

The Fireside.

THE DAY OF YOUNG MEN.

BY A. H. MARTIN.

"I saw your advertisement for a copyist, and came to apply for the position."

Mr. Whiting, attorney and counselor at law, looked at the speaker and beheld an old man. His hair was white; trouble and time had furrowed a face that at one period must have been firm and handsome. The old frock coat was spotless, but shone in places like satin. His linen was without stain, but bore unmistakable evidences of wear.

"I can write a good hand and should very much like to get the position," continued the man.

"I think it would hardly suit you," responded the attorney. "The wages are small, and I was looking for a young man."

"Oh, well, sir, I don't expect very large wages. Of course I am not a young man, but I am as good as any of them. I am only sixty-eight, and I am as spry as ever," and the spare figure straightened perceptibly.

"I'm sorry," said Mr. Whiting, turning again to his work, "but I have made partial arrangements to fill the place."

A shadow of great disappointment overspread the applicant's countenance.

"That is too bad," he said, "but I wish you would take my address, and if the other party should fail you, I know I could satisfy you."

"Very well. Mr. Bates,"—the lawyer spoke to his managing clerk, who had been standing by with a bundle of papers,—“you may take the gentleman's address."

The old man followed the clerk to the outer room, and saw entered on the memorandum, "James McGregor, 139 Bolton Street."

As he watched the young man rubbing his fingers over the blotter, he said, "You will be sure to let me know if the other party does not come, won't you?"

There was a note of pleading in the tone that made Bates look at the speaker more closely. The figure had lost its erectness; the hopeful look, which had illuminated his countenance when he had first entered, was gone, and in its place was an expression of despair.

"Are you sure you would want the position?" the young man asked. "It pays only fifteen dollars a week."

"Oh, yes; yes, indeed! I would be very glad to take it. I would be willing to work for almost anything. It is pretty hard for a man of—of my age to get work. Everybody wants young men nowadays. I think this would be just the place for me."

"Very well," responded Bates, strangely touched by the apparent distress of the old man.

Evening found Mr. McGregor, weary and footsore, returning to the little flat which he and Mrs. McGregor called home. All day long he had been walking the streets, riding in elevators or climbing stairs, seeking for an opportunity to work, a chance to live. He had been given a number of bills by merchants and professional men, but they were mostly old accounts, chaff that had been thrashed over for years, and there was more exercise than profit in undertaking to collect them.

Money was too precious to be used for car fare, so he had walked mile after

mile. This day had been but a repetition of many others. Disappointments had been accumulating, and he was staggering under the load. Moreover, he had that morning withdrawn from the bank the last ten dollars of years of savings.

"The Lord only knows," he muttered, as he shook his gray head, "what will become of us unless I get something to do this week. I can't bear to tell Beth."

His lips were moving, his bowed head shaking, and his hands closing and opening nervously when he was aroused from his reverie by a cheery "Good evening, Mr. McGregor!"

Raising his eyes, he beheld Bates, Mr. Whiting's managing clerk, walking by his side.

"Ah, good evening, good evening, sir! You startled me. I did not see you. I was busy—ah—er—just thinking."

"Poor old chap!" thought John Bates. "I suppose, 'just thinking' has been the only business he has had for some days."

John remembered the time when he, a young man full of vigor, had walked the streets day after day. He remembered the disappointments, the bitterness, and the awful eagerness of his quest for work as he saw his money diminishing. What if he had been an old man whom no one wanted? He gasped at the thought as the horror of those days came back to him. He did not know Mr. McGregor's circumstances, but the symptoms were hard to mistake.

"I thought I recognized you, but I wasn't quite sure until I caught up with you. Are you homeward bound?" he asked.

"Yes. I guess it is about time I was starting. It is quite a little jaunt from here."

"You are not going to walk?" exclaimed the young man.

"Oh, I don't mind it. I am a great walker usually, but I am a little jaded tonight."

John made no comment, although he felt certain that he knew why the old man walked. He wished he could think of some way of offering him car fare without hurting his feelings, but no plan occurred to him, so he said nothing further until he bade him good night at the next corner.

"What if my father was in that shape?" he muttered, when he was alone, and he stepped faster, his brows knit and his face troubled.

