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HOW WILLIAM GOT HIS FLING.

By ELLA MIDDLETON TYBOUT.

Author of "Pometown People," "A House Divided," "The Turn of the Tide," etc.

"I wouldn't worry too much over James if I was you, Amanda," remarked Mrs. Wilkins as she rocked placidly to and fro. "What if he does run after the girls some? It's natural at his age."

"But, Cousin Cynthia, you seem to forget that James is a church member. I'm terrible afraid he'll be led astray if I don't keep a close watch on him. I was talkin' about it to John and—"

"You take my advice, Amanda, and let James alone; don't trouble his father about him, or you'll regret it in the end. I know just what you're goin' through now. Didn't I have the same experience with our son, William? If you'll promise to say nothin' to nobody about it, I'll tell you how 'twas I made up my mind to let William have his fling in peace—and I ain't never been sorry I done it. Draw the rocker up to the fire and make yourself comfortable."

"Well, the year, William was twenty-one he took to goin' out pretty near every night. He'd always been such a steady boy and stayed round home so contented-like that I fretted myself to a shadder over him coastin' down the road to ruin, as I reckoned he was doin' mighty fast. His pa gave him the bay colt and a new buggy when he was twenty-one, and there wasn't a night but that colt and buggy (with William settin' up inside dressed in his Sunday clothes) went prancin' out somewheres, gettin' home dear knows when. But I was always ready for him. Never a night, no matter how late he got in, that I didn't put my head out of the door when he was tryin' to sneak upstairs easy-like in his stockin' feet, and say: "That you William? What time is it?" or some little remark of that sort."

"I didn't approve of his friends, neither, for William had got religion the year before and was a professed church-member. His father bein' an elder and all that, I didn't think it was a good example for our son to be gaddin' round the country every night with the prettiest and flightiest girls he could find,—especially Mary Gray,—and of course, she was the one he was set on.—Try one of them sugar cookies, Amanda, they're right good."

"Well, I done what I could. I talked to William serious every chance I got and offered to pray with him evenings, but he was pretty short in his answers—which I took to mean he wanted to be let alone. Ain't it strange the way a boy gets to be real independent-like when he turns twenty-one? Anyhow, I found I couldn't talk to William when he didn't want to talk to me, and so I took to talkin' to his father about him every chance I got. Joseph agreed with me that something must be done to stop him on the downward course before it was too late, and we both felt we must do our duty by William if he was entitled to vote."

"It 'sime to my knowledge that there was to be a huskin' bee at the Grays' and a dance afterwards in the barn. I knowed there would be something of that sort if Mary Gray had a finger in the pie, and I knowed also that William would be there, though he hadn't happened to mention it. Sure enough, down come William to his supper that night with pomatum on his hair and white rose on his handkercher; he had his best clothes on and a brand-new necktie I never seen before with a gold pin stuck in it careless-like, and he looked real elegant, but not a word did he say. At last I couldn't stand it no longer and I sez, sez I,—

"Goin' out, William? sez I.

"Yes," sez he, and up he got, leavin' his supper half eat (we had baked beans, I remember, and William's very partial to 'em), and off he went before I could say another word.—Would you mind puttin' a few of them pine-cones on the fire, Amanda? They make a nice blaze."

"Well, as I was sayin,' William marched off without sayin' nothin' to nobody, and we could hear him roll out the buggy and holler at the colt. I looked at his father and his father looked at me."

"Pa," sez I, 'it's serious this time,' sez I. "You're right, Ma, it is," sez he."

"Then I riz up and spoke very solemn and impressive, as I have to do sometimes, for Joseph, though a good man, often has to have the path o' duty p'inted out to him very plain and distinct before he is convinced it's the proper place fur his feet to walk in."

"Joseph Wilkins, sez I, 'it's your son that's goin' to destruction, and it's your place to foller him and bring him back. He must be brought home as a brand snatched from the burnin', fur well I know he's bound fur the huskin' at the Grays.'"

"Cynthia," sez he, 'I'll do it. I'll foller him and watch him, and if he gits to dancin', I'll take him by the arm and lead him home, so's we both kin wrastle with him in prayerful quietude. I'll save him yet, so help me Moses!'"

