

THE CORN-STALK'S LESSON.

One single grain of corn took root Beside the garden walk ; "O let it stay," said little May ; I want it for my stalk."

And there it grew, until the leaves Waved in the summer light ; All day it rocked the baby ear, And wrapped it warm at night.

And then the yellow corn-silk came— A skein of silken thread ; It was as pretty as the hair Upon the baby's head.

Alas ! one time, in idle mood, May pulled the silk away, And then forgot her treasured stalk For many a summer day.

At last she said, "I'm sure my corn Is ripe enough to eat ; In even rows the kernels lie, All white and juicy sweet."

Ah me ! they all were black and dry, Were withered long ago ; "What was the naughty corn about," She said, "to cheat me so !"

She did not guess the silken threads Were slender pipes to lead The foot the tasselled blossom shook To each small kernel's need.

The work her foolish fingers wrought Was shorter than a breath ; Yet every milky kernel then Began to starve to death !

So list, my little children all, This simple lesson heed ; That many a griefed sin has come From one small thoughtless deed. —Hilda Areola.

THE MAN OF THE HOUSE.

BY PANSY.

(Author of "Mrs. Solomon South Looking On.") CHAPTER XXIII.—Continued.

I suppose it would be difficult to describe to you how very much Beth Stone enjoyed the first part of the first evening out. The girls were disposed to be especially kind to her. The fact was, they liked the pretty little city girl, with her pale cheeks and delicate looks, and quiet, graceful ways, for Beth was one of those who had grown graceful by merely watching others at a distance. She had never had bright ribbons to wear in her hair before, nor a lace ruffle for her dress, yet she knew as well how to tie the ribbons, and just how high to baste the ruffle, as though she had worn them all her life. Hadn't she studied other little girls by the hour together? Well, the little girls at the candy pull studied her, and liked her much ; so did the boys. They gathered around her and asked questions. She knew a great deal about the city to which some of them had never been ; she had used her eyes to good purpose, and could describe the park, and the fountain, and the great store on Broadway that was like a good-sized town in itself, and many of the other wonders, in a way that astonished the listeners, even Reuben, who hadn't an idea that Beth could talk so well. It seems almost a pity that any other subject should have come up for discussion that evening.

It was Arthur Holmes who suddenly drew the interest to himself by this beginning : "Oh, I've got the richest thing to tell you. Halley Parsons has come home. Did you know he had come? I was up there yesterday and saw him. Well, you know little Teddy, the washerwoman's boy, that Judge Porter is sending up there to school? You don't know him, Reuben, do you? A funny little chap who is smart with his books, and Judge Porter has taken a notion to him and sent him off with his son to school. Halley says they have the richest fun with him. He told me about one scrape this winter. They have big rooms in the boarding-house, with double beds, and cots or something, and that brings six of the fellows in a room. Well, Teddy, you know, joined the Church just before he went away. He's a real good little fellow, but he's an awful coward, and Halley, it seems, thought he would have some fun, and he told the boys in Teddy's room ; and the first night they all talked

and laughed a blue streak when they were getting ready for bed ; they watched for Teddy's Bible to come out, because Halley had told them that he read in the Bible, and prayed every night as regular as the minister. But it seems they were too much for him that night ; he left the Bible in the bottom of his trunk. Finally a boy named Case who slept nearest to the gas-light, gave the word that it would be out in two minutes, and out it went. Almost, that is, He gave the other fellows a wink, and left the least little glimmer of it, not so you would notice it at all, Hal said, but so he could turn it on again in a twinkling. Then for a few minutes everything was quiet, Teddy in bed with the rest. Pretty soon they heard a little soft motion, not more noise than a mouse would make. "What's that?" said Case, and he turned on a blaze of light. There sat Teddy on the foot of his bed, shivering as though he had an ague fit. Then Hal said you ought to have heard Case tell how sorry he was that he turned out the light before Teddy was in bed. "I didn't notice," he said ; "I thought everybody was ready. I ought to have paid attention to you, when you were a new boy." Then he offered to help him, and said it was a cold night, and finally he hopped out of bed and tucked poor Teddy up head and ears, and turned down the light again. Then all was still, and pretty soon some of the fellows began to snore as though they were asleep. Then they heard that little creeping noise again. This time Case waited until he knew by the sound that Teddy must be slipped off the bed, then he flashed the light up, and there stood Teddy shivering and looking like a goose. "I'd have given a dollar to have seen him!"

