

The children had never been taught the vitally important lesson of obedience, and this neglect was soon to bear its natural and inevitable fruit. That evening, after putting the children to bed, Mrs. Lansing was chatting quietly with her husband in the parlor, when they were startled by hearing loud screams in the back part of the house. Rushing to the kitchen, they were horrified when, upon opening the door, to be met with a cloud of smoke, and to see a tongue of flame darting around the room, igniting everything inflammable in its way.

'The children! the children!' shrieked Mrs. Lansing, while her husband turned ashen with horror. The children's bedroom lay beyond the kitchen, and opened off from it on the court, and no one could pass through that flame-lighted room and live. They could hear the little ones crying, 'Mamma! Papa!' but could not see them through the smoke. They had fled to this retreat after their fatal experiment with the matches, which—after their mother's back was turned—they had crept out of their bed to make. Almost suffocated with the smoke which pursued them, they were nearly wild with fright.

'Shut the door, Dicky,' shouted his father. The child obeyed, and Mr. Lansing then tore down the front stairs to turn in an alarm, while his wife followed and rushed around to the rear of the building to see what could be done from that side. Alas! the kitchen door was locked on the inside and the key in the door, though it would have been of no use if they could have opened it because of the fire inside. The rear bedroom had a window opening onto the porch, but its only door opened into the kitchen.

By this time a crowd began to gather, and the usual excitement and panic ensued among the other tenants of the building, who were rushing hither and thither through their flats, trying to save some of their valuables, for there was no telling where the fire would end. For some unexplainable reason, the fire engine had not appeared.

Jim made his appearance on the scene as Mrs. Lansing was wringing her hands and shrieking, 'My children! my children! they will be burned alive!' and understood the great need there was for prompt action. He knew where the children slept, and also that the firemen would be too late to save them, for the flames were bursting through the bedroom door,—he could see the glare from the court window as he ran up the front stairs.

The Lansings lived on the third floor; the bath-room was on the court between the front hall and the children's room, at the window of which the trembling tots were huddled, in terror of the black smoke and swooping flame. Stiff and rheumatic as he was, Jim did not hesitate. Stepping from the ledge of the court window opening into the front hall, across to the sill of the bath-room window, keeping himself from falling by hanging to the window-frame, he worked himself along to the sill of the window, where the children were. The window was closed, but bright little Dicky quickly shoved it up when he saw Jim coming.

'Take us out, Jim, please,' he called. 'It's awful hot, and we're 'fraid.'

'Wait a minute, honey,' Jim shouted, 'n' Jim 'ill take you out. Don' be 'fraid.'

By this time Mr. Lansing had returned, and comprehending the situation, hurried to the bath-room window, ready to take the little ones as Jim passed them across the intervening space. This was not an easy job, as they were chunky little tots, but Jim did manage it. Leaning far out of the window, he handed first the girl to her father, then the boy, holding them in a grip of iron. Mr. Lansing, not so strong as Jim, was very glad of the hands behind him, now ready to help him lift his precious burdens through the bath-room window.

'Come on, Jim,' he then called, and 'Come on, Jim,' was echoed from all those around, but Jim—blinded and bewildered by the smoke which poured through the room and enveloped him, and overcome by the heat—lost both his head and his footing, as he essayed to reach the bath-room window. He fell, striking the cement flooring three stories below, with a sickening thud, just as the fire engine dashed up the street.

A groan burst simultaneously from many throats. Not one there but shrunk from the thought of going to the scene of horror, but it had to be done. They found Jim—a pitiful heap—maimed, crushed, living, but unconscious. An ambulance was sent for, and he was taken to the hospital. In the meantime, the fire was soon extinguished, but with considerable damage to furniture and wood-work, though this was lost sight of in the joy of having the children saved from such an awful death.

The next morning Mrs. Lansing hurried over to the hospital.

'Yes, he is alive,' the nurse said in answer to her inquiry, 'and conscious, but he cannot last long. He is so frightfully injured that it will be a mercy when death puts an end to his suffering. Yes, you may see him. It can do him no harm.'

When Mrs. Lansing looked into the poor face, so drawn and lined by suffering, yet upon it the 'peace which passeth understanding,' she realized that this 'old nigger' possessed what was more precious than any earthly possession, and which was not hers, in spite of her fair complexion and boasted superiority. But she was in a fair way to improve, now that this truth had dawned upon her, for she had the grace given her to be ashamed of her former attitude toward her black brothers of the human race.

'Oh, Jim, forgive me!' she cried, the rain of tears washing the hardness from her eyes. 'I am so sorry—so sorry! You are a hero, Jim, and I have not treated you well. You saved my children's lives, and now—you must—you must—'

'Die; yes, Missis,' said Jim feebly, 'but don' you feel bad 'bout dat. Why, all Jim's got is ober dar where's he's a-gwine,' and a smile, almost unearthly in its brightness, lighted up the fading eyes, and spread over the black face. Great drops of sweat stood upon his forehead, which the nurse gently wiped away, and the labored breathing showed what an effort it was for him to speak. 'Don' you fret, honey,' he said. 'You did'n' un'stan'. You did'n' know Jim wasn't black clar frough,' and with one long-drawn-out sigh, he was gone—gone to a laad in which the gradations of society are arranged with an eye strictly to character instead of color.

## A Shopman's Restitution

'It's no use,' said a young man, kneeling in an inquiry-room; 'I don't get the knowledge of my sins forgiven. I must have it. Oh, God, help me!'—'God will help you,' said the worthy man of God who was kneeling by his side. 'Come, Dick, I've proved Jesus Christ to be a loving Saviour. You haven't to pray God into a willingness to save you.'—'I know, I know,' was the reply; 'but I can't get converted.' And the beads of perspiration burst out upon his brow. He groaned in agony.

An experienced evangelist came up at the moment, and, after listening for a few minutes, said, 'My friend, is there anything you ought to confess?'

'How—how do you know?' stammered the seeker.—'Then there is?'—'Well, I did not attach any importance to it, but—'—'If there was a wrong done, and it blocks your salvation, depend upon it, it is not unimportant.'

'True, true; I see it. I will tell you what haunts me. Some years ago, when employed by a provincial firm, I used to extract sums of money from the till; small sums, I grant, but still, there is the fact.'

'Did they not notice the loss?' asked the evangelist.—'No; the manager trusted me absolutely; how the affair escaped attention I don't know. Perhaps—as I used to look after the shop while he was away billiard playing—he felt responsible, and he made the money right from his own pocket. That I can't say, but—"I had the money!"'—'How much?'

'About five pounds in all. But, though I would pay the money back, I don't see how I can, for the firm has retired from business, and I believe neither of the partners is alive.'

'Is there no other reason? Is there not the fear of the police-court and the gaol? Be true. Trust the Lord. Commit your way unto him. The salvation of your soul is the important matter.'

'It is, it is,' groaned the young man. 'I confess you have touched the sore spot. Oh, what shall I do? Think of the disgrace of a confession. And to whom shall I confess?'—'Is there no living heir of either of the partners?' queried the evangelist. 'If so, write and tell him everything, for your soul's sake.'

'Yes, I will,' was the reply.

And that very moment he was able to pour out his soul to God in prayer. The Lord answered and saved him. He wrote to the son of one of the late partners, explained the circumstances, returned the money, and begged forgiveness. The reply came in the words of Scripture, 'Go in peace, and sin no more.'

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