"That was a mighty strong expression for Joseph, and I felt easy in my mind that he'd do his duty. Still, after he'd dressed hisself and started off I got to thinkin', and I remembered the old sayin,' 'If you want a thing well done, do it yourself.' Joseph always had been weak where William was concerned, and I was afraid his heart would fail him when the time come. At last I couldn't stand it no longer, so I put a shawl over my head and started fur the Grays.—You're sectin' the heel of that stockin' wrong, Amanda; let me show you."

"Well, I started fur the Grays'. It wasn't fur across the fields and pretty soon I seen the barn, all lighted up, just as I expected. I could see in a side winder by standin' on a peck measure, so I took a good look. The fiddles was jest tunin' up, and, sure enough, there was William fairly layin' hisself out to Mary Gray, and there in a remote corner stood Joseph lookin' grim and disapprovin'—just as he should look. I really felt proud of Joseph's expression of countenance."

"The fiddles begun, and up stepped William, chipper as a cricket, took Mary Gray by the hand, and led her out. I saw Joseph start forward pretty quick, but he restrained hisself, and I thought he believed the hour was not yet ripe, so I kep' on watchin'. The music went faster and faster. It's queer the way it gets hold of you. If you'll believe me, Amanda, I found myself standin' on that peck measure keepin' time with my feet and not knowin' I was doin' it. Well, I looked across at Joseph. His expression had changed a good deal, and he was keepin' time also, not only with his feet, but with his hands. And him a'elder!"

"William and Mary clasped hands and went up the middle and down ag'in; they stopped at Joseph's end of the barn and she made William a grand courtesy. Then, Amanda, I seen Joseph, my husband, jump up and run out on the floor, push William out of the way, and step up to Mary like he knew just how it was done. I wouldn't have believed it if anybody'd told me, but I seen it with my own two eyes. Mary looked surprised at the change in partners, but the sassy baggage jest made another courtesy deeper than the first and kept right on dancin' like all possessed."

"I can't tell you how I felt, Amanda. There was Joseph, my tried and trusted partner of years, with his thumbs in his vest pockets, cuttin' pigeon-wings, takin' fancy steps, and bowin' and scrapin' with a chit of a girl. Lookin' back on it now, I must say he was mighty light on his feet considerin' his new boots and his mature years, but I didn't think of that at the time. The music went clean out of my feet, I can tell you, and I jest walked straight into that barn and took Joseph by the arm. I never seen William; I forgot all about him."

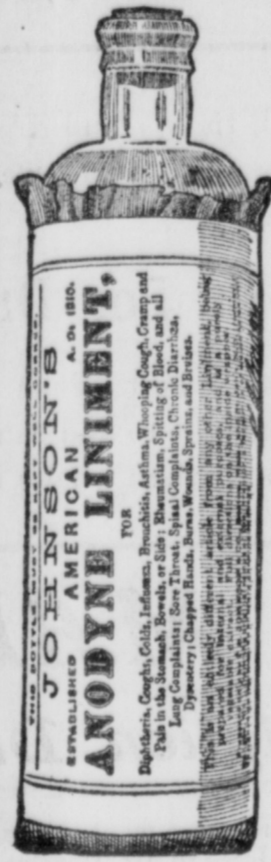
"Joseph," sez I, low but clear, 'come home.'

"And Joseph come. "We walked across the fields sayin' nothin', and leavin' William behind us; he might have danced the soles off his shoes for all I cared by that time. We continued to say nothin' till we shut up the house, and I got out the Family Bible for prayers and laid it before Joseph with a look which said many things. Looks is better than words sometimes."

