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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman
Darwin Thoreau Twain
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
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Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chambers Irving
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Elsie's New Relations

Martha Finley

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER XI.

CHAPTER XII.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHAPTER XV.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHAPTER XX.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHAPTER XXV.

ELSIE'S NEW RELATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

"For wild, or calm, or far or near,
I love thee still, thou glorious sea."

— *Mrs. Hemans.*

"I bless thee for kind looks and words
Shower'd on my path like dew,
For all the love in those deep eyes,
A gladness ever new."

— *Mrs. Hemans.*

It is late in the afternoon of a delicious October day; the woods back of the two cottages where the Dinsmores, Travillas and Raymonds have spent the last three or four months are gorgeous with scarlet, crimson and gold; the air from the sea is more delightful than ever, but the summer visitors to the neighboring cottages and hotels have fled, and the beach is almost deserted, as Edward and his child-wife wander slowly along it, hand in hand, their attention divided between the splendors of a magnificent sunset and the changing beauty of the sea; yonder away in the distance it is pale gray; near at hand delicate green slowly changing to pink, each wave crested with snowy foam, and anon they all turn to burnished gold.

"Oh, how very beautiful!" cries Zoe, in an ecstasy of delight. "Edward, did you ever see anything finer?"

"Never! Let us go down this flight of steps and seat ourselves on the next to the lowest. We will then be quite near the waves and yet out of danger of being wet by them."

He led her down as he spoke, seated her comfortably and himself by her side with his arm around her.

"I've grown very fond of the sea," she remarked. "I shall be sorry to leave it. Will not you?"

"Yes and no," he answered, doubtfully. "I, too, am fond of old ocean, but eager to get to Ion and begin life in earnest. Isn't it time,

seeing I have been a married man for nearly five months? But why that sigh, love?"

"O Edward, are you not sorry you are married? Are you not sometimes very much ashamed of me?" she asked, her cheek burning hotly and the downcast eyes filling with tears.

"Ashamed of you, Zoe? Why, darling, you are my heart's best treasure," he said, drawing her closer to his side, and touching his lips to her forehead. "What has put so absurd an idea into your head?"

"I know so little, so very little compared with your mother and sisters," she sighed. "I'm finding it out more and more every day, as I hear them talk among themselves and to other people."

"But you are younger than any of them, a very great deal younger than mamma, and will have time to catch up to them."

"But I'm a married woman and so can't go to school any more. Ah," with another and very heavy sigh, "I wish papa hadn't been quite so indulgent, or that I'd had sense enough not to take advantage of it to the neglect of my studies!"

"No, I suppose it would hardly do to send you to school, even if I could spare you—which I can't," he returned laughingly, "but there is a possibility of studying at home, under a governess or tutor. What do you say to offering yourself as a pupil to grandpa?"

"Oh, no, no! I'm sure he can be very stern upon occasion. I've seen it in his eyes when I've made a foolish remark that he didn't approve, and I should be too frightened to learn if he were my teacher."

"Then some one else must be thought of," Edward said, with a look of amusement. "How would I answer?"

"You? Oh, splendidly!"

"You are not afraid of me?"

"No, indeed!" she cried, with a merry laugh and a saucy look up into his face.

"And yet I'm the only person who has authority over you."

"Authority, indeed!" with a little contemptuous sniff.

"You promised to obey, you know."

"Did I? Well, maybe so, but that's just a form that doesn't really mean anything. Most any married woman will tell you that."

"Do you consider the whole of your marriage vow an unmeaning form, Zoe?" he asked, with sudden gravity and a look of doubt and pain in his eyes that she could not bear to see.

"No, no! I was only in jest," she said, dropping her eyes and blushing deeply. "But really, Edward, you don't think, do you, that wives are to obey like children?"

"No, love, I don't; and I think in a true marriage the two are so entirely one—so unselfishly desirous each to please the other—that there is little or no clashing of wills. Thus far ours has seemed such to me. How is it, do you think, little wife?"

"I hope so, Edward," she said, laying her head on his shoulder, "I know one thing—that there is nothing in this world I care so much for as to please you and be all and everything to you."

"And I can echo your words from my very heart, dearest," he said, caressing her. "I hope you are at home and happy among your new relatives."

"Yes, indeed, Edward, especially with mamma. She is the dearest, kindest mother in the world; to me as much as to her own children, and oh, so wise and good!"

