

THE TWO BROTHERS

Gavin and Marcus Young were brothers, but in looks, manners, and character, they were widely different and not a single mark of similarity could be traced between them. Gavin, the older brother, was fully six feet tall and was considered the strongest young man in the pretty little village of Campton in which he lived. He was, however, coarse in manner, and tried to master all the young in the community, and especially his brother Marcus. The latter was of slight stature, kind and gentle, and always had a pleasant smile for everybody.

The indifferent attitude of Gavin towards his father and mother had often grieved his younger brother, who passed it by unnoticed, not because he was afraid, but because he knew that it would cause trouble, and thus make his parents uncomfortable.

One summer evening John Young and his wife, together with their two sons, were sitting around the family table for supper. Gavin looked more glum and disappointed than usual, and his mother became anxious to know what was troubling him.

"What is the matter with you this evening, Gavin,?" she said to him kindly. Gavin was silent; she repeated her question. He then raised his head and said gruffly:

"Why do you want to know? What difference does it make to you what ails me?"

He continued to speak in this manner for some time, when suddenly Marcus arose from his seat, and facing his brother demanded sternly:

"Do you realize that it is your mother to whom you are speaking?"

Gavin turned to him in rage and said:

"When I wish to hear your opinion I shall ask for it. How dare you interrupt me while I am speaking."

"That is all right," replied Marcus, "but this time I am going to give my opinion and I will have you understand, that, at least in my presence, you will not use such language as this to mother."

This parley continued for some time, and that evening, the quiet little home in Campton witnessed the first battle between two brothers. In this struggle Gavin realized for the first time that Marcus was something more than the mother's boy he had always thought him to be. When

it was finally settled the elder brother turned to his father and said:

"What do you think of this boy now, that has caused such trouble in the house?"

"Marcus is perfectly blameless for the trouble," replied the father, "and he has but acted the man's part, by checking you in your abusive language."

"It is always the way," said Gavin. "I am blamed for everything that that good for nothing does. I am going to leave here, and find some place where I shall have friends; then you will have your angel all to yourselves."

"You are perfectly welcome to stay here," replied his father. "When you go out into the world you will find no friends so dear and faithful to you as your parents."

Next morning in spite of all the prayers and entreaties of his troubled mother, and the advice of his father, Gavin left home for the first time. His last words, to Marcus were:

"I shall never forgive you,"

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Ten years had elapsed from this scene in the Campton till the beginning of the Great World War. When the first call for the men was issued, Marcus Young thought it was his duty to fight for his country.

He did not like to break the news to his mother, knowing that, it would grieve her to see her second son leave home. For two months this weighed heavily on the mind of Marcus, and had begun to make itself manifest in his looks and actions; he was no longer the carefree, laughing chap he was won't to be in the presence of his parents but became dull and meditative, and passed many hours with them in silence. His mother was not slow to notice this change in her son, and felt very uneasy about him.

One evening as they were again sitting around the table, Marcus beside the chair of his absent brother, and very quiet, as usual, his mother said to him;

"What has happened to you, Marcus? You do not seem all happy. Please tell me what it is all about."

"It is on account of you and father," he replied. "I have something I have wished to tell you for a long time, but never had the courage to do so; I cannot conceal it any longer. I am going to join the army. The thought of leaving you is very unpleasant to me, but I must go and do my bit."

At first his mother was dumfounded, and he was sorry that he had told her even then about his plans. When she could speak again, she said:

"What ever made you think of this, Marcus? How could you leave father and me alone?"

"Duty itself mother," he replied, "is the only thing that could cause me to do so, but I cannot change my mind now."

His father who had remained silent all this time admired the bravery of his son and said:

"I am sorry to see you leaving us, but I would never prevent you from such a glorious action. You have my consent, boy, and when mother thinks it over, she will doubtless also agree to let you go."

About a week later, Marcus with the full consent of his mother joined the "Princess Pats" due to go across a month later. When the day came for them to sail, his father and mother went down to the wharf to see their son off. They told him if he should see Gavin before his return, to tell him not to be afraid to come back, that his quiet home and thoughtful parents ever waited to welcome him home again. They waved him a fond adieu as the boat pulled out, and sorrowfully retraced their steps homeward.

