

The Beggar

By Margaret Pearce

And he cried and said: "Father Abraham have mercy on me and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

* * *

"Ma sent me for a piece of ice for the baby; he's sick."

The statement was made in an awed little voice quite unlike the voice Martha Tently used when at play; but the "big man" of the little village of Shirley was always a subject of wonder and admiration to all the children in the place. He had lately arrived there to fill his dead father's place and he was newly rich. He eyed the small messenger a minute, to her consternation, and finally called:

"Lizzie, come here and see what this child wants and attend to her if you can"; then grumblingly under his breath, he said, "Always wanting something—always. Why in the name of peace don't all the idiots go to work and make something to live on instead of always begging."

Lizzie Walton came from the bedroom adjoining and fixed the little girl with a cold stare.

"Well, what is it?" her voice was as cold as the stare, and Martha felt turned to the ice for which she asked, but bravely

door and with a look filled with hatred for the world of poor folks on her face went back to her husband.

Martha scudded away home with her freezing hand clasping the ice tightly; she was so afraid it would melt before the precious little brother could taste it that she fairly flew over the ground. Doctor Yancy was bending over the crib and he it was who took the ice; his gaze met Mrs. Tently's and he said:

"I am afraid we had disfigured the kind people, they had only two hundred pounds; I saw it come in yesterday when I was at the store."

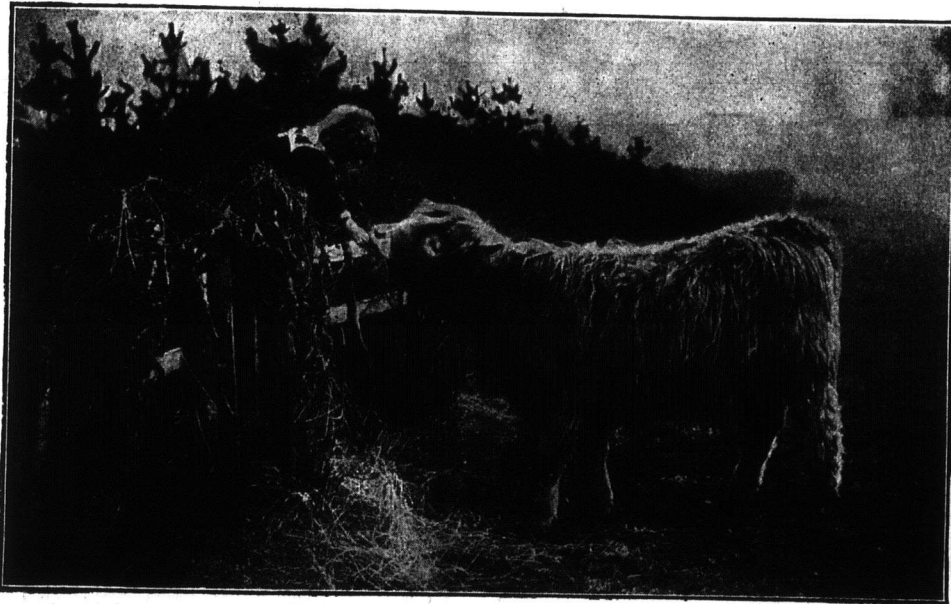
The woman smiled a tired little smile and she shook her head slowly expressing sorrow for the stingy.

"If you will shave some of the ice I will give it to him now," said Dr. Yancy, "then I will run across and telephone for some to be sent out at once."

The mother arose and did his bidding and when he was gone across the street she stood over the crib and cried, the little eyes knew her and the little arms reached for her, but she dared not lift him up; his face was wrinkled in pain and the moans he had split her ear and tore at her heart strings.

"My baby, my boy," she sobbed.

The doctor was returning and she wiped her eyes; his presence gave her



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she thought of the little brother burning with fever and repeated her quest. Albert Walton raised himself slightly on his elbow and said:

"She wants ice; this is the third request that has been made for ice in the last few days; the people round about here think we are made of ice. It makes the ice melt so to break it and it is expensive to haul it so far in the sun."