Here Arthur stopped to laugh, nearly all of his listeners joining in. "Well, Case questioned him again, and he stammered and muttered something, wouldn't you, you know, that he wanted to say his prayers. Case was very sorry for him ; and was afraid he was sick ; hoped he would be able to sleep, and all that sort of thing, and tucked him into bed and turned out the light again, or rather didn't turn it out. After that, Halley said it was still so long that they began to think the little fellow had given up his prayers, or said them with his head ducked under the bed-clothes, and one or two of them were just dozing off to sleep when that mouse-like noise was heard again, and Teddy was evidently crawling out. This time Case waited until the youngster was fairly on his knees, in the middle of his prayer, maybe, then he flashed up the light, and all the fellows sat up in the bed, and there was Teddy out on the cold floor with his bare feet, nothing around him, kneeling down, with his eyes tight shut, and his lips going as if he was saying forty spelling lessons at once. Well, sir, Halley said you never saw anything so funny. He said if he had been expelled the next morning he'd have had to laugh. And all the boys just roared. Teddy, he hopped up and dashed into bed, and hid his head under the clothes, and Halley says they believe he cried half the night."

Now I really don't know how to account for the way in which those boys and girls listened to this story ; there must have been among them those who thought that a shameful as well as a silly trick had been played on poor Teddy, yet every one of them joined in Arthur's laugh, save Reuben Watson Stone. He sat up straight, his cheeks red, his eyes flashing, himself so indignant, especially over the faint little giggle which Beth gave, that he could hardly control his voice enough to say : "Well, I must say that a meaner trick in a small way, without anything to be got out of it, I don't know as I ever heard of, and I've heard of a good many. The newsboys and the bootblacks are always getting up some sort of trick that is twice as bright as this, and not any meaner. If I were Halley Parsons I'd be ashamed of myself for telling it and calling it fun. I didn't know that rich gentlemen's sons that had chances to learn, and all that, were so mean."

Then the girls looked at each other, and at Beth, whose cheeks flamed now like peonies, two or three of the boys whistled, Stephen Miller said : "A lecture on Morals, one night only, admission two peanuts," and began to pass them around. Then others of the boys and some of the girls laughed ; Arthur Holmes said : "Pshaw ! Nobody meant any harm, it was only a little fun ; it didn't hurt the

youngster, either ; and he needn't have been such a coward as to be afraid to say his prayers, if he wanted to."

"That is true," said Reuben in a quieter voice. He was already sorry that he had spoken so sharply, and did not believe that he would have done so if Beth had not given that little laugh. "That is true ; I'm sorry the little fellow didn't more pluck ; but I must say I can't see the fun in a lot of older fellows doing a mean thing because a little one has done a silly thing. I don't know how you folks that have had chances argue about things ; I've never been to school, and I've never had much to do with boys who could go, but I know there isn't a street boy in the city who would play as mean a trick on one of his own mates as that ; they stick together and try to help each other ; and I supposed all boys did."

It had its effect on the boys, this frank confession that he had no chances, and knew more about street boys than he did about those who were carefully taught in happy homes ; had Reuben given his opinion without this explanation, there were those present who would have been rude enough to ask him where he got his education, what boarding school he attended, or whether they taught manners in the box factory, or some such silly thing, to remind him that they were, most of them, boys whose fathers took care of them, and sent them to school, while he had to work hard for a living. As it was, they didn't know what to say. I think perhaps some of them were a little cross over Reuben's bold hint that the city newsboys and bootblacks were ahead of them in politeness, but they seemed at a loss how to answer him, and all were glad, I think, that just at that moment the candy was announced ready to pull.

But there was one little girl for whom the rest of the evening was almost spoiled, and that was Beth. It was not on account of that silly little laugh, though she was a good deal ashamed of it, or would have been had she given herself a chance to think. The story had not amused her at all ; in fact she had thought it a shameful and stupid trick ; but the truth was, poor little Beth's pretty head was turned with a desire to be like other people. The boys and girls who had always worn nice clothes, and had gone out of evenings to candy pulls, and had pleasant times together in a hundred ways that were new to her, had laughed over the story, so she, Beth Stone, must needs do so ; that is the way she reasoned. Of course, being in this free world, Reuben's frank statement that he had never had any chances or been to school like others, and that he was quite well acquainted with newsboys and bootblacks, and other dreadful beings like them, was like live coals dropped on her comfort. How could Reuben talk so. All these uncomfortable thoughts went racing through her brain as she pulled and pulled at her candy, determined to have hers the whitest strand in the room.

The talk went on gaily enough, and but for Reuben's noticing that most of the boys had very little to say to him, it would have been pleasant work to pull that candy. As it was, he found himself somewhat in the corner, working alone ; not a boy but rather resented being told that he had laughed over a mean trick.

