

FOR TIM'S SAKE

She put down her basket and seated herself beside it. The day was warm, and she had walked to and from the village store; she was rather tired. She loosened the strings of her sunbonnet and brushed back over her forehead a few gray hairs that had strayed against her cheek.

She had slept perhaps an hour, when she became conscious of voices near her. At first she thought it was morning and she was just awakening from her night's rest; but gradually she grew aware of the fact that she had fallen asleep on her way home from market, and that it was not morning but mid-afternoon.

The sun was bright and warm, and she was still weary from her walk, so she remained seated, with closed eyes while the voices came distinctly to her ear. A youth and a maiden were conversing just on the opposite side of the thick hedge against which she was resting. Evidently they believed themselves to be alone.

"My little girl, it is hard to have to wait so long; but you know how it is, Alice, while the old folks have need of me it would be cowardly to think of marriage."

"I understand, Tim."

"But, dearest," the first voice pleaded passionately, "you will wait for me?"

"Yes, yes, indeed I will!"

"Ah!" the man's voice resumed after a moment's pause. "I know that I am asking a great deal—more than I deserve, Alice; but I love you very much, and if you will wait it may not be long until I am free, and then, my dearest, I will do all in my power to make you happy and contented."

"I shall be happier waiting for you, Tim, than I could be as the wife of another man."

Martha Langton brought her hands to her ears and shut out the few words that followed, as the lovers strolled down the path on the opposite side of the hedge. Gentle old soul, she was ashamed that she had overheard even as much as she had. Yet her action had been wholly in-advertent.

"Bless their foolish hearts!" she exclaimed, rising and looking through a break in the hedge. "If these old hands of mine could undo the tangle—"

The sentence was never finished, for something in the retreating figures of the lovers closed the lips of Martha Langton and for a moment took away her breath. Then her hand went to her heart, and she reeled backward with a painful cry.

"It's Tim! It's my boy Tim!"

Febly and painfully she took up her basket and went toward the little cottage, and her old hands fumbled at the latch so long that John Langton thought it locked and left his work to let her into the yard. Her white face and changed look filled the husband with alarm.

"Why, Martha, what's the matter? You aren't sick, are you?"

"No, John; not sick." And Martha Langton tried to smile away the alarm of her husband; but the latter was made the more uneasy by the pitiful smile, and, clasping his wife's hands, exclaimed:

"Land sakes! your hands be all cold."

"Hush, John!"

"You come right along into the kitchen, and I'll fix you up something hot to drink. This warm spell kind of makes me faint, too." And old John Langton took up the basket and led his wife into the kitchen of the little cottage.

"Now, Martha, you rest yourself, while I stir about and make you some tea."

The tea made and drunk, and the cup and saucer washed, dried and put aside, John Langton sat down beside his wife, and taking her hands in his asked if she did not feel better.

Martha Langton was silent for a while. She was thinking of the lovers—of Alice Bailey and her boy Tim. Should she let John know? Ah, she must! She must not conceal from her husband that they both were thieves—thieves of youth and life and love, thieves of their boy's happiness.

"John."

"Well, Martha."

"It is wicked to part those whom the Lord hath joined."

"Why, Martha?" cried John Langton, in amazement, "nobody's talkin' o' partin' us, be they?"

"No, John; not us. But if a lad and a lass love each other, like we loved each other, John, fifty years ago, ain't it the same as partin' them for two old folks to keep them from comin' together?"

"I reckon it be, Martha, I reckon it be."

"And the Scriptures say: 'Thou shalt not put asunder those whom the Lord hath joined.'"

John Langton took off his glasses and bowed his head in solemn confirmation. "Well, Martha?" he finally queried, after a long silence on the part of his wife.

"John Langton," came the dreadful accusation, "we are breakin' the commandment of the Lord! Yes, John; you and me. We are keepin' our boy Tim from marryin' the lass he loves. We two useless old bodies are keepin' him at feeding and clothin' and shelterin' us, while all the time he ought to be makin' a home for himself, like we did, John, fifty years ago."

shifted upon another.

"Stuff and nonsense, John! You ain't a bit more to blame than I be. You ain't as much to blame, 'cause I'm spryer than you, though you do be a man."

