

The boy advanced and handed him the envelope. 'I was asked to hand you this, sir,' he said. 'An' the person said it was important.'

He turned and left the room.

Then he waited in the hallway. He had been there perhaps five minutes when the door opened and the stranger came out. His face was flushed, and he closed the door behind him with an angry slam.

'Here, boy,' he sharply called, and John Paul picked up the heavy bag and meekly followed him out. But as the lad passed the girl in the stanhope he drew down his face with a comical grimace, and trudged along.

The old man looked for the boy as he entered the office next morning, but he was not in sight. A little later a knock was heard at the door, and the lad came in.

'I'm a little late, sir, but I had to meet a friend from out of town.'

The old man's mouth twitched.

'So your name is John Paul Stokes?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Are you aware that you have some pretty bad acquaintances?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Perhaps you think you did me a favor when you warned me against that smooth promoter?'

'I hope so, sir.'

The old man's mouth twitched.

'And you want a place here?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Probably you are not aware that I never engage a man—or a boy, either—without a reference?'

'I have my reference here, sir.'

He turned and called to somebody in the hallway. A tall young man answered the summons.

The old man stared at him for a moment. Then he put out his hand.

'Glad to see you, Bradford; sit down.'

The tall young man came forward quickly and grasped the proffered hand.

'Thank you, Mr. Spelman,' he said, with a catch in his voice.

The old man looked at him with half-closed eyes.

'There has been a mistake, Bradford. I was wrong. I was hasty. I know it now. You haven't seen Luella?'

'No, sir; I came to you first.'

'That was right. You mustn't blame Luella. She did what I told her to do. But it will be all right now. I'm glad to see you, boy.' And he put out his hand again. 'But what fortunate happening brought you back?'

The tall young man looked around.

'It was a letter from my friend here, John Paul.'

The old man scowled at the lad.

'Confound your interfering persistence,' he cried. 'So you're in this, too, are you?' He suddenly laughed. 'I throw up my hands. I see that the only way to get rid of you is to take you in.'

'Thank you, sir,' said John Paul.—*Cleveland Plain Dealer.*

THE IRON WILL

'Fanny, I've but one word more to say on the subject. If you marry that fellow, I'll have nothing to do with you. I've said it; and you may be assured that I'll adhere to my determination. Don't come back to me—for I will disown you the day you take his name. I've said it, and my decision is unalterable.'

On that evening, Fanny Crawford left her father's house, and was secretly married to a young man named Logan.

When Fanny went from under her father's roof, the old man was left alone; the mother of his only child had been many years dead. For her father's sake, as well as for her own, did Fanny wish to return. She loved her parent with a most earnest affection, and thought of him as sitting gloomy and companionless in that home so long made light and cheerful by her voice and smile.

As the father predicted, Logan added, in the course of a year or two, dissipation to idle habits, and neglect of his wife to both. They had gone to housekeeping in a small way, when first married, and had lived comfortably enough for some time; but Logan did not like work, and made every excuse he could find to take a holiday or be absent from the shop. The effect of this was an insufficient income. Debt came, with its mortifying and harassing accompaniments, and furniture had to be sold to pay those who were not disposed to wait. With two little children, Fanny was removed by her husband into a cheap boarding-house, after their things were taken and sold. On top of all this the young man's dissipation lost him his position, and, despondent, he shipped, with a companion, on an ocean steamer, leaving Fanny no word.

Of the fact that the husband of Fanny had gone off and left her with two children to provide for with the labor of her hands, Mr. Crawford had been made fully aware, but it did not bend him from his stern purpose.

'She is nothing to me,' was his impatient reply to one who informed him of the fact.

One day Mr. Crawford met a Quaker near his own door. The Quaker was leading a little boy by the hand. Mr. Crawford bowed, and evidently wished to pass on; but the Quaker paused, and said:

'I should like to have a few words with thee, friend Crawford.'

'Well, say on.'

