

The Vicar's Nephew; or The Orphan's Vindication

CHAPTER I.—(Cont'd.)

He sent Molly away, and then began a laborious apology for the wickedness of Jack, the "devil's limb." Seeing how much he took the matter to heart, the visitor cut him short good-humoredly, giving his own version of the story, as of a mere school-boy prank, and turned the conversation to other subjects.

Presently the boys brought in, and together with it came Mrs. Raymond, a stout, submissive, motherly woman, older than her husband, with indefinite eyebrows plaintively raised in an arch of chronic surprise. Her black gown was the perfection of neatness, and not a hair of her head was out of place. Molly, in a clean white pinafore, the thick curls carefully brushed and tied back with a ribbon, made a graceful little picture, clinging shyly to her aunt. An air of peaceful docility seemed to enter with the woman and child. The bread, butter, and cake were too good not to be home made; and when, after tea, Mrs. Raymond sat down by the window to finish embroidering a frock for Molly, the visitor saw that she was no less excellent a needlewoman than a cook. She was also charitable, as appeared from the red woollen comforter which Molly was learning to knit; the little girl had evidently been taught that the making of warm garments for the poor is an important duty. It occurred to him that this woman of plastic virtues must sometimes find it a little fatiguing to stand a perpetual buffer between husband and nephew.

"Sarah," said the Vicar, when tea had been cleared away. "I've been telling Dr. Jenkins how deeply we regret what happened on the cliff road yesterday. He is so kind as to take the matter very lightly, and not to demand any formal apology."

Mrs. Raymond lifted her mild eyes to the visitor. "We are very sorry that you should have any annoyance. But we have done our best, indeed; and it is most kind of you not to want the boy punished."

"He will be punished in any case," said the Vicar quietly. "The entry is already made in the conduct book. 'Not on my account, hope.' Dr. Jenkins put in, 'I regarded the whole thing really as a joke, and should never have thought of complaining if you had not happened to hear of it.'"

"You are very kind," replied the Vicar; "but I never overlook an offence."

"Good Heavens, what a piled-up account there must be against that boy!" thought the doctor. He turned the conversation away, as soon as he could, from the sore subject of Jack's delinquencies. On other topics the Vicar talked very agreeably; he was practical, clear-headed, and fairly well informed. He took a great interest in local philanthropic and pious enterprises, particularly in missions. He was giving the visitor an account of his connection with the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, when the house-door was violently slammed and Mrs. Raymond looked up in nervous anticipation.

"Jack!" called the Vicar, rising and opening the door of the room. "Come in here. Molly, my dear," he added, turning to the little girl; "you had better run upstairs and play."

"Mind you change your pinafore," said Mrs. Raymond, as the child went out. "And ask Mary Anne—Oh, Jack, where have you been to get into that state?"

Jack had slouched into the room with his hands in his pockets. He took the situation at a glance, and stopped short beside the door, scowling at the visitor. Sullen, grimy, and unkempt, his obstinate, unyielding face, his jacket torn and dirty, and the wet mud from his boots soiling the clean carpet, he looked as ill-favored and ill-conditioned as a yobbo brute. His family could be cursed with it.

"Do you remember this gentleman?" asked the Vicar, with ominous composure.

"I'll bet he remembers me, anyway," said Jack. Heard in a room, his voice sounded curiously full and resonant for his age.

"I certainly do," said the visitor, still cheerfully trying to make the gathering strong. "Come here and shake hands, boy, to show there's no ill feeling."

Jack looked at him silently from under lowered brows.

"Go up and shake hands," said the Vicar, still gentle, but with angry eyes. "Your aunt and I have apologized for you, as you have not done it for yourself."

Jack approached the visitor in his slouching way, and held out a grimy left hand, keeping the right still in his pocket.

"Why not the other hand?" asked the doctor.

"Can't," said Jack.

"What have you done to yourself now?" asked Mrs. Raymond, with a pathetic, unconscious emphasis on the last word. "Why, your sleeve's all over mud, and you've torn that new jacket!"

"Take your hand out of your pocket," said the Vicar. His voice was growing sharp with suppressed irritation.

The hand, when unrolled from a dirty, blood-stained handkerchief, proved to be scratched and grazed.

