

EDITED

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The Pansy.

THE MAN
OF THE HOUSE.

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THE MAN OF THE HOUSE.

BY PANSY.

THERE was not time to answer Beth; for there came a stream of light just then from a new lamp, and behind it were mother and Miss Hunter; and Reuben poked the fire, and added a fresh lump of coal, and the room looked lovely and cheery. He was glad for the interruption, for in truth he had no answer ready. Beth's ideas of the Christian life were very startling. Was it to be supposed that he, Reuben Watson Stone, could read in the Bible and pray before people!

What did Beth mean by saying "they always did it?" Could she be right in thinking that because he was a Christian he must take up such duties as those?

"Well," said Miss Hunter briskly, setting down the new lamp on the gay lamp mat that she had fished from her box of treasures, "how did Sunday-school go? Did you like it, Beth?"

"Some," said Beth absently, and then rousing herself, "why, yes, ma'am, I liked it very much." She was still thinking of Reuben's wonderful news.

"Miss Hunter," said Reuben, his thoughts suddenly turned in a new channel, "do folks that sign a temperance pledge have to stop drinking cider?"

"Well, now, my boy, that depends on the kind of pledge they sign; there are some wishy-washy pledges I've seen that left cider out; but why they should is more than I can understand. Why, was that your Sunday-school lesson?"

"No'm," said Reuben with a little laugh, "not exactly; but something came up about pledges and promises, and we got on to it somehow, and one of the boys said that cider belonged in the pledge, and another boy said it didn't; he said he had been a member of a temperance society for two years, and that he drank as much cider as he wanted; and they had quite a talk about it."

"And what did the teacher say?"

"Well, she didn't say a great deal about it; I guess she thought it wasn't in the lesson, and she wanted to get the boys to tend to that; but I don't believe she thinks much of cider."

"I'll warrant she doesn't; not if she is a good teacher, and knows much about boys. Why, Reuben, one of the worst drunkards I ever knew, learned to drink by sucking cider out of his father's barrel through a straw. The idea of leaving it out of a pledge, when those who know say it will intoxicate quicker than beer!"

"One boy said that there was a great difference in cider; that he thought every pledge meant you musn't touch *hard* cider, but that new cider such as he drank, wouldn't hurt a cat."

"No more it wouldn't," said Miss Hunter drily, "because a cat knows enough not to touch it. I'll tell you what I think about sweet cider; I think it is just a snare of Satan; time and again he has got hold of a boy by making him so fond of sweet cider that he couldn't

let it alone, and he knows it. Satan is real sharp, I tell you. Then there is another thing, Reuben; you must ask your boy who drinks as much sweet cider as he wants, if he has studied the thing up, and knows just when it changes so that there is a little bit of alcohol in it. The fact is, that change comes a great deal sooner than most folks think. I've heard them that know say that sweet cider was really the flattest tasting stuff in the world; and that nobody liked it until the change had begun in it that makes alcohol. I should think that was stepping pretty near the edge of a promise, even if my pledge didn't say any thing about sweet cider."

"I should think so too," declared Reuben. "I hadn't thought about it before, and I couldn't tell which side I was on; but I guess I'll let cider alone."



DRINKING CIDER THROUGH A STRAW.

"Why, Reuben, you don't belong to any temperance society?" This from Beth, in an inquiring tone.

"No, but I'm going to. There's a fellow in the shop going to get all the signers he can to the pledge, and I told him to-day I'd sign the first thing to-morrow."

"That's right," was Miss Hunter's hearty commendation. "And is it a cider pledge? If it isn't, I'd have another line added and poke it in somehow, for I tell you it works more mischief to young folks than all the other drinks put together. I've watched it. Boys, and

girls too, that have been brought up to do right, and be what they called temperance people, go on drinking their cider year after year, and every year they like it a little harder, though they don't say so. All they say is: 'Seems to me this cider tastes kind of flat; it's a little too new; it wants to stand awhile.' And the first thing they know, the harder it is the better they like it, and



"OH, WE USED TO SING," SHE SAID.

they like it so well they can't let it alone. Some of them do, you know. It doesn't affect everybody that way, of course; if it did people would see the danger easier. But how are you going to know but you will be the very one to learn to like it too well?"

"And even if you don't, maybe the boy that stands next you will be the one to, and maybe he would let it alone if you would." This was Reuben's comment.

