

THE CHILD NEEDED A FATHER

And Either of the Two Men Were Ready at Any Time

To Take Upon Himself the Responsibility of the Position—Story of That Life.

The mother was a widow, an industrious woman, who worked late and early in order to support her child a little girl between 4 and 5 years old as pretty a fairy full of fun, affectionate and coaxing as any happy child could be.

On the opposite side of the landing on the fifth floor on which Mme. Etienne and her daughter Lillie lived was the door of the apartments inhabited by two brothers, cabinet makers by trade and bachelors either by choice or chance, no one knew.

One of those days when the intense heat necessitated the door being left open in order to get a current of air, the prettiness of Lillie attracted the attention of the two brothers, who were already past their first youth and adored children in their quality of approaching old bachelorhood. From that sort of intimacy sprung up between the two brothers and her neighbors. Little reciprocal services passed between them. They sometimes made a party of pleasure on the Sunday. So well did they get on indeed that one day the eldest of the two brothers said to the other:

"That child would want a father, wouldn't you?"

"That is my opinion also."

"Would you have any objection to making the mother to marry me?"

"Why should I? In fact, I was thinking of doing the same myself. Since you have spoken first follow the notion up, but on the condition that you will let me see Lillie as often as I like. I love that child as much as she were my own."

"Forsooth! You will live with us." The question agreed upon, the two brothers, dressed in their best, went to see Mme. Etienne, whom, however, they found confined to bed. The evening before she had run in order to take some work back to the shop in time; and returning she had caught a chill, and a feverish night and was not able to rise in the morning. She begged her neighbors to go for a doctor. It was no time to speak of marriage.

Inflammation of the lungs carried off the poor woman in ten days. Thanks to the two brothers, she had to go to the hospital, and until the day she was able to see her little Lillie, whom she earnestly recommended to them. They swore never to abandon a child.

The funeral over they took charge of little one, kissing her. They said one another at the same time: "If you wish, we will never get married now."

They went to live at Vincennes so that Lillie might have plenty of good food and take walks in the wood. They were very proud of their adopted daughter. When people stopped to look at them and asked in a casual way which was her father, they replied, "Both of us."

Lillie seemed to like one as well as the other and called them Uncle John and Uncle James.

When she grew a little older they put her to school—to a young ladies' school. Her understanding—taking her there every morning and calling for her in the evening. So Lillie grew up being these two affections without ever knowing the want of father or mother.

About the brothers a great deal of money, did the little one, but baby went no longer to the cafe and school a little more than formerly. Her supplementary hours were devoted to the pleasure and toilet of made-up Lillie.

When she was 15 years of age, she was the first to suggest that she should go home for the future, at which, of course, the brothers were enchanted. A charming little housekeeper had then and with what joyful surprise she greeted their return, exclaiming: "To say the spoiled child never abused their goodness, but at least she was saying too much, but at least she seized every available opportunity of pleasing them."

Two years passed over so quickly for them that on the day the two brothers brought a cake and bouquet to celebrate Lillie's birthday they exclaimed: "Seventeen years old! Is it possible?"

take her away from us before very long."

"Poor little thing!"

"Yes, if she were to get a bad husband!"

"Oh, I should kill any man who would treat her badly!"

"There is only one way of escaping that."

"Ah!" said the elder brother, without making any addition to the exclamation.

"And then," continued the other, "think how sad it would be for us to part from Lillie—never again to see her trotting about the house, never to hear her merry voice singing after we return from work on an evening."

"I have been thinking of all that for a long time, my dear John."

"It must be put an end to."

"And your plan?"

"It is very simple if it pleases you. I shall marry her before she gets fond of any one else."

"Zounds!"

The elder brother stood up, almost threateningly.

"I also have thought of that plan. I was often going to speak about it, but always held back."

"Why?"

"Because I wanted to marry Lillie myself."

The two brothers looked at one another far from amiably. Then the younger said:

"This is the same as with the mother formerly. Do you remember, James? I gave her up to you. It is your turn now to give Lillie up to me. You are three years older than I."

lady next to her as she squirmed upon the seat.

"Oh, mamma!" with a tug at her mother's shoulder. "Look quick! Isn't that the young man who lives next door to us that you told Aunt Mildred had such 'soulful' eyes?"

Mamma's reply was not audible, but her actions were. The car stopped just then, and she yanked "dearest lovey" by the arm and lifted her into the street in a way that presaged "disturbed conditions" in the atmosphere of that household, with "some dampness."—Washington Star.

A Lesson in Boxing.

"What are you going to do, John?" asked Mrs. McFizzle, as her husband unwrapped a pair of boxing gloves.

"I'm going to give Johnny some lessons in self-defense," he answered. "Every boy should know how to take care of himself in an emergency. Come on, Johnny, I won't hurt you."

Twenty minutes later Mr. McFizzle returned with his hand on his face.

"Get me a piece of raw meat to put on my eye and the arnica bottle."

"Why, you don't mean to say that Johnny?"

"No, I don't; of course I don't. Johnny's sitting out in the garden now in sorrow and repentance. I've discovered that the only way to teach that boy is with a strap."—Exchange.

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