"How did you do that?" asked Jack.

Jack threw a sullen glance at his uncle.

"Climbing on Deadman's Cliff."

"Where you have been strictly forbidden to go?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Jack," said the aunt helplessly, "how can you be disobedient!"

The Vicar took out the black book and made another entry.

"Go to your room and wait till I come," was all he said.

Jack turned with a shrug of his shoulders, and left the room, whistling. Mrs. Raymond followed, glancing nervously at her husband.

"It's no use our trying to hide the skeleton in our family cupboard away from you," said the Vicar, turning to his visitor with a sigh. "It has been forced upon your notice against our will. My nephew's bad disposition has been a heavy cross to Mrs. Raymond and myself; the heaviness with which it has pleased Providence to afflict us."

"He may grow out of this willfulness in time," the doctor ventured, consolingly. "After all, many very good men have been naughty boys."

"Naughty, yes; but unhappily it is not mere childish naughtiness that we have to contend with in my nephew; it is an inherently evil disposition."

He looked into the fire for a little while; then added with a gesture of resignation: "If Timothy has not already told you the wretched story you are sure to hear it soon from some of the village gossips. Jack inherits from his mother a character which seems incapable of reform, its vices are so deeply rooted. Neither persuasion nor firmness has any effect upon him; after years of care and earnest efforts to arouse some glimmering of better feelings, he grows steadily worse and worse. We have been greatly blessed in that Molly, as yet at least, shows no trace of vicious tendencies; but for the boy I have little hope."

As soon as he could, Dr. Jenkins made his escape from the house. He was wearied of the subject of Jack and his sins. "Hang it all!" he said to himself; "if that confounded cub is to be rammed down my throat whenever I go, I shall have to set up a placard on my door. It is requested not to talk about the crimes of the Vicar's nephew."

In the garden was a shed used for storing fire-wood. Passing beside it he heard a noise overhead, and looked up. Jack, serene in the consciousness of a position at once dangerous and impregnable, was sitting astride on the corner of the sloping roof, and a huge lump of bread in one hand and a sour green cooking-apple, probably a remnant of yesterday's loot, in the other. He was devouring the two in alternate bites.

"Hullo!" said the doctor. "How did you get there? I thought you were sent upstairs."

The imp glanced at him leoninely and took another bite out of the apple. "They're always cackling and muzzling over something," said the curate, coming up behind him. Mr. Hewitt turned round quickly, with a look of relief; he and the curate were old friends.

"I'm awfully worried about this business, Black," he said. "Do you think the Vicar suspects anything?"

"I'm certain he doesn't; he'd have turned the place inside out. You know how severe he is about anything immoral. Why, the other day, with Roscoe's girl—I thought he would have frightened her into a fit. It's all very well, Hewitt, but he's too fat!"

"The girl's very young and ignorant, and it was not fair to press her so."

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At night the vision along the cliffs of the "Million Fireworks" electric bulbs in thousands among the trees—and the thousands and thousands of gaily clad women and children visitors shepherded by the more sombre-clad men, give the traveller two distinctly delightful sensations before reaching the illuminated falls themselves. The tiny lights come and go among the trees in a bewitching way. The single light, says the Kobe Chronicle, which illuminates the highest fall will perhaps appeal to many rather than the colored lights thrown on the lower fall, and the lamp-rays, giving the fountain the hues of the rainbow, may be regarded as artificial. Nevertheless, the general effect is attractive, and the surprising coolness of the gorge after a blazing day may tempt many to linger there and enjoy the beverages provided by the many refreshment booths that have been erected.

To any one who knows China, it is impossible not to draw a comparison favorable to the Japanese in viewing the crowd. Entrance to the gorge is perfectly free, yet the thousands flocking there every evening are neatly dressed in summer garments, every one clean and respectable, while the conduct of the great crowd is orderly and marked by a sense of quiet enjoyment. Such a scene would be almost impossible in China, and until the idea of personal cleanliness can be introduced among the swarming millions of that country, we are afraid the Japanese will continue to inferior down upon their neighbors as lookers.

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SITUATION IN THE BALKANS.