"You are not sorry now that you and I are not to live alone?" he queried, with a pleased smile.

"No, oh, no! I'm ever so glad that she is to keep house at Ion and all of us to live together as one family."

"Except Lester and Elsie," he corrected; "they will be with us for a short time, then go to Fairview for the winter. And it will probably become their home after that, as mamma will buy it, if Mr. Leland—Lester's uncle, who owns the place—carries out his intention of removing to California. His children have settled there, and, of course, the father and mother want to be with them."

The sun had set, and all the bright hues had faded from the sea, leaving it a dull gray.

"What a deserted spot this seems!" remarked Zoe, "and only the other day it was gay with crowds of people. Nobody to be seen now but ourselves," glancing up and down the coast as she spoke. "Ah, yes! yonder is someone sitting on that piece of wreck."

"It is Lulu Raymond," Edward said, following the direction of her glance. "It is late for the child to be out so far from home; a full mile I should say. I'll go and invite her to walk back with us."

"No, you needn't," said Zoe, "for see, there is her father going to her. But let us go home, for I must change my dress before tea."

"And we want time to walk leisurely along," returned Edward, rising and giving her his hand to help her up the steps.

Lulu was reading, so absorbed in the story that she did not perceive her father's approach, and as he accosted her with, "It is late for you to be here alone, my child, you should have come in an hour ago," she gave a great start, and involuntarily tried to hide her book.

"What have you there? Evidently something you do not wish your father to see," he said, bending down and taking it from her unwilling hand.

"Ah, I don't wonder!" as he hurriedly turned over a few pages. "A dime novel! Where did you get this, Lulu?"

"It's Max's, papa, he lent it to me. O papa, what made you do that?" as with an energetic fling the captain suddenly sent it far out into the sea. "Max made me promise to take care of it and give it back to him, and besides I wanted to finish the story."

"Neither you nor Max shall ever read such poisonous stuff as that with my knowledge and consent," replied the captain in stern accents.

"Papa, I didn't think you'd be so unkind," grumbled Lulu, her face expressing extreme vexation and disappointment, "or that you would throw away other people's things."

"Unkind, my child?" he said, sitting down beside her and taking her hand in his. "Suppose you had gathered a quantity of beautiful,

sweet-tasted berries that I knew to be poisonous, and were about to eat them; would it be unkind in me to snatch them out of your hand and throw them into the sea?"

"No, sir; because it would kill me to eat them, but that book couldn't kill me, or even make me sick."

"No, not your body, but it would injure your soul, which is worth far more. I'm afraid I have been too negligent in regard to the mental food of my children," he went on after a slight pause, rather as if thinking aloud than talking to Lulu, "and unfortunately I cannot take the oversight of it constantly in the future. But remember, Lulu," he added firmly, "I wholly forbid dime novels, and you are not to read anything without first obtaining the approval of your father or one of those under whose authority he has placed you."

Lulu's face was full of sullen discontent and anger. "Papa," she said, "I don't like to obey those people."

"If you are wise, you will try to like what has to be," he said.

"It wouldn't have to be if you would only say I needn't, papa."

"I shall not say that, Lucilla," he answered with grave displeasure. "You need guidance and control even more than most children of your age, and I should not be doing my duty if I left you without them."

"I don't like to obey people that are no relation to me!" she cried, viciously kicking away a little heap of sand.

"No, you don't even like to obey your father," he said with a sigh. "Max and Gracie together do not give me half the anxiety that you do by your wilful temper."

"Why, can't I do as I please as well as grown people?" she asked in a more subdued tone.

"Even grown people have to obey," said her father. "I am now expecting orders from the government, and must obey them when they come. I must obey my superior officers, and the officers and men under me must obey me. So must my children. God gave you to me and requires me to train you up in His fear and service to the best of my ability. I should not be doing that if I allowed you to read such hurtful trash as that I just took from you."

"It was Max's, papa, and I promised to give it back. What shall I say when he asks me for it?"

"Tell him to come to me about it."

"Papa — —"

"Well, what is it?" he asked, as she paused and hesitated.

"Please, papa, don't punish him. You never told him not to buy or read such things, did you?"

"No; and I think he would not have done so in defiance of a prohibition from me. So I shall not punish him. But I am pleased that you should plead for him. I am very glad that my children all love one another."

