

TOM CRIMP.

BY I. E. DIEKENA.

Mr. Crimp was a wiry, stoop-shouldered, ordinary-looking little man, with a dried-up, wrinkled face, and a thin brown beard. He was a poor man of no particular importance in the community. He was so insignificant that society even denied him the common privilege of being addressed as Mr., bluntly and unceremoniously calling him Tom Crimp. Strange as it may appear, Tom Crimp was a member of a rich and fashionable church. And why Tom Crimp remained in it, and why he had ever entered it at all, are questions quite as impossible to answer as why he loved it with such an unflinching devotion, and was so wonderfully true in all his duties to it.

Now it happened one Sunday evening, as Tom Crimp stood in the doorway of the church, that he espied a black bundle upon the stone step that led to the pavement; and, curiosity drawing him nearer, he found it to be the figure of an old woman.

As Mr. Crimp observed her curiously, she beckoned to him with a bony hand.

"It must be a splendid church," she said. "Inside, I mean. How I should like to see it!"

"Why, that you may," exclaimed the little man with hearty kindness—"that you may."

But the old woman shook her head.

"No, no!" she said. "It's no place for me. Ah, me! how times have changed! You don't believe it, sir, perhaps, but I've seen better days."

"And will again, I hope," said Mr. Crimp.

"No, that can never be," muttered the old woman. "I'm seventy-two years old, and not long for this world. But fifty years ago I knew this church well, and it was smaller then. I was so happy in it."

"And there's no reason in the world, mother," said Tom Crimp cheerily, "why you should not be happy in it now. Come, go in with me."

"Not to-night, sir!" she said, rising hastily,—"not to-night."

"Next Sunday then," persisted Mr. Crimp.

"We'll see," she said,—"we'll see!"

"And I'll be here," continued he, "and we'll go in together." And then she said, "Good night," and left him.

On the following Sunday evening, true to his word, Tom Crimp stood waiting in the doorway. Out of the shadows beyond came a figure which his keen eyes quickly recognized. He would have led her to his own modest pew, but she shrank back into the farthest corner of the church. And Mr. Crimp was wise enough to respect her wishes, and left her undisturbed. But after the service, he stepped down beside her as she left the church, and, raising an umbrella over her head, said, "Mother, it's beginning to rain. Let me take you home."

"Don't put yourself to any trouble, sir," she answered, hurriedly. "I'm used to bad weather."

"But there's a storm a-coming," persisted Mr. Crimp; "and it won't do, you know." Not that Mr. Crimp meant to imply any criticism of the weather, but simply to express his conviction that it was not right to let her go home unprotected in the rain.

"You are too good to an old woman," she replied. "Well—if you will—part way—and many thanks, sir."

At the corner of an alley, in an obscure quarter of the city, she stopped him.

"We must part here, sir," she said.

"Let me go with you to the door," said Mr. Crimp.

"No, no! It's not a good place for gentlemen; but nobody will hurt the old woman."

"Take my umbrella, mother."

"No, thank you kindly, sir; it's but a little way. Good night." And Mr. Crimp was left alone.

The acquaintance thus strangely begun was continued several months. He soon discovered that she made her livelihood—precarious, indeed, it seemed—by selling soap and matches. She had, or claimed to have, no living relatives—or friends, except Tom Crimp. She was old—very; no doubt as old as she had said. After a while he noticed that she was not only very old, but very weak, and growing feeble every day. One day,—well, he remembered it long afterward, for it was their last

walk on earth together,—she leaned heavily upon his arm, and tremblingly exclaimed:

"Mr. Crimp, how good you are to this poor, friendless body! You are the only friend I have."

"Why, mother," he answered with tender heartiness; "surely there is another,—a better one than I!"

"I do not know him," murmured she,—"I do not know him."

"Ah, yes, you do!" he smilingly responded; then gently added, "There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

She looked up quickly, with a sharp glance at his face, then let her eyes droop, and walked on, strangely silent, by his side. But when they reached their parting-place, she seized his hand with both of her own, and exclaimed, "Mr. Crimp—O Mr. Crimp! your voice is like an angel's. That Friend you speak of—I have forgotten him so long! But I will try to think of him,—I will, indeed, and perhaps he will not cast me quite away."

