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or thoughtfulness, or kindness, or whatever you do have which they lack—or rather what you think they lack—wouldn't it be wiser—wouldn't it—if you will permit me, my lad—be a little better bred to contribute something of your own excellence to the festivity?"

It was now Jack's turn to lean back in his chair and cover his face, but with two ashamed hands. Not since his father's death had any one talked to him like this—never with so much tenderness and truth and with every word meant for his good. All his self-righteousness, his silly conceit and vain-glory stood out before him. What an ass he had been. What a coxcomb. What a boor, really.

"What would you have me do?" he asked, a tone of complete surrender in his voice. The portrait and Peter were one and the same! His father had come to life.

"I don't know yet. We'll think about that another time, but we won't do it now. I ought to be ashamed of myself for having spoiled your evening by such serious talk (he wasn't ashamed—he had come for that very purpose). Now show me some of your books and tell me what you read, and what you love best."

He was out of the chair before he ceased speaking, his heels striking the floor, bustling about in his prompt, exact manner, examining the few curios and keepsakes on the mantel and tables, running his eyes over the rows of bindings lining the small bookcase; his hand on Jack's shoulder whenever the boy opened some favorite author to hunt for a passage to read aloud to Peter, listening with delight, whether the quotation was old or new to him.

Jack, suddenly remembering that his guest was standing, tried to lead him back to his seat by the fire, but Peter would have none of it.

"No—too late. Why, bless me, it's after eleven o'clock! Hear the music—they are still at it. Now I'm going to insist that you go down and have a turn around the room yourself; there were such a lot of pretty girls when I came in."

"Too late for that, too," laughed Jack, merry once more. "Corinne wouldn't speak to me if I showed my face now, and then there will be plenty more dances which I can go to, and so make it all up with her. I'm not yet as sorry as I ought to be about this dance. Your being here has been such a delight. May I—may—I come and see you some time?"

"That's just what you will do, and right away. Just as soon as my dear sister Felicia comes down, and she'll be here very soon. I'll send for you, never fear. Yes, the right sleeve first, and now my hat and umbrella. Ah, here they are. Now, good night, my boy, and thank you for letting me come."

"You know I dare not go down with you," explained Jack with a smile. "Oh, yes—I know—I know. Good night—" and the sharp, quick tread of the old man grew fainter and fainter as he descended the stairs.

Jack waited, craning his head, until he caught a glimpse of the glistening head as it passed once more under the lantern, then he went into his room and shut the door.

Had he followed behind his guest he would have witnessed a little comedy which would have gone far in wiping clean all trace of his uncle's disparaging remarks of the morning. He would have enjoyed, too, Parkin's amazement. As the Receiving Teller of the Exeter Bank reached the hall floor the President of the clearing House—the most distinguished man in the Street and one to whom Breen kotowed with genuflections equalling those of Parkin—accompanied by his daughter and followed by the senior partner of Breen & Co., were making their way to the front door. The second man in the chocolate livery with the potato-bug waistcoat had brought the Magnate's coat and hat, and Parkin stood with his hand on the door-knob. Then, to the consternation of both master and servant the great man darted forward and seized Peter's hand.

"Why, my dear Mr. Grayson! This is indeed a pleasure. I didn't see you—were you inside?"

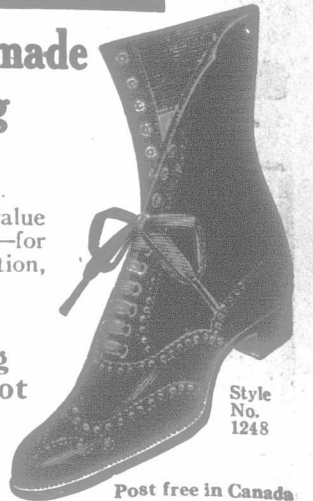
"No—I've been upstairs with young Mr. Breen," replied Peter, with a comprehensive bow to Host, Magnate and

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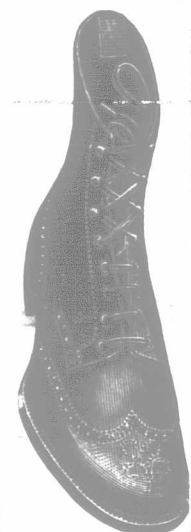
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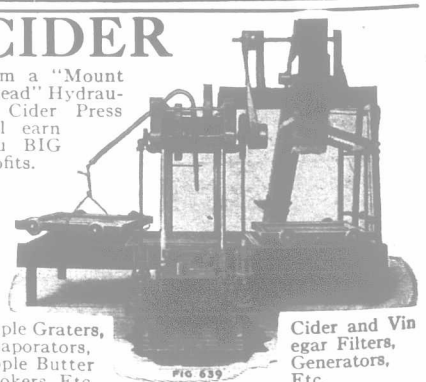
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