

Joseph Greer and His Daughter

By Henry Kitchell Webster

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JOE'S DAUGHTER

SYNOPSIS.—Joseph Greer, a black-bearded pirate of fifty, having discovered a process of extracting fiber from flax straw, is made director of a big corporation. For years distrusting men of affairs, Greer has played a lone hand. Now holding what he considers the winning cards, he is willing to submit his wits to wealth. To protect his own interests, Joe has foisted his own secretary, Jennie MacArthur, upon the company. Henry Craven, a bank clerk related to John Williamson, the millionaire backer of Greer's new company, is offered by Williamson the position of treasurer of the new company, with the generally understood purpose of watching over Craven's interests. Joe tells Jennie about his wife, who is about to divorce him, and his nineteen-year-old daughter, Beatrice, whom he has never seen. He is planning to force the daughter into Chicago society.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

She was perfectly comfortable, in his hands like that, but it struck her—perhaps because of her recent encounter with George Burns—as rather funny that this should be true. They were great, powerful, hairy hands that held her, and the face, so near hers, could take on, easily enough, a feral look. She allowed herself to smile over her own complacency.

With a grunt, he released her and stepped away. "You don't mind me a bit, do you?" he remarked. "And you know me pretty well, too, wouldn't you say?"

"Pretty well—as far as I go," she qualified. "No, I didn't mind. I know you play fair."

"I went to dinner with the Cravens last night," Joe said, over his breast of guinea-fowl. "Henry and his sister, at their flat. So I suppose you've got a right to say that I'm turning respectable," he concluded.

Clearly, he was embarrassed about it, an amazing phenomenon to be seen in Joe. Jennie suppressed an impulse to laugh at him and asked him, with a good appearance of sobriety, if he'd had a good time.

He told her, a little dubiously, that he had; a first-rate time it would have been, except that he didn't quite—get them.

A moment later he laughed again and sat back in his chair.

"Well, that's the funny way life works," he said. "Just as I'm getting ready to settle down and behave myself my wife's lawyer writes me to say she's going to get a divorce."

Jennie stared at him in clear incredulity. When she could think at all, she tried to warn herself that this



"And I Give You My Word, Jennie, I Was Getting Ready to Do It."

was one of his jokes, but it wouldn't work. She knew him too well to be deceived. "Your—wife!" she echoed blankly.

"Didn't I tell you you were going to be surprised?" he said.

After a silence of a minute she asked, "How long have you been married, Joe?"

"Oh, twenty years, about. Annabel and I were really married—living together, I mean—about six months. I haven't seen her in nineteen years. She lives out in Pasadena with her father; her mother died a couple of years ago. It wasn't up to me, was it, to tell you the day you came to work for me that I was a married man not living with my wife?"

"Oh, it's been kind of a dirty deal all round. I guess that's why I've wanted to keep it dark. I've done a whole lot worse things," he went on, feeling his way, "and haven't cared a d—n who knew 'em. And I never tried to make anybody think I was a plaster angel. But this proposition—well, I never knew my own mind about it. I've always thought I might clean it up some day. Only when I did, I wanted to be in position to do it by—well, see, the handsome thing, so there wouldn't be anything left to be said.

"And I give you my word, Jennie, I was getting ready to do it. And then, some days ago, a smart Aleck of a lawyer writes me that she's going to get a divorce. Of course, it's all right. I let her know, long ago, that she was entitled to get one if she wanted it—on any grounds she chose. As long as she didn't, I let it lay. Well, there it is—D—n it, Jennie, can't you see it at all? You sit there looking like—"

He broke off, perceiving that he'd aroused her.

"Yes, I understand," she said at last. "Go ahead and tell me the whole story. What was she like? Where did you meet her?"

Joe turned away thoughtfully to the smoking-table and relighted his cigar.

"Why, Annabel was a Chicago girl," he began presently. "Lived down in Woodlawn with her father and mother—Fannings, their name was. I boarded with them back in the spring of ninety-nine, just twenty years ago now. I'd just passed my examination for a licensed structural engineer. They were the most respectable people in the world, those Fannings. Poor but genteel—good Lord—so you could hardly breathe! But somehow that sort of thing looked good to me just about then."

She left unbroken for a little while the reflective silence into which he'd fallen, before she prompted him. But presently she got him going again by suggesting that the reason gentility looked good to him just then was Annabel. "What was she like? How old was she? What color was her hair?"

