

UP FROM SIN

The Fall and Rise of a Prodigal
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by

Len G. Broughton, M. D.

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CHAPTER THREE

OVERCOME WITH EVIL

“And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want” (Luke 15:14).

“And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!” (Luke 15:17)

Things have wonderfully changed in the experience of our young man. In our last, we saw him “out in the world,” having a gay time. He was sowing wild oats. He had plenty of money and plenty of friends, who voted him the finest fellow in town. But now what a change! You remember, we made a prediction concerning him; that he'd come to want if he continued in that course. No such a fast life can last. It would break a Vanderbilt in time. And yet many young men seem to think it is all right.

It is strange to me that fathers will allow such things. It seems to me that they might know what it would lead a boy to nothing. But somehow parents are often blinded to the faults of their own children.

So our young hero is only fulfilling a prophecy. It is a sad picture! It is always sad to see a promising boy come to nothing. It means so much lost. The further hope of this country is in her young men. They are going to occupy the places of trust soon. They will manage the affairs of state. They will preach the gospel, and control the world. What a pity then to see even a small percent of them come to naught!

IN THE GUTTER

Let us see in what particulars our young man was in the gutter.

First, financially.

It has not been long since he started with plenty of money. I do not know how much; I should say a sufficiency at least.

It makes little difference about the *amount* of money a young man has when he starts. It is not *what he makes*. It is *the way he uses what he gets*. There are young men getting along better on \$30 a month than others getting \$100. Why? Because they are taking care of what they get.

The prodigal spent his money in riotous living, and soon was in want. Boys, how many of you are doing the same thing? A young man today can't afford to wear a ready-made suit of clothes; he must go to the best tailor, and wear the best he can get, and pay the best price for it. He can't walk with his girl to the opera; he must get a carriage, and drive. A great rivalry seems to exist in the extravagance business, and the young man who can do the biggest fool piece of extravagance is for the time the popular fellow.

Young men, stop and think. There is coming a rainy day. You may not now see even the slightest cloud in your sky, but it will come, and you will rue the days of your folly.

WHAT HE MIGHT HAVE DONE

In order that we may be impressed with his present sad surroundings, let us pause long enough to see what he might have done with his money.

He might have educated himself. Many a boy would have jumped at his chance for an education. Oh, the boys today longing for an education! Some of them so anxious that they risk everything to obtain it. When I was a student at Wake Forest College, North Carolina, I remember a young man who came there with everything he had in the world on his back. He didn't have any encouragement save from the faculty of that noble institution, who have always stood for the poor boys. He battled against every obstacle imaginable, but finally came out conqueror, and today is occupying a most prominent place of duty. How easy for a young man with money to equip himself in this way! Young men, put a peg here: if you come into possession of money, either by your own labor or by inheritance, and have not a liberal education, stop everything, and go to school, and fit yourself for the real pleasures of life. This will be wealthy which cannot be destroyed.

Again, he might have invested his money in some good business, and thus have saved himself this shame and disgrace. I wish I could impress upon young men the importance of saving and wisely investing their money. But instead of this, it all goes in "riotous living."

But suppose a young man can find no good business in which to invest his earnings? Then I would bury it. I have a thousand times more respect for the man who hides his money than for the man who throws it away in "riotous living." I heard of a man during the war who buried his money, and afterwards forgot where he put it. Everybody laughed at him; but it was a thousand times better for that man's sons than if they had taken it and done as most others did – spend it in fast living. It is an awful thing for some boys to come into possession of wealth. It so often means death to their future prospects.

But if he had no other way to have spent his money, he could have put it in some good charitable cause, and thus have reaped perhaps the largest possible dividend.

The true object of life, as has been said, is the good of our fellow-men and the glory of God. No one will ever make a mistake who invests in this cause. Money spent here is never lost. **“Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.”**

This is the promise of the Master. It is His principle of business. **“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”**

I wish so much every young man could appreciate this motto text. No man who has made it the rule of his life has ever come to want. The inexhaustible storehouse of God is behind him. He cannot fail.

SOCIALLY AND MORALLY DOWN

Secondly, he was down socially and morally.

