

The Worst Boy in the Town.

A CANADIAN STORY,

BY
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CHAPTER V.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

"And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the noon-day."

It had long been a custom of Mildred Grey's to frequently take her work or book, on fine afternoons when her father was not at home, and go down by the water in some sheltered nook.

On the following afternoon her father had taken a drive out in the country to look after some pastoral work, which he, when well enough, took charge of. So being left alone, Mildred locked up the pretty cottage, and started, with her embroidery and *Methodist Magazine* under her arm, for the water.

She seated herself in a sheltered nook overlooking the water, where she had a good view, and yet could not be easily observed.

Away, away before her, in all its solemn majesty stretched the blue waters of Lake Ontario. The warm sunshine rested upon it, making it sparkle like silver. Calm and motionless it lay—no white-capped waves were visible; it looked like some great monster asleep; its tiny waves washed slowly back and forth on the sands, and there was in its gentle motion no suggestion of the wild tumult and seething foam it could so easily change into.

"Oh, peaceful, sunshiny water!" said Mildred to herself, as she watched it. "Thou art as deceitful as thou art fair! Thou hast caused many a wreck! Many a promising life has been swallowed up by thee!"

Then she thought of Jesus' words—"Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to destroy the soul."

"The liquor shops are destroying both soul and body," said she to herself. "They present as peaceful and harmless an exterior as this placid lake, but death—eternal death—lurks in their poisonous draught."

After sitting for some moments lost in thought, she opened her *Methodist Magazine*, and was soon deeply interested in the stories of "The Dragon and the Tea-kettle," and "A Singer from the Sea."

Presently she heard voices approaching—a group of merry school girls came and sat down on the other side of the rock, and began chattering in a confidential way to each other, quite unaware that Mildred was so close to them.

Not wishing to be a listener to what was not intended for her to hear, Mildred gathered up her book and her work and was about to move away when a fragment of their conversation arrested her attention and caused her to remain very still and listen eagerly.

"Who got the prize in Mr. Seburn's room?" said one to the other.

"No one got it; they had a terrible time over it; Jack Harding's essay was the best and the prize was awarded to him, but someone noticed an open history in his desk and they all thought he cheated."

"I don't believe he'd cheat about it," said another. "He's said to be the worst boy in the town, but I have heard lots of people say that he is honest; and one can see by the upright, manly way he has of carrying himself that he'd scorn to tell a lie."

"It seems his worst fault is his temper,—he gets very angry, and then to mend the matter he drinks; that was what he did yesterday, and then he got thrown out of a rig near Miss Grey's, and she had him taken to her home, because he's in her class in the Methodist Sunday-school."

"But," said the first girl again, "everything looks against him in this case; he was observed to go in the room alone at noon, and the common opinion is that he got his book from the teacher's desk then, and put it in his own."

"Well, he didn't do any such thing," said the smallest girl in the group, who had not spoken until now, "and I can prove it too!"

"What do you know about it?" asked half a dozen voices at once.

"Why, just this," said she; "we were playing hide-and-seek, and I just thought to myself that I would hide in Mr. Seburn's room, and then I would have a splendid chance to slip out and get home free. There was not a soul in the room, so I crept in and hid up in the corner behind some rolls of maps. I had only been there a few moments when I heard footsteps, and I was scared pretty near to death, for I thought it was the teacher, and I knew he'd lecture me if he found me hiding in there. But it was only Jack Harding, and I gave a great sigh of re-

lief. He did not see me, but I saw every move he made. He walked straight to his desk, and put a bunch of violets in a bottle there; then he went directly out again. I was about to make my escape when I heard footsteps again, and this time it was Bob Pierce. He did not see me either, but I saw him, and he took a blue book out of the teacher's desk and placed it in the very place where Jack had put his flowers. Of course I did not know then why he did that; and I wondered why he moved so stealthily lest someone should see or hear him, but I know now, and I think it was a mean trick.

"As soon as he had gone I slipped out and got home free. You remember that time I got home free, Maggie, and you all wondered where I hid? but I wouldn't tell, for I knew I had no business there; but I guess it was a good thing after all."

"Well, I should say so!" exclaimed the rest of the girls in a breath.

"I never liked that Bob Pierce," said one. "Nor I!" "Nor I!" shouted half a dozen voices.

"And I'll be real glad to see Jack Harding cleared," said another; for he is just as gentlemanly as ever he can be, when people let him alone and use him right."

"I think the first thing we ought to do about it is to go and tell Miss Grey," said one of them. "She takes a great interest in him, and she will be so glad to hear that his innocence can be proved."

