

Reconciliation

Gregory Walsh, lost in thought, walked slowly down the busiest street of Brownsville, on his way to the depot to board his train, which left in less than an hour. On the previous day he had come from his home in Carleton, forty miles distant, for a personal interview with his lawyers, but the meeting had been without results. There was still no trace of his missing grandson, and Walsh was beginning to fear that the search would be unsuccessful. In order to understand the anxiety that Gregory Walsh felt, it is necessary that we review briefly an event which had happened in his life a few years previously, and its consequences.

Thirteen years before the opening of our story Gregory Walsh, in the role of an irate and dutiful parent, had taken serious objection to his son's decision to marry an orphan girl, against whose parents the young man's father had been prejudiced. Clark had refused to heed his father's objections, however, and had married the girl, even in the face of parental opposition. The father's anger knew no bounds. He had promptly disinherited the boy, and had made things so unpleasant that Clark and his wife had been forced to leave Carleton; shortly after his son's departure vague rumours reached Gregory Walsh's ears, to all of which he paid not the slightest attention. Clark had been disinherited at the age of twenty, and, due to the life he had led as the only son of a rich and loving father, found himself unfitted to support himself and his wife. For a time the young couple had managed fairly well, but sickness, and the birth of a son, had added to their financial difficulties. In an almost super-human effort to provide for his family, Clark had over-worked himself and had become an easy victim to an attack of pneumonia. The news of the son's death had failed to stir the heart of Gregory Walsh, however, and the young widow had been forced to continue the struggle for subsistence. Two years after the death of her husband, she too had been overcome by a serious illness, and had finally weakened and died, leaving no provision for her three year old son. Gregory Walsh had heard of his daughter-in-law's struggle against poverty and of her death, but his heart had been so hardened against her that he had refused to recognize

her child, and the boy had been left to the tender mercies of strangers.

As the years went by, however, a great change had been wrought in the heart of Gregory Walsh, a change difficult to explain unless it was that the approach of old age and the knowledge that death was hovering over him had aroused in him a desire to make some amends for his cruelty in earlier life. He had a specialist's assurance that, owing to a condition of the heart, he could not live more than a year. A slight shock might prove fatal at any time.

Gregory Walsh lived in fear of this fatal moment when death would claim him as a victim, and prayed that he might see the fulfilment of his great desire before that time. Both his son and daughter-in-law were dead, but he felt that somewhere their child was alive. If only this grandson could be found, Walsh felt that he would be able to meet his Maker with a clearer conscience. He had had his will changed to provide for the boy in case death should come unexpectedly, but this act did not bring the contentment equal to that which the discovery of the child would bring. Lawyers and detectives had been employed, but six months of diligent search had failed to reveal a single clue as to the whereabouts of the missing boy. Truly Gregory Walsh had food for reflection as he made his way along the crowded street. His detachment from what was going on about him was so complete that he failed to notice an on-coming automobile. His first intimation of danger was a light but insistent tugging at his coat sleeve, and a shrill young voice shouting: "Be careful, mister!"

Walsh sprang back to the curb just in time to escape the speeding car and then glanced at the poorly dressed, dirty-faced newsboy who had spoken the warning. The boy glanced at him shyly.

"That was a close call, sir; buy a newspaper, sir?"

"Thanks, my boy, for having saved my life. No, I don't want a newspaper, but I'd like to do something for you. What's your name?"

"Jimmy, sir," replied the boy respectfully. "I must go now, mother's not feeling very well, and I promised her I'd be home early."

Gregory Walsh was struck by the young chap's politeness and frankness, and suddenly wanted to know more

about this newsboy. He was taking an interest in children now. His grandson would be just about the age of this child, and perhaps in no better circumstances.

"That's too bad, my boy, I'm sorry to hear that your mother is sick. Perhaps there's something I could do to help you out. Where do you live?"

"Oh, it's a long way from here; I'm sure you wouldn't like to come, although you might be able to help."

"No matter how far it is, I'll go along with you. Lead the way."

Gregory Walsh was at a loss to understand his action. He knew that he would miss his train, but he felt drawn on by an irresistible force. Jimmy led him through a maze of streets and traffic. They walked for twenty minutes, and Walsh was beginning to repent for not having taken a taxi. Finally his guide stopped in front of an unpainted, ramshackle, tenement house.

"This is home, sir," explained Jimmy.

They climbed three flights of stairs, walked down a long, dark corridor, and finally Walsh found himself in a cheerless, scantily furnished living-room.

A woman's voice inquired dispiritedly from an adjoining room: "Is that you, Clark?" The visitor started at the sound of the name.

"No, mother, this is Jimmy.—Clark is my adopted brother," explained Jimmy in an undertone as they walked towards the bed-room.

"Mother, here is a man whom I met today. He asked me to take him here when he found out that you were sick."

The sick woman nodded, and was about to reply, when a noise was heard in the corridor.

"There's Clark coming now," exclaimed Jimmy.

The woman turned towards the visitor. "Thank you, sir, for having come, but I am not seriously sick." Suddenly she seemed to find something of interest in the face before her.

"Your name, sir?" she inquired quickly.

"Gregory Walsh," replied the man softly. "Your son saved my life today, and I insisted that he take me here to see if I might help you."

"Gregory Walsh!" repeated the woman. "Can it be possible?"

"What is it, woman?" inquired Walsh.

For answer the woman raised her voice slightly and called: "Clark, come here."

A young lad of about the same size as Jimmy entered the room slowly. Gregory glanced at the boy curiously, and then stared unbelievably.

"My grandson!" he exclaimed. There could be no doubt about it. The boy had his father's features, even to the color of his eyes and the dark, curly hair. Gregory took a step towards the boy, but suddenly felt himself weaken. The day's excitement had been too much for him, and the unexpected discovery of his grandson had been too great a shock for him. He realized that he was dying, but the realization seemed now to hold in it nothing of terror.

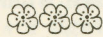
"Quick, a pencil and paper," he gasped as he sank to the floor.

Jimmy jumped to fill the request and handed to the dying man the desired articles. Gregory Walsh wrote laboriously for a few minutes, folded the paper slowly, and passed it to the uncomprehending Jimmy.

"Here," said Walsh weakly, "deliver this at one—seven—four—Adelaide—Street." With a final effort he turned to the woman lying on the bed. His final words came slowly:

"God bless you, lady, and, God be praised, I—die—in—peace."

—M., '34.



Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,—
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.

—Tennyson.

He makes no friend who never made a foe.—Tennyson.

Nothing is given so profusely as advice.—*La Rochefoucauld*

One thorn of experience is worth a wilderness of warning.
—Lowell,