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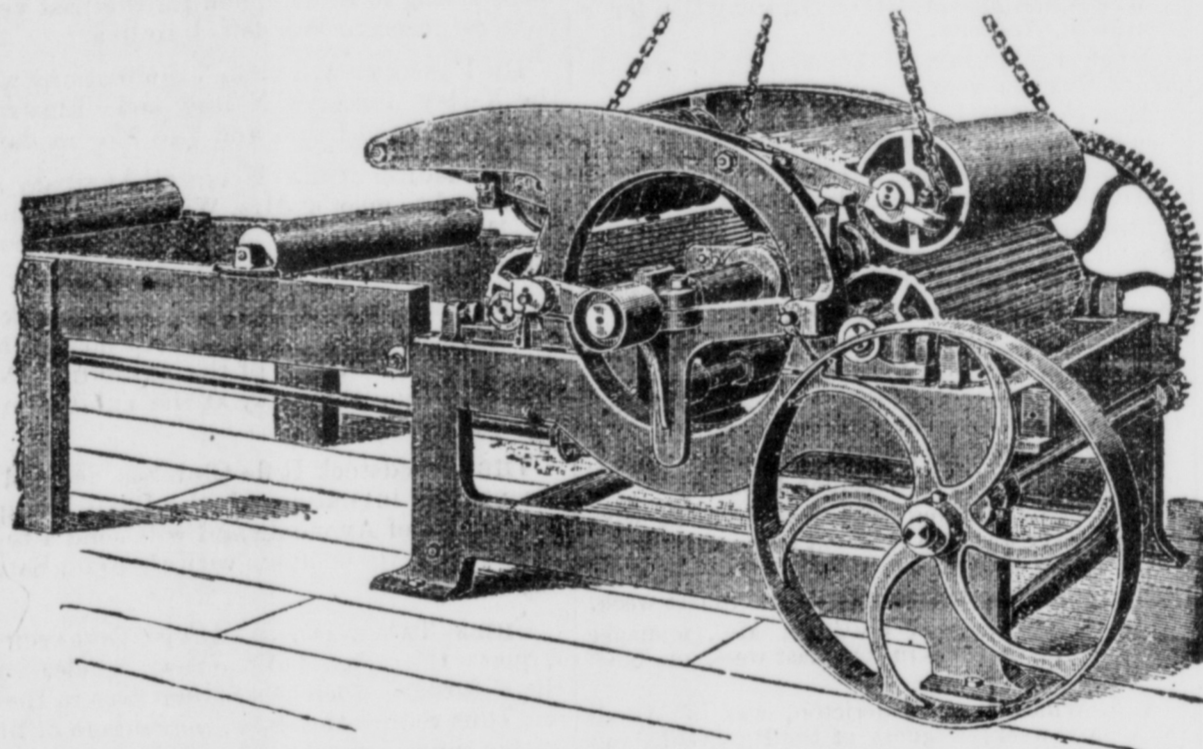
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Amanda, as I've proved by experience. That's he sez, sez he:

"Cynthia," sez he, 'I dunno why I done it. The fiddles got into my knees and I had to dance or bust.'

"Joseph," sez I, 'we'll say no more about it, but hereafter we'll let William have his fling to hisself. We don't need hold him any more.'

"Joseph read some instances from the life of David that night to show how liable men are to yield to temptation. I didn't say nothin', but I done a lot of thinkin', and when William come creepin' upstairs along about two o'clock I snored loud and peaceful, so's he thought I was asleep. I do that now every time he comes in late instead of askin' him the time, and he seems to enjoy the change."

"Now, Amanda, all men is men, be they your husband or mine. I know just how worried you feel about your boy, but he ain't goin' to come to no harm. You take my advice and let James have his fling by hisself; don't send his father out to look after him."

"If you'll stay to tea with us, I'll get out some preserved quinces and Joseph will see you home across the big pasture-field. He'd be proud to do it, and, besides, he wants to talk to your husband, anyhow, about tradin' off the red heifer. You better stay, Amanda."

Boylife.

The late Mrs. Mary Mapes Dodge visited a St. Louis family some years ago.

There was in this family a little boy with an inordinately sweet tooth.

"Mrs. Dodge," said the boy's mother, one day, "do you think it is right for Bobby to eat so much bread and jam?"

"It doesn't hurt him," the visitor answered.

"But all that jam?" complained the mother, anxiously.

"Oh," said Mrs. Dodge, with a grim smile, "he doesn't eat it. He leaves it on the doorknobs."

How Peking is Lighted.

A French writer tells how Peking is lighted, as follows: "Eighty thousand tals (\$50,400) is assigned each year for street lights; the official in charge takes 40,000 as his share, and gives the rest to a subordinate. This latter hands over 20,000 to his inferior, and so on, until the original sum is reduced to a few copper cash, given to a coolie to buy oil and a wick; these are placed on a plate on the ground. A beggar comes along and drinks the oil and such is the lighting of Peking."

Man's Ready Wit.

A young man entered the drawing room of the girl whom he was soon to marry. The girl came down to meet him with a severe frown on her pretty face. "John," she said, "father saw you this morning going into a pawn-broker's with a large bundle." John flushed. Then he said in a low voice: "Yes, that is true. I was taking the pawnbroker some of my old clothes. You see, he and his wife are frightfully hard up." "Oh, John, forgive me!" exclaimed the young girl. "How truly noble you are!"

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