On this they all agreed, and in another moment they would probably have set off in the direction of Miss Grey's had not she suddenly emerged from the cave and stood before them.

"I beg your pardon, girls," said she, "for listening to your conversation. I was about to move away when you first came here, but as soon as I heard Jack Harding's trouble at school mentioned, I felt that I must stay and hear it through to the end. I am so glad that his innocence can be proved. Mary," continued she, turning to the little girl, with whom she was acquainted, "will you tell the teacher just what you have told these girls?"

"Yes," said Mary, "indeed I will! But you don't think, do you, that he'll scold me very much for disobeying orders about playing in the school-room?"

"No, I am sure that he will excuse you this time since it has led to such a happy result."

Mildred parted with the girls, first gaining a promise from Mary to tell the teacher as soon as she reached the school the next morning.

"And," said Mildred, "I'll see that Jack is there."

She hurried back up town and went straight to Jack's home, determined to find him if possible and tell him the good news.

What a dismal-looking home it was, with no curtains to the windows, and everything presenting such an untidy appearance. She wondered not that Jack found life hard.

The coarse, rough-looking woman who answered her gentle knock had a red face, and eyes still redder. Mildred could scarcely keep from drawing back from her in disgust.

In answer to Mildred's inquiries about Jack, she replied that he was upstairs, and she rudely allowed the door to go shut, leaving Mildred standing outside, while she went to call him.

A little child of five or six years was playing around the yard, and Mildred at once supposed that it was Jack's little half-brother, Charlie, whom she had often heard him speak of. The child did not resemble his miserable mother in the least; he had a sweet, trusting face, and innocent blue eyes.

Mildred said a few kind words to him, and won his heart completely by taking from her purse a shining quarter and giving it to him. Little did she know that it would go where Jack soon appeared, and as he stepped out and closed the door after him his first words were:

"Oh, Miss Grey, how could you come here, in such a place as this?"

"I was determined to see you, Jack, I have much to tell you. Come, walk down the street with me."

It was with feelings of intense pleasure that he listened to what she had to tell him. How glad he was to hear that his innocence could be fairly proved!

He was somewhat reluctant to promise to go to school the next morning, but after some hesitation he consented.

"You see this is providential," said Mildred, brightly. "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform, and it does seem to me that everything has come about to prove your innocence in the most satisfactory way."

"I am certainly very thankful," said Jack, "for not only did I want my innocence

proved, but I also wanted that handsome book very much."

They walked silently on for a little way, but before they parted, Mildred abruptly asked:

"Is your little half-brother quite well, Jack? I saw him out playing, and I noticed he looked so very pale."

A shadow crept over Jack's face, and he answered bitterly:

"No, Miss Grey, he is not; I have been uneasy about him for some time; he seems so restless and feverish at night. I have spoken to his mother about it, but honestly, the only thing she cares for is liquor. Poor Charlie is sadly neglected."

"Well," said Mildred, "if he should get worse—if he should get real ill, do not hesitate to let me know, and I'll do all I can for him."

"Thank you, Miss Grey. You are indeed a true friend," said Jack.

(To be continued.)

A Chain of Songs.

This is the song of the bee;

"Open wide the sweet enclosure

Of your bosom red to me?

I would enter in, O rose,

I would come to dwell with thee.

All the sweets of wild-flowered field,

All the wealth the gardens yield,

All these shall the guerdon be

For thy love," sings the restless bee.

This is the song of the rose:

"You are nothing to me, O bee,

For at night there's a wind that blows;

In the dark he kisses me,

And no flower the secret knows.

O wind, that wayward darts,

Take my hundred glowing hearts!

Thine are they, to wear or lose,

So thou love me," sings the rose.

This is the song of the wind:

"I love you not, wanton flower;

If I kissed you, count it sport;

There's a young tree near your bower,

And to her I pay my court.

Fold me, sweet, in your swaying arms;

I will praise your maiden charms

East and west, if you are kind

To your lover," sighs the wind.

This is the song of the tree:

"Naught care I for wind that woe;

There's a lark that flies and sings,

And him for my love I choose;

Ah, fain would I clip his wings!

Draw near, love, and build thee a nest

Right here, love, upon my breast,

And safe shall thy dwelling be;"

This is the song of the tree.

This is the song of the lark:

"O tree, I regard thee not;

Higher, higher, I aspire

For I long to reach the spot

Where I see you ball of fire,

Glowing, flashing, flaming, burning,

And my heart is madly yearning

Just to be a tiny spark

Of the great sun," sings the lark.

