

Deacon McNab's Prodigious

The deacon watched anxiously for his son's reply to his letter. He felt sure that Alexander would reply. He judged from his own standpoint, and from his knowledge of his disputatious young man. He forgot to take into account the influence of marriage, and of living in a community where men have to be engaged in matters of common-sense. He was ignorant of many circumstances in his son's life which made this letter of less importance to him than it was to the lonely, anxious sender of it. He was sorry at its tone, and he said to his wife: "I have been a little premature. Scotchmen have long memories for an offence as well as for a kindness. I will wait a year and write again."

But a year passed and he did not write two and three years, and then he began to think he could hardly write again unless his father requested it. He might be suspected, if he did, of mercenary motives. He had better let things alone. So year after year passed away, and the silence was unbroken.

In the meantime a great change had taken place in the deacon; but it had been so gradual that his oldest friends rather thought their estimate of him had been wrong than that his character had altered. "He is hard when you first know him, but he mellow as your friendship grows," said McLeasie, who had been a familiar friend for forty years. But it was something more than the mellowing of time. As drops of water will wear away granite, so the preaching of Dominio Fraser had told upon the deacon's spiritual nature. There had indeed been times when he had seriously disapproved him, when he had even feared he was listening to something very like Arminianism, but through it all very few Sabbaths when the words of Jesus had not found his soul, even in its most secret places.

In the fifth year of his son's absence he began to remember him very tenderly and to find excuses for him. "He was very young, and he had my sin high temper and quick tongue. I ken weel I has a gunpowder temper, and the laddie was like a flash o' fire; in the very nature o' things mischief would come. Wish I kent where he is at. Perhaps I ought, I mean, perhaps it would be kinder like to look after him. I wouldna like to meet his mother in another ward if I had fallen in mercy to the laddie. Whatever way can I make it up wi' him?"

It was in a mood of this kind he went to church one morning. His thoughts wandered a great deal until they fitted into the words which the deacon was reading—the words in which the wise woman of Tekohah urged David to bring back his banished son Abalom. He pointed out the imperfection of David's forgiveness, in that, though he brought him back, he suffered him not to see his face. Then he turned to the father of the newer dispensation, limited in Christ-like colors, running to meet his prodigal when afar off, taking him to his breast with kisses of forgiveness, calling together his friends to rejoice with him over the son that was lost and found.

When the deacon left the church it was with one fixed purpose—to go and find his son. "And you'll do right, deacon," said the dominie. "You are hale and vigorous, and needs fear the travel. You has plenty o' siller to go to the lad; maybe he hasna a barbee to come to you. He may has fallen very low—has you thought of that?"

"Ay, havy I. If I can find him, however low he has fallen, I'll lift him up and gie him his siller in a' things." "If that is the spirit you are in go your ways, deacon, and the Lord go wi' you. Where to first?"

He wrote me a letter frae a town on the Gulf o' Mexico in Texas; but I has written twice to that place and got no answer back, for I bid him leave it on pain o' my displeasure, and he'll has gane, but whichever way is mair than I can tell."

In a month the deacon was in New Orleans, and from there he went to Corpus Christi; but since Alexander McNab had lived there it had been visited by an epidemic of yellow fever, and the population had been a constantly shifting one. No one remembered him.

"I'll go up to the seat of government," he said to himself; "where there is law-making there'll be lawyers. Maybe I'll find the lad among them."

So he bought a horse and buggy and went leisurely through the country. It was in the first week in June, and he was lost in amusement and delight. There was a pomp and glory in the sunshine and flowers which he never dreamed of; and as he rode through miles of blowing grasses and saw the countless herds of cattle and felt all the lonely beauty and peace sank into his soul, he said rapturously, "Here one kens that the earth is the Lord's." The highly oxygenized atmosphere gave him a feeling of exhilaration; he found himself singing lines of his favorite hymns or snatches of such authorized songs as "Auld Lang Syne," or "Soots who has Wallace bled." But the strange happi-

ness in his heart he put entirely down to the credit of conscience. "It's a' gran' thing," he thought, "to be on an errand o' mercy. I dinna wonder how there are so many philanthropists."

However, on the fourth day he left the open prairie and got into the pine woods. The best increased, unknown insects troubled him, he saw huge snakes gliding away into the underbrush, there were strictly sounds all around, and a sense of aerial solemnity came over him. He was alone, with God in the thick woods, and he feared Him as he had never done before. All day long the prayer of contrition and adoration was on his lips. Toward the evening he was delighted to reach the prairie again and to meet two travelers.

"Good night, stranger." "Good night to both o' you. Ken you whar I can get a bite and a sup and a night's lodging?" "Ye, sir—straight ahead. You'll come to the judge's in half an hour. They are right smart folks, and you'll best light there for tonight, I reckon."