The map shows how Bulgaria's entrance into the war would facilitate the march of the German allies to the aid of Turkey. German forces are now said to be bombarding Serbian positions on the frontier, while Bulgaria is also mobilizing troops on the eastern frontier.

presence, remarks which they knew would have infuriated him had the double meanings but being intelligible to his ignorance. When his book was turned the gang would shriek with laughter at the incongruity of a leader in wickedness too "green" to understand Rob Polwheal's jokes. It was perhaps as much the general enjoyment of a comic situation as the fear of his big fists which saved him from enlightenment.

He, for his part, had nearly forgotten the incident of the puppy, and certainly bore no ill-will on account of it. Thrashings were matters of common occurrence; and, for the rest, he was still in the barbaric stage of cub-hood, and had fought as much for pure joy in fighting as for any sentimental reason. Nevertheless, he instinctively disliked both Greaves and Polwheal, just as he disliked Charlie Thompson, the fat, short-winded boy whose hands always disgusted him—he could not have told why. Jack, like many primitive creatures, had a curious physical shrinking from anything not quite healthy. Singularly enough, this subtle instinct of repulsion had never yet warned him against the Vicar; there his feeling was quite simple and elementary; he hated his uncle, just as he liked animals, just as he despised Aunt Sarah. Mr. Hewitt, the schoolmaster, walked down the lane with his eyes on the ground; he did not share the general high spirits. The responsibilities of his profession weighed heavily upon him, for he was a conscientious person, and nature had not intended him for a schoolmaster.

"Together again," he muttered, looking after the two big boys as they walked off arm in arm.

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WATCH THAT OLD BOOK.

There May Be a Small Fortune in Some Musty Volume.

The next time you are tempted to throw away that old book, take some expert advice as to its value. It may be worth its weight in gold.

A few years ago the butler of Thorbeck Hall, Lincolnshire, sold an apparently worthless old book to a pedlar for ninepence. A chemist who bought it from the pedlar for three shillings disposed of it to a bookseller for £2. Eventually the book—Dame Juliana Berners' "Boke of St. Albans"—realized £420, says London Answers.

One can sympathize with the young who unwittingly let such a tidy sum slip through their fingers. But the bookseller who bought a copy of the first edition of Swift's works at the sale of a deceased nobleman's library for a few shillings, sold it for a guinea, and then learnt from the papers a few days later that he had lost over £1,000 by the transaction. He deserves one's deepest commiseration.

Another lucky find was made at Oms Hall, Hampshire. In an old orchard "Justinian's Laws" was discovered amongst a collection of old, blue, yellow, and black books. These two understood each other.

"If you don't drop it, why it's all right," said the sergeant. "Of course, if you do—"

"And when you throw it, sir, you must look out and not hit the man's hind and knock the bomb out of your hand. That has happened before now to an absent-minded fellow when you throw bombs."

"They say that you sometimes pick up the German bombs and chuck them back before they explode," it was suggested.

"Yes, sir, I've read things like that in some of the accounts of the reports who write from 'Somewhere in France.' You don't happen to know where that is, sir? All I can say is that if you are going to do it you must be quick about it. I shouldn't advise delaying your decision, sir, or perhaps when you reach down to pick it up neither your hand nor the bomb would be there. They'd have gone off together, sir."

"Have you ever been hurt in your handling of bombs?" one asked. Surprise in the bland, blue eyes.

Being Courteous to Bombs.

"Oh, no, sir! Bombs are well behaved if you treat them right. It's all in being thoughtful and considerate of them."

Meanwhile he was jerking at some kind of a patent fuse set in a shell of high explosive.

"This is a poor kind, sir. It's been discarded, but I thought that you might like to see it. Never did like it! Always making trouble!"

More distance between the audience and the performer.

"I've got it, sir—get down, sir!"

The audience carried out the instructions to the letter, as army regulations require. We got behind the protection of one of the practice trench traverses. He threw the discarded bomb beyond another wall of earth. There was a sharp report, a burst of smoke, and some fragments of earth were tossed into the air.

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"What's In A Name"?

Well, if the name is

"SALADA"

it means irreproachable quality and value.

SOLDIERS LIKE BOMB-THROWING

ANARCHISTS' WEAPON BECOMES HIGHLY RESPECTABLE.

Sharp Work With Cold Steel, Short Weapon Preferred, Follows Target Practice.