"Yes, I be, Martha," stubbornly maintained the other—yes, I be."

"Hush, John, and listen to me; I've got something to tell you. Our boy Tim is in love with a lass—old Bailey's daughter, as good a lass as ever lived, John—and he'd marry her to-morrow if us old folks were off his hands for good. But, John, while he's got us to keep and provide for, he's not the lad to think of taking a wife, Tim's not."

"That's the Lord's truth, Martha! But how do you know Tim's taken with the lass?"

With her husband's hands clasped in her own, Martha Langton told all that she had overheard as she had rested on her way home from market, and when she was through the two old folks looked into each other's eyes and understood each other's heart, as they had for fifty years, and always would.

Yes, they must go away; go away somewhere together and leave Tim to marry the lass he loved, and make a home for himself and wife, as they had when they were young. But where could they go? to the county poorhouse? No! Tim would promptly bring them back home again. And should they go away to the city, they might perish of want, for they had grown too old to gain a living by their own labor. Besides, should they secretly run away, Tim would move heaven and earth to find them. Ah! where could they go?

Tim had just lighted the sitting-room lamp and drawn up John's and Martha's chair, when there came a loud knock at the front door of the little cottage. Tim hastened to answer it. As he left the room he did not notice the old folks turn pale and clasp each other's hands.

The visitor proved to be a sleek, clerical-looking gentleman, who requested to know if John Langton was at home. Tim replied in the affirmative, and admitted him to the sitting room, where the old folks were still standing.

"John Langton, I believe?"

Tim took a sudden dislike to the stranger.

"John Langton, sir, and Martha Langton, my wife," was the simple reply.

The visitor bowed effusively. "I am delighted, sir! delighted, madam! Ah! I bring you good news." He placed his silk hat upon the centre-table and, drawing up a chair, sat down. The old folks were now seated.

"Good news?" said Tim, as John and Martha remained strangely silent.

"I believe, sir, I bring good news. But you shall hear, and then you can judge for yourself." The visitor drew some papers from his pocket, and setting a heavy pair of gold glasses on his nose, addressed John Langton.

"You had a brother named Harvey Langton, I believe?"

"I did, sir."

"That brother went to Nevada in the early fifties, and he was not heard of again by you? Am I right or wrong?"

"I understand that Harvey died in fifty-four."

"No, sir, he did not. Ah, I knew I would surprise you!" cried the visitor, pressing John Langton back into his chair, as the old man was about to rise. "No, sir, he did not die; and what's more, sir, he's a rich man, a very rich man to-day."

John Langton looked toward his wife, and the eyes of the old folks met, but neither spoke a word. Tim reached out his right hand, and drawing up a chair, was seated. His left sleeve was pinned to his coat.

"Yes, sir, a rich man to-day. And I have been engaged to persuade you two old people to pack up what stuff you want and move over to his home in Hill County, not three hundred miles from here, where you will have nothing to do the rest of your lives but enjoy yourselves."

Martha Langton rose and placed her hand on Tim's shoulder. "Does that invitation, sir, include our boy Tim?"

"I was given to understand," said the visitor, "that this young man is only nominally your son, that you adopted him when a child. In short, ma'am, that he is of no blood relation to either of you."

"Our dead son, sir, could scarcely have been to us what Tim has been, and unless the invitation you bring is for Tim also, we can't accept it, can we, John?"

"We can't, Martha."

Tim was on his feet. "Mother, father, consider! This means a home for you—a beautiful home, and not a poor, mean little rented cottage like this!"

"No, Tim," said Martha Langton, sorrowfully, "the spot where you are not welcome would be no home for John and me. And yet by going away we can take off of your shoulders a burden that it ain't right that you should longer bear."

"Mother!" pleaded poor Tim, the face of a young girl rising before his vision.

"That's true, Martha," affirmed John Langton, nodding his head vigorously. "That's very true. I think we best accept brother Harvey's invitation."

"Should you reject it, sir, you will regret it the longest day you live." The visitor emphasized his assertion by striking the table heavily with his palm.

Tim bowed his head and was silent.

