not when they come a-pryin'!"

"Pryin'!" cried Mrs. Cowslip. "I ain't pryin', you unfortunate creature! I'm only wishful to have you see your wrongdoin' an' your sin, an' to—"

"Bah!" cried Maggie. There was a rustle throughout the prison, denoting a movement of the occupants of the cells toward the gratings. Maggie turned away, as one done with conversation. Then she whirled again.

"What do you know about it?" she asked fiercely. "Was you brought up a foundlin'? Was you, I say?"

"No," faltered Mrs. Cowslip.

"No! You wasn't. An' was you put out to service before you was twelve? No! An' was you a slave for a boardin'-house before you was fifteen? No! An' was you glad enough to marry the first loafer that ever spoke a soft word to you? No! Or to take his beatin's if he'd only make up with you again? No! Or to work the flesh off your bones to get him money so's he'd stay with you? No! An' be never left you, did he? Your husband ain't never deserted you, has he? He's a nice, white-haired, old gentleman with a cane—oh, I see him—an' he think's you're wonderful good because you ain't never done none of the things you ain't tempted to do! An' your children—they ain't robbed you an' cast you off, I'll bet! It's 'Mother, this,' an' 'Mother, that,' an' 'Where's Mother's armchair?' an' 'Mamie, run upstairs for your grandma's glasses!' Oh, I know, I know!"

"Come away, come away, Mrs. Cowslip," urged the matron. "There's no use trying to stop her when she gets going on like this."

"No, no," said the old lady, shaking off the hand that would have led her away.

"Neat an' warm your house," went on Maggie, singsongily. "Lovin' an' willin' the hands about you. What cause would you have to go an' drink? But are you grateful for what you've got?" She came close to the barred door of her cell and peered out, her hands above her bleared eyes, the better to see. "You're not! You're not! Of course you don't steal! You've no cause to! Of course you don't steal! You've no cause to! Of course you don't drink! What have you got to forget? But you've got your sins—I know—you've got your sins—I know—you've got your sins an' no excuse for them!"

She turned and paced to the end of her cell. Then she wheeled about.

"Go down on your knees!" she said, fiercely, "an' thank God for a good husband an' good children an' a good home."

The bell clanged peremptorily in the matron's room. She caught the quivering old lady by the arm and hurried her away to that dismal shelter. She pressed her gently down into the chair. "There, there," she said, soothingly, "stay there and I'll be back in an instant."

When she returned from that visit to the sergeant's desk, the slow tears of old age were crawling down Mrs. Cowslip's finely wrinkled cheeks.

"There," she said, putting a slip of paper into the matron's hand—"there's the address—for the telegram; an' he—the policeman, you know, in there—he said — that I'm sorry if—if they was upset at home."

## ONE BOY'S WORK

Recently the enterprising monthly named Success offered prizes for the best true life stories on the subject "My Salary and What I Did With it." The first prize was won by a young American of Scandinavian name, August Sjoquist, who began to earn a living for his mother, his three little sisters and himself before he was twelve years old. His interesting story is well worth reading — the real life story of a plucky, industrious, home-loving boy.

At the age of eleven years I was employed by a farmer, who paid me one dollar a week. This was the first money that I had ever earned. My father died shortly before the Christmas of that year, and then the only prospect for support of my mother and three little sisters was the poor farm. I was determined that they should never go there, and with this in mind I worked, and worked with a will and a determination to support them. I knew that to be able to do this it was necessary for me to take care of my health, and I did. A more careful boy than I was at that time it would have been difficult to find.

Allow me to tell you that one year from that Christmas we were all living comfortably, and to my baby sister, who was then nearly two years old, I gave a little rattle that cost three cents. My older sisters received ten cents' worth of pencils and paper, and to my mother I gave a pair of much needed shoes, while I presented myself with a pair of overalls. Then I had left eleven dollars and thirty-seven cents. I bought a heifer for ten dollars and with the balance twelve chickens. Thus was my first year's salary gone, and all I could show for it was twelve chickens and one cow, but, best of all, our little family was well provided for.

The next year I was re-employed by Mr. Thompson, with my salary increased to one dollar and seventy-five cents a week. I'll admit that Mr. Thompson was very kind to me, allowing me to spend every Sunday with my folks and during the evenings teaching me the common school branches and bookkeeping. I'll assure you that when the next Christmas arrived I felt like a great man. My sisters received nicer playthings; to my mother I gave a dress, and when we were all provided for the festive day, I had thirty-three dollars in hard cash left, one cow and about one hundred chickens. If you had seen me then, as I stood in my four dollar and seventy-five cent suit, you would have thought me a man possessing one-half of that township!

I had noticed the boys of my age used tobacco and always tantalized me for not being man enough to take a chew with them. I always would show when thus vexed a stiff upper lip, brace my backbone and say one decisive "No," which soon settled the difficulty. Those boys boasted of using at least five dollars' worth of tobacco a year. When I heard this I decided to put away five dollars a year, which I deposited in our county savings bank. Out of the twenty-eight dollars I had left I bought three calves at eight dollars apiece and gave my mother the balance.

I was employed by Mr. Thompson again, he agreeing to pay me one hundred and twenty-five dollars for the next year. I worked for him six years, every year at an increased salary.

At my twentieth birthday I owned a small farm and a herd of fine cattle. My mother and sister took care of the farm and I drew a yearly salary of eight hundred dollars as a bookkeeper in the bank where I deposited my tobacco money. My mother and sisters were as contented as I could make them.

I discovered other fields where I could spend my money to great advantage, and organized a long-needed library in our town, pledging myself to give one hundred dollars a year for the maintenance of the same. In connection with this I organized an evening school, where those whose circumstances had not permitted them to gain any knowledge could imbibe learning during evenings.

I am now twenty-five years old and do not draw any more salary, for I am the sole proprietor of a well-paying manufacturing establishment and own six hundred and forty acres of land. I still pay one hundred dollars a year to the library and am willing to increase it if more is needed. I continue to deposit my five dollars a year tobacco money, which I have decided shall be the foundation of an anti-tobacco institute to be organized in our town.

### TACITURN.

People have frequently been known to attempt to talk each other down; but a competition in taciturnity is rare. Carlyle and Tennyson used to enjoy sitting all the evening through in silence, smoking and gazing at each other. But there was no element of antagonism in those "gran' nichts." It was otherwise in a case mentioned in "The King and His Army and Navy" this week. Frederick III. of Prussia always had the reputation of being the most laconic man of his day in Europe. It once became known that a Hungarian magnate, who was then at Carlsbad taking the waters, was very abrupt and short in his manner of speech, so much so that some even went so far as to suggest that he was as terse and silent as the King of Prussia.

This came to Frederick's ears, so he determined to run down to Carlsbad to see his rival. The following conversation was the result:

Frederick—Bathing?
Hungarian—Drinking!
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Hungarian—Magnate!
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