"Yes, indeed we do, papa!" she said, "And we all love you, and you love Max and Gracie very much, and — —"

"And Lulu also," he said, putting his arm about her and drawing her closer to his side, as she paused with quivering lip and downcast eyes.

"As much as you do Max and Gracie?" she asked brokenly, hiding her face on his shoulder. "You said just now I was naughtier than both of them put together."

"Yet you are my own dear child, and it is precisely because I love you so dearly that I am so distressed over your quick temper and wilfulness. I fear that if not conquered they will cause great unhappiness to yourself as well as to your friends. I want you to promise me, daughter, that you will try to conquer them, asking God to help you."

"I will, papa," she said, with unwonted humility; "but, oh, I wish you were going to stay with us! It's easier to be good with you than with anybody else."

"I am sorry, indeed, that I cannot," he said, rising and taking her hand. "Come, we must go back to the house now."

They moved along in silence for a little, then Lulu said, with an affectionate look up into her father's face, "Papa, I do so like to walk this way!"

"How do you mean?" he asked, smiling kindly upon her.

"With my hand in yours, papa. You know I haven't often had the chance."

"No, my poor child," he sighed, "that is one of the deprivations to which a seaman and his family have to submit."

"Well," said the little girl, lifting his hand to her lips, "I'd rather have you for my father than anybody else, for all that."

At that he bent down and kissed her with a smile full of pleasure and fatherly affection.

CHAPTER II.

"By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." — *Matt. 12:37.*

As they drew near the house Max came to meet them.

"I've been to the post-office since the mail came in, papa," he said, "and there is no government letter for you yet. I'm so glad! I hope they're going to let us keep you a good deal longer."

"I'm not sorry to prolong my stay with wife and children," the captain responded, "but cannot hope to be permitted to do so very much longer."

"Grandpa Dinsmore has come back from taking Harold and Herbert to college," pursued Max, "and we're all to take tea in there, Mamma Vi says; because grandpa wants us all about him this first evening."

"That is kind," said the captain, opening the gate and looking smilingly at Violet, who, with little Grace, was waiting for him on the veranda. He stopped there to speak with them, while Lulu hurried on into the house and up to her own room, Max following.

"Where's my book, Lu?" he asked.

"O Max, I couldn't help it—but papa caught me reading it and took it away from me. And he told me when you asked me for it I should send you to him."

Max's face expressed both vexation and alarm. "I sha'n't do that," he said, "if I never get it. But was he very angry, Lu?"

"No; and you needn't be afraid to go to him, for he won't punish you; I asked him not to, and he said he wouldn't. But he threw the book into the sea, and said neither you nor I should ever read such poisonous stuff with his knowledge or consent."

"Then, where would be the use of my going to him for it? I'll not say a word about it."

He went out, closed the door and stood irresolutely in the hall, debating with himself whether to go up-stairs or down. Up-stairs in his room was another dime novel which he had been reading that afternoon; he had not quite finished it, and was eager to do so; he wanted very much to know how the story ended, and had meant to read the few remaining pages now before the call to tea. But his father's words, reported to him by Lulu, made it disobedience.

"It's a very little sin," whispered the tempter; "as having read so much, you might as well read the rest."

"But it will be disobeying wilfully the kind father who forgave a heedless act of disobedience not very long ago," said conscience; "the dear father who must soon leave you to be gone no one knows how long, perhaps never to come back."

Just then the captain came quickly up the stairs. "Ah, Max, are you there?" he said, in a cheery tone, then laying his hand affectionately on the boy's shoulder. "Come in here with me, my son, I want to have a little talk with you while I make my toilet."

"Yes, sir," said Max, following him into the dressing-room.

"What have you been reading to-day?" asked the captain, throwing off his coat, pouring water into the basin from the pitcher, and beginning his ablutions.

Max hung his head in silence till the question was repeated, then stammered out the title of the book, the perusal of which he was so desirous to finish.

"Where did you get it?" asked his father.

"I bought it at a news-stand, papa."

"You must not buy anything more of that kind, Max; you must not read any such trash."

"I will not again, papa; I should not this time if you had ever forbidden me before."

"No, I don't believe you would be guilty of wilful disobedience to any positive command of your father," the captain said in a grave but kindly tone; "and yet I think you suspected I would not approve, else why were you so unwilling to tell me what you had been reading?"