For three years Marcus fought bravely, and had distinguished himself many times on the battlefield.

He had now been promoted to the rank of Captain, and was placed in command of a small body of soldiers. These men admired their Captain very much, and there was not one in the crowd that would not have sacrificed his own life for the safety of his Captain. At the battle of Ypres, Captain Young and his men were placed in the thick of the fray, and although a number of their soldiers were killed and disabled during the day, it did not daunt the spirits of these brave men that survived.

At a little before sunset, just in the heat of action, the captain himself was wounded and reeling, fell to the ground. A big stretcher-bearer who had just come up examined the wound and bandaged him roughly to stop the blood that was flowing profusely. He then carried him back to a place of safety and left him there until he should have a chance to bring him to a dressing station. When it became dark, he went back again, and although endangering his own life, he raised the wounded man upon his shoulders, and started for a dressing station that was quite a distance

from the line. It was a hard journey for a man over this shell-torn piece of the country even without a load, and more than once on the way, the big soldier had to release the burden from his shoulder to rest.

About an hour later, they reached their destination, and Captain Young was placed on a bed in a small chamber. His wound was found to be fatal, but he received such attention as it was possible to procure in a place of this kind. In a short time the wounded man had somewhat recovered and was talking to those about him. The stretcher-bearer who brought him to the station, thinking that his duty towards his brother-in-arms was fulfilled, was preparing to go back to his work. He went to the wounded man's bedside, and said:

"I suppose there is nothing more that I can do for you, Captain, before I leave."

"There is only one thing I wish you to do, my good man," was the reply, "that is of much more importance than the rest; I wish you to get me a priest, and I should like you to stay with me for a little while longer. It will only be a matter of a few hours, till all is over."

The priest was not hard to find, and soon Captain Young was prepared to meet his judgment. After the priest had gone, the two soldiers were again alone, the big soldier sitting on a bench near his comrade's bedside. He saw that the dying man was in deep thought and the long silence that followed led him to believe that something was troubling him.

"Is there any message you would like to leave for me to deliver?" he asked at length.

"None," was the reply, "I am but thinking of my home that I shall never see again, of a kind father and a loving mother that are waiting for my return, of a brother that left home long years ago, saying to me, 'I shall never forgive you.'"

This made the other also remember his home and early life with his parents, and brought to his mind the memory of a brother, Marcus Young, whom he had left behind; and he thought, could this be he?

When he remembered their parting, and the words he addressed to him, the thought became a conviction, and after a few questions by which he found out the name of the captain's home town, and parents, he exclaimed:

"Marcus, I am that brother."

The color rushed to the dying man's face as he clutched the other by the hand, and said feebly:

"Can it be true? Good Heavens! Is this Gavin?"

Gavin filled with emotion and choking with tears only could say:

"It is."

For a short time both were too overcome and surprised to speak. Marcus was the first to break the silence by saying:

"Thank God I have met my Gavin, met him in this way, for now you will be reconciled to me again."

"Our old differences are forgotten, brother," was the reply. "I have been the cause of all our troubles, and I now earnestly ask your pardon. I have led a desolate life," he said, "since I left home; I have forgotten both God and duty."

"There is one thing more, dear Gavin," said Marcus, "that I wish you to do for my sake. If you ever get out of here, go home, and be kind to our dear parents; for in mother's last words to me, she asked me, if I should see you over here, to tell you that she had not forgotten you, and that she never ceased to pray for your return. Write as soon as possible and break this news to her gently; tell her not to mourn for me, for I died a soldier's death."

"You can rely on me, brother, to do all that you have asked," was the reply.

For an hour after this, the chamber was as silent as death itself. Gavin, sitting quietly by his brother's bedside, watched every motion of his body. His brother was evidently growing weaker. About midnight the spirit of Marcus Young went quietly and peacefully forth to Him from whom it had come.

G. McDonald, '26.

