

## Boys and Girls NOT THE BEST OF IT

"GRANDPA," said Fred, "don't you want to see my new knife?"  
"I think you showed it to me last week," said his grandfather.  
"No; this is another. The one I showed you then only had two blades. This one has four, and a nail file besides."

"That looks like a good knife," said grandfather, examining it.  
"That's what it is. It's tiptop steel and not a bit damaged except a nick in the smallest blade and that little crack in the horn on the handle. But the best part of it is how I came by it. It really scarcely cost me anything."

"There are few things in this world we get for nothing," remarked grandfather. "We pay the price in some way."

"Well, the price I paid for this was small, and you'll say so when I tell you the whole story. First, I had a gimlet with the point broken off. Little Jack Deems wanted it because he's fond of working with tools, and the little goose didn't know enough to see the point was damaged. He wanted it, and wanted to trade me a knife for it, for his uncle had given him a new one and he was willing to let the old one go. It wasn't much of a knife, but it was worth twice as much as the gimlet."

"So you traded?"  
"Oh, not even, grandpa," said Fred with a laugh. "I'm a little too sharp for that. As he was so anxious about it, I told him I'd do it for five cents to boot. And he did it. Why," Fred laughed louder, "he could almost buy a gimlet for five cents."

"Is this the knife?"  
"Oh, no! I haven't finished the story. This was Rob Hill's knife. I've wanted it for ever so long, for I do like a four-bladed knife. I happened to know that Rob was pretty hard up for money. He couldn't go over to the Fourth of July celebration at Radnor with the rest of the boys because he couldn't get hold of a quarter to pay his fare. So I offered to trade knives with him and give him a quarter to boot. He hated to, but he wanted to go, so he gave in. This," Fred snapped the blade, "is worth at least a quarter more than I gave for it. So, you see, I've got the best of it in both my trades."

"I don't know about that," said grandpa, gravely.

"Why, haven't I been telling you exactly how it was?"

"Yes, but it hurts me to think of your paying such a price for your knife."

Fred's face fell. "I wonder if I could have got it for less? Perhaps he would have taken twenty cents, or fifteen. But it's no use trying to undo it now, for we both said 'done.'"

"I don't think you take my meaning, my boy," said grandfather, gently. "You tell me that you believe that you got more than the worth of your gimlet from Jack."

"Yes, five cents, and a better value in the knife."

"And that this knife is worth more than you gave for it."

"Of course, grandpa. I always get the best of it in any trade."

"Then you got a quarter's worth of Rob and five cents and more from Jack without their getting any equivalent. Did you say to them, 'I know that what I am getting is worth the most'?"

"That would be queer kind of trading," said Fred with a laugh. "I tried my best to make them think they were getting the best of it."

"Was that true?"

"Ho! You take such a serious view of it, grandpa," said Fred.

"What do they call it," went on the old gentleman, without noticing the remark, "when one person takes from another something for which he does not give a fair and honest price?"

"Why—grandpa," Fred hesitated a little, still attempting a laugh, "they call it—trading."

"But what is it? What is its real name?"

"Well, I suppose that depends on how you look at it," said Fred a little unwillingly.

"Yes, on how you have been told

to look at it when you think seriously of it. One name for such transactions is cheating. An ugly word, isn't it? Another name is still uglier, but we won't apply it here, for I know that through your love of a trade you have allowed yourself to do things of which you have failed to see the true significance. Now, my boy, when it appears that you have sacrificed truth, honour, and honesty for your knife, I think you have paid too high a price for it.

Colour rose to Fred's face. "Then it seems I haven't got the best of it after all," he said, slowly.

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