

Only a Husk.

Tom Darcy, yet a young man, had grown to be a very hard one. At heart he might have been all right, if his head and his will had been all right; but these being wrong, the whole machine was going to the bad very fast, though there were times when the heart felt something of its own truthful yearnings. Tom had lost his place as foreman of the great machine shop, and what money he now earned came from odd jobs of tinkering which he was able to do here and there at private houses; for Tom was a genius as well as a mechanic, and when his head was steady enough he could mend a clock or clean a watch as well as he could set up and regulate a steam engine—and this latter he could do better than any other man ever employed by the Scott Falls Manufacturing Company.

One day Tom had a job to mend a broken down machine and reaper, for which he received \$5; and on the following morning he started out for his old haunt—the village tavern. He knew that his wife sadly needed the money, and that his two little children were in absolute suffering from want of clothing, and that morning he held a debate with the better part of himself, but the better had become very weak and shaky, and the demon of appetite carried the day.

So away to the tavern Tom went, where, for two or three hours, he felt the exhilarating effects of the alcoholic draught, and fancied himself happy, as he could sing and laugh; but, as usual, stupefaction followed, and the man died out. He drank while he could stand, and then lay down in a corner, where his companions left him.

It was late at night, almost midnight, when the landlord's wife came into the bar-room to see what kept her husband up, and she quickly saw Tom.

"Peter," said she, not in a pleasant mood, "why don't you send that miserable Tom Darcy home? He's been hanging around here long enough."

Tom's stupefaction was not sound sleep. The dead coma had left his brain, and the calling of his name stung his senses to keen attention. He had an insane love of rum, but did not love the landlord. In other years Peter Tindar and himself had loved and wooed the sweet maiden—Ellen Goss—and he won her, leaving Peter to take up with the vinegary spinster who had brought him the tavern, and he knew that lately the tapster had gloated over the misery of the woman that had once discarded him.

"Why don't you send him home?" demanded Mrs. Tindar, with an impatient stamp of the foot.

"Hush, Betsy! He's got money. Let him be, and he'll be sure to spend it before he goes home, I'll have the kernel of that nut and his wife may have the husk."

With a snuff and a snap Betsey turned away, and shortly afterward Tom Darcy lifted himself up on his elbow.

"Ah, Tom, are you awake?"

"Then rouse up and have a warm glass."

Tom got upon his feet and steadied himself.

"No, Peter, I won't drink any more to-night."

"It won't hurt you, Tom—just one glass."

"I know it won't," said Tom, buttoning up his coat by the solitary button left. "I know it won't."

And with this he went out into the chill air of midnight. When he got away from the shadow of the tavern, he stopped and looked up at the stars and then he looked down upon the earth.

"Aye," he muttered grinding his heel in gravel, "Peter Tindar is taking the kernel, and leaving poor Ellen the worthless husk—a husk more than worthless!—and I am helping him to it. I am robbing my wife of joy, robbing my dear children of honor and comfort, and robbing myself of love and life—just that Peter Tindar may have the kernel and Ellen the husk! We'll see!"

It was a revelation to the man. The tavern keeper's speech, meant not for his ears, had come on his senses as fell the voice of the Risen One upon Saul of Tarsus.

"We'll see!" he said, setting his foot firmly upon the ground; and then he wended his way homeward.

On the following morning he

said to his wife: "Ellen, have you any coffee in the house?"

"Yes, Tom!" She did not tell him that her sister had given it to her. She was glad to hear him ask for coffee, instead of the old, old cider.

"I wish you would make a cup, good and strong."

There was really music in Tom's voice, and the wife set about her work, with a strange flutter at her heart.

Tom drank two cups of the strong, fragrant coffee, and then went out—went out with a resolute step, and walked straight to the great manufactory, where he found Mr. Scott in his office.

"Mr. Scott, I want to learn my trade over again."

"Eh, Tom! what do you mean?"

"I mean that it's Tom Darcy come back to the old place, asking forgiveness for the past, and hoping to do better in the future."

"Tom," cried the manufacturer, starting forward and grasping his hand, "are you in earnest? Is it really the old Tom?"

"It's what's left of him, sir, and we'll have him whole and strong very soon, if you'll only set him at work."

"Work! Aye, Tom, and bless you, too! There is an engine to be set up and tested to-day. Come with me."

Tom's hands were weak and unsteady, but his brain was clear, and under his skillful supervision the engine was set up and tested; but it was not perfect. There were mistakes which he had to correct, and it was late in the evening when the work was complete.

"How is it now, Tom?" asked Mr. Scott, as he came into the testing-house and found the workmen ready to depart.

"She's all right, sir. You may give your warrant without fear."

"God bless you, Tom! You don't know how like sweet music the old voice sounds. Will you take your place again?"

"Wait till Monday morning, sir. If you will offer it to me then, I will take it."

At the little cottage Ellen Darcy's fluttering heart was sinking. That morning, after Tom had gone, she had found a dollar bill in the coffee cup. She knew that he had left it for her. She had been out and bought tea and sugar and flour and butter, and a bit of tender steak; and all day long a ray of light had been dancing and shimmering before her—a ray from the blessed light of other days. With prayer and hope she had set out the tea table, and waited, but the sun went down and no Tom came. Eight o'clock—and almost nine.

Hark! the old step! quick, strong, eager for home! Yes, it was Tom, with the old grime upon his hands, and the odor of oil upon his garments.

"I have kept you waiting, Nellie."

"Tom?"

"I didn't mean to, but the work hung on."

"Tom, Tom!" You have been to the old shop!"

"Yes, and I'm bound to have the old place, and—"

"Oh, Tom."

And she threw her arms around his neck and covered his face with kisses.