It would have been bad enough for him to have been in the gutter financially, but when he has added to his financial want his social and moral depravity, it is too great a pity.

Think of the contrast: a proud young heir now eating with the hogs. Once the finest dressed man in town, now in rags. Once popular with boys and girls, now snubbed by them all. What a mighty change in so short a time!

Young man, you can afford to lose your money, but let me tell you, you can't afford to lose your character. When that is gone, you are gone. But this is only the sad story of many a one within the range of my acquaintance. They have been warned and warned, but they go on in their wild extravagant career, until they are lost in the deep sea of degradation and ruin.

But you say, “Who is wasting his substance in riotous living? We are not such a set of low, degraded fellows as your picture represents us.”

Well, now let us see. “Riotous” does not necessarily mean that a man is to fight and curse and drink whiskey. A Fellow may be very riotous in his manner of living, and yet be quiet about it. Recently, I submitted a series of questions to ten leading businessmen, without regard to church or religious opinions. These questions were asked of them purely as businessmen. The circular sent out was as follows:

“IN THE INTEREST OF YOUNG MEN

“Mr. _____

“Dear sir: I am now delivering a series of practical talks to young men, with the purpose of guarding them and strengthening them against certain dangerous points in life.

In order that I may be as plain and helpful as possible, I find it necessary to address a few questions to you, as a businessman, which I trust you will consider, and in as condensed a manner as possible give me your candid opinion.

I assure you that your opinion, however much it may differ from mine, will by no means be a subject of criticism and discussion. I trust that in your answer you will be as frank and open as the nature of the case demands, and that you will have no hesitation whatever in speaking your sentiment.

If you desire it, your name will be kept secret; however, it might be better to give with your opinion the weight of your influence to help in the furtherance of your sentiment.

“Question One – What, in your judgment, is a young man’s most dangerous age?

“Question Two – What are some of the most dangerous points which at this time the young man has to pass?

“Question Three – What would constitute the very best recommendation for a young man to present to you for employment?

“Question Four – What influence would the knowledge that a young man was given to the occasional use of spirituous liquors have upon you in desiring his services?

“Question Five – What effect would it have upon you to know that a young man seeking employment under you – a position of trust – was habitually guilty of –

“First, playing cards.

“Second, attending Germans

“Third, baseball (professional)

“Fourth, social clubs

“Fifth, theaters (indiscriminate)

“Question Six – Please give me, as near as possible, your estimate of what it takes to constitute a model young man in business.”

After I had obtained the answers to these questions, I tabulated them according to their agreement, and I give you the results. All agree in substance that from sixteen to twenty-five is the danger period. All agree that dissipation, fondness for games, card-playing, the wine cup, staying from home at night, bad books and evil associates are the greatest dangers. All agree, also, in substance that the best recommendation a young man can produce is a sober, honest, Christian character.

In answer to question five, what influence would it have to know that a young man is desiring a position of trust was habitually guilty of –

1. Taking a social glass of wine. All answer: "Would not have him."
2. Attending Germans. Seven out of ten say: "Would not want him." Three say: "Would investigate further."
3. Attending professional baseball. Nine out of ten say: "Would not want him – takes time, and likely to lead astray." One says: "Would look into his other qualities."
4. Attending promiscuous theaters. Nine out of ten say: "Would rather not have him – a dangerous habit."
5. Social clubs. Eight out of ten say: "Would not want him." The others say: "It would depend some upon the nature of the club." One of the eight said in his answer: "I regard the meanest thing the devil ever made is whiskey; next to this is a social club."
6. Card-playing. All answer: "Would not have him."

Now, these answers came from men who answered from a strictly business standpoint, and they represented bankers, merchants and railroad men.

So, the kind of rioting I am after in this talk is something which is engaged in by perhaps most of our young men. There is a craze for amusements and sports. Our people are going wild over them. There must be a stop to it. Businessmen are not going to stand it. I beg you then listen to them, as they speak from experience, and warn you against these so-called pleasures, which are, after all, nothing but traps in which to catch your hard earnings

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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