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**The Story of a Faithful Worker**

John Gordon was a young man with ordinary abilities and a sincere desire to be faithful and to do his whole duty in life wherever he might be found. He had once heard an eloquent minister during the course of his sermon, speak these words: "No man need fail in life. Let him determine that he will succeed, at any cost to himself, let him work through the working hours of the shop and later on in the hours of darkness, let him not be fearful of giving an hour or two extra to his employer. Steadiness, faithfulness and ability will always be recognized and rewarded sooner or later. There is always a place for every man who is willing to use his powers to their full extent." The words had made a deep impression upon his mind, and he had endeavored to live up to them. He went into a machine shop that had been established about the time he was sixteen, in its beginning, and at the time this story opens had worked there five years. He had never shirked the hardest work, and the foreman knew he could ask John to do any little piece of work out of hours that he wanted done, without a grumble, and that no matter how particular a piece of work was, John never needed watching. He was known to be faithful, accurate, industrious, reliable. And yet no one was around "seeking him as they would an angel of light" and offering any wages he asked to come and work for them. Indeed he had never had a raise since he came into the shop, though it had been promised him. The only result of his willingness and fidelity was that he often had extra jobs with-out extra pay to do than any one else, and the most complicated and difficult jobs were given him to struggle with alone. He was more "put upon" than any other man in the shop because he was so "goodnatured and wouldn't kick" and this was his sole reward for being faithful and accurate.

The firm owning the shop were being crowded to the wall by their wealthier competitors, and were forced to make some important changes in order to save themselves. The easy-going foreman was changed for an up-to-date machinist, who would get all the work out of the hands possible. Some new machines were introduced, that "saved" the employment of several men. In order to meet the demands of the market the wages in some departments were cut down. More strict rules were made and a more rigid discipline prevailed throughout the establishment. There was a great deal of discontent and low, half-suppressed growling, but for some time no outward demonstrations were made. John Gordon had won the love of a Miss Nellie Benson, a suit factory girl, who was pretty, industrious, steady and good. He was considered a most fortunate young man to have secured her promise, for more than one young workman had hoped for success in winning her, but had failed. It seems that the foreman met her soon after coming to town, under somewhat peculiar circumstances, and he too was much taken with her. Miss Nellie and her brother and a cousin were boat-riding on the lake one Sunday afternoon, when a hat came flying through the air which she caught and saved from a watery fate. Soon a bareheaded young man came rowing rapidly to overtake them, and said the hat belonged to him. He was profuse in his thanks when he saw that its rescuer was a pretty young girl, and accompanied the boat as long as he could, making agreeable conversation with all his art. But he was not greatly encouraged and had to leave them finally. He, however, followed up the slight acquaintance with diligence and with a calm assurance that his superior manners, looks and address must win the lady in good time. But he was mistaken, for Miss Nellie never liked him, and she treated him as coolly as her naturally gentle heart would allow. In due time she and John were married.

Apparently all was well. But they did not see the look of Allen Grover's eyes when he learned that they were married, nor hear his muttered words when he first saw them pass together. He may not have been so deeply in love with the humble cloak girl, but he could not bear the thought of being outdone by a "churl of a workman." Outwardly he manifested no ill-will toward John, but treated him as well as he could. But John found that his work grew harder with no increase in his pay. The new foreman had quickly discovered that John would perform in a painstaking manner everything that was given him to do, without protesting. According to the precepts usually laid down for the guidance of workmen, he should have been a favorite and been one of the last to be discharged if there were any discharging to be done. Other employers should have been seeking him with tears in their eyes, imploring him to work for them and name his own price. Far from this being a fact that there are but few faithful, intelligent, accurate men, and that these are always appreciated and sought after "as angels of light," it is true that every man who keeps a job any length of time at all is one who is constantly "carrying a message to Garcia," he must do his duty faithfully and with accuracy or business would be ruined entirely, and he would soon be sent "tramping." But it is done as a matter of course, for pitiful wages and no words of appreciation employers and foremen have no time to stop and praise their working men for what they pay them to do. The man who bungles or strikes or "soldiers" during working

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hours, stands no show whatever of holding his position, unless he has some kind of a strong "pull." But John was one of the steady, plodding kind, and expected to live only by the hardest kind of work. He spent no money foolishly, indeed he seldom indulged himself in even necessary relaxation and recreation that cost money. He wanted to build a home and lay up a little money for the time when he could not toil long. When he married he bought a piece of the company and as soon as possible he put up a little board shanty to which he would build on as he could.

