

The Inglenook

Gerald and His Giant.

A large, dimly-lighted room, with fire flickering behind a wire guard in a grate. A table set for dinner with dainty care, silver, glass, spotless linen. Flowers in crystal vases, pink candles, with little pink shades, in tall silver candlesticks, in the centre a bowl full of hothouse fruit, peaches, pears, great bunches of white and dusky grapes. At the side of the table, a boy of six in a velvet suit, with a mane of yellow "love-locks" falling over his shoulders, looking wistfully at the fruit. He reaches forward; he break off a bunch of grapes.

"The're papa's grapes," he says, half aloud. "He always gives me his things."

Then he crams the fruit into his mouth, eating very fast, and in spite of his brave words he is very careful to conceal the seeds of the grapes he devours, in the palm of the other hand. Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all.

This small stealer of grapes was Gerald Ashley, the son of an English army officer, who had left the army when someone died and left him a fortune, and had come to live, as a country gentleman, on the estate of Cleave Hall.

Gerald did not recollect India very clearly, because he was but two years old when he left it, but he was quite sure that he loved England best. And, indeed, Cleave Hall was the very sort of home for a boy to be happy in, so big and roomy, with a park full of old oaks and a garden full of old roses, and such nice bridle paths among the trees to ride ponies on, and a stable where rabbits and guinea-pigs were not only allowed, but encouraged. Any boy could be happy in a place like that, and Gerald was very happy. He liked it all, and he liked being the only boy, and in consequence petted and cosseted by every one.

There was one exception. Colonel Ashley did not pet Gerald. He was, on the contrary, rather grave and peremptory with him, though always kind, and I think it showed what a fine little fellow Gerald was at bottom that he loved his father best of all. He would do almost anything to win a word of praise from him, for he admired him immensely. He was so brave and splendid, he had a sword which he had won in battles. Gerald was sometimes allowed to hold it in his hand, and that was indeed a proud moment for him. He passionately desired to be approved by his father, so you may imagine how he

felt when, as he popped the last grape into his mouth and turned to go into the drawing-room with the seeds squeezed tight in his hot little hand, a rather stern voice demanded, "What have you there, Gerald? What are you eating?"

"Grapes, papa."

Gerald's cheeks were very red, but he made no attempt to evade the truth.

"Where did you get them?"

"I took them off the table," replied Gerald, his cheeks growing still redder.

"Did you have leave to do so from anyone?"

Gerald began to feel quite miserable.

"No, papa," he said in a low voice.

"Oh, you stole them!"

There was a scornful tone in the quiet voice which cut Gerald to the heart.

"Papa—indeed, indeed—I didn't. I never meant—they were your grapes, I thought."

"Mine? Yes, but did you ask my leave to take them?"

Gerald did not reply. A lump had come in his throat. He felt very much like crying.

"Now, Gerald," said Col. Ashley, sitting down and drawing the child closer to him, "let us talk this matter over. We are friends, you and I, are we not?"

"Oh, papa—yes, yes."

The little voice was choky.

"You know how we have talked very often about what bravery consists of, and how fine it is to be brave. Now, to be brave, one must begin with little things and learn how gradually. No boy ever has giant's heads to cut off in these days. If he wants to grow up into a brave man he must educate himself by fighting with small things which are the same to him—tempers, temptations, little faults, and conquering them one by one. When you took those grapes you lost your little battle."

"Papa, I never thought of that—I only, I only—thought of the grapes."

"Yes—but all the same you were beaten. It is mean and ill. And to steal things—even very little things—a gentleman and a brave man will not do it. Remember this, Gerald."

"I will—indeed I will," protested Gerald, with energy. It seemed at the moment quite easy to resist temptation.

But four nights after this, Colonel Ashley, coming home earlier than usual, saw a little figure slipping in through the dining-room door. His face grew dark, but followed and stood in the shadow of a screen to watch what should take place. Very slowly the little fellow went across the room toward the table. The candles were lit, and the watch-

could see the boy's face as he stood looking intently toward the bowl of fruit, on the top of which shone a large peach with a cheek like a red rose.

Three times the little hand extended itself toward the peach, and thrice it was drawn back. At last the hand went out for the fourth time and took the peach. Gerald looked at the beautiful fruit, smelled it, hesitated; then he began slowly to move toward the door. Col. Ashley watched him grimly and gravely, without a word. At the very door, Gerald stayed his steps, stood still for a moment thinking, then turned, hurried back to the table, put the big peach in the bowl exactly where it had been before, and almost ran out of the room as if afraid to look again toward the temptation which had so nearly overcome him.

Col. Ashley smiled to himself behind the screen, a very pleased and happy smile.

"Thank God," he said to himself.

"There is a real giant overcome. My boy is stronger than I thought."

Presently he went into the drawing room, where he found Gerald sitting gravely by the fire, quite ready to hear a story; and neither the father nor the son said a word to each other about the big peach and the temptation vanquished. Both were secretly happy, especially Gerald—for to earn your own appreciation is even better than to win the approval of some one else. And who one has fought with self and won, there is a sense of inward growth and valor which is particularly pleasant even when you are only six years old.—Little Men and Women.

A solemn murmur of the soul
Tells of a world to be.
As travellers hear the billows roll,
Before they reach the sea.

Phases of Child Life.

Children pass through a great many phases. Transitions are often trying. Keep these related facts in mind. We sometimes fix a fault by taking too much notice of it. A mistake should not be treated as a wilful sin. A transient awkwardness may be due to rapid growth. A shyness of behavior, which amounts to a painful timidity, will pass if not accentuated by comment and reproach. This is especially true in regard to speech. Children sometimes use slang; sometimes pick up words and phrases which are worse than slang, but the mother need not be unduly alarmed because of this. The boy and girl will speak the language and use the dialect of home; and if the mother possess the children's confidence she will not find it difficult to convince the children that vulgar speech is a thing to avoid. Mothers will never in the years to come regret a union of mild measures with firm adherence to principles in the home life. But of harshness and too much government they may repent in dust and ashes.—Harper's Bazar.