THE COLLEGIAN.

BY SHELDON.

(Continued.)

By this time it was past sundown, and the storm was at its height. As he came up to the steps of Rankin hall he noticed a light in the room. He suddenly remembered that Willis had said that he might return on Christmas day in order to take part in some private theatricals given by the society men in one of the houses of a member who lived in Raynor.

"I ought to tell him all about it, I suppose," Edward muttered to himself down at the foot of the steps. And the thought almost upset him again. He was ready to make a clean breast of it to his mother. He had already done so, and it had lifted a load from his heart. He was going to tell Freeda, and he knew that she would understand him and love him none the less. But his roommate was another person. The two incidents of the paper route and the football team had undoubtedly given Willis a feeling of great respect for his roommate. There was no longer any doubt in Edward's mind that Willis had a deep and honest esteem for him founded on the thought he had of his moral character. If now he should frankly disclose to him the facts connected with his recent experience, what would become of that respect which Edward felt he prized at this moment more than anything else? Would he ever again have any influence over Willis? Would it do any good to say anything about it?

But then Edward knew that in spite of his efforts to conceal his visits to one of the lowest of the entertainments two of Willis' society friends had recognized him there and might speak of it any time. Should he wait for a knowledge of it to come to Willis through others and so give his roommate the suspicion that all along he had tried to give an impression for moral uprightness which he did not possess? After all it was not a trifling matter, Edward said to himself as he stood irresolutely on the steps. He knew very well that he had escaped a deadly peril, one of the blackest hells that ever engulfed a young man, and even yet he trembled at the thought of what he had lost, of the wrong he had wrought upon his imagination and his memory.

He went on up the stairs slowly, shaking off some of the snow from his coat and entered his room.

The minute he entered Willis, who was trying on a costume of some sort that he had evidently just pulled out of his dressing case, turned around and said heartily: "Merry Christmas, old man! Old Santa Claus," he added as he noted Edward's snow covered form. "See here what my mother sent you for a little Christmas present." He reached down into his dressing case and pulled out a box done up in tissue paper. "Oh, open it, man, and it won't hurt you. Mother was bound to send it."

Edward fumbled at the package and finally opened it to discover a watch and chain. He silently laid them on his table and looked at them.

"It's all right," exclaimed Willis, laughing. "I told mother about your old turnip, that can't keep time any more than a pumpkin pie, and she insisted on my bringing you this. It won't be polite at all for you to refuse. Not good form in the society we move in, and mother will never forgive you if you don't take it. Oh, I cracked you up all the time I was home. Told mother all about the paper route business and the football affair, and I tell you she couldn't be more grateful if I had rooms with a clergyman and a Sunday school superintendent and a policeman all together to keep me going straight, and the fact is, chum," continued Willis, with a kind look that made Edward groan as he thought of his past record, "it does me good to get back. I'm not your sort much, but it's a tonic for me to have you around, and one of these days when you get me converted I'll do you credit. What sort of a time have you had since I've been gone? Must have been a relief to you to get rid of me awhile, I guess. But, honest ginger, I'm awful glad to see you. You do me good!"

Edward had not said a word yet. In fact, he wasn't able to, Willis rattled on at such a rate. But when Willis paused his wide awake, good natured face smiling carelessly toward his roommate, Edward said in a voice that trembled some, "I've got something to tell you that may change your opinion of me."

"Eh!" said Willis in surprise. He turned and looked more closely at his chum. The storm outside roared steadily over the hall as the two young men, both grave now, stood facing each other.

CHAPTER IV.

As Edward began to tell Willis the story of those two weeks and the effect of his experience on his character Willis grew more and more embarrassed, and finally he assumed a posture of attempted indifference, as he stood by the table, that did not deceive Edward in the least; for, even in the suppressed excitement of his confession, he could not help noticing that Willis was deeply moved. Just how he would take the matter was entirely unknown to Edward, but he doggedly kept on with his story, not attempting to conceal or slur any part of it, making it a disclosure of a real fall in moral conduct, such as it actually had been. To his great relief as he neared the end of his confession he felt consciously freer and happier. No matter how Willis might take it, he was not sorry that he had told him. It was a burden off his soul, and the future, whatever that might be, lay clear before him.