John and his wife were very happy despite the necessity of living very economically. In a year a little baby was added to their household, adding to their expenses and their happiness. But they could get along on very little, and not mind it so long as they had each other. One day at noon the foreman began to talk to John in a friendly, confidential sort of way - asked him how he was getting on, if he thought he could pay for his place in due time, if he didn't find it pretty hard to live on his wages, etc. John, surprised and pleased at his amiability, frankly told him all about himself, his family, his mild ambitions and his possibilities. Then Mr. Grover said kindly, "I know of a job I could get for you which would pay nearly twice as much as you are receiving now." "Do you? And will you?" eagerly asked John.

"It is in a distant city, and you would be obliged to leave your home and family." "John's face fell. "Oh, I couldn't do that!" he exclaimed sadly. "But think of how many more comforts you could procure for your wife and child. Think how much quicker you could pay for your home, secure it while you are young and so be in no danger of being homeless in your old age." John rubbed his chin and looked doubtfully at the foreman. "I would very much like to earn more money than I do, but - I can't leave - Nellie - and the baby. Couldn't I take them with me?" "Better have her stay on the place - had policy to get away, both of you and desert your home - everything goes to rack and ruin so. I can get you the rates so that you can come home every month or so, and you will enjoy your visits enough to make up for your absences." John bowed his head and looked very serious and thoughtful. "I must talk to my wife about this. Can you give me three days to decide in?"

The foreman fell into a brown study before he answered. John waited, watching his face and wondering. "Oh, yes, yes; to be sure. Take your time and when you have decided come and tell me," he said suddenly and then turned and left him. John told Nellie of his offer as soon as he reached home. Her eyes beamed with delight until he said that he would be obliged to leave home, and then she started up in a fright. "Oh, no! I could not be left alone, John!" Then he dilated upon the advantages of a better position and higher pay, and the possibility of paying for their home soon, and of having more comforts and a better chance of educating and caring for their child. It was such a chance - it would be almost wicked to let it slip by - but how could she live without John? "Well," she said, "let us take a little time to think it over. If only I could go with you!"

"What have I ever done to deserve such a dear little woman?" he thought humbly as he greeted her. They sat down together in a secluded corner of the unoccupied shop, with baby crowing in his carriage-cradle at his unusual surroundings, and Nellie chatting merrily of many trifling things, that still were to her vastly interesting, and she proudly displayed a cup of hot, savory soup, a piece of roasted meat, warm biscuits, steaming coffee and a fresh pie, and sat down to enjoy seeing him eat. It was a pleasant hour and John felt himself well repaid for his toil. When it was nearly time for the whistle to blow, she packed the empty pail and the cups away in the baby buggy, made baby comfortable and John accompanied her to the outer gate. Then in order to be at his post when the hour came, he hurried back to his place. But he could look out of a window which commanded a view of the gate, and he saw the foreman talking to Nellie, he having come up just as she got outside. He held his hat gracefully in his hand, and an unusually pleasant smile beamed on his face, as he bent forward and seemed to be addressing her gallantly. Nellie stood with drooping head, but he could not see her face or whether she answered him or not, and was glad to see that she moved on as soon as it was politely possible.

Mr. Grover did not enter his room for some little time, and John soon became very busy with his work. Presently he felt that peculiar sensation sometimes experienced when another is intently examining him, and he looked up. Mr. Grover had come in, and stood gazing at John with a fierce, intense, lating gaze, a wild, vague something in his eyes that made the working man shudder. He could not forget that look, it haunted him all the rest of the day. There could be no real friendship toward him in a man who could look at him like that.

"What was his real object in offering him a better job?" he thought. "Was it to get him out of the way?" "To get him out of the way," suggested to John vague, terrible possibilities. Why should he want him out of the way? and John darkly brooded over the matter that afternoon as he steadily but more slowly than usual worked away. He remembered for the first time since his marriage that Grover had tried to ingratiate himself in Nellie's good graces when he first came to town, but she would have nothing to do with him. Could it be that the man was still thinking of Nellie - his wife? Or was it revenge he was after?