At last the old folks were ready for the journey. They sat side by side in the little depot, Tim and Alice waiting near to bid them Good-speed and farewell. Martha was dressed in a black silk gown, saved and altered from an earlier day, while John was attired in his Sunday broadcloth suit. They had wished to make the journey in more humble attire, but Tim would not allow it. They were going to live with their rich kin, and

it was proper that they should appear in silk and broadcloth.

As the moments passed Tim grew more and more restless; he wanted to accompany John and Martha and see that they arrived safely at their destination. But, no, Mr. Vanderhill, the lawyer, would be sufficient escort. Tim must stay and look after the cottage.

A loud whistle and the clanging of a bell, and Vanderhill hurried in to report that the train was approaching.

Martha Langton clasped her husband's hands and whispered: "For Tim's sake!"

"For Tim's sake!" whispered John Langton, returning the pressure of his wife's hand.

Then the old folks broke down and wept, and Alice and Tim, with tears in their own eyes, begged them not to take the journey—to come back to the little cottage, and all stay together the rest of their lives. But Vanderhill pook-pooed the pleading of the lovers as sentimental nonsense, and hurried the two old folks out upon the platform of the little depot, where John Langton, in the excitement of leave-taking, kissed Martha good-bye, and Martha—poor old soul—took off her shawl and threw it over the shoulders of Alice, as if Alice was the one who was going away.

"Good-by, Tim! Good-by, Alice! May God bless you both!"

The lovers stood on the depot platform and watched the train until it was out of sight, then they walked together back to the little cottage.

How swiftly the train sped on! How it rushed through the valleys and thundered through the hills! How many, many hundreds of telegraph poles flew by! How many farms were passed by on the right, and brooks and water-tanks and pastures on the left!

Finally the train stopped and Vanderhill hurried John and Martha Langton to the side of a dilapidated four-seated buggy waiting at the depot. "You are to drive straight to the poorhouse," were his directions to the lank, freckle-faced youth who held the reins of the team.

The youth stared incredulously, then said something that the old folks did not overhear, but at which Vanderhill turned pale. He made as if to seize the lank young fellow and force the truth from him, as though the latter had lied, but suddenly forbore and, slipping a coin into his hand, whispered him some hurried directions. Immediately John and Martha Langton were helped into the dilapidated vehicle, and the four rode away.

After the village had been passed the horses were forced to a rapid pace, and soon the outlying grounds of a large and handsome edifice were reached. Here the horses were stopped, and Vanderhill got down.

"Now, my good people, this is the place. You get off here and we'll walk the rest of the distance. It wouldn't look well to ride up to the gate in a buggy; for they mightn't let you in." Then the lawyer reached out his hand and helped Martha Langton from the vehicle to the dusty road, and John Langton also got down.

"So this is the poorhouse?"

"I believe I told you that before," said Lawyer Vanderhill, curtly.

Martha Langton touched the lawyer on the arm. "Oh, sir, do not be harsh with John and me! We need kindness now."

Vanderhill muttered something, and, climbing back into the buggy threw down a small hand-satchel to the road. Then he leaned over and gave the horses a sudden vicious cut with the whip. The angered team, snorting and quivering, leaped forward down the road at a furious pace, throwing the lawyer back into the seat and shaking the vehicle until it seemed in imminent danger of falling to pieces.

Another minute, and the team had passed out of sight around a bend in the roadway, and John and Martha Langton were alone.

The former was the first to speak. "He bean't coming back, Martha."

"No, John, he bean't coming back." The two old folks walked slowly and silently down the road, and came at last to the arched gateway of the handsome building before whose grounds they had been deserted—and betrayed.

"Let's go inside and rest ourselves a bit under the trees," said John. "Maybe somebody will see us and come and welcome us."

A woman came into view down the gravelled side-path. She was perhaps fifty years of age, and her kind, gentle face appealed instantly to the old folks.

"It's—the matron," whispered Martha. "Say howdy-do to her."

"Good-afternoon to you, ma'am," Langton rose and lifted his hat.

"You are resting yourselves, I see," smiled the woman. "Won't you come in and have some tea?"

"You are strangers in this neighborhood, I presume?" questioned the hostess, with kindly interest.

"Yes, ma'am," said Martha. "John and me just got in on the cars."

"Ah! Then you were not here last evening when the county almshouse burned to the ground?"

