

folks trembled for the time when he should come of age and get his father's fortune. He boarded with Nymphas Stacy, and loved his cousin Mary, who kept house for her father. Mary's mother was long dead. She was a sister of Henry Tinkham, and had married so far beneath her station (for she had lived in the best house in the village and her father was county judge) that her brother never noticed her. He was president of the bank now. He and his father had hated the intrepid Scotchman who dared to make himself prominent in Jewonkee. Before his advent they had been head of everything. Now they were thrown in the background, and even looked on with disfavor. The sickle populace turned and said, rather correctly: "What good's them Tinkhams ever done to this town? None." Henry, the son, lived in cities till his father died, and then came home a widower, with a little hump-backed child Huldah.

The women who married Jewonkee men died young. Why? Look at a specimen. He comes down the hill in a rickety, unpainted waggon, his horse is dirty and uncared for, his clothes seedy, and he is unkempt and unshaved. That is not so bad; but his face—yes, rich or poor, there is on every face the stamp of hopelessness, subdued discontent. The gloom that settled when hope and ambition died. The jaw droops, the eyes are half-closed, the forehead wrinkles, and the heavy, over-hanging brows meet scowling over the nose. They never smile, these men; the small, blue-gray eyes may twinkle rarely, but that little spark of mirth divine is quenched so quickly you may have dreamed it there. Those smileless, stony faces reflected the smileless, stony soil. Why did the women die young? Oh, they starved for love. They hungered for affection, sympathy, tenderness. They held their babes after the pain and suffering, and their worn-out, lifeless hearts, bruised and stunted, broken under the great new joy, and they, who had true women's natures, then and there died without a sigh of regret. That babe would grow unloving so soon!

Not such a woman was Ann Johnson. She owned the best farm in Jewonkee, and superintended its working herself, hiring one man, with additional help in haying. She herself worked in the fields, and spread hay, and planted or weeded. The farmers around her always prophesied her ultimate financial ruin; but she took agricultural papers and introduced improved farming implements and Jersey stock. The farmers were glad to avail themselves of the latter, and her cattle always brought high prices. She snapped her fingers at the prophecies, and prospered. She was a tall, masculine woman, with broad shoulders and big feet and hands. She had fine, expressive features, blue eyes, and a mass of iron-gray hair, which she pugged in a knot in her neck. Her old white horse, green waggon, her bright plaid shawl and pumpkin hood were familiar features in the village. She had considerable money in the bank, and had esteemed its founder highly. Folks said, after his wife was dead, he would marry Ann, and it was known he had proposed to her. Ann knew marriages in Jewonkee were sadly unfortunate.

"John McCrate," she said, firmly, "if you'd never come tow this miserable town, I'd never been borned 'n riz here, I'd marry yew, 'n thank yew for the offer. At 'tis, I ain't on the marry."

Miss Ann was a consistent hater, and she despised Henry Tinkham. Her deceased father had left \$4,000 in Tinkham's hands, which she tried for years to get, and at last, after a persistent warfare, that would have discouraged the most valiant man, succeeded in obtaining only half. She cursed him and his, and said to him one day:

"That misshapen child of yourn's a just punishment tew you."

And she openly showed her dislike to Huldah, by glaring at her when they met.

Huldah was a pale, shrinking girl, with shy, nervous ways. She had big, pitiful brown eyes, and long, fair curls. She was tiny and fairy-like in her motions, and though now eighteen—the age of her cousin Mary—was no larger than a child of twelve. She was terribly deformed, her little head resting on the crooked shoulders. It was years before, in her carefully-guarded life, she realized she was different from other children, and when the truth dawned upon her, it came with such overwhelming force that she never rallied. When her motherly old governess was gone and she was constantly with her cousin Mary—beautiful, with the sunny hair and blue-gray eyes of New England lassies—and Dick, tall, handsome and winning, she understood her affliction. Though she strove nobly against it, she was jealous of Mary—hating her at times, with fierce anger and rebellion against fate. She loved Dick with the intensity of a strong nature, a love more fervent because it was hopeless and unsought. The cold blue eyes, and firm, impassive face of her father brightened when he looked on his crippled daughter, and he suffered for her. He guessed her secret, and he hated, as a cold-blooded, scheming man can hate, the two cousin-lovers who made sunshine in sunless Jewonkee.

