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The Vicar's Nephew; or The Orphan's Vindication

CHAPTER VI.

Angry as Dr. Jenkins was, he held his tongue. His first impulse, on leaving the house, had been to make the whole matter public; and it was only after a hot discussion with his colleague that he had agreed to keep silence.

"Professional secrecy. And if I were called to a house and saw murder being done, would you expect me to keep up professional secrecy then? This is not so far off it. All this talk of the Vicar and his respectability—thank Heaven some of the world's not respectable at that rate! One would think the child had been clawed by a wild beast."

"It's a ghastly business, I don't deny," Dr. Williams had answered mildly. "But what good will you do to any one by exposing it? You'll ruin his career, there will be a horrible scandal in the papers, and the boy's position will be worse than ever. And then, think of the poor wife!"

But the reticence of the two doctors was of little avail. Probably the story leaked out first through the servants; however that may have been by Monday evening Portcharriack and all the neighboring villages were ringing with the scandal of the Vicarage. Seeing that there was nothing to conceal, and that silence only led to the circulation of exaggerated reports, the two doctors consented to tell what they knew. Mr. Hewitt then gave them a detailed account of the enormities of which Jack had been found guilty; and the curate earnestly pointed out that the Vicar's action, "much as all of us must regret it," was, after all, only the result of too great zeal in the cause of public morality.

"And what's all that to me, sir?" roared the squire. "You don't suppose I need to be told that Jack Raymond's a young scoundrel? If the boy's too bad to live among decent folks, send him to a reformatory—what else do we keep them up out of the rates for? But while I'm lord of the manor there shall be no vivisection and Spanish Inquisitions here, or I'll know the reason why."

In the end the matter was, of course, hushed up, though not without a stormy scene at the Vicarage. Seated at his desk, his head resting on one hand, his foot nervously tapping the floor, he listened to everything that his accusers had to say; and looked up at last, with a sigh.

"I have no doubt you are right, gentlemen. I have been to blame in this matter; but I did all for the best. Perhaps, Providence having so greatly afflicted me in the character of my nephew, I did wrong ever to let him enter a school where he had an opportunity of contaminating others. I have heard," he added, turning to Dr. Jenkins, "that some doctors believe these vicious tendencies can be eradicated by a special course of hygienic treatment; but the idea seems to me to be based on a profoundly immoral conception. How can hygiene cure sin?"

"I'm not a theologian," said the

"Of course," said the doctor after a pause, "do you understand why your uncle does not let you go?"

"I never supposed he would," Jack answered quietly, "when he can have the fun of keeping me here. Did you ever watch him train a puppy? Uncle likes to see anything kick."

"I believe," Dr. Jenkins said at last, "I could persuade him."

"Of course you could; you know too much."

"Look here, my boy, I don't like cynics, even grown-up ones. Suppose I were to speak for you?"

Jack's mouth set itself in a harder line.

"Why should you? What is it to you?"

"Nothing; except that I see you are unhappy, and am sorry for you."

Jack turned suddenly, sitting bolt upright, and some hidden thing leaped up in his eyes.

"Do you mean you want to help me?"

"If I can," the doctor answered.

Jack was crushing his hands together fiercely; his voice sounded hoarse as he spoke. "Then get me out of this! Get me away somewhere, so I can't go on here—your don't understand, of course; I'll keep on as long as I can; but I can't be able to stand it much longer."

His speech faded out suddenly, like a gusty wind dying down. The doctor looked at him, wondering.

"Let us be open with each other, boy," he said at last. "I know all this has been hard on you—brutally hard; and I'm more sorry for you than I can say. I believe if your uncle had begun by trusting you instead of—well, never mind that. Anyway, suppose we try trusting you now. Most likely the real reason he won't let you go to school is that he's afraid you won't be a good companion for the boys you'll meet there. Isn't that?"

"You think that's why?"

There had been a little pause; but at the sound of Jack's voice the doctor recovered himself and asked gravely: "Don't you?"

The boy let his eyes fall slowly; he had realized that Dr. Jenkins understood nothing.

"Did he tell you any reason?" the doctor persisted. Again there was a perceptible pause.

"He said he must keep the curse to himself and not let it loose on others," Jack answered in his pathetic, passive way, as if speaking of strangers.

"I thought so. Now, a friend of mine is headmaster of a good school in Yorkshire; and I think, if I talk the thing over with your uncle, he'll let me recommend you to him on my own responsibility. It will be a heavy responsibility, Jack, after what has happened; but I should just make up my mind to trust you. You wouldn't make me regret that, would you?"

A sudden fire was beginning to glow in Jack's eyes. After waiting a little for him to speak, the doctor added softly: "You see, my boy, I must think of the others too. If any little fellow came to ruin through you, and it was my fault, I should never forgive myself."

