HIC JACET.

Upon a stone with lichens gray,
Mid mossy marbles of the dead,
A soft breeze wrote these words to-day
In crimson tears and kisses red.

The beech upon it rates as gold;
A briar wantons over it,
And many a sculptor hand hath scroll'd
Its brief Hic Jacet, quaintly writ.

But if or beauty, age or youth
Be pillowed in the green below;
Or hearts of hope, or laughs of truth,
Or babe or bride, we may not know.

What cruel caprice of circumstance
O'ercame him, or what fate befell,
That lifting wave of lucky chance,
Two words alone remain to tell.

For run as will our round of years,
In shine or shading, peace or strife;
Let laughter be our lot, or tears,
Hic Jacet is the sum of life.

—Catholic World.

AN AWKWARD HERO.

"I can't see what brought him here, anyway. None of us asked him to come, I am sure."

"Unless it was Denzil. He is always so self-hearted about such people. If he looked as if he wanted to come you may be certain Denzil gave him an invitation."

"Yes," said Denzil, quietly, "I did ask him to come."

"I can't tell what you did it for, then," responded the one who had first spoken, "for it is all disagreeable, stupid creatures, Caleb Orton is the most disagreeable and stupid."

"Never says a word all day long, but just sits and sticks for all the world like one of those wooden images before tobacco shops."

"Yesterday," said a girl's voice, "I was trying to cross the brook on the stepping stones, which, as you know, are very slippery. Master Caleb happened to come along, and without saying a word he picked me up and carried me across as if I had been a bundle. When he saw I was angry, he turned very red, muttered something about being afraid I might get wet my feet," and went off, looking more sheepish then ever."

"He does nothing but ride around the country on that bicycle of his, and—"

"Now look here, fellows, and you, Mollie," interrupted Denzil, "you are all mistaken about Caleb Orton. Tell me, did you ever know of his saying or doing a mean thing?"

"N—o," reluctantly, from several of the party.

"Well, then I tell you that Caleb Orton is a true gentleman at heart. He may be slow and awkward; I don't deny that. You may not like his looks. That is a matter of taste. But in spite of his queer, shy ways he is one of the best fellows that ever lived."

And all this time Caleb Orton himself stood in the shadow of the hazel hedge not ten steps distant from where the party of girls and boys sat upon the lawn. He had meant to join them but had paused where he was with an unhappy sense that he would not be welcome among them; and while debating with himself he heard all.

He hesitated a moment, drawing his rough, red hand over his eyes then, without knowing very clearly what he meant to do he pushed his way through the hazels and stood before the party.

Instantly silence fell upon the group. Those who had been talking against him looked a little uncomfortable; for there was something in the boy's face which they had never seen there before.

"No," said Caleb as Denzil beckoned him to a place beside himself on the settee, "no Denzil; I only came to say that I know all. I did not mean to listen, but I know now why none of you like me. I'm not angry, only very sorry. I am clumsy and dull; I can't talk—that the most of you. I can't do things that other boys can. I wanted to make friends with you, but somehow I couldn't. It wasn't your fault, I supposed I am different from other fellows. I am going away to-morrow, and—and I hope you will forgive me."

He spoke hurriedly, in a choked voice, and broke down at the end. He was ashamed of the tears he felt spring to his eyes and turned away quickly without waiting for any reply. He had taken a few steps when he felt a hand upon his shoulder and Denzil Graham joined him. The two boys walked on in silence, side by side, for a short distance; then Denzil said earnestly:

"Look here, Caleb, you don't mean what you said about going away to-morrow?"

"Yes," answered Caleb. "You see I didn't know they hated me, or I wouldn't have stayed so long."

"They don't hate you," said Denzil. "It's just their talk. They don't know you as I do, that's all."

"You speak up for me like a brick, Denzil," and Caleb's coarse, honest face lighted up with an affectionate smile. "I thank you, but I must go."

"I will come to your room this afternoon?" said Denzil.

"I'm going back to the others now, but I think I shall have something to say to you then that will alter your feelings."

The two boys shook hands warmly; Denzil returned to the party on the lawn, while Caleb went to the carriage house where his bicycle was and mounting it rode away at great speed.

Denzil Graham had invited a number of boy and girl friends to spend a part of the season at his father's place, the Mill Farm, situated in a beautiful little valley among the Laconic mountains. Among others he had asked his classmate, Caleb Orton, to come. Poor Caleb had few friends, but Denzil had learned what a sterling fellow there was hidden under the boy's uncouth exterior, and he believed that the rest of the party would soon come to like him as warmly as he himself did. But the result had been quite the contrary to Denzil's expectations, and Caleb's first week at Mill Farm had been one of the unhappiest of his life.

For a few moments, as Caleb rode along the silent country road, his reflections were very sorrowful; then gradually he forgot his own troubles in a discovery which he believed he had made a day or two before. The Mill Farm had received its name from the sawmill which stood at some distance from the house, on the banks of the brook which ran through the midst of the valley. Half a mile above the dwelling a heavy dam had been built across the stream, making a pond of some acres in extent, which supplied power to the mill. Riding about the country alone on his bicycle, Caleb had found this dam and had visited it frequently.

There had been a heavy rain storm at the beginning of the week and the water had risen full to the top of the very brink of the dam. The structure was old, and the pressure of the water had started a number of seams in the masonry. This was Caleb's discovery.