CHAPTER II.

One Sunday morning in the early fall, when the gold and crimson of the dying leaves mingled with the sombre green of the pines and firs, Henry Tinkham rose from his sleepless bed and went slowly down to the bank. He saw before the yellow cottage, Dick starting out with his dog and gun (Dick was a Sabbath-breaker, ungodly youth), and Mary run down to the gate to kiss him good-bye. The elder man muttered a curse; he never swore, but breathed—unknown to a soul—fierce profanity, like a scorching blast. He bowed to the people he met—a few villagers, hurrying leisurely from driving their cows to pasture, to eat breakfast, brown bread and beans, and be ready for "meetin'." He opened the bank door, and locked it behind him. There was a little entry-way with two doors, one leading to a coat-room, thence to a private office, from which a small door led to the banking-room. The other hall-door opened into this room; one end of this held a big safe, and was walled in by a high iron railing, in which there were little windows for the cashier and teller. The windows of this end of the room looked out on the river, now full, and rippling brightly in the morning sunlight. At a desk a thin old man, with scant white hair, tremulous mouth, and big, childish blue eyes, sat writing. He was haggard and worn. He had been at that desk the livelong night, and he was prepared to face the worst. He did not speak when Tinkham came in, but groaned, and buried his face in his hands.

"Well," said Tinkham, "have you decided?"

There was a pathetic strength in the weak old face, as Nymphas Stacy said, brokenly:

"I have."

"What will you do?"

"To-day," said the other, lifting his bowed head and facing the man who stood glaring at him with blazing eyes yet unmoved face—"to-day, after service, I will rise and tell the truth. The whole village will be there; it will reach all. I will tell them I robbed the bank of two hundred dollars years ago to bury my wife and pay her sick-bills, for she'd been sick so long I hadn't a cent, and, as all luck would have it, I've never been able to pay it back. I'll tell that you, man or devil, I don't know which you are, found me out, and I've been your tool ever since. I'll say the bank is ruined, the books are lies, the safe is empty, and you, Henry Tinkham, insatiate stock-gambler, in your vile schemes to make a fortune and to gratify the extravagance of lewd women, have squandered every cent. Your last

visit to Boston finished the remnant of Dick's property left in our hands; that though you've ruined the townspeople you've feathered your own nest. Dick comes of age to-morrow, to receive only an empty house and not one farthing of the hard-earned money his honest old father left him."

He paused then to breathe, and wiped the sweat off his forehead and palms.

"You are determined?"

"I have sworn it, and I've prayed the night through for strength to aid me till I tell all. Then, oh, God, let me die!"

With a cry of agony he bent his white head over the table and wrote with eager, nervous haste.

Tinkham stood a moment irresolute. He did not waver or falter; he was not a coward nature. He never forgot in after years that chilly room, the monotonous ticking of the clock, the river outside the window sparkling and swift, the office cat asleep in a corner where the sunlight fell warm on the floor, the open safe, the disordered books and papers, and the bowed figure at the desk.

Fleet as an arrow, noiseless as a shadow, he caught the hatchet near the stove, and in a second—a half second—lifted it high, his face gleaming with hate and vengeance, and, crash! the blunt end descended on the bowed head. Quick, another blow! He groans. Another. So. Not a cry, not a word, death came instantaneously. Oh, God, the blood! It spurted over everything. He wrapped the head in his own coat and that stopped it. He kindled a fire and thrust into it the bloody hatchet-handle and the papers and books that were spotted; he burned the square of oilcloth under the desk, and carefully brushed the edges of the carpet where the dust had gathered; he threw open the window and flung the hatchet-head far into the stream; he left the room and came back in the overalls and ragged coat and hat of the old janitor who lived a mile away and did not be back till Monday; he brought in a bag; it had been filled with charcoal. Into this he thrust the body, then lifting it through the window, he flung the heap straight into a boat moored below; then arranging the room neatly, he dropped into the boat himself with the agility of a squirrel, catching the water-pipe to stay his fall, and then the boat shot into the stream flying across to the opposite shore.