"Nellie, darling, wait a little and you shall have the old Tom back again."

"Oh, Tom! I've got him now—bless him! bless him! my own Tom! my husband, my darling!"

Then Tom Darcy realized the full power and blessing of a woman's love.

It was a banquet of the gods, was that supper—the household gods all restored—with the bright angel of peace and love and joy spreading their wings over the board.

On the following Monday morning Tom Darcy assumed his place at the head of the great machine shop, and those who thoroughly knew him had no fear of his going back into the slough of joylessness.

A few days later Tom met Peter Tindar on the street.

"Eh! Tom, old boy, what's up?"

"I am up, right side up."

"Yes, I see, but I hope you haven't forsaken us, Tom?"

"I have forsaken only the evil you have in store, Peter. The fact is, I concluded that my wife and little ones had fed on husks long enough, and if there was a good kernel left in my heart, or in my manhood, they should have it."

"Ah, you heard what I said to my wife that night?"

"Yes, Peter; and I shall be grateful to you as long as I live. My

remembrance of you will always be relieved by that tinge of warmth and brightness."

"Join at Once."

A story is going the rounds, says the *Bombay Gazette*, which is too good to be lost. A young sub-lieutenant left his regiment a short time ago on sick leave, and put up at the best hotel, not a 100 miles from Poonah, where he was immediately stricken by the attractions of a lovely maiden who was staying there. He proposed, was accepted and the happy day fixed. The colonel, however, disapproved of sub-lieutenants getting married, and particularly of the marriage of the sub in question. As he happened to be a friend of the young man's father, he thought to prevent the union of the fond couple by sending a peremptory telegram couched in the following words:

"Join at once."

The son of Mars was in despair. He presented himself before his intended with the fatal missive in his hand, and everything but a look of pleasure in his countenance; but the lady was equal to the occasion. With a blush of maiden simplicity and virgin innocence, she cast her eyes to the ground and remarked—

"Dear me! I'm glad your colonel approves of the match; but what a hurry he's in! I don't think I can get ready so soon, but I'll do my best, because, of course, love, the commands of your Colonel must be obeyed."

The young warrior was puzzled. "Don't you see, my darling," he said, "that this confounded telegram puts a stopper on our plans? You don't seem to understand the telegram. He says peremptorily 'Join at once.'"

The lady's blushes redoubled, but with a look of arch simplicity she raised her lovely eyes to her fiancé and replied:

"It is you, my darling, who don't seem to understand it. Your colonel says plainly 'Join at once,' by which he of course means get married immediately. What else can he possibly mean?"

A look of intelligence replaced the air of bewilderment in the young hero's classic features, and bestowing a regular *feu de joie* of chaste salutes on her rosy lips, he accepted the explanation, and was enabled to answer the colonel's telegram in twenty-four hours afterwards in these words:

"Your orders were obeyed. We were joined at once."

**SPIRIT OF THE AGE.**—A member of the sanitary police force came across a boy the other day who was wheeling home a load of oyster cans and bottles, and curious to know what use the lad could put them to, he made a direct inquiry.

"Going to throw them over into our back yard," replied the boy. "I took two loads home yesterday."

"But what do you use 'em for?"

"It's a trick of the family," grinned the lad.

"How trick?"

"I'd just as leaf tell," continued the boy, as he spit on his hands to resume his hold of the barrow. "We're going to have some relish-shuns come in from the country. We may not have much to eat, but if they see these cans and bottles and boxes they'll think we've had isters, champagne, figs and nuts till we've got tired of 'em and are living on bread and taters for a healthy change!"

The officer scratched his ear like a man who had received a new idea. —*Detroit Free Press, Marce 2.*

**CANDLELESS.**—The old gentleman went into the parlor the other night at the withing hour of 11.45, and found the room unlighted and his daughter and a dear friend enjoying a tete-a-tete in the corner of the window. "Evangeline," the old man said sternly, "this is scandalous." "Yes, papa," she answered sweetly, "it is candleless because times are hard and light costs so much, that Ferdinand and I said we would try and get along with the starlight." And papa turned about in speechless amazement, and tried to walk out of the room through a panel in the wall paper.

The horsefly crawls out of his crack in the wall, and with wings still stiff and feeble begins to practice flying at a mark. In another week he will be himself again, and able to hit a man's nose ninety-seven times out of every hundred.

The Judge Answered.

William Watson, a youth, stood at the bar of the General Sessions, convicted of theft.

"Where have I seen you before?" Judge Gildersleeve asked, thoughtfully. "Your face is certainly familiar to me."

"I don't know, your Honor," Watson replied.

"Where have you seen me before?" his Honor persisted.

"I don't know, I am sure, your Honor," Watson protested.

"Where were you last employed?" I am confident that I have seen your face before," Judge Gildersleeve continued, with the air of having cornered the prisoner at last.

"In the Crystal Palace saloon, your Honor," Watson answered, and the spectators laughed.

Judge Gildersleeve did not pursue his inquiries further. He sentenced Watson to the State prison for three years. —*N. Y. Sun.*

**A FAMILY LIKENESS.**—Some soldiers who were quartered in a country village, when they met at the roll-call, were asking one another what kind of quarters they had got; one of them said he had very good quarters, but the strangest landlady ever he saw—she always took him off. A witty comrade said he would go along with him, and would take her off. He went, and offered to shake hands with her, saying, "How are you, Elspa?" "Indeed, sir," said she, "ye hae the better o' me; I dinna ken ye." "Dear me," replied the soldier, "d'ye no ken me? I'm the devil's sister's son." "Dear save us," quoth the old wife, looking him broadly in the face; "od, man, but ye're like your uncle!"

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