"Exactly so, my boy; do you see that cider is put into the pledge that you sign."

"I will," said Reuben.

Then suddenly Mrs. Stone started a new train of thought:

"There is something about this room makes me think of my old home; I can't tell what it is nor where it is, but the minute I get into it I think of the house we used to live in when I was a little girl, and especially the sitting-room where we used to sit on Sundays."

"Well, now," said Miss Hunter with hearty sympathy in her voice, "isn't that pleasant? I do think it is so nice to have something to remind us of our childhood. You must have had a real nice home if this reminds you of it, for I do think this is about as pleasant a room as I ever saw. And what did you used to do Sunday nights when the twilight was coming on?"

Both Reuben and Beth turned interested faces on their mother, and waited for her answer; they knew very little about her old home; she had never seemed fond of talking about it.

"Oh, we used to sing," she said, speaking slowly, as if it were hard work to go back to that long ago past.

"There was quite a family of us once, and we were all singers; Reuben and Kate were first-rate singers; they were the two youngest, and father used to say they could earn their living with their voices; but they didn't need to earn a living; they both died before they found out what a hard thing it was to live. Father had enough and to spare, in those days." And then Mrs. Stone gave the sort of weary sigh that Reuben and Beth were well acquainted with. Miss Hunter didn't want her to sigh.

"So they went to heaven to sing?" she said briskly, almost gayly. "Well there's a pleasant side to that to look back on, I'm sure. Those things most always seem so sad when they first come! I've had them when it seemed to me I never in the world could feel it was for the best; I'll believe it," says I, "because the Lord says so, and I used to tell him that on my knees; but as for realizing it, I don't think I ever can, not till I get to heaven. And if you believe it, I've gone to him on my knees and told him since that I saw it as plain as day about those very things, they were best. Well, I suppose after the singing was done, somebody used to get out the old Bible and read, and then the father prayed; wasn't that the way of it?"

Mrs. Stone caught her breath hard for a moment, then in a lowered voice said: "Yes, it was; my old father never used to neglect that."

There they were, right back to the subject which had put Reuben in such a whirl. This was great news to him; he had never heard so much about his grandfather before; then his mother used to belong to a home where the Bible was read every Sunday evening at least; he wondered if it was on other evenings; he wished he knew, but he did not like to ask his mother. At this point in his thoughts his eye caught Beth's. She nodded her head, and her face said almost as plainly as words could have done: "I told you so; grandfather was a Christian, you see, and he read in the Bible and prayed."

"But then he was a man," said Reuben to himself.

"Well, what of that?" asked the other self, who often in these days held conversations with him. "So will you be a man if you live long enough; and you are the only man there is to this house now. You have to help pay the rent, and buy the coal, and do ever so many things now that you wouldn't if you had a father. As likely as not you would be in school instead of working hard every day to support your family; why should you wait until you get to be a man before you read in the Bible and pray in your family, any more than you waited until then to do the other things?"

"Mother might not like it," said Reuben.

"You will never know until you ask her," said the other self; "and you know you don't believe but what she will like it, or at least that she won't find any fault with it; she hardly ever finds fault with anything that you do."

"Maybe I'll do it next Sunday," said Reuben.

"I should think it would be a great deal more sensible to do it now," said his other self. "Things don't grow easy by waiting, you know that, for you've tried it; in fact this first Sunday in a new home when everything is beginning over new in your family, is just the easiest time you will ever have. If I were you, I'd do it this very night. Your mother doesn't know, to be sure, that you have become a soldier, but Beth does, and you see what she expects of you; and your mother might as well hear it now as at any time. You wondered how you should ever have a chance to show your colors. Are you going to shirk the very first chance?"

But at this point Reuben gave up the sort of thinking which consists in just holding an argument with one half of yourself against the other half, and set himself to right down earnest thinking. The talk went on in

the room, but he did not hear it. He had an important question to settle. It seemed strange to him that Beth, who was not a soldier at all, had been the one to rouse him to duty, and even point the way, but the more he thought about it the more sure he felt that she was right, and that here was a chance to stand by his colors. It seemed like very hard work to him. You boys who have been in the habit of reading a few verses in the Bible with your mother, and then kneeling with her in prayer every night and morning of your lives, will probably never be able to understand how hard it was. But there was this about Reuben that made every one who knew him believe in him, and believe that he would make a man to be trusted. When he saw a plain duty he never shirked it because it was hard. He did not mean to shirk this one.