Places of business were closing; toilers were hurrying in crowds along the streets; men with dinner-pails jostled Mr. McGregor; messenger boys and men of affairs hurried by unheeding. Street car gongs clanged; wheels rattled; drivers shouted, and the world seemed a pandemonium. At a corner a large department store was pouring its flood of clerks into the street. Mr. McGregor was forced to pause until this crowd had scattered. He looked at the people hurrying hither and thither. The world seemed so full of work, but there was none for him.

The way had never seemed so long, but at last he reached his home and ascended the stairs. A little woman met him at the door with a smile.

"Nothing, nothing!" he said, in response to the muttered question which he saw in her eyes. He sank wearily into a chair.

"I have tramped miles and miles, but it is the same old story. It is 'young men, young men!' The world seems crazy for young men. Youth and energy are everything. Experience and judgment nothing. There is a lot of good work left in me yet. They seem to think that a man who is over fifty is good for nothing but the poorhouse. He is worn out, and has no business to be alive."

"O James, don't!" exclaimed Mrs. McGregor, who had never heard her husband speak in this way before; for despite all his disappointments and trials he had always kept a cheerful face before her. She came behind him, throwing her arms about his neck, nestled her cheek against his gray head.

Mr. McGregor started as if caught talking to himself. He reached up, and taking hold of her hands, patted and stroked them fondly, saying, "There, now, dear, you must not mind what I am saying. I am a little tired and disappointed. That is all. I am sure to find something tomorrow. I shall be all right as soon as I get some of that good coffee I smell. Is supper ready?"

He strove to banish the gnawing care and appear cheerful in his wife's presence. It was a difficult task, but he succeeded fairly well. They chatted continually during the meal, happy in the belief that they were deceiving each other. Hope rose the next morning with the sun. Who could tell what the new day might have in store? Mrs. McGregor watched her husband as he strode down the street.

"Who would have thought," she sighed, "that James McGregor would be seeking service with other men?" Ah, the good days had gone! Young men were in command of affairs now; men who did not remember the time when the name of James McGregor was good for almost any sum he might ask at any bank in the city.

The days passed as other days had done. Disappointment, disappointment, bitter and deep, met the old man at every turn. He could hardly summon courage to go home. The next week rent would be due. There was nothing which to pay.

There was no use trying to deceive his poor wife any longer. He must tell her the truth; some of the furniture must be sold. They had not kept very much, but what they had must go. His footsteps dragged. He felt as if he were an executioner on the way to kill the one he loved.

"I am a failure, a failure!" he kept repeating.

It was not until after lunch that day that John Bates found an opportunity to speak to Mr. Whiting in regard to a matter that had been troubling him all the morning. He had thought so much of the old man that in his dream the night before he had seen his own old father, for whom he was now able to provide, wandering disconsolately about in search of employment.

"Mr. Whiting," he said, "have you decided on any one to fill Mr. Hartman's place?"

"No," responded the lawyer. "None of those who have applied suit me."

"I thought you said you had partly arranged for one."

Mr. Whiting smiled. "I am afraid that was not exactly the truth. I said something like that, I believe, to that old man who was in, but I did it because I did not like to tell him right out that he was too old."

"But why wouldn't he be all right?"

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strengthen the kidneys and bladder, then all trouble is at an end.

Mrs. E. Kidner, a London, Ont., mother, living at 499 Gray St., says:

"My little daughter, six years old, has had weak kidneys since birth. Last February I got a box of Doan's Kidney Pills at Strong's drug store. Since taking them she has had no more kidney trouble of any kind. I gladly make this statement because of the benefit my child has received from this medicine."

the young man inquired. "He would be more likely to stay at it than a younger man. Young men are always looking ahead for something better, and aren't as likely to be so careful."

"That is so," responded Mr. Whiting, twirling his glasses on the end of their cord; "but on the other hand, old men are hard to teach. They do not take things up as quickly, and are opinionated and set in their ways. Then, too, he would be likely to be laid up with rheumatism or something just when we needed him most, and we shouldn't like to be so strict with a man of his years."

"He looks strong," John protested, "and I think you would be doing him a kindness if you gave him the place."

"Perhaps so, but there are ten thousand other old men in the city who are in need of just such kindness. When you have practised as long as I have,

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