"Lightish," Joe said; "not yellow; there wasn't much color in it. I was fooled on her age, all right. I took it for granted that she was just a kid, barely twenty, if as old as that. When she gave her age at the license bureau up in Milwaukee, where we'd run off to get married, I found she wasn't but five or six years younger than I was— It would have made quite a difference if I'd known that sooner," he added.

Jennie remarked that twenty-five wasn't too old for a girl to marry. But Joe said this wasn't what he meant. She was too old not to be more grown up than she was.

"You see, she'd been having a fight with her father and mother. She wanted to be an artist, a sculptor, and they wouldn't let her. She'd been going down to the Art Institute for quite a while taking lessons in drawing and designing, china-painting, I don't know what—maybe a little modeling. But now it was a question of a life class, and they wouldn't hear of it."

"Well, that interested me in her a whole lot more than I'd been before, and the line her father and mother had taken seemed so d—n silly that the next chance I got I tried to put in a word for her. It was a fool thing to do, of course. It got Annabel in wrong, worse than ever, for discussing such a subject with a young man—she, herself, was furious with me at first for not having seen that—and they were already suspicious that I wasn't quite as good as I looked."

"Now, here's a d—n funny thing, Jennie. Here's a question I've asked myself a thousand times: Will you tell me why I didn't just pack my trunk at that point and clear out? I was tired of the old people and I wasn't in love with Annabel, not one little bit. I didn't even want her in a temporary sort of way. There were girls growing on every bush that were more attractive, that way, than she was. But I didn't get out. I went on butting myself farther and farther in. We had a h—l of a time. The old folks would hardly speak to me. They sat around and kept watch so that I shouldn't be alone with Annabel. I think the only reason they didn't turn me out of the house was because they figured it was easier to keep us apart as things were, having a line on me, than if they hadn't any idea where I was."

"Well, the upshot of it was that one day, along that summer, we took the day-boat—the old whaleback, it was—to Milwaukee, got a license and a minister to marry us, and spent the night at the Plankington hotel. Came home on the train the next morning."

"The old folks wouldn't take us in—and it wasn't a bluff either. But I found a furnished flat over in Hyde Park—it was easy enough to do in those days—and we set up house-keeping. I'd suggested a couple of rooms in some family hotel so that she could have more time to herself. But she didn't want that. I was beginning to wonder about that famous career of hers that the whole row had been about. Finally I asked her one day why she didn't go over to the Art Institute and register in the life class. I remember how she looked at that and just what she said. She gave me a stare and then a sort of laugh, doubtful whether I wasn't joking, and she said, 'Why, you silly old thing, what do I want to go there for, now?'"

"She hadn't any idea what marriage was about, Jennie. Apparently supposed there was nothing to it beyond house-keeping and a little familiarity. And she couldn't stand me—that's the long and the short of it. Lord! but

she was conscientious—all three of them were that. And she must have had a talk with her mother that straightened things out a little. The one thing that reconciled her to the relation at all was that it was legal and binding—going to last forever."

"I can't think of a worse mixup than that. Because with me, well, it had been like this. I'd never had anything to do with a woman before—I never have since, for that matter—who wasn't in love with me, crazy about me, for the time being anyhow. So this was wrong all round. Yet she might have made some other sort of man a good wife and been happy with him. But she didn't like me, even in other ways. I think I frightened her without meaning to. The way I talked shocked her. I tried to reform for a while. Good God! I've seen her turn white over a plain 'hell' or a 'damn' or two that I'd used without thinking. I never swore at her—Never swore at you, either, did I?"

"It looked for a while—oh, at the end of three months or so—as if we might make a go of it. She liked our little flat, dusting and sticking the



"Want to Bet Me a Hundred I'm Not Right," He Asked.

furniture around in new ways, and making fancy desserts and things that she got out of magazines. And, in a way, I liked it, too. I liked the feeling of being anchored to something, having a real address in the telephone book. I liked feeling respectable—and I was, too. Didn't do any bumping around outside."

"And then all of a sudden she got to hating me a whole lot worse. Took to spending most of the time at home with her folks. I tried to put my foot down on that, as long as they wouldn't let me in the house. But it didn't do any good. She went more and more and tried to keep it dark. Well, at last I got the offer of that big job down in Lima. I didn't really need it, because I was getting on first-rate in Chicago, but it looked to me like a good chance for a showdown. So I accepted it, and then I put it up to her. She could come with me or she could quit me, just as she liked. Well, she quit, and I don't know as I blame her. I certainly didn't try to make it look good to her. I wanted to get loose; that's the gospel truth. She went back to her folks, and I cleared out without saying good-by to her."

