

'It was that night, just after you'd gone,' replied the accountant in a low voice.

Ralph Leeke gasped. His face was working strangely, and he clutched a chair.

'Then you—you took the blame?'

'I promised. And once, Mr. Ralph, you saved my boy's life,' returned Justin, simply.

The young man turned agitatedly to his friend.

'There's a mistake here, Pagnell!'

The mystified junior partner watched them leave together.

'Come along—he'll be at lunch. I know the place.' Justin put a timid question. 'Why, I'm going straight to my father, of course!'

'Mr. Ralph, hadn't you better keep it from him?'

'And let you suffer, Justin? A thousand times no!'

In the big restaurant, Justin, standing awkwardly apart, saw that at first the elderly merchant would not listen; but finally he called to him.

'Justin,' confessed Mr. Leeke, rising, 'my son has convinced me that I have done you a grave injustice. I'm very sorry.'

The bookkeeper followed them. They reached Leeke and Co.'s offices. His former companions stared in amazement. The head of the firm addressed the staff.

Justin could hardly hear what he said. His heart was beating.

'Does everybody clearly understand? The accusation made against Justin was entirely without foundation!'

'Justin struggled for speech. 'Thank you, sir!' he faltered at last.

'It was the least I could do. I'll tell Pagnell's also. But I hope you'll come back to us. Will you?'

'If only I may!' Justin blurted.

'That's settled, then. It's all through you that my son is here, and we—we're friends again. I have to thank you for that!'

'I'm very glad, sir.'

'In return I want you to let me pay for your boy's operation. We'll arrange it at once.'

A lump rose in Justin's throat. He could not answer.

Everyone in the office had seemed eager to congratulate him and express pleasure at his return. Their friendly anxiety had helped Justin considerably. When at last one morning he brought news that his son would certainly recover, they surrounded him, cheering. The head of the firm entered during the little scene, and waved Justin to approach.

'Yes, sir, it's really true. He's turned the corner. That operation was performed just in time.'

'Ah! Then your troubles are nearly over now.' Mr. Leeke nodded and smiled. 'Your salary will be increased £50 a year. Not a word of thanks. I was a fool to listen to Niles. I ought to have known you better. He's left us now, and I'm not sorry. In future you'll see how a grateful master can appreciate an honest servant. Good morning, Justin; good morning.'

So saying, the chief went into his private room.

'Thank heaven,' he said to himself, 'I have been saved from committing a great wrong.'

SYMPATHY.

If there is one person who deserves sympathy it is surely he who suffers from chronic colds. A sudden change in the weather or going out into the night air from a heated room, is quite enough to bring on the trouble. Usually the tendency to catch cold is due to a generally run-down condition, and the treatment should take the form of a tonic like BAXTER'S LUNG PRESERVER. It is pleasant to take, gives sure results, and is quite harmless; for children and adults you cannot find a better cough or cold remedy. 1/10 a bottle from all chemists and stores, or by post direct. J. BAXTER & CO.—CHRISTCHURCH.

MAC'S BEST SHOT

Even after John McLain had passed his sixtieth year he was the best shot in our county. There are many accounts of his wonderful marksmanship, and surely none of them is more extraordinary than the story that his old partner in California, Dr. Joseph Hay, calls 'Mac's best shot.'

'We were on our way home from California in '60,' says Doctor Hay, 'McLain, Frank Vilemont, Aleck Saul, Lowell Wright, and myself. We'd had fair luck, and were taking east a good bunch of Mexican halfbred horses and pack ponies.'

'As we came down the North Platte in September, we fell in with a big herd of buffaloes going leisurely south. Indian hunters were following them, and we passed several small parties, encamped or hunting. These bands had their women and children with them. Indians do not make war at such times, and we had nothing to fear except, perhaps, a night raid on our herd of horses.'

'When we camped near their village we were not invited to "call"; but the bucks came into our camps freely, in the hope of obtaining powder and shot. They were eager to trade, for apparently their ammunition was running short. As some of our pack animals were going sore, we tried to trade for fresh horses; but we did not offer ammunition, and the hunters brought us only inferior beasts.'

'One night a pack horse of mine was so nearly exhausted that I rode across the river to a hunting camp, prepared to deal for the best animal the Indians had. As I approached, the women and children ran into the tepees; the men seemed sour and hostile, until I made it plain that I had powder and slugs to trade.'

'I asked them to show me some pack ponies, and at once several bucks hurried away to get their animals. It was a village of thirty or forty Sioux hunters with their women and children. Most of the men were out after buffaloes, and I was left for a time to engage in sign talk with two old men. As we squatted there on the ground, a number of women and children ventured out to look at me.'

'Suddenly from a tepee just at my right came a cry. The door flap moved suddenly, and out of its slit a child sprang. She ran directly to me, and peered into my face.'

'"I'm Emily!" the child exclaimed. "My ma—she—" Before she could get further an old woman snatched her up, put her hand over the child's mouth, and hurried her back into the tepee.'

The child was a little girl about ten years old, with dark hair and skin; she wore the dirty torn dress of a papoose, and I should never have noticed that she was not an Indian if I had seen her among the crowd.

'One of the old Indians now took pains to explain to me that a trapper—a white man—had married a woman of their band; that this was his child; that her mother was dead, and that her father had gone away. By tapping his forehead significantly, the old man intimated that the child was wrong in her mind.'

'I nodded carelessly, as if I had fully believed his tale. Just then the bucks returned, leading a number of pack ponies. I looked the animals over with much care; then I told their owners that others of my party also wished to trade, and that we would come over in the morning.'

'When I returned to camp I told my companions of my discovery of the little white girl; the thought that a white child was held captive close at hand stirred our little party profoundly. We could not hope to rescue her by show of force; we should have to use strategy. After long consultation we settled upon a plan.'

'The next day about noon McLain, Frank Vilemont and I road over to the village. When we displayed slugs and powder, and an old revolver and a sawed-off shotgun—of the sort often used to kill buffalo from the saddle—they were very eager to trade.'

In sign language we asked the Indians to bring out their pack horses one at a time for our inspection.