

was a grave dug. I remember rejoicing that there was only one, and that we should lie together. I did not feel frightened, but I moved as in a dream. The sergeant came up.

"Let me loose your hands, sir. You may speak to your friend now, but only for a few minutes."

"I was glad the time was not longer; yet I held Bertram in my arms. He was younger than I and always a boy to me; I held him as if I could never let him go."

"You do forgive me, I know," he said. "Perhaps all may be well yet; and if it is, think that I am glad, will you?"

"What did he mean? His mind must be wandering, I thought."

"All is well, Bertram, dear!" I said. "I am glad, so glad, to be with you!"

"We embraced and kissed, then I tore myself away from him."

"Meantime the priest had stepped up to the soldiers, and was talking earnestly to them, and pointing to us. Then quickly we were placed. My prayers were all for Bertram. My eyes were bandaged. I waited to hear the word of command, but a signal was used instead. I waited; it was but a few seconds—it seemed minutes. Then there burst upon my ears the sharp crack of the rifles, and, falling to the earth, I knew nothing more."

"When I awoke to consciousness I found myself in the priest's house. I was unhurt; not a bullet had touched me. Bertram had been slightly wounded by a ricochet bullet, but otherwise we were both none the worse for our adventure. When the soldiers fired we both fortunately fainted. We were covered for a few minutes by the good priest's cloak, and then, when the soldiers had hurriedly filed off, we were smuggled into the "cure's" house, and the empty grave was filled in, and marked by a wooden cross."

"Bertram's wound soon healed. After some weeks the Germans moved out of the district, and we were able to make our escape, across the frontier into Switzerland, and so to England."

"The 'cure' told me what had happened. We owed our lives to Bertram's love and remorse, and to the great tact of the French priest."

"While we were bidding each other a last farewell the 'cure' went up to the firing party."

"Gentlemen," he said quietly, but quickly, "the youngster over there"—pointing to Bertram—"wishes a favor, which is in your power to grant. He has brought his friend to this bloody death through the sin of drunkenness. As a soldier to soldiers, he asks that you will fire straight to his heart alone. Here is his fiancée's portrait, which is to be laid on his wounded breast, and on it he has written the words 'Honor before life.'"

"Not another word was said. The tears which rose in the eyes of those men must have spoilt their aim, or else—and more likely—each man secretly determined that his bullet should miss its mark."

"That is all—a bright ending to a sad tale, Ronald," concluded Mr. Baker, caressing his boy, for Ronald had burst into tears.

"Do you wonder that we both became teetotallers, when we remembered what the drink had cost us then?"

"Father," said Ronald, "I am awfully sorry I wished what I did. I will never wish to give up my pledge again. Whatever it may cost me will be very little to what it cost you and Uncle Bertram."

THE END.

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William Awdry's New House

"Yes, it will be a nice place, I think, for us to end our days in. As you say, I am paying a good price for it, but of course, good materials and good workmanship must be paid for. When a man gives me good value I like to pay him a fair price."

"Well that is the only honest way, of course; I'll look in and see how they are getting on with it."

William Awdry was a well-to-do man. He had decided to give up business, and build a house near the village in which he had been born, that his wife and he might pass their last days among the scenes of his early boyhood.

Plans had been prepared, and the building had been entrusted to John Tinkler, a local builder, whose father William Awdry could remember. His estimate had been rather high, but everything was to be of the best, and as Mr. Awdry said: 'Good value deserved a fair price.' This evening his old friend, Frank Russell, had dropped in to see him, and, knowing that the latter knew a great deal about building matters, William Awdry laid the plans before him.

Mr. Russell entered heartily into his friend's pleasure at the prospect of settling down in his native place. He praised the plans, and as the building was near his own house, he said that he would look in and see how the work was getting on.

This he soon did, and was taken over the place by John Tinkler himself.

"It'll be a real good house," said John, "and no mistake. The best of everything Mr. Awdry would have, and that's what we're giving him."