Well, in any event he could not go away and leave Nellie alone. He would tell her so that night. As he started out of the door after 6 o'clock, he said to Grover: "Mr. Grover, I believe I'll not take the place you so kindly offered me the other day. I prefer my home." "The more fool you!" answered the foreman angrily, then as though recovering himself suddenly, indifferently said, "It's not my lookout," and passed on. Meanwhile the employees generally were grumbling a great deal at the condition of affairs. It was decided to appoint a delegation to go to the proprietors with a statement of grievances, and ask that they should be duly considered. It happened that they (the proprietors) called in their model foreman to counsel with them. A fierce light came into his eyes as he read the paper.

Gordon. The proprietors were surprised to hear the name of Gordon, and asked for some proof. "He has been imbibing socialistic notions, and is a leader in his union. He thinks he can win glory for himself by starting trouble and 'beating the bosses.' Just give them all their walking papers, and you will have no more troubles." The proprietors believed him, and the next day their discharges were given to the men designated. "I guess you'll leave home now whether you like it or not," Grover muttered as he saw John read his discharge and grow pale and cold under it.

It was a terrible thing to go home and tell Nellie. Their home was partly paid for, and they would probably lose it all. They had no friends anywhere else in the world. Their friends there were as poor as themselves and could not help them. Their whole world was overturned for them. What was to become of them? Once John thought to go and expostulate to the employers face to face, but this seemed too humiliating. Then he thought of Nellie, he had been, they knew he had worked overtime for them for nothing, that he applied himself as few men do from the first to learn his work. He had spent hours in the shop after the working day was over and on holidays studying the machinery and the processes so that he might sooner be a perfect workman. They knew it all, and it had counted for nothing. Still and all, he had after all done nothing toward keeping him a position. To be brief, they experienced a terrible time. Old workmen know what it is, for scarcely a working-man but knows some period of that awful trouble in his life - the long, vain hunt for work.

He would not leave town for a long time - he dared not stay away from home and Nellie. He tried everything - all kinds of shops, mills, factories, in vain. He got a few days' work on the streets and gladly accepted it. Finally he went to other towns for a day at a time and back again, always discouraged and disheartened. Nellie cheered him up as best she could, and went to her old factory and got some work to bring home and Nellie. He tried to save from actual starvation. One day on returning from a hunt, John found Grover in his house. Nellie was standing behind the stove, as far from him as she could get; she ran to her husband as he entered, exclaiming: "Oh, John! I am so glad you have come. Mr. Grover is talking so strangely to me - I don't know what he means. You talk to him." "What do you want of him?" "I merely came to see this lady who is an old friend of mine. We were getting along very nicely before you came," he answered with a sneer. "Nobody wants to see you here, I would thank you to walk out."

"I'll go when I get ready. A man in your situation is in no condition to be taken care of by the collar and shined him toward the door, where with a well-directed kick he sent him into the street, and shut the door. The men at the mill all went out one day. After that there were some exciting times. Small riots occurred almost every day, for the men were very bitter; they had worked for the firm from the first and had been very faithful, and yet they were not even listened to. The word of the foreman was taken for everything, and he misinterpreted them. John was careful usually to keep off the streets when there were many gathered there, but one day he was passing quickly along, when all at once Grover appeared and a crowd immediately gathered around him. They wanted an explanation from him and as his word, he proudly took very little notice of them and endeavored to pass on his way. But a serious disturbance ensued. Some one struck the foreman on the head; the police came and Grover pointed out Gordon. They dragged him to prison, he wildly protesting his innocence, for, it would kill Nellie, he knew, to hear of this. But in vain, to prison he went to be locked up for many days. It was a awful shock to Nellie but she dared not give up, as she would if it had not been for her baby. How that wretched time passed she could never afterward tell; she sewed all her strength would permit, visited John and struggled on as only delicate women can when the test if pushed before them. Their home was taken, as soon as a legal process made it possible. But for the kindness of their humble friends, Nellie would have had no place to lay her head. John's anxiety was distressing. Three months of incarceration turned his hair from a glossy brown to grey.

At last he had a trial and was cleared. He was proclaimed innocent but no compensation was afforded him for his suffering and injuries while being wrongfully held in durance vile. He had to swallow his wrongs for the poor have little opportunity to gain justice. He continued his search for work. After days of anxiety and deep mental agony he at last found a place in a little machine shop where his superior skill was a little better appreciated than ever before. So he commenced the struggle over again, glad and grateful, as it is intended the "disinherited" should ever be for a chance to toil and receive a pitiful share of their productions. LIZZIE M. HOLMES.

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