"Nay, never that," said Mr. Crimp, softly. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

The tears of gratitude were in her eyes; but she only pressed his hand without another word, and then passed slowly out of sight.

On the next Sunday night she did not appear; and Tom Crimp, going home with heavy forebodings in his heart, was not surprised to find awaiting him a well-known physician, whose benevolent work among the poor had made him famous.

"Mr. Crimp, I believe?" said this gentleman, rising, as Tom Crimp entered.

"Yes, sir."

"Mother Shelton, the old lady whom you have befriended, was taken suddenly ill to-day—"

"Is she very sick?" cried Mr. Crimp.

"It is over," said the doctor: "she is dead."

After the first solemn hush which succeeded these words, the doctor drew Mr. Crimp aside, and showed him an iron box upon a table in the corner of the room.

"When she knew that she was about to die," said the doctor, "she gave into my keeping this iron box, which she charged me to deliver to you. She said all that this box contains she freely and gladly gave to you, because you have been so kind to her, and especially because of the last words you spoke together. She wanted me to tell you that she believed on and trusted the friend you spoke of,—what she meant I cannot say,—and that she died happy. Therefore, my dear sir, I now hand you the key to the box, in accordance with her last request."

With conflicting emotions, in which sorrow for her sudden and lonely death mingled with joy that she had found her better part before she died, Mr. Crimp thrust the key into the lock, and opened the iron box.

What was his astonishment to find it packed completely full with money!

"Mother Shelton's savings," explained the doctor. "I have long suspected that she was not as poor as she seemed to be. She has evidently been hoarding for years, and this money has slowly accumulated. She will not need it now."

"No," said Mr. Crimp earnestly. "She has a better fortune."

"A snug little sum for you, though," continued the doctor. "What will you do with it?"

Tom Crimp thought a moment. Then he answered:

"I know what I will do with it."

On the corner of a block in a quiet and retired but withal beautiful part of the city, stands a large brick house. It has no architectural adornment, but it is very commodious, and looks extremely comfortable. Sunning themselves at the open windows or upon the broad stone steps, or leisurely strolling through the spacious grounds around the house, one may see on pleasant days certain superannuated people, of both sexes, who seem to have nothing further to do in this world but to take life easy and prepare for the next. Over the doorway is a broad white stone upon which are engraved these words:

HOME FOR THE AGED AND FRIENDLESS.

Founded by
THOMAS CRIMP
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SUSAN SHELTON.

And thus has honest Tom Crimp continued his kindness to the old and helpless. It must not be supposed that he was able to carry on this enterprise alone. But when the story had been told, and it was known that he intended to use his suddenly acquired wealth for this purpose, it was proposed that others should help him in his undertaking.

And the movement became at once immensely popular, especially in Tom Crimp's church, which, from having at first simply tolerated him, now began to honor him, and extol his virtues in manner that were both very pleasant and very embarrassing. And to this day there is no name in all its membership so honored and respected as homely, simple, plain Tom Crimp.—S. S. Times.

A CAUSE OF CRIME.

At a late Prison Association meeting in Saratoga, Warden Brush, of Sing Sing, said that one cause, greater than any other, that leads to prison, is disobedience in the family. Some time in life every one must learn to obey, and when I hear a child say a parent, "I won't," when told to do something, I see a candidate for prison. The governor of 1,500 convicts believes that the want of family government and subsequent disobedience of children is the most frequent cause of crime.

Question Corner.—No. 9.

PRIZE BIBLE QUESTIONS.

31. What man met his death hanging in a tree? and how came he to be in such a position?
32. What two men were sold for money?
33. What caused Paul and Barnabas to separate as they were starting on their second missionary journey?

WHAT THEY SAY.

A young girl from Ottawa, who is taking part in the Bible Competition which is to continue in the *Messenger* during this year, writes,

"When we come home from Sunday School we immediately set to work at the Questions. We want to thank you very heartily for giving the Bible competition, as in searching the Bible to answer the questions, we have learned more about what the Bible contains than in almost any other way, and if all the subscribers to the paper knew what real pleasure there is in looking for the answers, they would all enter the ranks of competitors."

This is but one note of the many we have received during the past few weeks, and we hope to receive many more.

All communications to this paper should be addressed.

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