"Thank ye, gentlemen." Gude said. He rode on very anxiously. The sun was sinking fast, and an inexpressible solitude was around him. One lonely, silent bird flying hastily to its covert gave a still eerie feeling to the hour and scene. Suddenly he heard the joyful laughter of children at play. He quickened his pace, rounded a clump of trees, and then saw a white house spreading its self beneath them. Some children, black and white, came running to the little gate to meet him.

"Well, baillie, if the Judge at home?" "No, but ma is, said a little lad about six years old. "Go to the house, sir, He'll and I'll take you buggie."

He let them take it very gladly, and went to the house. A pretty little woman met him on the piazza. She needed no explanation. "He was a member o' wanting food and shelter, and she gave them with a charming courtesy that at once put the deacon at ease.

"I am sorry my husband is away," she said, with a pardonable wifely grief, "but he is a member of the Legislature, and it is now in session."

Then the children came back, and the deacon took to them wonderfully. Children were a new form of humanity to him; he knew nothing about them. But there was an independence and good fellowship about the little lad, as he told him all about his animals and his adventures, that delighted the old man.

After a little they went to bed in the next room, and he heard them saying their prayers to their mother. "God bless grandpa!" How the words smote him. He grew so nervous and restless that when the baby lisped out the same petition he could no longer sit still. He walked to the window, where there was a table and a lamp and some newspapers. Then he noticed a large Bible, and he drew it toward him. Almost unconsciously he turned to turned to the family register. "Alexander McNab, born in Glasgow, March 29, 18—," was the first name he saw. He made no outcry; he never moved. His eyes were riveted upon the words and upon those that followed: "Mary Baylor, born in Galveston, Janet McNab, David McNab, Mary Margaret McNab, Peter McNab."

On the opposite page the "death of Janet McNab, aged ten months." He had objected to her bearing her grandmother's name, and she was in heaven with her. He opened the door softly and went out on the piazza. God had held him to his son's house, and he had eaten at his son's table and had not known it. His emotions were incommunicable, even to the heavenly Father. He sat as still in his joy as he had often done in his grief and opened not his mouth, because he was so sure that God had done it.

After a little Alexander's wife came and sat down beside him, and he encouraged her to talk of her husband and his prospects. She, at least, believed in him sublimely. He was the best and greatest man in Texas—she had not a doubt about it. Peter could have smiled if he had not been so full of thought. Finally he asked if her husband was born in Texas.

"Oh, no," she answered, frankly, "he was born in Glasgow, a town in Scotland. I suppose you know the city, for you talk like a Scotchman."

"I has many friends and business connections there, ma'am." She hesitated a few moments and then asked: "Did you ever know or hear tell of Mr. Peter McNab?" "He is a lawyer." "I may say I ken him vera weel. I dinna think much o' him either, ma'am. He's a hard auld man."

"He is my husband's father, so you must not say so here. His son thinks very highly of him, and perhaps you may be mistaken. In business men, even kind men, are often obliged to be hard." Then she turned the conversation, and the deacon was glad of it.

He did not sleep much; and the next morning was on the road to Austin at daybreak. He reached there in the afternoon, and went to Smith's Hotel. A few words of inquiry satisfied him. The Judge was staying there—he would be in from the Capitol about 5 o'clock. If the gentleman had any private business there was no use going

there. The Judge was chairman of a committee, and not apt to be on the floor in the daytime. But Peter could not sit still. He refreshed himself, and then turned his face to the great white building standing so loftily at the head of the beautiful avenue. Deacon entered its halls and gazed upon such a body of lawmakers; he had never dreamed of seeing, and he was wondering if he had not been misled by the men and the methods. But he did not find his son, and after an hour's stay he determined to go back to the hotel and wait there for him.

As he entered the landlady said: "The Judge is in his room, stranger." "The Judge is in his room, stranger." "Gude night, stranger." "Gude night to both o' you. Ken you whar I can get a bite and a sup and a night's lodging?" "Ye, sir—straight ahead. You'll come to the judge's in half an hour. They are right smart folks, and you'll best light there for tonight, I reckon."

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The woman that can buy one dress or more every season, may buy what she pleases. If it is not becoming, she can discard it, or leave it aged and made up in a different style. But the woman who can only afford one new dress in five years (there are many such among farmers), has to exercise care and spend some thought over the matter. "We farmers' wives and daughters do not wish to look dowdy when we go to town; but we certainly will if we buy dresses of any shade that happens to suit our fancy. We cannot make our bonnets last as long as our dresses, and when the bonnet that matched the dress is laid aside, the next one bought must still match the dress, or else be inharmonious. When one can have but few dresses, it is the best plan always to buy black or dark gray for best. Silk is out of the question with farmers' wives and daughters that are obliged to practice economy. The best 75-cent cashmere makes a dress that can be worn winter or summer, and will last ten years with reasonable care, and if made in a sensible, becoming manner, will not need renewing more than twice during that time. The daughters, of course, like a change, and dark brown makes a very handsome suit with a hat and feather to match, and when one tire of the color, the dress can be dyed an excellent black. It is best to buy of a reliable dealer, because some purporting to be merchants will palm off old-styled goods on the unsuspecting farmer's wife, who is obliged to economize. For second best, for shopping, etc., nothing is so economical as becoming in summer than a good durable print or percale. For such wear, a dress of that kind needs to be made up at least, and fitted, by a dressmaker as much as the best dress. For those who wish something better, a black alpaca or mohair makes a very desirable suit."