Martha looked at her husband; then she cried out in pain: "Oh, John, this bean't the poorhouse!"

"Oh, my good, kind, dear lady!" pleaded Martha. "I know you will forgive two useless old bodies like we for intruding here upon you, for we were told that this was the poorhouse—weren't we, John?—and we were so happy a moment ago to think—to think—oh, thou kind Heavenly Father," broke off the poor old soul, clasping her hands in despair, "Tim must never know! It would break his heart!"

"Tim! Who is Tim?" questioned the woman.

"Tim's our boy," said John Langton, simply.

"Do you mean to say that you have a son, and he has allowed you to come to this?"

"No, no, you mustn't think that of Tim! Tim ain't that kind of a boy! Why, Tim's been the sole support of

John and me for now going on most ten years—hasn't he, John?—and Tim has only one arm. He lost the other arm helpin' the firemen when the paper-mill burned down. Why, Tim thinks we've gone to live at a rich relative's."

Little by little, skillfully led on by their sympathetic hostess, John and Martha Langton told how they had given their little all to a lawyer to represent himself to be the agent of a long-missing brother of John's, who wished John and his wife to come and live with him in a distant county, and how Tim had been deceived into believing that they, John and Martha, were going off to a pleasant home among their kin, never dreaming that they were going away to a poorhouse; how Tim would marry Alice, and make a little home for himself and wife, as they did fifty years before; how they had been deceived and deserted by their lawyer, and now knew not what to do.

Profoundly moved, the woman listened to their simple, pathetic, heroic story, and when, with infinite pride and love, Martha took a little package from her bosom and disclosed a photograph of Tim, she examined the likeness with the deepest interest.

The picture was that of a young man of four and twenty, a broad-shouldered, clean-cut young fellow.

"He is a son to be proud of," said the woman, returning the photograph, with a deep sigh.

"He is indeed!" was Martha's proud response.

From the little bundle lying in Martha's lap a small object fell to the floor. Her hostess stooped and picked it up and was about to return it, when a sudden change came over her, and she stared at the trinket in her hand with dilated eyes.

"Oh, John, she's fainting!" Martha cried in great agitation, as the woman swayed.

John hurriedly leaped forward, and with Martha's aid supported their hostess until they could place a chair under her. She had nearly fainted, indeed; but now revived, and holding out the trinket clasped in her hand—a string of coral beads—demanded, "Where did you get these?"

"They were our boy Tim's when he was a baby."

"Your boy?" the woman repeated, a spasm of pain shooting across her face. Then a light seemed to strike to her very soul. "Is he your boy, or an adopted son?"

Martha was suddenly silent, and it was her husband who answered.

"We adopted Tim when he was a little thing of two years, or thereabout. We found him, Martha and I, sitting one morning a-laughin' and crowin' on our steps, playin' with a big bunch of timothy, and no one coming for him, we took him in and raised him. These beads were about the little one's neck the mornin' we found him."

Martha bent over the trembling form of her hostess and smoothed back the soft hair. "We have found the mother of our boy, John," she said, with infinite tenderness.—Don Mark Lemon in the Sunday Magazine.

My Crucifix

(Translated from the French of Hoppenot for the Catholic Standard and Times.)

I carry it everywhere, I prefer it to everything. When I fall it raises me up. When I cry it consoles me. When I suffer, it soothes me. When I fear it reassures me. When I call, it answers me.

My Crucifix

It is the light which illumines me, The sun which warms me, The food which nourishes me, The spring from which I drink, The gentleness which permeates me, The balm which heals me, The beauty which charms me— My Crucifix.

It is the solitude in which I repose, The fortress in which I am secure, The furnace in which I am purified, The ocean in which I plunge, The abyss in which I lose myself— My Crucifix.

But, dearest Lord Jesus, grant me this, my heart's desire, that I may Guard me during my life, Reassure me during my agony, And be upon my hear, in my last hour— My precious Crucifix.

O, my Mother, you whom the Crucifix has also consoled and sanctified, obtain for me from God, and for all those dear to me, the love of the Crucifix.

—W. Th. B. Parker, M.D. Northampton, Mass., Whitsunday, A.D., 1906.

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