

## Don't Wear a Truss!



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The boy, self-confident as ever, was rather surprised to find that the Major's face wore a stern look, in spite of the kind, friendly eyes.

"Roger," he asked abruptly, "have you been teasing Phyllis a great deal lately?"

"I only—" began the boy. But the Major stopped him.

"Yes or no, please, Roger!"

"Yes!" The word was scarcely audible, but the Major caught it.

"Well, Roger, it must not happen again. I can't have my little girl's

spirit spoiled by a boy bullying her. Harmless and friendly chaffing I approve of, but mean tricks and rudeness I can't allow." The Major added kindly—"Have you forgotten that the King's law commands kindness to those younger and weaker than ourselves?"

Roger's face flushed—with shame, the Major thought, so he said with a smile—"Cheer up, old man! Rome was not built in a day! We'll be proud of you some day!" And with another warning and a few encouraging words he sent Roger away.

That it was anger and not shame that caused the flush was apparent when the boy reached the schoolroom. He slammed the door behind him, and turned to Phyllis.

"You hateful little thing!" he cried, "to go and tell the Major that I tease you, and get me into his black books."

"I did not tell dad, Roger!" she said gently.

"That's not true, Phyllis!" said the boy huskily.

"You know it is true," said the girl, with a quiver in her voice.

Roger soon cooled down, and a little later, when he wanted to sharpen his pencil, he actually asked Phyllis for the loan of her knife.

She searched her pockets, then she remembered. "I'm sorry," she said, "I've left the old thing down in the boatshed, but, if you'll wait, I'll run down for it."

"All right, fire ahead!" he replied coolly.

Phyllis had hardly left the room when it struck Roger that he might pay her out for sneaking by giving her a thorough fright. There was a good long avenue down to the boatshed and the pond, and that would make things easy.

Poor Roger! It was a sudden temptation that led him to do a thing that, in a wiser moment, he would have scorned to do.

He rushed to his bedroom and pulled a sheet off his bed. Tucking it under his arm, he slunk out of the was almost quite dark, for the moon was behind the clouds, so Roger wrapped the sheet round him, and waited in the shadow of the trees near the pond for Phyllis to return.

What happened was so sudden, so unexpected, so terrible, that—to do him justice—it was a wonder Roger did not lose his head altogether.

The moon was shining brightly when Phyllis started up the avenue. She was not naturally a nervous child, and she was humming a tune as she tripped along. Suddenly she caught sight of a white figure moving among the trees. With a scream she turned—and ran blindly into the pond.

Roger heard the splash, but by the time he reached the edge of the water the moon had disappeared behind a dark cloud, and everything was black as night.

The next few seconds seemed like hours to the boy, and he never forgot the fearful suspense and the sickening pain at his heart. Suddenly, in his despair he remembered his father's King. Surely God would help him—

not that he deserved it, but just "for Jesus' sake." Roger had for years used that phrase every day in his prayers, but he had never really thought of its meaning before.

"Oh, God, help me, for Jesus' sake, Amen," he sobbed out with all the earnestness of his boyish heart.

God answered Roger at once. The moon shone forth with all its brightness before his prayer was finished—and, with a plunge and a few strokes he was at his sister's side, dragging her towards the little landing place.

To his surprise, the Major and the gardener came rushing to his assistance. They helped him out of the water, then he seemed to forget everything for a long time. When he recovered consciousness he was lying in his own bed, and there was a huge fire burning in the grate.

"Better, sonny?" the Major's voice was strangely kind and gentle.

Roger began to remember, and to feel uncomfortable. He expected the Major to be angry and scornful. What did it all mean?

"I didn't think we should be proud of you so soon, youngster," his stepfather was saying. I can't tell how proud and thankful we are. You are your father over again! Now you must try and get to sleep. Phyllis is doing splendidly."

The Major slipped away, and when he was gone the truth dawned on Roger that not a soul but himself knew that he had been the cause of the accident, so probably the household were all thinking of him as the gallant rescuer.

The temptation to leave things as they were was very strong. It is not often that a lad of fifteen has the chance to play the hero. Full confession of his trick would indeed show himself to be very unlike his soldier father. Besides, how angry the Major would be!

But the moonlight streaming in at the window, reminded Roger of something. He had not thanked God for His help, and it seemed rather mean, for Phyllis was safely tucked up in bed—not even likely to be ill.

There was a hard battle fought at the Priory that night, and Roger Chisholme's better self won it.

"I can't thank God for saving Phyllis," he argued, "and allow everybody to think I'm like my father, when I'm the biggest cad on earth."

He got out of bed, and, with a little prayer in his heart, for courage, went boldly downstairs.

"Well, youngster," said the Major kindly, as he entered.

The whole story came out, after all with surprising ease, although at the thought of the terrible minutes of darkness by the pond Roger completely broke down.

The Major said one or two hard things when the boy had finished, but they were said so kindly that, although in a way they did not hurt very much, they got home successfully.

It hurt, certainly, to be told that Phyllis had never once sneaked about

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his nastiness, but had been planning a lovely surprise for his birthday

Suddenly the Major's voice changed, and became more affectionate than Roger had ever heard it.

"Roger, my son," he said, "I can't tell you how thankful I am that you have told the truth to-night. I would rather a thousand times have you an honourable man than see you the hero of the Empire. Back to bed, youngster, and God bless you!"

As Roger went back to his own room, he paused to look at his father's portrait. The moon was shining on it, and the beautiful eyes seemed to smile on the boy.

From that night, Roger was a new being, and now when the villagers say of him, "He is his father over again," they don't just think of a fine figure, blue eyes, and curly hair. They think rather of a certain manliness, an unselfish spirit in one for whom the keeping of the Fifth Commandment includes "stepfathers, tutors, little sisters, and everybody."

Most people credit the Major with the change in the boy's character, but the Major, seeing Roger and Phyllis the firmest of friends, thinks to himself—"The boy has owned his King, and that makes all the difference!"—The Scotsman.

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