"I didn't come back to the States until nineteen-nine, and when I started I went as far as Panama with the idea that I'd go on up the west coast, drop off at San Pedro, and go on up and see her. If I'd made the big strike I'd been playing for down in Chile, and just missed, I would have gone to see her; no doubt about it. I'd have been rich then. Able to make a proposition that I needn't be ashamed of, however she took it—if you see what I mean. But I wasn't rich by a devil of a way. I had just about enough to start myself again decently in Chicago, to come back looking like a successful man. I'm always either just broke or just on the point of making a h—l of a big thing. Anyhow, I came up to Chicago by a fruit-boat to New Orleans instead of going around the long way. And, what with the war and one thing and another, I haven't been in shape to fix things up with her until now. And now, just as I am ready, I find out that she's tying a can to me."

It was funny, Jennie tacitly agreed; funnier than he knew, to see him still nursing a grudge over the inconstancy his wife had shown in not waiting another year on the end of twenty. She asked him if he had any idea why Mrs. Greer was doing it.

"Oh, another man, I suppose," he said.

When she cried out incredulously at that he wanted to know why not. Wasn't it likely enough? "She's only forty-five or thereabouts. Probably doesn't look any older to speak of than she did at thirty. She wouldn't—a woman like Annabel—unless she's got fat. Some well-preserved widower of sixty-odd—there's enough of them like that out in Pasadena, heaven knows—has been making up to her."

He turned upon her with an implied gleam in his eye.

"Want to bet me a hundred dollars I haven't got it doped out right?" he asked.

"No," she said thoughtfully. "I don't believe I do."

She often made bets with Joe, and not infrequently collected them, too; but never when that gleam in his eye warned her that he was proposing a sure thing. Those hadn't been blind speculations of his about Annabel and her well-preserved widower. Somehow or other he'd managed to inform himself of the facts.

"You aren't going to contest the divorce, are you?"

"Of course not," he grumbled. "What would I contest it for?—Oh, I haven't been putting detectives on her, if that's what you are getting at. Only, if you don't want to be walked on in a case like that, it's just as well to have something to bargain with. I had Nathan get in touch with a lawyer, a perfectly respectable chap, out in Pasadena, and asked him to look up the main facts, just so I'd know where I stood. There is a widower, all right, a retired Chautauqua lecturer with a weak throat. He's got a little lemon grove just outside Pasadena."

He got up with a spring, chucked the butt of his cigar into the fireplace, and flexed his arms. "Well, he's welcome to Annabel. And she's welcome to him, as long as she doesn't try to get rough with me."

"You mean if Annabel doesn't try to gouge you for too much alimony?" Jennie asked.

"No," he said, "I wasn't thinking of that. I was thinking of the grounds for divorce she puts in her bill. I'll look bad enough at the best, but I won't be made to look any worse than necessary."

Why in the world, Jennie wondered, should he care how he looked. It was plain that he did care tremendously. Then came the real idea, the luminous surmise.

"Joe," she asked him suddenly, "did Annabel have a baby?"

"I should think you might have seen that long ago," he grumbled.

"A boy or a girl?" she asked, when her mind had got into its stride again.

"Say! If it had been a boy," said Joe, "I'd have gone back. I'd never have left a son of mine to be brought up by—Fannings. Being a girl, it seemed to belong to them more. But at that I almost went back, as I told you."

Jennie roused herself at the end of a long reflective silence to remark that the child must, by now, be pretty near grown up.

"She's nineteen," he answered. "I've never known her exact birthday. I've always known about how old she was, though," he added. "Her name's Beatrice."

"Don't you know at all what she's like? Haven't you any sort of picture of her?"

"Picture! Lord, no! I told that Pasadena lawyer to try to get me one. But he hasn't succeeded; at least it hasn't turned up yet. Why, I suppose she must be a good deal like Annabel. She's sure to have been brought up like that. Innocent. Well, that's the way to bring up a girl, all right. Do you know those old-fashioned bouquets that are coming in style again, with a paper frill around them? I expect she's a good deal like that."

Looking up at him, near to tears with a sudden sympathy, she saw his face darken. It was so startling a change that she cried out, "Joe! What is it?"

"Can you see," he asked, "how that child has been brought up to think about me? They will have used me as the bad man to frighten her with. Your father will get you, if you're a naughty girl, Beatrice!—I can hear old Ma Fanning say it. But where I stick is at that d—d widower, googling at the kid, pawing her, telling her he's her daddy now, holding her on his knee. Not if I know myself!"

"There you are, Jennie! Now we're down to brass tacks. If anybody's going to be that child's father, I am. That's what I wanted to put up to you tonight."