He had spoken of this to Mr. Graham, who had laughed at his fears, saying that the old dam had lasted fifty years and would last another fifty. But Caleb had made a journey to the pond every day and had seen that the cracks in the wall were surely growing wider, while the seeping water was escaping in quantity. On the previous afternoon he had found the crack in the stonework near the middle from which a small torrent was rushing. Though Mr. Graham evidently ought to know best, Caleb felt uneasy about it. He was sure there must be danger of the old wall crumbling away.

When he reached the pond and leaving his bicycle in the road, climbed down to the foot of the dam, he was startled first by a loud roaring sound, and then by the sight of a mass of brown water pouring through a large gap in the wall, which had not been there the day before. Wide cracks seamed the masonry in every direction, as he rested his hand against the stones he felt them tremble as under a succession of heavy blows.

While he stood there aghast, there came a loud report, and another crack opened in the wall, from top to bottom. Almost at the same moment a huge block of masonry fell out, followed by a tremendous rush of water. Every instant smaller pieces crumbled down and new jets of water burst forth. The dam was going!

Poor, slow Caleb stood clutching a sapling, wondering what he ought to do. He knew that the Mill Farm dwelling was in the very center of the narrow valley, and if this great mass of water were to rush down upon it suddenly, it must surely be swept away with all in or near it.

In the midst of his doubt and terror another section of the wall gave way, and driven by a blind impulse Caleb climbed the bank, mounted his bicycle and raced down the road like the wind. Behind him he could hear the deepening roar of the water and he he turned into the house at Mill Farm, shaking with fatigue and alarm, there came a dull, heavy boom, that seemed to shake the pond. The dam had given way!

A number of the boys and girls were sitting upon the porch. He did not pause to see who they were, but mounted the steps, shouting:

"The dam, the dam! It has burst! Run for your lives."

In a moment all was confusion. Girls, boys, servants and farmers hither and thither, some crying out in vague terror, and utterly incapable of caring for their own safety.

Caleb soothed to be the only one there with presence of mind. Raising his voice above the uproar, he shouted:

"Run for the top of the hill! Quick, don't wait for anything."

With a courage and coolness for which no one had ever given him credit, he got the frightened crowd together and started them up the hill, following behind to urge them on. They had nearly reached the top, when Caleb stopped and looked back.

"Where is Denzil?" he cried. "He is not here."

"I saw him down by the brook a few minutes ago," answered one of the number.

"Go on, then," answered Caleb, "I'll see that he is safe now."

"What are you going to do?" asked a terrified voice.

"To find Denzil," replied Caleb, turning back and running swiftly down the hill.

The water was now swirling and roaring down the middle of the valley in a torrent that was increasing in volume every instant, and bearing upon its muddy surface uprooted trees, planks and rubbish.

"Denzil! Denzil!" cried Caleb, wildly. "Oh, Denzil, where are you?"

"Here I am," came the reply, and Caleb saw the slight figure of his friend standing upon the point of a rock projecting out of the flood which boiled and thundered above him.

Without a moment's hesitation Caleb plunged into the flood, which rose to his armpits, and battled his way toward the rock. Seizing Denzil around the waist he drew him down and, supporting him by one arm, struck out for the high ground. The water had now risen above the boys' heads and they could only hope to escape by swimming.

Denzil could not swim and if left to himself in that raging torrent would have drowned in a moment. But he was tigid and strong and Caleb was the strongest boy in the school.

As the minutes went by the terrible strain began to tell upon Caleb's strength. In order to keep Denzil's head above the water he was swimming on his side overhand, which with Denzil's weight forced his own head under at every stroke. Moreover he was bleeding from a blow on the temple from a piece of passing wreck; skillful and vigorous as he was, he felt himself growing very weak. Should he fail after all? Poor Denzil! It was like him to think only of his friend even at that terrible crisis.

But he would not fail! He set his teeth grimly and battled on. Denzil could hear his breath come in sobs, and see the suffering in his wild eyes, and drawn features.

"Oh, Caleb!" he cried, "you are killing yourself for me."

"I—is—nough," came the gasping reply; "but I'll do it."

Those who watched them breathlessly from the bank above many times believed the boys lost, as the yellow waves rose over their heads and hid them from sight. But the next moment they would reappear, and the hope would be renewed in the anxious hearts of the spectators.

Poor, dull Caleb! They will never laugh at you again. Everything was forgotten in love and admiration for the gallant boy struggling for the life of his friend in the clutch of the flood. How they hung upon every stroke of that strong right arm! How they groaned and cried out when they saw him growing weaker and weaker, moving slower and slower. Yet he still held on.

One more stroke! Another! Hurrah! Saved—saved!"

Caleb heard the words as in a dream. He felt his feet touch the ground. Eager arms seized him. There was a wild, exultant cry. Some one called his name; then he knew no more.

When he came to himself again he found that he was lying upon the ground, his head supported by Denzil's knee, while around him stood boys and girls, men and women, some shedding tears and all talking together like crazy creatures.

"Caleb," said Denzil brokenly, "it is no use trying to say anything—"

"Then don't," interrupted Caleb, smiling faintly. "It's all right."

"And I," cried Mollie, sobbing, "oh, Caleb, I am so ashamed!"

"Don't," said Caleb again. "It's all right."

When the flood subsided it was found that only the lower portion of the house had been carried away. The upper rooms were still habitable. At Denzil's request the party remained at Mill Farm, and three days later an open air picnic was given in honor of Caleb Orton, and every one there heartily agreed with Denzil when he concluded a neat little speech with the words:

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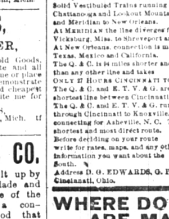

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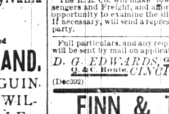

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