He was standing before the bureau now, hairbrush in hand, and as he spoke he paused in his work, and gazed searchingly at his son.

Max's face flushed hotly, and his eyes drooped for a moment, then looking up into his father's face he said frankly, "Yes, papa, I believe I was afraid you would take the book from me if you saw it. I deserve that you should be angry with me for that and for lending one to Lu."

"I am displeased with you on both accounts," the captain replied, "but I shall overlook it this time, my son, hoping there will be no repetition of either offence. Now go to your room, gather up all the doubtful reading matter you have, and bring it here to me. I shall not go with you, but trust to your honor to keep nothing back."

"Oh, thank you, papa, for trusting me!" cried Max, his countenance brightening wonderfully, and he hastened away to do his father's bidding.

"Just the dearest, kindest father that ever was!" he said to himself, as he bounded up the stairs. "I'll never do anything again to vex him, if I can help it."

He was down again in a moment with two dime novels and a story-paper of the same stamp.

The captain had finished his toilet. Seating himself he took what Max had brought, and glancing hastily over it, "How much of this trash have you read, Max?" he asked.

"The paper and most of one book, papa. I'll not read any more such, since you've forbidden me; but they're very interesting, papa."

"I dare say, to a boy of your age. But you don't think I would want to deprive you of any innocent pleasure, Max?"

"No, sir; oh, no! But may I know why you won't let me read such stories?"

"Yes; it is because they give false views of life, and thus lead to wrong and foolish actions. Why, Max, some boys have been made burglars and highwaymen by such stories. I want you to be a reader, but of good and wholesome literature; books that will give you useful information and good moral teachings; above all things, my son, I would have you a student of the Bible, 'the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ.' Do you read it often, Max?"

"Not very, papa. But you know I hear you read it every morning and evening."

"Yes; but I have sometimes been grieved to see that you paid very little attention."

Max colored at that. "Papa, I will try to do better," he said.

"I hope you will," said his father. "You will enjoy the same religious advantages at Ion, and, my boy, try to profit by them, remembering that we shall have to render an account at last of the use or abuse of all our privileges. I want you to promise me that you will read a few verses of the Bible every day, and commit at least one to memory."

"I will, papa. And what else shall I read? You will let me have some story-books, won't you?" Max said, entreatingly.

"Yes," said his father, "I have no objection to stories of the right sort. There are some very beautiful stories in the Bible; there are entertaining stories in history; and there are fictitious stories that will do you good and not harm. I shall take care in future that you have plenty of wholesome mental food, so that you will have no excuse for craving such stuff as this," he added, with a glance of disgust at what he held in his hand. "It may go into the kitchen fire."

"Mrs. Scrimp never burns the least little bit of paper, papa," said Max.

"Indeed! Why not?" asked his father, with an amused smile.

"She says it is wicked waste, because it is better than rags for the paper-makers."

"Ah! well, then, we will tear these into bits and let them go to the paper-makers."

Max was standing by his father's side. "Papa," he said, with a roguish look into his father's face, "don't you think you would enjoy reading them first?"

The captain laughed. "No, my son," he said; "I have not the slightest inclination to read them. Bring me that waste basket and you may help me tear them up."

They began the work of destruction, Max taking the paper, the captain the book his son had been reading. Presently something in it attracted his attention; he paused and glanced over several pages one after the other, till Max began to think he had become interested in the story. But no; at that instant he turned from it to him, and Max was half frightened at the sternness of his look.

"My son," he said, "I am astonished and deeply grieved that you could read and enjoy anything like this, for it is full of profanity; and reading or hearing such expressions is very likely to lead to the use of them. Max, do you ever say such words?"

Max trembled and grew red and pale by turns, but did not speak.

"Answer me," was his father's stern command.

"Not often, papa."

The captain barely caught the low breathed words. "Not often? sometimes, then?" he groaned, covering his face with his hand.

"O papa, don't be so grieved! I'll never do it again," Max said in a broken voice.

The captain sighed deeply. "Max," he said, "dearly as I love my only son, I would sooner lay him under the sod, knowing that his soul was in heaven, than have him live to be a profane swearer. Bring me that Bible from the table yonder."

The boy obeyed.

"Now turn to the twenty-fourth chapter of Leviticus, and read the sixteenth verse."

Max read in a trembling voice, "And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him; as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death."