Huldah followed her father that Sabbath morning. He knelt by her bed and kissed her before he left, and she feigned sleep, for she feared he was troubled; he had groaned and walked all night; so when she heard the hall-door shut she hurried on her clothes and her blue velvet cloak with its soft ermine lining, and hastened to the bank to come home with him, and perhaps take an early morning walk. The big door was locked, but she had a key to a side-door in the private office, for she often came to visit her father during bank hours when she was lonesome. She was so gentle in her movements that her light footsteps made no noise. She passed into the office; there were angry voices in the bank-room. There was a little scratch in the panes of the glass in the upper half of the door leading to that room; she made it one day so she could peek through at the people inside. She looked through this, and she saw the terrible scene. It was like a frightful dream. Vainly she tried to scream, to open the door, but she was dumb and powerless and fell in a dead faint.

How long she lay she did not know. When she came to consciousness the bell was ringing for church. She went out unsteadily, as in sleep, and, strange enough, no one saw her leave the bank. She followed the throng crowding into the meeting-house, and sank in a corner of the pew, still in that curious, numb state. The people all seemed far-off, then near. Their faces swelled to giant size or diminished to dwarfs. Were they singing? It sounded like the rush of a mighty army. Who was leading? She struggled to fix her gaze. There, in the

deacon's seat, below the pulpit, in his immaculate linen and spotless broadcloth, with calm and serious face, was her father. Church was over.

"Are you sick, Huldah, darling?" he said tenderly, as he tried to take her hand.

"Yes, papa; my head is bad," she said, uneasily. "I think—please, I can walk best alone. I am fanciful when I am sick."

Much hurt, he made no effort to take the trembling hand.

"Can I sit by you?" he asked, when she lay on the big chintz-covered sofa in her pretty, sunny bed-room.

"Please, no, papa," she answered gently, striving hard to repress the shudder when he laid his large, cool hand on her head. "I'm better alone, when my head is so bad."

He stooped and kissed her, and wondered why those soft lips returned not his kiss. What had come over his darling? Perhaps she grieved for Dick; and his face darkened then.

CHAPTER III.

Monday morning was bright and pleasant. There was a suggestion of early frost in the air, but only enough to quicken dull pulses and stir sluggish blood. The hills were gorgeous masses of color, and the river along shore in their shadow was alike tinted by the same wondrous painter. The fields were brown and bare, with here and there scattered groups of corn-stalks. Shining from the rugged earth, yellow as the sun, big pumpkins showed their jolly heads. Crops were harvested, the winter's wood hauled and split, and hog-killing practically over. Farmers were idle till snow came; then there was the wood-cutting and hauling for the next winter, and the bustle and stir and vigorous life brought into the quiet woods by the red-shirted loggers and the excitement of their camp.

These fall days were fine occasions for neighbourly converse, and after the chores were done the "men folks" found errands to the village, and the roads leading thither would be dotted with teams heading for the common centre. The season had been fairly profitable, and as the hard-featured farmer passed the bank a look of inward satisfaction lightened his eyes, though his mouth still maintained its rigidity. Cumbersome scows navigated the Adder, and the surplus "produce" (none but a native Jewonkeean could properly pronounce the last word) was floated away to somewhere, to fill the deficit in a more barren region, if such could be found, or landing at a coast town, after vicissitudes of storm and sea in clumsy coasting schooners, it finally reached that El Dorado—Boston.

At ten A. M. the bank always opened. There were a few farmers who had deposits, and one or two came for unclaimed interest waiting. The latter wished "to buy the gals some locket fixin's, as 'twas comin' Thanksgiving, an' they'd like to look smart to meetin'." Each rugged and old fatherly heart felt an honest glow of pride in his "gals."

Slowly the hour went by. What was the matter? They rattled the door of the bank, they tried to peer under window curtains, and they talked it over. Just then a girl with a white, scared face and a shawl thrown over her head came running down the street.

"Mary Stacy; her father must be sick," said old Peter Rounds, who had fifty dollars to deposit, and naturally worried about carrying such a sum on his person. The girl came up panting:

"My father! Have you seen him! Wasn't home last night—left Saturday night. I've been here a dozen times and can't get in. Mr. Tinkham don't know where he is. Says he hasn't seen him since Saturday afternoon, at five—"

She stopped to get her breath.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The main strength and force of a law consists in the penalty annexed to it.