

LOVE'S MEMORY

Written for The Western Home Monthly by C. M. Watson

"—It's my thanks for the friendship—and the pin you gave"

A SOLITARY pedestrian had just reached the bend of the river when he confronted a young lad seated on the trunk of a fallen tree absorbed in reading.

"It's a fine place for reading, my boy, is it not?" he inquired more pleasantly than he had spoken to a child for years. In fact having no children of his own, he so seldom spoke to a child that when he did so his voice and manner were generally crisp and sharp.

The boy nodded a quick little nod. Somehow Carrington expected that nod and the glimmer of a smile that accompanied it. "What book are you reading?" he asked.

The boy held it out. It was that old classic of boyhood, "John Halifax, Gentleman."

"It's lovely," he said. "Teddy Clark lent it me and I have to finish it today because Lionel Appleyard is to have it next and he would like it as soon as I will give it him."

"It's a good long time since I read 'John Halifax,'" said Carrington more to himself than the lad, "but when I did it was at this very bend and on this same tree. There was a Clark and Appleyard in the partnership then too—the fathers, I have no doubt of Teddy and Lionel. What is your name, my boy?"

"Guy Smith, sir."

"Guy Smith's son!" Carrington recoiled as if he had received a blow. His face grew so grey and hard that the young lad involuntarily glanced upward to see if a cloud had fled across the sun.

"Your father was Guy Smith, I suppose?" Carrington said shortly.

The boy nodded. "Yes, I was called after him, but he's dead. He's been dead ten years. I cannot remember him."

"Have you any brothers and sisters?"

"I have a little sister two years younger than I am. The other two are dead. They died ever so long ago. I'm the only boy mother had. Oh, if I was only bigger and older! If I was I could do something to save our home. It is breaking mother's heart to have to leave it."

"Oh, she has to leave it, has she?" Carrington mimicked in his usual crisp and sharp tone.

"Yes, there's a mortgage on it and we're to be sold out very soon,—so the lawyer tells us. Mother tried hard to make the farm pay but she couldn't. I could if I were a man. I know I could. If they would only wait a few years. But I'm afraid it's no use thinking of that. Mother is always crying about leaving. She went there with father when they were married and she says she cannot live anywhere else now. Dorothy—that's my sister—and I do all we can to cheer her, but it is very little we can do. If I was a man! If only I were a man!"

"What was your mother's name before she married your father?" Carrington asked abruptly.

"Maud Heighley," answered the boy, his brow contracting with secret thought.

Carrington flinched again. Maud Heighley! He might have known it. What woman in all the world could give her son those blue eyes and firm mouth? So Maud had married Guy Smith—little Maud Heighley, his schoolboy sweetheart. He had forgotten her—or he had tried to. Yet sometimes in the midnight watch from the bridge of his ship he had seen the phantom-shape of a little girl with golden curls and clear blue eyes gliding ahead on the water.

And now the same vision presented itself as he absently looked straight before him. He was silent for a long time. All old memories came back with their full recollection and he again lived in his boyhood days.

The boy had returned to his book.

Finally Carrington aroused himself from his reverie.

"I used to know your mother years ago when she was about the same age as you—perhaps a little older," he said. "I wonder if she remembers me. Ask her when you go home if she remembers Dick Carrington?"

"Will you come to the house with me and see her, sir?" asked Guy politely. "Mother is always very pleased to see her old friends."

"No, I have not time today," Richard

Carrington was not going to tell Guy Smith's son that he did not want to see his little Maud of long ago in the figure of Guy Smith's widow. The name even spoiled her for him, just as those blue eyes spoiled the lad for him.

"But you may tell her something. The mortgage will be left as it is being paid, she shall stay in her home. It was I who was the power behind the lawyers, but I did not know that the present owner of the farm was my little playmate, Maud Heighley. You and she may stay there as long as you wish. Tell her Dick Carrington does this for what she gave him round the bend there. I think she will remember and understand."

Here he drew from his tie a little gold pin in the shape of an anchor.

"Tell her," he continued, addressing the pin more than the lad, "but for this I would have drifted many a time. It

has kept me off the rocks and held me on firm ground. As for you, Guy, be a good lad and stick to your mother. She's the best friend you'll ever have. I hope you'll make the farm pay when you are old enough to take it in hand. At any rate there'll be nothing to disturb you in possession of it."

"Oh, sir! Mr. Carrington!" stammered Guy in his ecstasy of delight. "Do you really mean it, it sounds too good to be true. Do you really mean that we can stay in the old home and not be sold out. Won't you come and tell mother yourself? She'll be so glad—and grateful. Do come with me and let her thank you herself."

"No, Guy, not today. I would rather not. Off you go and give her my message. The sooner she gets it the better."

Richard Carrington watched the lad (Continued on Page 56)

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