"Now the twenty-third," said his father.

"And Moses spake to the children of Israel, that they should bring forth him that had cursed out of the camp, and stone him with stones; and the children of Israel did as the Lord commanded Moses."

Max had some difficulty in finishing the verse, and at the end quite broke down.

"Papa," he sobbed, "I didn't know that was in the Bible. I never thought about its being so dreadfully wicked to say bad words."

"What do you now think a boy deserves who has done it again and again? say as often as Max Raymond has?" asked his father.

"I suppose to be stoned to death like that man. But nobody is ever put to death for swearing nowadays?" the boy said, half inquiringly, not daring to look at his father as he spoke.

"No, Max, fortunately for you and many others. But suppose you were my father and I a boy of your age, and that I had been swearing, what would you think you ought to do about it?"

"Give you a sound flogging," he answered, in a low, reluctant tone.

"Well, Max, that is just what I shall have to do, if I ever know you to use a profane word again," said his father, in a grave, sad tone. "I should do it now, but for the hope that you are sorry enough for the past to carefully avoid that sin in the future."

"Indeed I will, papa," he said, very humbly.

"And, Max," resumed his father, "you are never to make a companion of, or go at all with anybody who uses such language, and never to read a book or story that has in it anything of that kind."

And you are not to say by George or by anything. Our Saviour says, 'Let your communication be Yea, yea, Nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.' My son, have you asked God to forgive you for taking His holy name in vain?"

"No, sir."

"Then go at once to your room and do it."

"I did, papa," Max said, when he came down again to find his father waiting for him.

"I trust the petition came from your heart, my son," was the grave but kind rejoinder. "I must have a little more talk with you on this subject, but not now, for it is time we followed the others into the next house, if we would not keep Grandma Rose's tea waiting."

CHAPTER III.

"A kingdom is a nest of families, and a family is a small kingdom." — *Tupper*.

It was a bright and cheerful scene that greeted the eyes of Captain Raymond and his son as they entered the parlor of the adjacent cottage.

It was strictly a family gathering, yet the room was quite full. Mr. Dinsmore was there with his wife, his daughter Elsie and her children, Edward and Zoe, Elsie Leland with her husband and babe, Violet Raymond with her husband's two little girls, Lulu and Grace, and lastly Rosie and Walter.

Everybody had a kindly greeting for the captain, and Violet's bright face grew still brighter as she made room for him on the sofa by her side.

"We were beginning to wonder what was keeping you," she said.

"Yes, I'm afraid I am rather behind time," he returned. "I hope you have not delayed your tea for me, Mrs. Dinsmore."

"No; it is but just ready," she said. "Ah, there's the bell. Please, all of you walk out."

When the meal was over all returned to the parlor, where they spent the next hour in desultory chat.

Gracie claimed a seat on her father's knee. Lulu took possession of an ottoman and pushed it up as close to his side as she could; then seating herself on it leaned up against him.

He smiled and stroked her hair, then glanced about the room in search of Max.

The boy was sitting silently in a corner, but reading an invitation in his father's eyes, he rose and came to his other side.

The ladies were talking of the purchases they wished to make in Boston, New York or Philadelphia, on their homeward route.

"I must get winter hats for Lulu and Gracie," said Violet.

"I want a bird on mine, Mamma Vi," said Lulu; "a pretty one with gay feathers."

"Do you know, Lulu, that they skin the poor little birds alive in order to preserve the brilliancy of their plumage?" Violet said with a troubled look. "I will not wear them on that account, and as you are a kind-hearted little girl, I think you will not wish to do so either."

"But I do," persisted Lulu. "Of course I wouldn't have a bird killed on purpose, but after they are killed I might just as well have one."

"But do you not see," said Grandma Elsie, "that if every one would refuse to buy them, the cruel business of killing them would soon cease? and that it will go on as long as people continue to buy and wear them?"

"I don't care, I want one," pouted Lulu. "Papa, can't I have it?"

"No, you cannot," he said with grave displeasure. "I am sorry to see that you can be so heartless. You can have just whatever Grandma Elsie and Mamma Vi think best for you, and with that you must be content."

Lulu was silenced, but for the rest of the evening her face wore an ugly scowl.

"My little girl is growing sleepy," the captain said presently to Gracie. "Papa will carry you over home and put you to bed. Lulu, you may come too."