In buying black goods of a cheap quality, always avoid anything of a soft nature, as such soils very easily. If you possibly afford it, have your dresses made by a good dressmaker. Never have them made longer than the prevailing style, and do not have them profusely trimmed. One word of a dress that has much trimming on it, and so do our friends, and we certainly should have some consideration for those that are obliged to see us in the mud dress year after year. Laws made with a few tacks or ruffles pretty dresses for the young to wear to Sunday school or church, and a dark black lawn is certainly very becoming to the matron. Instead upon your dressmaker using fine thread on lawn or other thin goods."

A word about dressmakers. Never patronize a dressmaker because she is poor or a relative, and if you cannot get one that can do her work better than you can, do it yourself and hire some of your heavier work done. If you have daughters, send one to a first class dressmaker in the nearest town and let her learn the trade thoroughly. Then you will be no longer at the mercy of dressmakers, and can indulge in the luxury of having even your home frocks made by one who understands the business.

Scripture Practically Expounded. In a German village, there lived a parson and a clerk who had often quarrelled about some trivial matters relating to church affairs. One Sunday morning the minister chose as his text, "And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other," and after an eloquent discourse, he proceeded on his way home. The clerk lay in the parsonage, and, thinking that the opportunity had at last arrived for avenging past injuries, he congratulated himself, saying, "Let 'us see if you can practice as well as you can preach." He then gave the parson a smart blow on the right cheek. The parson determined to act on his text rather than allow the clerk to deride and sneer at him, so he offered him the left cheek, upon which the clerk, thinking the clergyman thoroughly cowed, promptly administered a heavier blow than was a man of rather large dimension, there is another text which runs thus, "For with the same measure ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again," and suiting the action to the words, he gave the clerk such a sound thrashing as he had never before received in his life, and never wished to receive again. The squire of the parish happening to pass in his carriage, and desirous of knowing the cause of the scuffle, sent his footman to ascertain what it was about. The footman quickly returned, and touching his hat, said, "Oh, sir, it is only the parson and the clerk expounding Scripture to one another!"

Avoid by all means the use of calomel for bilious complaints. Ayer's Cathartic Pills compounded entirely of vegetable ingredients, have been tested for forty years, and are acknowledged to be the best remedy ever devised for torpidity of the liver, costiveness, and all derangements of the digestive apparatus.

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Wheeler's Tissue Phosphates. IT SHOULD BE MORE GENERALLY understood among invalids that medicine, like heat, is a mode of motion or form of potential energy, which is set free from its latent state by the application of its chemical affinities. It possesses no cure-all or specific properties, but as it is nature by increasing the functional activity of the vital organs, which secures the digestion and assimilation of food, the only radical means of cure in all forms of disease. The special value of WHEELER'S PHOSPHATES AND CALIFORNIA consists in being both medicinal and food, containing agents that create nerve force, and tissue elements for repair.

PITY THE POOR DYSPPEPTIC.—Poverty with perfect health is rather to be chosen than riches and dyspepsia. Try the magic effect of a dollar bottle of FOUNTAIN OF HEALTH.

Correcting Children. To correct children for trifling offences continually, at home or in school, has had effect. It is confusing to the child, and does not tend to develop or cultivate the memory sense. It tends to make distinctions between right and wrong which do not exist, and for this very reason weakens real ones. It is surprising to see how early children begin to look into the hidden things of metaphysics. "It is really wrong, mamma," a little boy said the other day, "or only against the law?" The astonished mother questioned the child, found that some one has told him stories of the fugitive slaves, and of the lives of their slaves, and had, with this question for generalizing which many children have applied his knowledge to the circumstances and events occurring around him. To be perfectly honest with children, and at the same time to cultivate a power to pass by their small transgressions, which are often committed without premeditation; is sometimes well for both mother and teacher. It is only necessary to think ourselves back to childhood to understand how different the child's point of view is from that of the older person, and to do this occasionally would be helpful to most parents.

Prompt means should be used to break up sudden colds, and cure coughs in their early stages. Hagar's Pectoral Balm does this most speedily and effectually.

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W. L. FARR, of W. L. Farr & Co., Franklin St., Richmond, Va., June 2, 1882. "I have used AYER'S PILLS in numerous instances as recommended by you, and have never known them to fail to accomplish the desired result. We constantly keep them on hand at our home, and give them as a pleasant, safe, and reliable family medicine. FOR DYSPPEPSIA they are invaluable."

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