What he said was true; there had been much sickness that fall owing to the draining of his mill pond and the poor fever-racked people were too poor to hire ice hauled the 15 miles necessary.

Martha stood poised like a bird, ready to fly at the least notice; her little red hands showed the marks of hard work— young as she was; it was all her widowed mother could do to attend to the little boy who was ill and the biggest share of work fell to this child who ought to have been at play.

"Well, what would you do about it?" asked Mrs. Walton of her husband. "Of course we can't keep this up indefinitely, and they never offer to pay for it."

"I don't care if they did," growled Walton, "I don't want to be bothered with them anyway."

He let his head sink back on the pillow as though the task of denying the sick was a great effort but one that must be done. He was not a strong man, and while looking reasonably well most of the time spent much of his time in bed.

Lizzie Walton motioned the child to follow her and went to the huge refrigerator on the back porch and chipped off a piece of ice the size of a big man's fist; she handed it to the little naked red hand.

Martha took it in a doubtful way. She was surprised that the piece in her hand was so little and the piece in the refrigerator was so large. Mrs. Walton said nothing more, but slammed the refrigerator

confidence; he was faithful and he was doing all in his power.

"I will stay with him to-night."

Dr. Yancy turned his face to the strong light of the window; he was a little grey on the temples and it gave his noble face a tired look but the strong jaw and mouth showed no spirit of giving up; in that face Mary Tently saw her hopes realized and in the face of the woman before him the young doctor saw his dream of a home; a look as of a light leaped between them and they knew over this sick child that their souls were knit.

When the shades were drawn and the lamps were lit the doctor persuaded the woman to lie down while he sat and fought death till morning. He listened to the little sufferer's moans with grief in his soul and the wish that all big minds have in the presence of suffering—that he could take the burden himself; but when the first grey light crept in the window he knew that the fight was done and that he had been strong in his fight with his relentless foe; the baby stirred and opened his eyes to the doctor's face; a pale little smile meant for him, called a tear to the man's face and he stooped and fondled the sick child.

Stepping softly to her door he called the mother.

"All right," he said in a cheery voice; we win Mary; the baby will be well in a few days."

Then an unusual thing happened; he took her in his arms.

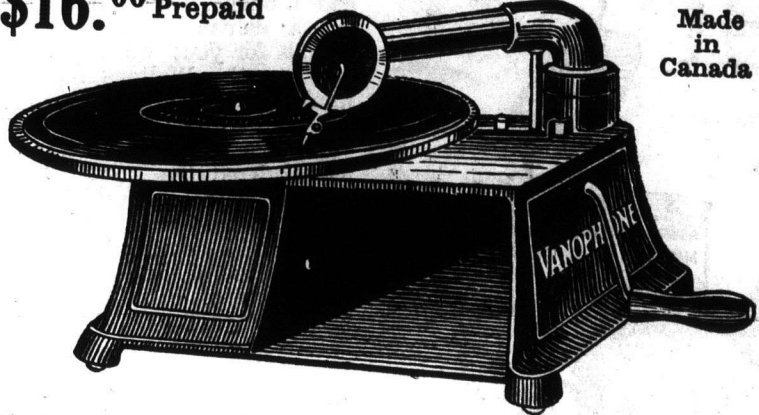
Many years passed and Ralph Tently was twenty-one—Martha was on the old maids' list, but she did not care—she was a trained nurse in a big city; Ralph was a rising young doctor; Mrs. Tently was Mrs. Yancy and all were doing well; in fact, Dr. Yancy was the best known surgeon in Austin.

On a day when Ralph had come into

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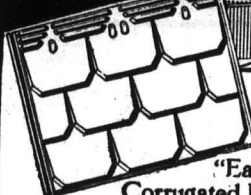
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