

TRUE TO HIS TRUST.

BY JAMES FRANKLIN FITTS.

Many of the readers of this narrative will easily recall to mind the late Mr. Abel Symington. For almost fifty years no face and figure were better known upon the streets of this great city than his; and his daily life, his kind, winning demeanor, and his frequent charities, caused his name always to be spoken with respect and esteem. At the time of which I am about to write he was in his sixtieth year. His form was still erect and his step elastic. His face was a perfect index of the excellence of his character and the greatness of his heart, as well as of the vigorous intellect of the accomplished man of business. I do not wish to overdraw this picture, but I must finish it with the remark that was often made by his friends and admirers—that Mr. Symington came as near being a perfect character as was permitted to humanity.

Perhaps I am partial; but that is natural. He was my benefactor; to his kindness is due all that I have become in life. Left a penniless orphan, my home at the age of eight was in a charitable institution of which he was a director. Something—I shall never know what—attracted his attention to me, among the two hundred inmates, upon one of his frequent visits. His inquiries about me were soon followed by my transfer to his own house. I believe I was not adopted, in the formal sense in which the word is used. I still retained my own name, Lambert Wade; but I will not furnish you the means to follow them. And I warn you—

"O, don't feel so bad about it, Uncle Abel! Just let me have the fifty, and I'll straighten up and be as good as you want me to. Only a few wild oats, you know."

"Misguided boy! I would do anything to save you from your evil courses; but I will not furnish you the means to follow them. And I warn you—

"Then you won't give me the money?"

"I will give you twenty times the amount to benefit you; but I will not—"

"O hang your moralizing!"

The nephew rushed abruptly away through the outer office. Involuntarily I looked up as he passed me, and received a glance—such a look! Hate and rage had transformed his face into the likeness of a demon. In a moment Mr. Symington came out and took several turns across the room.

"Lambert," he said—and I thought his voice trembled a little—"I have seen that you are not the kind of boy that needs continual approval to stimulate him to do his duty; and that discovery has gratified me as much as to know that you are faithful and industrious. My boy, you know I am not much given to open praise; but this once, at least, I will speak of you and to you as you deserve. I am more than pleased with you. I am proud of you. You have done exceedingly well."

His censure could not have brought the tears to my eyes as quickly as did these unexpected words. I tried to thank him, but my voice was choked, and I could only look what I felt.

The clock struck six, and we went together into the rear office to close the great safe. For several weeks past he had daily given me the combination with which he closed and opened it, explaining in case of accident to him it would be convenient, perhaps necessary, for me to have it. His habit was to whisper the new combination to me; I would whisper it over to him to insure accuracy, and then I would watch the indicator on the safe door while he was turning the knob. All this was done on this evening, as usual. When four hours later I went to bed, various emotions kept me awake till midnight.

Surprise at the discovery of Walter's depravity was mingled with sympathy for his uncle, but deep satisfaction on account of the commendation I had received was uppermost in my thoughts.

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About the first of June of that year Walter Brand came to visit Mr. Symington. I had never heard of him before, and now learned that he was the son of an elder sister who lived in a distant city. Walter was a very dashing, stylish young man of nineteen, who wore the most fashionable clothes, and seemed intent only on having what he called "a good time." No one who saw him could help admiring his upright figure, his regular features, bright eyes, and curly, black hair, and his hearty laugh, which had an infection of mirth in it. Two persons who were more unlike externally than plain Lambert Wade and handsome Walter Brand, it would be impossible to find. I felt attracted by his appearance, and made efforts to gain his friendship. To my surprise and mortification, he repelled all of them. His conversation with me when we met, as of course we did several times each day, was of the briefest; and more than once he gave me a decided snub. His treatment pained me, but I bore it without remark. I was not at a loss to account for it. His looks and manner showed me plainer than words could have told it, that he was angered to find another person occupying so confident and trusted relation to his uncle as I did.

Three weeks had passed since the arrival of this visitor when I became aware of a change in the usual demeanor of Mr. Symington. He was as punctual and industrious as ever at the office; but his face was often troubled, he appeared more thoughtful, and he talked less with me in the intervals of business. Being very little at the house now save at meal times, I had not a fair opportunity to judge if his nephew was connected with his uneasiness; but I certainly suspected it. My suspicions were entirely correct. About half-past five one afternoon, as I was writing at my desk in the outer office, and while Mr. Symington was reading the newspaper in the inner room, Walter came in, and in a tone which was almost abrupt enough to be rude, asked for his uncle. I merely pointed with my pen to the private office, and went on with my work.

I could not see either of them; indeed, my eyes were not raised from the large pages where I was making my entries, until their words came to me distinctly. "Uncle, please let me have fifty dollars."

"Why, Walter! You asked me for as much as that, and got it, only a few days ago."

"Yes, but—well, you were young then."

self once, uncle, and you know that a young fellow can't have any fun in a big city like this without money."

"I must speak plainly to you, Walter. Your conduct has pained me more than I can tell. You have kept such late hours that my duty to you compelled me to have you watched; and the report brought to me, about the places you have frequented and the company you have kept, has shocked and distressed me. My dear nephew, for your own sake—for the sake of your parents—for my sake—you must stop this at once."

"It seems to me you are making a great deal out of a little, uncle. I'm no worse than other fellows. We only amuse ourselves in our own way, and don't harm any one."

"Is it possible, Walter, that you have become so hardened as this talk would show? And here—see this letter! You told me that this was your college-vacation; but here the president informs me that you have been suspended for gross misconduct."

Walter laughed loudly. "Now, really, uncle, I did not mean you should know that; but after all, what of it? Most of the boys have these little larks, and they are none the worse of it."

"You don't seem to appreciate the evil you have done. Not only have you disgraced yourself, but you have lied about it to me."

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