

But the "traffic cop" did not notice. He was still pondering deeply. His brain mechanism had settled into a certain deep-rutted groove. His mind was busy, and in its slow, ponderous way gradually nearing a certain definite decision.

It came at length. With an exclamation he paused and then turned back, quickly retracing his steps to headquarters. Two minutes later he stood again in front of the Chief's desk.

"I got one of my own," he explained breathlessly, "but just the same Chief, if the woman ain't identified, I'll take that child myself."

For a full second the Chief regarded him. First a smile, then a frown settled over the grizzled features. The eyes narrowed perceptibly. A note of irritation sounded in the deep, resonant voice.

"Go home," he said, brusquely, "and forget it. You're way, way too slow, Baxter. At least two hours ago I made up my mind concerning the destination and probably prospects of that kid. He's mine!"

Baxter bowed meekly and for a second time went out into the street. Twenty minutes later he turned the corner which led straight to his own humble domicile. He was nearing home. For the first time that day he was conscious of weariness; but he was sustained by the thought of a warm meal and slippers and his evening newspaper. In a brief mental survey he visualized the cozy, well-kept rooms, the laden dinner table, the white lace curtains which draped the two front windows.

"Got my own little nest," he told himself gladly. "Why should I worry about one more chick to feather it?"

And then he observed that the house was dark. It was dark and lonely-looking; it was strange and unfamiliar; it was unearthly, deathly quiet. For a moment he stood dizzily regarding it. A hoarse sob rattled in his throat. Choking, weak and sick at heart, his legs barely carried him up the steps and into the shadowy, close interior.

"My God!" he breathed, and straightway across his line of vision flashed the awful replica of the scene in the street.

The baby with the scratched face was his own. With an effort he switched on the electric light. Stumbling, he made his way to the telephone. He had left just strength enough to call up the Chief of Police.

Before his hand touched the receiver, the bell rang. Dazed, he answered the call.

"That you, John?" anxiously inquired a sweet, familiar voice. "I'm at mother's. Please don't worry. She's had another of those dreadful attacks of hers."

BE STEADFAST

Nay, never falter: no great deed is done,
By falterers, who ask for certainty.
No good is certain, but the steadfast mind,
The undivided mind to seek the good;
'Tis that compels the elements, and wrings
A human music from the indifferent air.
The greatest gift a hero leaves his race
Is to have been a hero.

—G. Elliot.

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