'Thee is known as a benevolent man, friend Crawford. Thee never refuses; it is said, to do a deed of charity.'

'I always give something when I'm sure the object is deserving.'

'So I am aware. Do you see this little boy?'

Mr. Crawford glanced down at the child the Quaker held by the hand. As he did so, the child lifted to him a gentle face, with wild, earnest, loving eyes.

'It is a sweet little fellow,' said Mr. Crawford, reaching his hand to the child. He spoke with some feeling, for there was a look about the boy that went to his heart.

'He is, indeed, a sweet child—and the image of his poor, sick, almost heart-broken mother, for whom I am trying to awaken an interest. She has two children, and this one is the oldest. Her husband is dead, or what may be as bad, perhaps worse, as far as she is concerned, dead to her; and she does not seem to have a relative in the world; at least, none who thinks about or cares for her.'

'That is thy dwelling, I believe,' said the Quaker, looking round at a house adjoining the one before which they stood.

'Yes, that is my house,' returned Mr. Crawford.

'Will you take this little boy in with thee and keep him for a few minutes, while I go to see a friend some squares off?'

'Oh, certainly. Come with me, dear.' And Mr. Crawford held out his hand to the child, who took it without hesitation.

'What is your name, my dear?' asked Mr. Crawford, as he sat down in his parlor and took the little fellow upon his knee.

'Henry,' replied the child. He spoke with distinctness; and, as he spoke, there was a sweet expression of the lips and eyes that was particularly winning.

'What else besides Henry?'

The boy did not reply, for he had fixed his eyes upon a picture that hung over a mantel, and was looking at it intently. The eyes of Mr. Crawford followed those of the child, that rested, he found, on the portrait of his daughter.

'Henry Logan,' replied the child, looking for a moment into the face of Mr. Crawford, and then turning to gaze at the picture on the wall. Every nerve quivered in the frame of that man of iron will.

'Do you know who I am?' he asked, in a subdued voice, after he had recovered to some extent his feelings.

The child looked again into his face, but longer and more earnestly. Then, without answering, he turned and looked at the portrait on the wall.

'Do you know who I am, dear?' repeated Mr. Crawford.

'No, sir,' replied the child; and then again turned to gaze upon the picture.

'Who is that?' and Mr. Crawford pointed to the object that so fixed the little boy's attention.

'My mother.' And as he said these words, he laid his head down upon the bosom of his unknown relative, and shrank close to him, as if half afraid because of the mystery that, in his infantile mind, hung around the picture on the wall.

Moved by an impulse that he could not restrain, Mr. Crawford drew his arms around the child and hugged him to his bosom. Pride gave way; the iron will was bent; the sternly uttered vow was forgotten.

When the Quaker came for the little boy, Mr. Crawford said to him, in a low voice—made low to hide his emotion:

'I will keep the child.'

'From its mother?'

'No. Bring the mother, and the other child. I have room for them all.'

After a good deal of persuasion, Fanny at length made the effort to get herself ready to go out. She was so weak, that she tottered about the floor like one intoxicated. But the woman with whom she lived assisted and encouraged her, until she was at length ready to go. Then the Quaker came up to her room, and, with the tenderness and care of a father, supported her downstairs, and when she had taken her place in the vehicle, entered with her youngest child in his arms, and sat by her side, speaking to her, as he did so, kind and encouraging words.

The carriage was driven slowly for a few squares, and then stopped. Scarcely had the motion ceased, when the door was suddenly opened, and Mr. Crawford stood before his daughter.

'Do you forgive me, father?' said Fanny, in a tremulous whisper, half rising from her pillow, and looking eagerly, almost agonizingly, into her father's face.

'I have nothing to forgive,' murmured the father, as he drew his daughter towards him, so that her head could lie against his bosom.

'But do you love me, father? Do you love me as of old?' said the daughter.

He bent down and kissed her; and now the tears fell from his eyes and lay warm and glistening upon her face.