"Mother," he said, breaking into the midst of something that Beth was saying, being so intent on what he was about to say, that he had not heard Beth at all, and the earnestness sounded so plainly in his voice, that his mother turned toward him an expectant face and waited:

"Mother, I've had something to tell you for a week, but I haven't got it told. I've become a soldier and I've got to stand by my colors all the time."

"A soldier!" repeated Mrs. Stone in a kind of dismayed voice. This boy of hers had so astonished her lately that she was prepared for almost anything. Had he told her there was war with the Indians and he must march away the next morning, I don't know that she would have been much more bewildered than she was now. It was plain that she did not understand him any better than Beth had, and it was equally plain that Miss Hunter did. Her eyes flashed a bright light at him, that made his heart feel warm, and he answered her smile, and then turned to his mother.

"Yes, mother, a soldier of the Lord Jesus. I'm bound to serve him all my life; and since I'm all the man of the house there is, I was wondering if you would care if I read some verses in the Bible, and prayed, as grandfather used to do. I never knew before that grandfather did so.

For the next minute or two it was so still in that little new room that you could have heard your own heart beat, I think. Then Mrs. Stone said, and her voice was so low that Reuben had to bend his head to hear it: "Of course I wouldn't care, Reuben, if you want to."

Without another word Reuben reached for the Bible that he had been studying but a little while before, and read aloud the words over which he had been thinking that afternoon: "Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

"Thou, therefore, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

"No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

There was a great deal about these verses that Reuben did not understand; indeed, they had caught his eye because the word soldier was repeated several times, and then that last sentence about pleasing him who had chosen him to be a soldier, gave him joy; Reuben was sure of this, that he wanted nothing now so much as a chance to please Jesus. During this reading he was much troubled as to what he should say when he knelt to pray. Remember, he had never heard his own voice in prayer, and, indeed, I may say he had rarely heard anybody pray. But he was much astonished to discover that words seemed to come to him without any trouble. Only a few simple sentences, but they expressed as

plainly as words could, his resolution to belong to the Lord Jesus, and to serve him in all things as well as he could from that time forth.

He felt very happy when he rose from his knees; somehow he could not help feeling more like a soldier than before—as though he had put on his uniform, you know. Besides, there had been something in his mother's voice, low and husky though it was, which made him feel that she did not dislike the reading and praying. She had knelt very near to him, and he felt sure he had heard her crying. Perhaps she was thinking of grandfather; perhaps she had missed his prayers very much. And Reuben resolved that she should never miss prayers again. It hardly needed Miss Hunter's happy sentence, "Well, now, I thank the Lord that I belong to a family altar once more!" to make him feel that he had done the right thing, and that God would bless him in it.

GRANDMOTHER'S DARLINGS.

TO-MORROW will be grandma's eightieth birthday," said one of the children, "and we must make her just as happy as can be."

"What shall we do?" said another.

"Send her a long letter—four pages of foolscap—and a nice present," answered the first.

"Agreed!" said they all; and away they go among the stores on Main street. But this will not do, and grandma doesn't care for that; she has so many presents already it will be hard to find any thing fresh and good for her unless they buy something rare and costly; but she wouldn't be pleased to have so much money laid out for her, and the "children" can't afford it.

But one has a bright thought. Grandma dearly loves flowers; let's get her a plant or two, they will not cost very much. So they hurry from the stores to the greenhouse, for it must go out by the very next mail.

"How sweet!" they all exclaim as they enter. "See those roses! How moist and green and summery it is here!" Surely so! for the beauty and breath of ten thousand flowers that the Lord had made, that moment were there.

A marguerite and a begonia full of buds are soon bought, and the kind greenhouse man asks but a trifle for them. Does he know that they are going to grandma, and that she will take good care of the darlings? Maybe he has no grandma.

Home they hurry with their two treasures, and they tuck them away in a nice, new, clean pasteboard box. They look like two dear babies put to sleep in their crib.

Now a strong string is tied about the box, then a paper over that, and another string, and grandma's name and post-office are carefully written upon it. And just across the street is honest old uncle Samuel, or Sam, as most folks call him, but he was called that way when he was born. He is always ready to run on certain kinds of errands, and this is one of them. So he will carry the flowers and the big foolscap letter too, all the way to grandma—nearly a hundred miles—for fifteen cents! very cheap, you see. But that's his way, and he makes a good living because he's never idle like some folks who won't work unless they get the highest wages.

