

### Fred Curran's College Aspirations.

Mrs. Curran had been busy with her housework all the forenoon and had just finished the dinner preparations for her son Fred, who was in the field plowing. Everything in readiness for dinner, she went to the large square mirror with its black carved frame and pushed back the gray hairs from a wrinkled forehead under which she saw large gray eyes dimmed by fifty years of honest labor.

She was indeed very plain. Her hair was thin. She parted it in the center, combing it down flat, leaving a white streak. Her face was red and the corners of her mouth showed plainly the marks of crow's feet. She was not tall, but portly in person, with strong arms and heavy frame.

If her shoulders were somewhat stooped, twenty years of lonely struggles with the future of an only son in her case, was a sufficient excuse.

She turned from the glass and looked out upon the little flower beds with their green buds and waxy leaves looking with upturned faces at the sun; upon the spreading lilac bushes with its profuse clusters of purple upon the short tufted bluegrass, in which a sedate-looking old hen soothed the shrill piping plaints of a brood of twelve.

Sparrows twittered and chirruped in the green labyrinth of plum and gooseberry bushes.

The gentle breeze lifted the feathery bloom from the plum trees and scattered it like heavy snowflakes over the humble yard.

The fragrant odors of falling blossoms, the mild perfume of the quaint lilac was wafted through the open window as emblems of peace and rest.

Mrs. Curran stood with clasped hands, a wistful far-away look on her face. She had forgotten the scene before her, the blossoms and the trees, the yard and its glow of life and summer joy; she had forgotten the simmering kettle, the ceaseless hum of the fire, the sputtering of the water over the potatoes.

She was far back amid the scenes and voices cherished in memory; she was in the dim atmosphere of the past, where figures appeared hazy and indistinct. She saw herself a young, happy girl, with a ruddy bloom on her cheek and by her side a strong-limbed dark-eyed man with coarse features, but full, open countenance.

She saw the same man again, stretched on a bed, with pain-racked lips and fever-shot eyes. With a deep sigh from her, the picture vanished and she saw a simple mound on the hillside far away—grass-grown and plain—and a simple headstone.

"John Curran, 1860."

And then twenty years of weary labor flitted in rapid succession across her mind. She had been alone for twenty years. Fred was just beginning to be a support and a comfort to her now, but his school began three hundred miles away in September, then she—

The sound of noisy steps at the door broke short her sigh and she turned quickly to fix the table.

"Hello, mother! Fried eggs and apple pie! That smells good. I'm hungry as a bear. Any fresh water in?" cried Fred, throwing his hat in the corner.

"Yes, there in that can," said his

mother. "I knew you'd be tired. Dinner is just ready," straining the water of the potatoes.

"I finished plowing that piece. My! I'm glad of it. Uni in a month and no more plowing for me."

Mrs. Curran did not appear to notice the remark, but busied herself with the milkpans.

When Fred had finished washing, they sat down to their meal, he talking of farm affairs and boyish gossip; she listening with the good-natured indulgence of a mother.

When the meal was finished and Fred took his hat to go outside, his mother began.

"Banker Woods was here this morning. He wanted to see you. He said he could give you a place in his bank, with a chance for better if you liked it. He said for you to call and let him know what you'd do about it."

"Well, well, Banker Woods must think I'm crazy. I wouldn't trade my chance for college if I got the whole bank."

"Yes, Fred, college looks bright, but I thought this would be a good chance and I would so like to have you with me. You would only be two miles away."

"And shut up in an old bank. No, mother; your boy is cut out for something better, and then the time I'll have at college. You ought to hear Don Sanders talk about the fun he had."

"You ought not go just for the fun. It is a serious business and full of temptations."

"Oh, now mother, please don't scold me. I can take care of myself. When I come home with first honors you'll be glad of it."

"Well, maybe so, my child; but think over it well before you go."

With that she began to gather up the dishes, so James went off to the barn. She soon heard him calling her, and when she went to the door he was at the gate on a prancing gray horse.

"I'm going over to see Don Sanders, mother; I'll be back in a little while," and he was off at a gallop.

Mrs. Dirk dropped in that afternoon to ask Mrs. Curran if she might let Elsie work for her the next week.

"I hear Fred is going to college this fall," said she.

"Yes, he seems set on going," replied Mrs. Curran, turning over her knitting.

"It's nice for somebody to be learning something. All my folks was agin schoolin'."

"It's well for some folks, but I don't like Fred to be away. He's young and there's bad company to be feared in a city. Nobody's sure of themselves at his age. And I'm getting old. I've been alone all my life and I thought I'd have comfort when Fred came a man," and Mrs. Curran sighed deeply.

Fred found Don Sanders in his room pasting kodak pictures taken in college, in a large scrap book. The walls were covered with banners, ribbons, badges, pictures and all the paraphernalia which go to make up a college boy's personal property.

Don was an enthusiastic young man, whose eyes sparkled with glowing accounts of class scraps, midnight escapades, college spirit, and whose vocabulary was liberally interspersed with such words as "swell time," and "warm things."

Fred was only twenty. Don was twenty-three. He had been head book-keeper in Wood's bank, had written some funny stories for the local paper, and was just emerging from a four years' college course. Naturally he

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