When he paused, Willis, who had not attempted to interrupt or ask any questions, turned abruptly around and walked into his bedroom. He was gone several minutes, and Edward took it as a bad sign. Finally he came out, went up to his table and rather clumsily began arranging a few books that lay in a disordered heap there.

"What did you want to tell me anything about it for?" at last he said, in a tone that Edward interpreted to mean more or less irritation on Willis' part.

Edward explained his reasons, and Willis evidently understood them. He was silent awhile and then said, with a short laugh, "Wonder what mother would think of this?"

Edward shrank as if from a blow, but he did not attempt to say anything. After another pause Willis went over to the window and muttered something about its being too stormy to go out to the theatricals.

Then he turned around and looked at Edward strangely.

"Suppose I should do a little confessing on my side," he said in a tone that sounded to Edward almost mocking if not sneering. "What you've been through isn't a circumstance. Oh, pshaw! What's the use of being so awfully solemn about it? Of course I don't mind saying, Blake, that you've upset me some. I put you down as a kind of freshman saint, and I was beginning— Oh, well, what difference does it make? I don't see that you've done anything so awful. Why, I go to those shows right along, and I don't see that they hurt my moral character any. Can't spoil a rotten apple, eh? That's what you're thinking."

"No," replied Edward painfully; "I'm not thinking about you. I'm thinking more about what your mother"—

"I'll never tell her," interrupted Willis hastily. And then as he saw that Edward did not mean that he added: "Mother always used to take me to the theater when I was a boy. I don't suppose we noticed things that seemed a little out of place to you. Regular theater goers take certain kinds of conversation and certain situations for granted. They don't expect anything else."

Edward did not reply to this, and finally Willis slowly came over to where Edward was standing and deliberately held out his hand. As he spoke Edward remembered long afterward when other events came on to dull the memory of this scene that his roommate had never before exhibited so much real feeling.

"I don't believe, Blake, that another man in college would have done what you've done. I'm so much worse in the way of actual moral looseness than you ever dreamed of being that I would be a fool to think you had gone down very deep. Why, you're a regular saint yet compared with me and lots of the other fellows. I want to tell you I don't think any the worse of you for telling me. I'd thought a good deal worse of you if you'd kept still and let some one else do the telling. You needn't worry about me. I understand all right."

Edward never said a word as he shook Willis' hand. He was still in the valley of humiliation, and while Preston's frank statement relieved him of part of his feeling, he still felt too humble and sober over it all to make any promises for the future or ask his roommate to show any more confidence in him until time should prove that he was worthy of it.

The whole affair left both of them more thoughtful. There was this difference: Edward's thoughtfulness staid with him as days went by. Willis was apparently the same careless, happy-go-lucky fellow next day that he had always been. Only, Edward had again seen his deeper life and knew that it was there in spite of appearances.

So with the beginning of the new year Edward Blake, college student, faced new possibilities. He did not even make any resolutions. He simply faced a white page, and without definitely saying that he would or would not do certain things he felt hopeful. When, the afternoon of the next day, he had gone to see Freeda and had told her all about it, and she had received it all as he knew she would, he came back to his room simply saying to himself that he needed to learn a great deal and that he ought to have enough sense to know what his college education was for.

He was not a church member, and he had never called himself a Christian. He had, however, always believed in prayer, and on that night following his talk with Freeda he prayed before he went to sleep, and his prayer took the definite form of asking that he might find honest employment enough so that Freeda could go back into the hall. He could not make himself realize that it was the right thing for her to be working her way through. It was all right for a boy, but a girl was different.

