

The Decision

Dr. Arthur Brown placed on his desk the yellow slip of paper which he had been reading, and, relaxing in the comfortable office-chair, gave himself up to his thoughts. Life had been kind to Dr. Brown. At the close of his high school course he had been enabled to pursue his study in medicine through the generosity of a doting uncle. His record as a student in medicine had been so outstanding as to attract the attention of his professors, and graduation with highest honors had brought with it many tempting offers. His parents had been living at the time, however, and Dr. Brown had decided to live with them in the small town of Aftonville. Here he soon acquired a considerable practice, and his unfailing attention to duty had won for him the respect and admiration of both rich and poor. Then, in the midst of prosperity and happiness, sorrow had visited him. The death of both his father and mother within a few months of each other had wrought a change in Dr. Brown. He was no longer satisfied with his quiet life as a country doctor. True, he had continued to attend to his duties. Only a few days previously he had performed a difficult operation which had attracted the attention of some of the well-known authorities in surgery. Dr. Brown was no longer content, though. He now longed for the opportunity to display the talent which he possessed.

And now, this very morning, he had received the opportunity for which he had been waiting. He picked up the telegram again and read it through:

Passing through Aftonville this morning on west-bound express stop would like to meet you at station.

(signed)

(Dr.) J. A. Manion.

Dr. Manion! The man who was considered one of the greatest surgeons in the world, and whose chief assistant, Brown knew, had died only a few days before. A graduate of Markham University himself, the famous surgeon had doubtlessly looked to that university for suggestions as to a capable assistant. The authorities there had remembered Arthur Brown's brilliant record, and their recommendation, coupled with the publicity which Dr. Brown had recently received, had no doubt

induced Dr. Manion to interview this prospect. An eccentric man, though, Dr. Manion, in spite of his skill, as was shown by his decision to meet his probable assistant at Aftonville instead of having Dr. Brown call on him. This was certainly one appointment which must be kept, reflected the fortunate doctor. There were dozens of young doctors fully as capable as Brown who would jump at the offer to become Dr. Manion's assistant. Besides a large salary, the position would carry with it a splendid opportunity to become famous. Failure to meet Dr. Manion at the time appointed might easily be construed by the great man as a refusal on the part of Brown, and the opportunity would be lost.

The doctor glanced at his watch; ten-fifteen and the express was due at ten forty-five. He decided to leave for the station now, so as to be there in good time. Just as he was rising from his chair he heard a noise outside the office door, and, without warning, the door burst open and there entered a man who was plainly very much excited.

"Doctor, doctor, come with me at once. One of my children has been hurt and I'm afraid he's bleeding to death. Please hurry."

The doctor murmured a few words of encouragement and reached for his instrument case. The sight of the telegram on the desk stayed his action, however, and a pained look came into his countenance. This man, Jim Renfrew, lived some distance away. Response to his request for assistance would mean that the doctor would miss the train, and that would mean—a lost opportunity.

"What shall I do?" thought the doctor; "shall I refuse this man's request to go with him? It seems brutal, but I *must* see Dr. Manion."

He turned towards the anxious Renfrew, who had been watching the doctor closely:

"I'm sorry, Renfrew, but I can't go with you just now; I've another important engagement, and I'm on my way to the depot now, I'll try to get out to your house in an hour or so."

The words cost him an effort. It was the first time in his experience as a doctor that Brown had refused to answer an emergency call immediately; indeed it was this promptness which had helped greatly in making him so popular among the people.

Renfrew stood for a moment, silent. He seemed unable to grasp the full portent of the doctor's words.

"But doctor," he burst out finally, "surely you don't mean that. There isn't another doctor within fifty miles, and a delay of even a few minutes may mean death. Doctor, there's a life at stake, surely you won't refuse."

At these last words of the grief-stricken farmer, something snapped inside Dr. Brown. "There is a life at stake." The words recalled to him his mother's final advice as she lay on her death-bed:

"Remember, son, worldly success is not everything; God has given you a wonderful gift, and it is your place to see that His gift is not abused. When a life is in danger you should do all in your power to save it."

The recollection of these words of his dying mother seemed, somehow, to make Dr. Brown feel ashamed of himself. He stood thinking for a moment, and then came the decision.

"Very well, I'll go with you now. Hurry, there's no time for words."

The three mile drive to the farmer's home was quickly accomplished, and the doctor paid little attention to the father's account of how the child had severely cut himself while chopping wood. As he leaped from the car at the farmer's house the doctor was met by an anxious mother, who conducted him to where the boy lay, pale and weak from loss of blood. An artery had been severed, and though the mother's efforts had helped to check to some extent the flow of blood, nevertheless the doctor realized that any further delay would very probably have proved fatal. He applied himself to his task, and in a few minutes had effectively stopped the flow of blood. He arose from his work, satisfied that the child would live. After a few hastily given instructions as to the care of the wound, and a promise to return in a few hours, the doctor hurried to his car, glancing at his watch as he did so. Ten forty! His only chance now was that the train would be detained. The anxious doctor drove swiftly and directly to the station, only to find the train pulling away from the place, and rapidly gaining speed.

"Too late!" he exclaimed. "Now Manion has gone, and probably thinks that I'm not looking for the job. Oh, well, it's unfortunate, but anyway I saved the child's life." The position would have meant a lot to him, however,

and it was difficult to hide his disappointment. He was about to start his car when he was attracted by a light tapping sound. The doctor looked around to find the origin of the noise, and saw the agent making signs to him from within the office.

"I suppose he wants to have a chat," muttered the doctor, but nevertheless he climbed out of his car and entered the building.

"Good morning, Doc., you look as though you had lost your best friend. Here is a telegram for you that came in a few minutes ago; I called your office, but there was no one there."

"Thanks" murmured Brown as he reached for the message, reflecting upon what the last telegram he had received had meant to him. He glanced at this one carelessly, then stared at it intently. The message read:

Forced to postpone my trip until Tuesday, sorry.
(signed) Manion.

Dr. Brown turned towards the door, a new spring in his step, and a glad look in his eyes. Although too far distant to be certain, the agent thought he heard a heart-felt "Thank God!" and the rest of the sentence sounded like: "and thank you, Mother."

C.M., '34



A laugh is worth a hundred groans in any market.—*Lamb.*

Lord of himself that man will be,
And happy in his life alway,
Who still at even can say with free
Contented soul: "I've lived today!"

—*Horace.*

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the
chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music
out of sight.

—*Tennyson*