

The Ring in the Wall

There was a businessman who had a son; a good for nothing who lived an idle life and spent his father's money taking his pleasure wherever and whenever he could get it. His father had reprimanded him many a time, but you won't be surprised when I tell you, the boy ignored his father.

The man became ill and realised he was dying. He called his son to his deathbed to talk to him once more.

"There are plenty of people willing to spend money, but not enough prepared to earn it," began the father.

"I have tried to change my ways," answered his son.

"And always found a new set of drinking friends to waste our money on!" answered his father. "If you carry on living the way you do when I am dead, you'll soon have no money left. What will you do then? Start begging that's what. You'll be in such a mess you might as well hang yourself."

The son looked at his father and turned away.

"Down in my study, there's a corner cupboard built into the wall, said the father. "There's a ring fixed to it. Tie the rope to that and end your misery."

Shortly afterwards, the businessman died and was buried. The son continued to spend the money as if there were no tomorrow and had plenty of friends to help him. But all good things come to an end and eventually, the money ran out. The son had difficulty feeding and paying his servants and one by one they left his service, except for one girl who stayed and worked as his housekeeper.

He kept in contact with his friends and on his first visit to town, he did not have to pay for anything, but on his second visit, his friends were not so keen to put their hands in their pockets. The day came when there was no food in the house. He visited his friends for a third time. When he saw them, they did not acknowledge him. Instead, they turned their backs on him as if they were ashamed of him.

The son returned home. He knew he couldn't pay his debts and remembered his father's advice about hanging himself. The son went to the study and found the ring in the wall. He fetched a stool to stand on, fed a length of rope through the ring, looped it around his throat and kicked the stool from under him.

As soon as the rope tightened around his throat, the wall collapsed and the cupboard crashed to the floor. A great stream of money poured out from a hidden compartment behind him. The son dismissed all thoughts of hanging himself. He scraped the money out of the compartment and found a letter from his father.

"My son, this is the very last of my money. I hope you have learned that there are few things in the world you can rely on and have become a wiser man for your experiences."

The following day, the son paid off his debts and rehired his servants, who were delighted to work for him now that he could pay them. His former friends came around to visit him. They each shook him by the hand, congratulated him on his good fortune and reminded him of the good times they had shared together.

"I don't know any of you," said the son.

They looked bewildered.

"How old are each of you?" asked the son.

Some answered 'twenty,' some 'thirty' and some were in between.

"I can't possibly know you," explained the son. "All the people I know are only three days old."

His reply left them in no doubt how he felt about them and they left.

There is only a little more to tell. The son went out and found himself a wife.

They lived in a proper way and it was a good marriage. You see, the son had learned the ways of the world; he was indeed, a wiser man.