

Why Bertie Did Not 'Satisfy the Examiners.'

How often, and how anxiously had that expression been used within the last few weeks by Bertie West's mother, as she impressed upon her clever but careless son (who was soon to compete for a scholarship) the necessity for greater neatness and better spelling in his preparation papers, for he had to satisfy the examiners, and, as all boys who have gone up for an exam. know, it takes a great deal to satisfy them.

'Oh! mother, I expect I shall get through it all right—writing and spelling don't score for much—I know a lot of awful duffers who could jolly well send in a neat paper, if that were all; it's in arithmetic I shall get the pull—you get double marks for that.'

'I am sure, dear, I earnestly hope you will "satisfy the examiners" returned his mother, and, indeed, it was a matter for her to be anxious about, for she was a widow with very slender means, and it would be a grand thing to get her bright son a free education and a good one, as he would have, if he succeeded in passing this much-talked-of, and thought of, scholarship. What a bright prospect for both mother and son to dwell upon, and even their faithful old maid-of-all-work—Bridget—caught up the enthusiasm and mumbled forth ardent wishes (her thoughts divided between the business of her scrubbing brush and the scholarship) that 'Master Bertie would satisfy the examiners.'

As the time drew nearer the careworn mother became more and more anxious, and solicitous that more neatness should be shown by her boy, for indeed his papers were appallingly untidy sometimes; but Bertie himself feared nothing—arithmetic was his stronghold from which (fortified with the thought of the double marks it secured) he hoped to win the day. So on the momentous morning of the exam. he stepped forth buoyant and fearless! 'Be sure you get a good dinner—a mutton chop and potatoes—in the middle of the day,' said his mother. 'He needs plenty of nourishment at such a time,' she added to the acquiescing Bridget who stood in the background with his boots.

'He do, indeed, mum,' was her fervent answer, and the old head was shaken emphatically at the thought of the urgency of the need.

'Oh, no, mother, I shan't want all this,' he demurred, as his loving parent inserted the silver coin in his reluctant hand; 'besides, I could have my dinner when I came back.'

But the mother insisted upon the necessary chop; 'so essential to keep up your strength. It is a great strain, so much brain work,' and she hesitatingly added, 'but don't, dear Bertie, buy any sweets, will you? at least, until after the examination is over.'

'Mother! of course not!' A youth going to London for his exam.—he felt years beyond all that sort of thing just now!

'Oh! of course you won't,' his mother hastened to say apologetically, mercifully forgetting very recent delinquencies in that direction.

'And here's yer boots, sir,' admiringly scanning the polish of her handiwork.

'Well, Bridget, you have given them an extra shine for the occasion. Now if the examiners had to examine my boots instead of my brains, I'd be pretty certain of

getting through. Well, I must be off;' and his good-bye was answered by the heartfelt wishes of his mother, whom he left watching so lovingly and yearningly his retreating form. She closed the door at last, and a sigh came as she thought of those awful examiners who had to be satisfied.

It turned out a hot sultry day, and the closeness of the London air together with the depression of having made 'an awful hash,' as he called it, of his French dictation papers, made Bertie West feel less buoyant in the middle of that momentous day than he had been at the beginning. Jaded and out of spirits, he had just sat down (during the hour's interval allowed for lunch) and ordered the sustaining chop and potatoes that would be wanted to support him and help to pull him through the work of the afternoon. Arithmetic!—yes, that was the chief subject, and he was certain of scoring well in that; and he felt a little more cheerful at the thought, and was preparing to do justice to the well-cooked



IN HER ANXIETY FOR HER BOY.

meal when a friendly dig in the ribs and a salutation of 'What; you here, little kid!' made him hold the fork that was conveying the savory morsel to his mouth midway in the air, and turn round in astonishment.

He was anything but overjoyed to meet the quizzing eyes of an old and unpopular schoolfellow, who (together with a couple of friends) seated himself at Bertie's table. To be called a little kid when you are over twelve and are up for an exam. is irritating, even when the appellation comes from a big boy, but when that big boy actually takes to answer questions put to you by the smiling waiter—it is too much!

The waiter had said, 'Ale, sir? draught or bottled, sir? Nice 'arf pint bottles of sparkling ale, sir?'

'Not he! now does that cranium of his look as if he could stand your sparkling ale?' and the interrogation included, apparently his friends, as well as the smiling waiter.

The friends laughed (as they did at most of the big boy's jokes) and the waiter—well, the waiter was always smiling, so there was no means of knowing if it were brought forth by the big boy's joke, or by things in general. Any way, he bowed (still smiling) a 'Yes, sir' to Bertie's rather imperiously given order—'Bottle of sparkling ale!'

'Great Scott!' exclaimed the big boy; and his appreciative friends giggled.

'One would like to know where the joke comes in,' sneered Bertie, fuming with anger, as he gulped down the sparkling liquor.

And in spite of his rage which had taken such possession of him that he even forgot, for a time, the searching ordeal that awaited him that afternoon—in spite of his rage, his mother's thin, white face as she stood at the door, and Bridget's blacking-besmeared face in the background, from where she was mumbling—he knew—wishes that he would 'satisfy the examiners,' rose before his 'inward eye.' Well! it was no crime, after all, to have a bottle of beer—his mother had said 'no sweets,' but she had never mentioned ale!

The air seemed to become more and more sultry as the afternoon came on, until Bertie began to wonder how anyone could do work if it were always so hot in London—it didn't give a fellow a chance, and somehow he could not try to think anything out unless he closed his eyes. He didn't know if the hot weather had anything to do with the absurd way the Kings and Queens were behaving. The Tudor Kings would go picking about into dates which had never belonged to them, and the Normans insisted on invading England two hundred years after the time usually supposed. Then the Stuarts and Lancastrians were so hopelessly mixed up that Bertie could do nothing with them, so he was rather surprised when the smiling examiner (who, by-the-bye, was dressed just like the waiter) after glancing at his paper, said, bowing low, 'It is a fine sparkling paper!'

And perhaps he was more surprised still when the time was up for his history paper! No fault could be found with regard to mistakes, for there were none; or for lack of neatness, for the paper was as tidy and as blank as when it came from the stationer's shop. Asleep! Good gracious! and only the arithmetic paper to do—but even double marks could pull him through even now. But he did not get double marks, or any marks worth speaking about, for although the questions were simple, they needed a clear head for successful answering which Bertie West certainly did not possess just then. Dazed and sickened, the miserable lad reached home, welcomed by the well-meaning Bridget's unfortunate remark, 'Ah, now, I know you'll 'a satisfied them examiners!'

Now Bridget was rather deaf, so she did not clearly hear his muttered answer as he walked past her and ran upstairs to his own room, but it sounded for all the world like—'Oh, shut up!' Well! let's hope it was not that, and, indeed, the faithful Bridget did not accredit him with such a remark, she rather put the ugly sounding sentence down to her own lack of hearing, for 'Master Bertie was always such a civil-spoken young gentleman;' but she was so surprised at his unusual manner of entering the house that she could not get over it, and stood, open door in hand, gapingly turning the kind old shaking head in the direction of the stairs. She never saw her mistress who (with well filled basket containing the wherewithal for a welcoming supper for the hero of the day) at this moment appeared at the door.

'Mum! he's come home! You take my word, them examiners has been too much for him, he don't look hisself at all.'

'Poor boy!' said the anxious mother as