"I suppose you are carrying out the plans strictly?"

"Of course," said John, somewhat nettled; "Mr. Awdry will be able to see that when he comes."

"Well, I won't hinder you any longer now; do you think you could come over and see me to-night?"

"It was a question of building I wanted to talk to you about," began Mr. Russell when John called. "I was looking at some building plans a day or two ago, and to-day I had a look over the building itself, so far as it had progressed."

John shifted uneasily on his seat.

"I could not help noticing," went on Mr. Russell, "that in several things the building did not agree with the plans. In one place, for instance, the plans showed a double wall, but only a single one was being run up. Then in the matter of drain pipes, I noticed that those being put down were not the same as agreed upon."

"They were just as good," said John.

"If they were, that would not matter a bit. The agreement to use a certain kind should be kept. But as a matter of fact, I know something about building matter, and these were not as good."

"No one would know the difference."

"No; in every case where the agreement had not been carried out, it would be impossible to detect it when the building was finished until some repairs were required. But my friend is cheerfully paying a high price for good materials and thorough workmanship. Do you not think that a fair price deserves fair value?"

"Maybe it does," admitted John.

"Of course it does. You have no more right to scamp the work than my friend has to keep back part of the price. Think it over."

John did think it over. At first he felt furiously angry with Mr. Russell, but better feelings prevailed. He realized that his conduct was dishonest; there was no other word for it.

"Dick," said he to his foreman the next day, "that wall is too thin. Better make it double. And those pipes, we had better change them."

Dick stared, but said nothing; and the house was finished according to the contract. It proved all that its owner could desire.

As for John, he had learnt the lesson that fair pay deserves fair value. He became known as a man whose work could be relied upon, so that his business grew very quickly.—'Friendly Greetings.'

Youth's Friendships.

Youth is the time of friendships. It never sits solitary. When the battle of life is on we do not get close to the hearts of other people except in the charmed circle of home. But in earlier life we seek our enjoyment in social communion. We do not bottle up our capacity for friendships, but take out the cork and let the fragrance spread abroad. We live with chums. We find in our companions our delight and inspiration. The touch of their hand brightens the day and speeds the hour along.

Nothing is more important at this time of life than the choice of associates. St. Hildegard said to her friend: 'I put myself into your soul.' That is what all of those with whom we are closely intimate are doing. They put themselves into our souls, and so they lift us up or draw us down to their level. It is easy for a youth to be drawn away from his high ideals and purposes by an unworthy friend. Unconsciously and gradually the life is coarsened. Things which once seemed wrong now seem matters of indifference, and after a little become enticing. The more intense the intimacy, the more constant the friendship, the easier the transformation.

But if an unworthy friend may degrade, a worthy one may ennoble. George MacDonald says: 'To know one person who is positively to be trusted will do more for a man's moral nature—yes, for his spiritual nature—than all the sermons he ever heard.' We should then make some friends who are wiser and more stronger than ourselves. Their virtues will enter our lives, and prove a source of help far greater than the counsel we may listen to or gather from our elders. By their purity our grossness will be purged.

But while we should make the good our chums, we should not withdraw ourselves from those who are weaker. There is always the duty to give. Life is not all receiving. It is also imparting. Christ made the weak strong by the virtue which went out of him. 'Energy of mind and heart,' says some one, 'is developed by giving out.' The widow's oil increased as it was poured out, and the barley bread as it was broken. 'To be good, one must give out goodness. The spring that has not on some side a lower level will stagnate with all its fulness.'

As in our friendships we should get the best, so in them we should give our best. Do not drop below your highest level when you are with your chum. Do not keep back your best thoughts, your truest beliefs, your highest purposes, your loftiest aspirations. Pour them into his soul, that he may leave you the stronger and the better for the fellowship. There is too much drawing from the bottom of the cask, where the dregs are. Many young people seem afraid to exhibit their best. They utter frivolous thoughts, they assume light