"Then why should I go to school, if I'm so bad?" Jack broke in. "I've had enough of good people. Why should I go to school at all? I'd rather begin and earn my own bread. I'm strong enough, and I—"

He broke off, and then added with a little laugh: "I shan't be too particular. I'll go as cabin-boy on a slaver if you like, so you can't see there."

"Come, my lad, that's nonsense," the doctor gently remonstrated. "Think it over, and just give me your promise that you'll turn over a new leaf and give up all those habits, and I'll—"

Jack wrenched his hand savagely away. "I'll promise nothing. I'll find a way out myself."

"I'm sorry, Jack," said Dr. Jenkins gravely. "You'd have done better to let me help you."

He had no chance to say any more, for the family returned from church, and Molly at once absorbed him.

Jack had relaxed into his usual laziness. Till tea was finished he scarcely spoke.

"Uncle," he said suddenly.

He seldom spoke to the Vicar now, unless obliged to, that every one looked up.

"Is it quite settled that I mayn't go to school?"

Mr. Raymond's face grew hard. "Quite; and you know why. You have had your answer; now that is enough about the matter."

"Very well; I only wanted to be sure."

"You'd better lie down now, Jack," said Mrs. Raymond timidly. "I'll come and read to you after Molly goes to bed."

Jack lay down. He had become very docile in trifles since his illness.

"Dr. Jenkins has promised to read now," he said carelessly.

The doctor looked round in surprise; he had made no such promise.

"You mustn't worry Dr. Jenkins," said Aunt Sarah. "I'll read to you."

"Dr. Jenkins promised," Jack repeated. His face had set in the immovable lines that made it look like a mask; there was a violent domination in the black eyes. Dr. Jenkins came up to the sofa.

"I'll read if you like, my boy. What is it to be—a story?"

"A chapter, please; we read nothing but the Bible on Sundays."

"Are you sure it's not troubling you too much, Dr. Jenkins?" Mrs. Raymond asked. As the doctor turned to answer her, he felt the sudden grip of Jack's fingers on his wrist.

"Not a bit," he said. "I shall be delighted, if you and Mr. Raymond will put up with my reading; I'm not much of an elocutionist. Allow me."

He placed a chair for her, adding softly: "You'd better humor him as much as possible just now; he still gets a bit feverish towards evening."

She sat down and took Molly on her lap.

"I've found the place, sir," said Jack, holding out the brown Bible. "May I have the sofa turned round a

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REGAINED THEIR FREEDOM. British Prisoners of War Cut Barbed Wires and Flee.

An interesting account of the escape from Germany of two prisoners of war, one a sergeant and the other a private of a British light infantry regiment, has just come to light through the audience granted by the King at Buckingham Palace to Sergeant Birley and Private Haworth.

King George personally questioned the two soldiers at great length regarding their escape. The story told by Sergeant Birley was particularly interesting:

"It took us just four days and five nights to get free of German soil after we had once broken out of our prison at Westphalia," the sergeant said. "I went to the front with my regiment, the First Gloucesters, as soon as the war broke out, and was captured on October 29, 1914, near Ypres. On the way to the prison camp in Westphalia we were pretty roughly treated. One night fifty-three of us were locked in a church and had nothing to eat for more than twenty-four hours. At last they emptied a basket of mouldy bread on to the floor and left us a bucket of water. During the train journey fifty-three of us were crammed into a closed railway van for fifty-six hours. Only once were we allowed to get out, and that for a few minutes. For food we had some scraps of bread."

"At the camp I made several plans for escaping, but never got a favorable opportunity. I managed to get myself transferred to another camp and there began to make my plans which have succeeded so well."

"It was not an easy matter. The camp was, of course, surrounded by high barbed wire fencing. On each of its four fronts a sentry was posted and at night four powerful acetylene lamps lighted up the whole of the camp."

The great night came. We waited till one of the sentries had his back turned, and then wriggled on our stomachs to the fence. I then managed to sever one strand of the fence and, to my mind, the tang of it made the greatest noise I ever heard. But the sentry walked on. With beating heart I snapped the second strand. That made an awful noise. Still the sentry walked on. Then we crawled out, free men. I am glad we outwitted that sentry, as he had caused us a lot of trouble."

"We had to crawl for 100 yards before we could get any sort of shelter, and then we moved away as quickly as we could in the circumstances. During the night a compass which I had was a real friend."

"The only food we had was a few biscuits and a little chocolate. Whenever we came near a farm the watch dogs barked. In the nights that followed the dogs always smelt us when we were stealing apples in the orchards. For three days we had no other food but apples."

"It wasn't safe to travel by day. Although we had plenty of tobacco, I had laid it down that there was to be no smoking day or night until we were out of the country. The smell of English tobacco might easily put an inquisitive German on our track."

