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Adam Clifford's Temptation.

I.

Adam Clifford was his mother's darling, and his father's too, for that matter. Not an unusual state of things when the son is the only child of a late marriage. Adam had known no home except the quiet Vicarage of a scattered village in a remote corner of England. His studies were supervised by his father until he was old enough to join a class of students in a market town not far distant.

'We must send him to Cambridge,' remarked the Rev. James Clifford to his invalid wife, patting fondly the golden hair of his little son, and gazing into the fearless blue eyes.

'How are we to manage it?' asked the practical mother, doubtfully, thinking of the exceedingly small stipend which they entirely depended on.

'He will get a scholarship, of course, and we must manage the rest,' replied the father.

'And he must be a clergyman,' they both agreed.

And so his future was planned. Naturally clever, he soon gave promise of fulfilling his parents' dearest wishes, and the autumn of his nineteenth year saw him fully installed at Cambridge as a theological student.

He was home now for his first vacation, apparently unspoiled by his fuller, more exciting life,—the same loving, devoted son, full of health and spirit, and ready to settle down for a few weeks to the quiet country life to which he had always been accustomed. His one fault lay in his thoughtlessness, which often caused unintentional pain to those who loved him. . . .

'Hullo, Lucy! why you're prettier than ever, and—you've turned your hair up!'

'And quite time too,' laughed the young daughter of the country doctor, glad of an opportunity of breaking the slight constraint which had fallen on them at their first meeting. These two had been playmates from childhood, had roamed the moors together, had gone fishing and butterflying together, and together had got into many varied scrapes. But the natural shyness caused by a long separation soon wore off, and they were as free as ever. Lucy was a sweet, fresh young girl, tall and graceful, with fair hair and aristocratic features.

'You're not changed a bit,' she cried delightedly, after he had given her a long description of his new life and surroundings—intensely interesting to a country-bred girl whose only experience of life was that of a boarding-school in a small town.

'And why should I be?' he asked with a surprised look in his dark blue eyes.

'Oh, I don't know, people said you would be. But come in and have some tea—it's getting cold.'

II.

'I say, Clifford, come round to my rooms. I want to introduce you to Mallet and Jones.'

'Thanks, Hardy, but I've already told you it would not do for me to know your rich friends. I can neither afford the time from my work, nor the expense of their society.'

'But this is our third year, so you will not have to keep up their acquaintance for long.'

And in the end he yielded. . . .

'Clifford, you are just the man for the vacancy in my pater's business. Shut up your books after the exam., and go down with me. Your sort of work doesn't pay. What is a clergyman worth? If you get on in our firm, as I feel sure you will, you'll be a rich man in no time. And isn't there a fair one to consider?'

Thus the temptation came, and though for some time it was resisted, in the end it overcame him. In his native country village he

to give up the Church and go into business. I have a splendid opening offered me in the office of Jones' pater, and I think you will be pleased that I shall be off your hands so much sooner than you expected. You will not have to screw and scrape so much now. I am afraid I shall not be able to go down and see you for some time, as I am to go to town directly after degree day, and commence work at once. With love, your affectionate son, Adam.'

The letter dropped from the clergyman's



BUT, LUCY! I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

had led a perfectly contented life, but after a time, when he saw more of the world, he felt the contrast between his own position and that of so many of his friends, and by degrees the strict economy he had to practise became irksome to him. In his thoughtlessness and reckless anxiety to make money he forgot the seriousness of giving up his destined profession, and the disappointment he would be causing the parents who had sacrificed so much for him.

III.

'My dearest Parents,—You will rejoice that I am through, and able to take my degree in a few days. I rejoice, I can tell you, for now no more books. I have a better prospect than books can give me. I have made up my mind

hands, and he bowed his head with grief and disappointment.

'I am the one to blame—I have trusted too much to his youth and inexperience, and forgetting his characteristic thoughtlessness, sent him up to Cambridge insufficiently armed to resist the "world." So blind have I been that I have not impressed upon him the sacredness of the calling I chose for him, and I fear he has looked upon it in the light of a mere profession. . . .'

And after a while he rose, and went into the garden to break the news to the gentle mother who was reclining on a couch under the trees. The soft June breezes blew, and the sunlight and shadows flickered on the unheeding figure of two who had denied themselves much for