This is the song of the sun:

"O children, with hearts to break,

As ye lie on the world's broad breast,

I can see you quiver and ache,

With longing that's never at rest;

Only love that burns upward is living,

Such love liveth on with the giving,

Though love in return ne'er be won.

This is the song of the sun.

A SMOKER CURED.

WHEN quite young I learned to smoke, but later I went to work in a store where I could not smoke. I then commenced chewing tobacco, but afterwards I chewed and smoked both for thirty-six years. I finally decided that chewing was a filthy habit, and stopped. At that time I was a travelling salesman, and learned to drink liquor. For ten years I was a slave to drink. After losing everything worth living for I quit drinking, and then for two years I was unable to do anything. But I thank God for those two years. I have not made a practice of drinking for twenty years now, but I kept on smoking until last New Year's day. Last year I went east to see a sister whom I had not seen for twenty-one years, and after talking of the goodness of God to us, she said, as I brought out my pipe to smoke: "I cannot see how you pipe to smoke, thinking as you do." That is the religious light. I thought the matter over,

and after returning home I took my Bible and looked to see what I could find about it. First of all I found it an idol. Then I read 1 Cor. 3. 16, 17, and 10. 31. After that my smoking was no good to me. It was a sure cure. I had smoked forty-five years, but I have never smoked since.—D. B. Nicholls, in Witness.

RAINY DAYS.

SOME constitutions are powerfully affected by the weather, growing nervous and irritable when the wind is blowing in shrieking, noisy gusts, and hopelessly depressed when the splashing raindrops are making mournful music. Others tell us that a walk in the rain is a beneficial spray-bath, so long as we do not lounge about; and in glowing health and spirits they set off for a "Macintosh walk." To most of us it is an effort to be merry when through long hours the monotonous rain has been falling ceaselessly; we console ourselves with the quotation that "some days must be dark and dreary," and find a sort of coziness in settling ourselves assiduously to indoor occupation. Yet there is a beauty, too, in the showery dance that bathes the woods and waters the earth. Aldrich sings of "tremulous skeins of rain;" and there are times, after heavy brooding, threatening hours, when with delight and relief we thankfully watch the raindrops softly dimpling the pools and beating down into the street. Only the wisdom of God could so have arranged that the air like a sponge should pour out the water it can no longer retain, and thus the spreading plains should be abundantly watered. God knows when the earth needs rain; God knows when, across the sunshine of our life's prosperity, it is well that the clouds shall brood, and disappointment darken the prospect, and trouble come upon us like a storm. The dark days are blessed that remind us of our nest within the love that maybe in prosperity we scarcely held so precious. "Hope thou in God; wait patiently for him." The rainy, gloomy days are passing from us. Even now, if we lift our eyes to heaven, we shall see in the sky "God's glowing covenant" prism of his tender smile and our human tears; there is set God's bow in the clouds, and we own that it was worth all the sorrowful rain to behold its "afterward," the arch of light and peace, wherein is no shadow at all.—The Quiver.

SNAKE-CHARMERS.

A NOISE, something like the "buzzer" of a factory, produced by the "rubbing shioke" on a native drum, calls everyone to the door of the bungalow. Here we find the snake-charmer has established himself with a row of little flat baskets in front of him. Uncovering one of the baskets, he drones away on his pipe, made of a dried gourd, a monotonous air, and the snake, which seems to appreciate the music whether we do or not, raises itself, extends its hood, and waves its head about as though beating time to the measured drawl of the primitive bag-pipes. Other baskets are uncovered and the place is soon alive with venomous serpents, which the snake-charmer permits to twist around his limbs and coil about his body and clasp his neck. The cobra is one of the most poisonous of Indian snakes, and its bite means death in a very few minutes. But the charmer does not trust altogether to his music; he has probably rendered his venomous pet harmless by extracting the poison fangs. It is not safe, however, to presume on this so far as to touch the snakes, for the operation may have been performed imperfectly.

The snake-charmer will undertake to catch all the serpents in your compound and carry them away—for a consideration. He plays his bag-pipes and performs his incantations before an old ant-hill, which the gardener says has been appropriated by a snake, and he manages to induce the inmate to crawl out. Putting him into a basket he claims the reward and disappears. It by no means follows, however, that your garden is free from snakes, for some people say that the snake-charmer only catches a trained snake which he had himself previously introduced, so that snake-charming may be little better than jugglery after all.