"When we actually crossed the frontier into Holland we were in a pretty bad condition, so cramped with

sleeping out in the wet and our feet swollen and bleeding we could hardly stand. The first Dutch farmhouse was a godsend."

The Price Was Named.

A green sprig from the Emerald Isle entered a boot and shoe shop to purchase himself a pair of "brogues." After overhauling his stock-in-trade, without being able to suit his customer, the shopkeeper said that he would make him a pair to order. The price was named, the Irishman demurred, but after a "beating down" the thing was a "trade." Paddy was about leaving the shop when the other called after him, asking, "But what size shall I make them, sir?" "Och!" cried Paddy promptly, "never mind about the size at all; make them as large as ye conveniently can for the money."

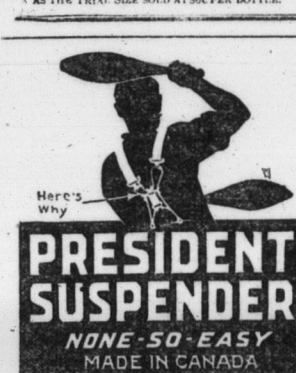


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WHAT THE WESTERN PEOPLE ARE DOING.

Progress of the Great West Told in a Few Pointed Paragraphs.

Milk sells at 12 quarts for a dollar in Vancouver.

Crow's Nest coal mines at Fernie are working double shifts.

One dollar a sack for potatoes at Kaslo is the lowest for some time.

Only one Phoenix hunter succeeded in shooting a deer in this season.

Prince Rupert sent seventy car loads of fish east during September.

Joyce Brothers' mill near Elko, and 5½ million feet of lumber were burned.

British Columbia mining dividends are expected this year to eclipse all records.

By the year ending October 31st Cranbrook had raised \$1,861 for the Patriotic Fund.

The potato crop of the Yukon was the best ever this year, owing to a long, dry summer.

Vancouver's share in the Hudson's Bay Company grant to the Patriotic Fund is now \$6,500.

A camp for the internment of "prisoners of war" may be established at Banff this winter.

The Canadian-Australian liner Makuru took on 2,511 tons of coal in 21½ hours at Victoria.

Trail saloonkeepers have made beers two for a quarter; they were 5 cents each heretofore.

A Nelson alderman claims the street cars are hampered by horses and cattle running at large.

During September 93,245 tons of ore were shipped from Phoenix to the smelter at Grand Forks.

Kamloops Board of Trade has considered the raising of sunflowers, and thinks farmers could make it pay.

Creston Valley shipments of fruit and vegetables this year will total \$60,000, a 50 per cent. gain over 1914.

The Native Sons of B.C. will try to make a complete section of the 104th Regiment at New Westminster.

Two hundred Vancouver Island miners are going to Britain to work in the collieries there during the war.

A pet pig attacked the one-year-old child of Mr. and Mrs. Trotter of Rose Hill, B.C., and ripped its abdomen.

City police of Vancouver have already started collecting for their annual Christmas tree for poor children.

One hundred and five bars of silver valued at \$65,000 passed through Revelstoke, B.C., consigned to China.

There will be no skating at the Arena, New Westminster, this winter. The troops will occupy the building.

Citizens of Vancouver are planning to send at least 500 bushels of apples as Christmas boxes to soldiers at the front.

The Finnish skipper of the Russian windjammer, Endymion, had great difficulty in signing a crew at Vancouver, owing to the fact that he refused to pay standard wages. He offered \$17 per month; \$20 was demanded.

MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

Why Noah Lived to be 395 Years of Age.

Scientists who see to-day how few people live to be 100 years old find themselves at a loss to explain how Methuselah managed to live 969 years, while Noah lived the respectable age of 595 years. Recently, however, a discovery has been made which helps to explain this mystery.

When the causes of short life nowadays are counted up it is found that most of the deaths are due to disease. Very few people die from old age. And the reason why people die from any one disease is that they have been weakened by other illnesses which they have had or which have been handed down to them by their ancestors.

To some of these diseases the human race has become so accustomed that it is immune. Measles will kill off a whole Indian tribe, but among the white race it is only an annoying childhood malady. But the variations of disease increase far more rapidly than the immunity.

Noah and the other patriarchs had not nearly as many different kinds of diseases to face, because they had not had enough ancestors to hand them down a variety. Consequently their constitutions were not constantly being weakened as are ours to-day. For example, there is no reference in very ancient literature to a cold in the head. The Greeks and Romans seem to have been the first people to suffer from it.

The real reason why the patriarchs lived longer than we do now was because in those days the fount of humanity was fresher.

Has Its Uses.

"Pa, what is meant by 'emoluments of office?'"

"That's a high-sounding word used frequently by politicians to denote their pay, my son, and it's like charity."

"How's that, pa?"

"It covers a multitude of sins."

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