Still, I think the little cloud of discomfort would have blown over, and things would have settled into pleasantness again if it had not been for the next thing that happened after the candy was pulled, and much of it eaten.

CHAPTER XXIV. HOW IT ENDED.

The next thing was, that after sticky hands had been washed, and little wads of candy had been picked from chairs and carpet, and the company had all gone into the sitting-room for some games, the dining-room door opened, and black Nancy appeared with a large fruit-basket of apples in one hand, and balancing on her head in a graceful way, the largest pitcher Reuben had ever seen.

"Oh, oh!" shouted John Stuart, who was a nephew of their host, "apples and cider! I forgot that we had any cider. Boys, I tell you it is prime ; just the right taste to it."

In a twinkling a row of sparkling goblets was arranged on the table, and brimmed with the beautiful amber-colored cider.

"Doesn't it look too lovely for anything!" declared little Addie Parker, clasp-

ing her hands in a flutter of satisfaction. "I do love cider dearly, and we never have any at our house, because aunt Fanny doesn't like it ; so silly in her!"

"Why, can't you have anything at your house that your aunt Fanny doesn't like to drink?" This question was asked in a very wondering tone by Arthur Holmes, and while the others laughed, Addie explained :

"Oh, she doesn't approve of it, you know ; doesn't like to have the boys drink it ; she is afraid they will be drunkards ; and Addie's laugh rang out in a sassy way, as though becoming drunkards was a very funny thing ; "so, out of politeness to her papa won't have it, because she is the house-keeper, you know, and he says she ought not to have in the cellar what she doesn't like."

"The idea!" said Kate Wells ; "I thought everybody drank cider."

Now Kate Wells was one of the best-dressed little girls in the room ; in fact, she was always well-dressed, and she lived in an elegant house, with lovely lawns about it, and a carriage drive up to the door, and a ride on horseback a wonderful little part of her own, and her father was the richest man in town. I wonder, after all I have told you, if you are astonished at Beth Stone for taking sips of cider with the rest! Like the bits of sips they were, and they did not taste good to her at all ; in fact she told me that she did not see what they wanted to make such a fuss over cider for, she hated it. Yet she sipped it. Reuben was astonished. He stared over at Beth in that way that made her glowing cheeks feel as though they would blaze ; and she even spilled a little of her cider on the blue merino ; Reuben began to feel as though he just was not acquainted with Beth. What she before, in all her life, had she gone contrary to his views and plans? She had thought as he thought, liked what he liked, and hated what he hated with all her earnest little heart, until now, when something, the name of which he did not know, had come in between them. Even if somebody had told him that the name of his enemy was pride, I am not sure that he would have understood, he knew so little about such a thing.

"But I want you to have a clear view of the glass of cider was passed, and he said it in a louder and firmer tone than he would have used had not Beth been sitting opposite him just then, sipping hers."

"What!" said black Nancy ; "ain't got a boy here that don't like cider?"

"No," said Reuben again in that clear firm tone, "I like it first-rate ; but I don't drink it all the same."

"Why not?"

"Because I have signed a temperance pledge, for one thing."

"Ho!" said Harry Jones crossly ; "temperance pledges have nothing to do with cider ; everybody drinks it."

"My pledge has something to do with cider ; it speaks it right out ; and if it didn't I would have it put in ; I had been thinking about it a good deal, all this winter, and I've found lots of temperance folks, and a good many books that don't believe in cider at all."

"But this is nothing but sweet cider," said this Stella Barnes said, speaking a little timidly ; she belonged to a temperance society, and had signed a pledge that had cider in it, and she wanted to do right, but she had made her weak little conscience believe that the pledge couldn't possibly have meant sweet cider, for everybody said that did no more harm than water.

The simple truth was, that she had not heard "everybody" say any such thing, only three of her schoolmates had said so. "There isn't any such thing as sweet cider," declared Reuben boldly, "not of the kind that people drink ; it begins to have alcohol in it before it is a day old, and people don't like the taste of it until it does have."

"Where is your cider mill?" asked Arthur Holmes, and the others laugh. But Harry Jones had no idea of letting an argument go, and he began to question an cross-question in a way that showed his conscience was a little touched ; and Reuben answered in a way that showed he had studied the matter and was prepared to argue. But some of the boys had no idea of getting themselves worried in an argument ; they had not forgiven Reuben for refusing to laugh with them over the trick played on Teddy ; they were in no mood to hear more from him.

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