"You mean," she asked, after she had lighted a cigarette to give herself the appearance, at least, of calm reflection, "that you want to take her away from her mother altogether and bring her out here to live with you?"

"You've got it," he said.

"It's a crazy idea, Joe," she then burst out desperately. But it can't be done. Even if you did get her to come to you, which I don't believe you could, what would you do with her when she was here? She couldn't live alone in this flat with you away half the time. And, anyway, the sort of life you live—"

"D—n the sort of life I live!" he interrupted. "What's that got to do with her? It's never had anything to do with you, has it? There'll never be any parties in this flat, Jennie. Not as long as she makes her home in it." "She couldn't live here alone in it, anyhow. Not with you away half the time."

"I wouldn't try to keep her here all the time. I'd send her to school, for one thing. Williamson's got a daughter just about her age who's away at some boarding-school or other. I'll send Beatrice to the same place. They'll make friends. It'll give Beatrice the right sort of start."

"There won't be any school till next September," Jennie pointed out. "This year's practically over now. And after the first of July you'll have to be up North most of the time."

He grappled with this difficulty for a moment; then faced her triumphantly with a solution.

"Henry Craven's persuaded his sister to take a cottage somewhere on Cape Cod this summer. Think she needs a change. And the Aldriches

have offered to loan her their place. She's agreed to go for a couple of months if she can find somebody to go with her. Well, she could take Beatrice along, just as well as not. She doesn't want to go till July, but that will just give Beatrice and me a chance to start getting acquainted."

Jennie felt her mind going blank. What could you do with a man like that? She got herself together, chucked away her cigarette, and charged the position, head on. "Joe, you're wild," she said. "You can't do things like that—not outside your own office, you can't. They won't work. You haven't an idea, really, what the girl is like. You don't know a thing about her tastes or her ways. You don't know whether she'd like these people or not—No, whether she'd like her."

"They'd better like her!" he retorted, half aloud. Then, with a laugh, "Look here, Jennie! Do you want to bet a thousand dollars, real money, that if I ask Miss Craven to take Beatrice under her wing for a few weeks down East she won't grab it like a trout? Come on, now? Don't be a crab unless you're willing to back your opinion."

Was that subtlety, she wondered, or naivete? Had he just this moment blundered into it, or had he thought it all out, in that amazing brain of his, at their dinner, the night before? He being Joe, you never could be sure.

"No," she said, beaten. "I'm not taking any bets with you tonight."

"Anyhow," he immediately went on, not stopping to gloat over her discomfiture, "this is all barking up the wrong tree. There's no argument whether we want the girl or not. The question is, how are we going to get her? I have written her an invitation and sent a thousand dollars in care of my lawyer, and hope that will bring her to me."

Jennie came over to where he was standing, and took him impulsively by the shoulders. "I wish you luck, anyhow," she went on. "I hope it works. I hope she makes you happy."

Clearly, he was startled by the caress. She had never done anything just like that to him before. He didn't respond to it with any gesture of his own, but his voice, when he spoke, had real emotion in it.

"Jennie! If I had had the luck to marry you twenty years ago," he said— "Well, what are you grinning at?"

For she'd instantly stepped away from him at that, and the quality of her smile was derisive.

"Annabel wasn't the wife for you, for a fact," she admitted. "But you don't hate her, even now. And, oh, Lord! How you would have hated me!"

"The right wife for you," she said, "would have to be pretty, silky, 'way up in the society game. She ought to be a little afraid of you, so that she'd take care to keep you afraid of her. And you'd have to be proud, whenever you thought of it, that you'd got her."

She saw this go home to him.

"All right," he said. "You needn't rub it in any more. Look here, it's half-past ten. You'd better be running along home. I'll telephone Burns to bring your car around."

She was mildly amused at his sudden concern for the proprieties, and she tried to tease him a little about it, but he insisted on treating the matter seriously.

"I don't want young Burns getting any funny ideas in his head about you. He's welcome to think what he pleases about me, and about some of the people I play around with. I don't care a d—n what he thinks. But I want you to be careful. Do you get that?"

"All right, boss," she said, sounding very meek as she rose and went to find her wrap. "Sure, I get it."

This final slant of the talk recalled her resolution regarding the boy, so while she and Joe stood in the corridor waiting for the car to come up, she told him she thought he ought to find something better for young Burns to do. "He's too good to be wasted driving access home from parties and that sort of thing."

"A little soft on him, are you?" Joe asked.

"Oh, I suppose so," she admitted. "I probably wouldn't have thought of it if he hadn't been so good-looking. But it's true, all the same."