It was at a bombing school on a French farm, where chosen soldiers brought back from the trenches were being trained in the use of the anarchist's weapon, which has now become as respectable as the rifle. Specialism develops as the war goes on. There are no M.B. degrees for Master Bombers yet; but that may come, any day, writes a correspondent at British headquarters.

Present was the chief instructor, a young Scotch subaltern with blue eyes, a pleasant smile, and a "cock of the north" spirit. He might have been 20 years old, though he did not look it. On his breast was the purple and white ribbon of the new order of the Military Cross, which you get for doing something in this war which would have won you a Victoria Cross in one of the little wars.

Also present was the assistant instructor, a sergeant of regulars—and very much of a regular—who had three ribbons which he had won in previous campaigns. He, too, had blue eyes, bland blue eyes. These two understood each other.

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When a bombing party bombs its way into the possession of a section of German trench there are Germans under cover of the traverses on either side of them. The German is waiting around the corner to shoot the first British head that shows itself.

"It's important that you, and not the Bosches, chuck the bombs over first," explained the subaltern. "Also that you get the bombs into their traverse or they may be as troublesome to you as the enemy."

With the bombs bursting in their faces the Germans who are not put out of action are blinded and stunned. In the moment when they are thus off guard the aggressors leap around the corner.

"Stick 'em, sir!" said the matter-of-fact sergeant. "Yes, the cold steel is best. And do it first. As Mr. MacPherson said, it's very important to do it first."

Handy Work With Cold Steel.

It has been found that something short is handy for this kind of work. In such cramped quarters—a ditch six feet deep and from two to three feet broad—the rifle is an awkward length to permit of prompt and skillful use of the bayonet.

"Yes, sir, you can mix it up better with something handy, sir—to think British soldiers would come to fighting like assassins, sir," said the sergeant. "You must be spry on such occasions. It's no time for wool-gathering."

Not a smile from him or the subaltern all the time. They were the kind you would like to have along in a tight corner whether you had to fight with knives or fists or 17-inch howitzers.

The sergeant took us into the storehouse where he kept his supply of bombs.

"What if a German shell should strike your storehouse?" it was suggested.

"Then, sir, I expect that most of the bombs would be exploded. Bombs are very peculiar in their habits. What do you think, sir?"

It was no trouble to show stock, as the clerks at the stores say. He brought forth all the different kinds of bombs which British ingenuity has invented—but, not all invented. These would mount into the thousands. Every British inventor who knows anything about explosives has tried his hand at a new kind of bomb. One means all the kinds which the British War Office has considered worth a practice test.

There were yellow and green and blue and black and striped bombs, egg-shaped, barrel-shaped, conical and concave bombs; bombs that were exploded by pulling a string or pressing a button—all these to be thrown by hand, without mentioning grenades and other bigger varieties which were thrown by mechanical means which would have made a Chinese warrior of Confucius or a Roman legionary feel at home.

GERMANS MUST TAKE BATHS.

Rule Applies to All Teutons in Russian Prison Camps.

Side lights on the life of Russia's prisoners in the Siberian detention camps are given in a letter received by an English merchant in Moscow, a translation of which is printed in a London newspaper.

"At the present time," says the letter, "we have 14,000 prisoners on our books—6,000 in the villages and 8,000 in town. A further transport of 10,000 prisoners will be taken in within a month."

"The Germans are kept separate from the other nationalities. For two hours in the morning the prisoners are allowed to take gymnastic exercises, to play games, sing, or play music. Gardening is also allowed. The prisoners may smoke in places especially allotted. They get the same food as our Russian soldiers."

"Every fortnight a Russian bath is provided, and every one must make use of it. This time of the year the prisoners go to bathe in the river at least once a month."

The letter says the Germans are denied certain privileges accorded to the other prisoners, but the treatment of all is good. No prisoner needs to work more than five hours a day. The sanitary conditions are considered satisfactory. The officers get 50 rubles (\$25) monthly and must provide their own food. Each house has a kitchen and there is a servant for every five officers. All complaints of ill treatment, the writer says, are immediately attended to, and those who are guilty are punished.

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From the Middle West

BETWEEN ONTARIO AND BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Items From Provinces Where Many Ontario Boys and Girls Are Living.

During