On and on and on he hurries to carry your message, and he goes just as cheerfully and cheaply a thousand miles for you as one. How like Jesus, who came so far to bring us good tidings of great joy; only that he didn't charge any thing at all, and he would have come and died all the same, if there hadn't been but one poor sinner in all the world to be saved!

But uncle Samuel is there now. Can't you see him hand it out to grandma?

How she wonders who sent it, and what it is. There! she has her scissors, and she says, "Stand away, children, till I see what is in this pretty box!" Then "snap, snap," go the scissors, and away fly the cords, and she lifts the cover off carefully, and there the two darlings are sleeping as soundly as babies.

And they all gather around grandma, and exclaim, and try to help her wake them up softly and lift the sweet dears from their crib.

There they are now, looking out of the window, happy as two queens.

Every morning they lift up their faces and smile as soon as the sun rises in the east over the sea. And when grandma comes and sprinkles them all over with clean cool water, they smile and say, "Thank you!" just as well as they can.

They make grandma very happy; more happy than if the children had sent her a piano or silk dress.

Can't you send your grandma or somebody's grandma a rose, or something?



A DANGEROUS DOCTOR.

THEY were playing together, Ruth and Stephen. Ruth was three years younger than Stephen, but he was a good-natured boy and willing to play almost any thing she fancied, although he sometimes laughed at her for always wanting to play like a girl.

Ruth had a good answer for him: "Well, why

shouldn't I want to play like a girl? I *am* a girl." On this particular day, trouble had come to Ruth's family; every one of her five children, baby and all, had small-pox. Stephen of course was the doctor; he had been through all that sort of thing many times; it was a favorite play of Ruth's, and Stephen was a good mimic, and acted out grave and yet gentlemanly Dr. Courtney very well indeed.

There was, however, one unusual thing about his practise, and it was owing to this strange fashion that I made up my mind to tell you the story. Stephen always himself swallowed the medicine he prescribed for Ruth's sick children. He counted the pulse, talked wisely about "Terrible symptoms," gave careful directions as to the temperature of the room, and the care that should be taken about draughts, then carefully measured from a curious-shaped bottle which was always in his pocket, a large-sized spoonful of liquid, and turning away from the anxious little mother, swallowed it. Ah! don't you wish that the doctors of to-day who

come with their large bottles of ugly, dark-looking liquid, had the same rule? But no, I hope you don't wish so; better put it in the drain and let it gurgle away down the sewer pipes, if it were the same medicine that Stephen used.

What do you think? That bottle was always filled with cider! Not so very sweet cider either, though that was the name by which it was called when it came into his father's house. Don't you know that sweet cider has a way of turning itself into sour cider very quickly, and that boys who like it much, are sure to like it better after it begins to sparkle? And after awhile, when it sparkles so that it bites a little, they like it best of all. Stephen was very fond of it; as I have told you, he kept his medicine-bottle always filled.

"The child ought not to have that cider," his grandmother would say, "it really stings."

But the mother would answer: "Oh well, he only wants it to amuse Ruthie; he plays doctor for her, you know, and that is his medicine; it looks more like medicine than plain water, and Ruthie likes him to have it."

Poor foolish mother! To be sure she did not know that Stephen always swallowed the medicine; but ought she not to have known it? If she had watched she would have discovered that Stephen was growing more and more fond of playing doctor, and that there was a great deal of medicine taken by Ruthie's children.

Last night, only last night, I was in Ruthie's home. She is thirteen years old now, and Stephen is sixteen; they play "doctor" no more. But Ruthie sat flattening her nose against the window-pane, waiting until after nine o'clock, in the hope that Stephen would come home in time to take her to the young people's rehearsal; then she went weeping to bed; Stephen did not come. She wept for something more than the dis-

appointment about the rehearsal. She wept a great deal through the night. What was the matter? Why, at eleven o'clock Stephen was helped home by a policeman, and to-day his father had to pay a bill of ten dollars for the glass that he smashed. He had been drinking hard cider and did not know what he was about. Poor Stephen, and poor mother and father, and poor Ruthie! The habit commenced in fun has grown on him, until now he cannot stop it, and it does not give Ruthie pleasure any more.