(To be Continued.)

Letters No Attraction.

Mrs. Hocorn—But, Mandy, I don't see why you don't want to marry Silas Beanblossom. He's prosperous enough. He's just put a new "L" on his house.

Mandy—I don't keer, maw. He kin put the whole alphabet on his house if he wants to, but this here literary life never did appeal to me.

A Use For Him.

Landlady—I rather like having one dyspeptic at my table.

Visitor—How queer!

Landlady—Oh, no. He makes the other boarders ashamed to find fault.—Indianapolis Journal.

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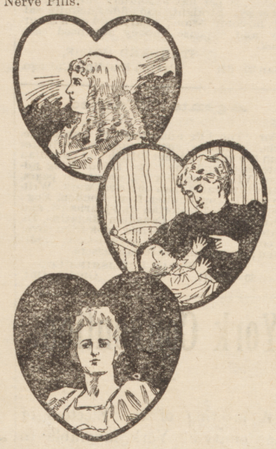

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A Story of Two Partners, Both of Whom Were Honorable Men.

"My first business venture on my own account was in—well, never mind the name of the city," said a New Orleans merchant, chatting over old times with some friends at the board of trade. "The location has nothing to do with the little story I am going to tell you, and, for reasons you will understand in a moment, I don't care to be too specific.

"I was a young chap of 25 at the time, and getting tired of working for other people I opened a cotton brokerage office with another ex-clerk who was considerably my senior in years. We put up an equal amount of capital and agreed to share and share alike in the profits and the hustling. From the very outset everything went remarkably well with us. We both had lots of friends, who took pains to throw business in our hands, and the end of the year showed a very nice little balance of profit. Next year, however, the results weren't quite so good, and I began to have a faint apprehension that I was getting a bit 'the worst of it,' as the saying goes. I heard a vague rumor that my partner was living at a pretty fast gait, and the more I thought about the matter the more dissatisfied and suspicious I became. You know how easily such estrangements will grow upon a firm, and to make a long story short I finally went to a detective agency that made a specialty of 'private investigations' and arranged to get a 'report,' as they called it, on my associate. I admit that it was a rather sneaking proceeding, and I felt secretly ashamed of myself for resorting to it, but I argued that it was my duty to know whether he was really in the way of getting into any embarrassing entanglement.

"Well, in the course of a week or so the agency made its report, and without going into details I may say that it completely exploded all the disturbing gossip I had heard. I realized after reading it that I had been doing my partner a great injustice, and of course I was conscience stricken. To make amends I determined to treat him with extra cordiality, and at the same time it seemed to me that his own bearing, which had been a little distant, became much more friendly. At any rate, whatever coldness had existed soon passed away and the three years of business association that followed were singularly pleasant. Then he received a flattering offer from Liverpool and went there to live.

"One day several months after his departure I was looking over some old papers and ran across a big envelope marked 'private and confidential.' Thinking it contained something relating to the firm, I tore it open, and what do you think I found?—a report on myself from the same detective agency I had hired to investigate my partner. It seemed that our suspicions had been mutual."

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7.45 a m Mixed for Woodstock, Presque Isle, Edmundston and points north via Gibson Branch. Leaves St. Marys 8.15 a. m.

9.20 a m—Accommodation for Fredericton Junction, connecting with Express for St. John and points east, and Accommodation for McAdam Junction

4.00 p m—Accommodation for Fredericton Junction, connecting with Short Line Express for Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and with the Pacific Express from Montreal for the west, Northwest and Pacific Coast, also with Pullman express for Bangor, Portland, Boston, etc, St Stephen, St Andrews, Houlton and Woodstock

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7.25 p m—Express for St. John and points east, and mixed train for McAdam Junction, and Short Line to Megantic, etc.

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8.50 a m—From St. John, McAdam Junction etc

11.50 a m—From Boston, Montreal, St Stephen, St Andrews, Woodstock and Houlton

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