Joe contradicted her, amiably but flatly. "If he's too good for it," he went on to explain, "then it's just the job for him. He has good pay and short hours; the whole day to himself except what he needs to make up lost sleep in. If he wants to study or do anything else that's worth while, he has all the chance in the world. If I could have picked up a job like that at his age, I'd have blessed my luck. Of course, it's true that, if he isn't any good, he has a handsome chance to go to the devil. But that's no concern of mine."

And then, the elevator coming up, Joe put her in it and bade her good-night.

"I know you're Mr. Greer. I'm Mrs. Williamson."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Like Screech Owls.

Jud Tinkins says some people are like a screech owl. They always sound melancholy whether they have any real trouble or not.

We Daresay. If a man had as much judgment before thirty as after, there would seldom be a skeleton in his family closet.

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL

Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. F. B. FITZWATER, D. D., Teacher of English Bible in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)
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LESSON FOR DECEMBER 30

REVIEW

THE WORLD FOR CHRIST

GOLDEN TEXT.—"They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness."—Ps. 145:7.

PRIMARY TOPIC.—Favorite Missionary Stories.

JUNIOR TOPIC.—What We Have Learned About Missions.
INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC.—What Is My Missionary Duty?
YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC.—The Present Missionary Outlook.

Two plans for the review are suggested:

1. The Summary Method. This will be to lift out the main facts of each lesson and state the leading teaching thereof. The following brief statements are suggested:

Lesson 1. God called Abraham out from his country and kindred to make him the head of the nation through which the Redeemer was to come. The leading lesson is that God blesses men and nations in order that they may be a blessing. This is the universal law of the spiritual realm.

Lesson 2. Israel was given an exalted position in order that she might make God known to the nations. The message they were directed to proclaim was that God was the Savior of all the nations.

Lesson 3. Israel's geographical position afforded the best opportunity to carry the Gospel to the whole world. She was literally in the center of the world. Special privilege carries with it special responsibility.

Lesson 4. The burden of the message of the prophets was that God is great in mercy to all the nations when they penitently turn to Him from their sins.

Lesson 5. Strong drink works great ruin to all. The only way to escape this ruin is to totally abstain from its use.

Lesson 6. The Psalter, the hymn book of the Jewish nation, has as its central message the Spirit of God's grace to the world. Its aim is to call men back to God.

Lesson 7. Jesus Christ was the pre-eminent missionary. His compassion for the multitude moved Him to send forth laborers in His vineyard. The missionary message to the lost world is that through the sacrificial death of Christ salvation is offered to all.

Lesson 8. Christ saved men in order that they might go to the lost world with the message of His salvation. Those who have experienced His saving power will go forth to tell others.

Lesson 9. The Holy Spirit is the power which will enable the disciples of Christ to witness His salvation. He will not only enable them to witness, but to endure afflictions and trials.

Lesson 10. The Gospel was intended for all the world. God in His providence permits persecutions and strife to scatter the disciples in order that they might witness.

Lesson 11. In spite of opposition, Paul preached the Gospel in the capital city of Rome. He was not ashamed to proclaim it there, for it was the power of God.

Lesson 12. Christ will come and establish His kingdom over the whole earth. Peace and righteousness shall then cover the whole earth.

11. The Question Method. These questions should be assigned to the members of the class the previous week. The following samples are given in Peloubet's Select Notes:

1. What were the missionary characteristics of Abraham?

2. What was God's missionary purpose for Israel?

3. What in Israel's geographical situation made it easy to be a missionary nation?

4. What was the missionary teaching of Jonah?

5. What is the missionary teaching of Israel?

6. Quote a missionary verse of some Psalm.

7. Name some particulars in which Christ was the ideal missionary.

8. Why should every Christian be a missionary?

9. Whence came the missionary power of the early church?

10. Describe the gradual outreach of the early church.

11. Why must Christian missions cover the earth?

12. What will Christ's universal reign do for mankind?

The Lord Knoweth Them.

In the lack of all human recognition, surely the Lord knoweth them that are His. His great heart of love will go out to them, till He has done for them exceedingly abundantly above all that they ask or think.—S. F. Smalley.

The Pledge to Us.

The cross of Christ is the pledge to us that the deepest suffering may be the condition of the highest blessing; the sign, not of God's displeasure, but of His wisest and most compassionate love.—Dean Stanley.

Decision.

Any worth-while decision is for life, and needs a foundation that will not crumble. When we make a life-decision for God we have His grace and power for our solid foundation.—The Exposition.