

Monday, April 15, 1912.

## THE JUDGE'S BOND.

By AUGUSTA LARNED.

[CONTINUED.]

"I guess the Square has put up your horse, Joel, and you had better stay to supper and spend the night with us."

Hester had spread the tea table, not with the best napery and dishes from the "keeping-room" cupboard, for Hester had hinted that it would be impolitic to make any change on Joel's account; but everything was clean, wholesome, and appetizing. There was the platter of sliced meat, the snowy bread, and golden butter, and the dish of clear honey for the fritters. The old man came in, and gave a sort of snort when he detected Joel sitting snugly ensconced in a warm corner by the fire. He drew his chair directly to the supper-table, without reference to anybody present, and his shaggy gray eyebrows, when he detected Joel sitting snugly ensconced in a warm corner by the fire. He drew his chair directly to the supper-table, without reference to anybody present, and his shaggy gray eyebrows, when he detected Joel sitting snugly ensconced in a warm corner by the fire. He drew his chair directly to the supper-table, without reference to anybody present, and his shaggy gray eyebrows, when he detected Joel sitting snugly ensconced in a warm corner by the fire.

"Making money hand over fist, I'll warrant."

"Yes, he is doing pretty well," replied Joel, so painfully confused that he dropped a lump of salt into his tea in place of sugar.

"Then lawyers have got long hands, and sharp claws," said the Squire. "The best way is to give 'em a wide berth. There's an old saying I used to hear when I was a boy: 'Tell the truth and shame the devil,' but I guess the devil don't often get ashamed that way by lawyers. There's one thing I will say for the Judge, though; he's the likeliest of the lot, and the rightest man in his business; but that ain't a family trait, is it?"

"What, honesty?" returned Joel.

"O, yes, I never knew a dishonest Selfridge."

"Humph," grunted the old Squire, "did you ever know a shifless Selfridge? But there ain't no asking that question. Everything has got a new-fangled name. What are lazy folks called now-a-days, Hester? You have taught school and ought to be acquainted with fashionable names."

"I'm sure I don't know," said Hester, bending her head down over the fire.

"Now I recollect. They're called gentlemen of leisure. If the Judge can afford to keep his relations without work, why he's a mighty shifless fellow, and I don't know as he's any business of mine, and with a metallic sound in the chest, which might have been either a laugh or a chronic cough, the old man arose from the table, and he had determined upon his head, and went away out of the house to do his evening chores.

The lamp was lit, the fire well trimmed and bright. Hester brought forth a large pan of rosy-cheeked apples (Baldwins) to pare for the last batch of mince pies. The keen knife glanced and shone, and the red rings slid down from her comely hands. Mrs. Preston was at work on a long gray sock, a sock anybody might know belonged to the old Squire if they had seen it in China. Joel had taken from his pocket the joints of his flute, and was screwing them tightly together, and as the old man opened the door he heard his name called.

"Come, now, Joel, give us General Greene's March, or Yankee Doodle. There's the Square coming in, and he's fond of music, too."

"You can't eat it or drink it," growled the Squire, as he took his own particular arm-chair, and drew it up to the fire, and, pulling off his heavy boots, held up his stocking-clad feet to the genial blaze.

"But your ears can drink it," responded the old lady, not knowing she had made a pretty speech.

Joel played one old air after another, and the walls echoed the strains pleasantly which seemed trying to bring the different heart-beats there under the roof-tree into consonance and harmony. When the music ended, the old man, who had been pondering with his chin sunk in his stock, drew back a little, and laid his hand rather heavily upon the table, and said, breaking out suddenly:

"I agree the up-shot of the business is, young man, you want to marry my girl. You've kept running here pretty nigh a year and a half, and the matter must end some time or other. Tain't my fashion to dally much with untempered mortar, and I tell you plainly what I've got against you is your want of suddenness and propensity to cool away your time, and live on other folks. I don't propose to support no son-in-law with my hard earnings. Everybody round me must use his own hands and feet, and put in as much as he takes out. Now that's the long and the short of it, and I'm prepared to hear your views."

Joel, thus summoned, looked as if he stood much rather run away, but he steeled his ground and spoke with his eyes cast down, and his face slightly pale, while the Squire's shrewd, keen countenance was turned attentively toward him.

"I do want to marry your daughter," he began, "and I should have asked for your consent long ago, but I knew you were prejudiced against me, and opposed to taking me into your family. It doesn't seem quite fair to condemn a man before he has had a trial. Hester shall not repeat if she marries me."

"Fine promises never raised a hill of potatoes," said the old man sarcastically. "I know good clean timber when I see it, and I know a crooked stick. I tell you, young man, you've got to put your own skin and buckle down to hard work before you earn a living for a family. I'm again disappointed, too, and, and always was. But, Hester, what have you got to say?"

Hester had held the apple she was paring suspended in her hand. The color varied in her cheeks, and now a tide of crimson swept over them. Her voice faltered, and almost broke at first, but it gathered strength and went on, so clear and distinct, that it seemed as though the old clock in the corner even stopped to listen. "Father," said she, "I hope you won't oppose us till the last. I have tried to please you, and be a good daughter, but there comes a time when a girl must listen to her own heart."

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To be continued.

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