

"Then I'll help you to shell them."  
Turah lifted the basket and moved away.

"Wait a minute," begged Ellen. "I wanted to ask you something."  
She turned and looked down into Ellen's eyes.

"I can't stay very long. There's a heap of stuff to be got up for market." It was difficult for Ellen to frame her question. She went close to Turah and put her arms around her neck. "You don't love me any more," she said.

"There were tears in her blue eyes. Adverse opinion was a grievous wound.

"I do," cried Turah hotly; "taint your fault if you're prettier and sweeter than me."

She set down her basket and took Ellen's fragile body in her strong clasp.

"Oh, I do wish you all the good and happiness in the world, more'n I could wish for myself if you and him are happier so. You're welcome to him, Ellen."

There was the difference of ten years between them, but they reached a unity of opinion from opposite standpoints. Intentional evil or injury did not exist for Turah; she had no comprehension of it. It did not exist for Ellen—she ignored it.

Ellen went to her room. For the first time since she came to Honey Path she began to feel bored and to look forward to the prospect of getting away.

She could not understand why Turah should spoil everything by such an assumption.

She looked a long while in the mirror. The Chambays were becoming tiresome. There was the evidence of the sun on her neck and arms. She pulled the kerchief away from her breast and pushed back her sleeves, where the skin was white and smooth in contrast.

Dinner was served under the trees by the spring. There were only the three women. The food palied upon Ellen's taste.

When evening came she walked down a still, unfrequented road. She wished to avoid Francis. Turah renunciation had suggested a possible embarrassment of riches.

With a feeling of impatience she saw the waggon coming toward her, black against the yellow west.

Francis leaned forward from the high seat. He was so deep in thought that he did not see her at first.

She would have hidden had there been bush or stone large enough to conceal her. He leaped down and they followed the lumbering waggon.

"I stopped at the post office as I come along and fetched these."

He gave her two letters, and watched her face as she turned them to catch the light.

She scanned the date and said:

"August 29th. This must have been at the office quite a while. It makes no difference, though. Had you a good sale?"

"Pretty fair."

"Too bad you will have to go again to-night."

"I'm not tired. That's a curious handwriting."

"Yes," she struck the letters against the palm of her hand, "very singular."

"If I recollect, I brought you a letter from the same person in July."

"They are from Henrietta's brother, and I think this last one means that my stay here is over."

Francis took her hand and held it fast. A thousand burning words rushed to his lips.

She began to talk rapidly in an endeavour to keep him from speaking.

"You have been so kind to me—all of you—so sweet and good. Aunt Kitty could not have been more so to a daughter and Turah has been a sister. As for you, how can I ever thank you for your goodness? Indeed, you must be the brother I have always wished for, materialized this summer. How dark it is growing! Turah's coffee will be cold. Let us walk faster."

"Stop!" said Francis. "I've got something to say to you. When are you coming back again?"

"Soon, I hope."

"I'd come to look upon you as never going away. Promise when you come back it will be for good."

"Have you forgotten Turah?" she asked. "You are engaged to marry Turah. Oh, Francis, how can you be so dishonourable?"

"I thought we'd both agreed to forget Turah this long time," he answered.

She felt weak and cowardly. An honest sugar was foreign to her.

"Who's dishonourable?" he demanded. "Who made me forget Turah so that if I live to be a hundred she can never be anything to me again? Who tolled me away from Turah with eyes and hands and lips and—yes—and words?"

Ellen looked across the fields up to the first faint stars. From somewhere a whippoorwill called and a bat circled close.

"Why is it dishonourable to say I love you," he persisted, "when it's the truth?"

She held up the letters.

"Have they anything to do with it?"

"They are from Brian, Henrietta's brother. I shall marry him some of these days."

"And you knew it two months ago?"

"I have known it five years."

She did not tell the truth even then. She had known it ten.

"You have no right to speak so to me. If this were not so you were bound. Nothing can excuse your faithlessness to Turah."

"Then you've been fooling me."

He held her by the shoulders and told her such humiliating truths as only a plain man goaded beyond restraint could speak.

She was thankful when he released her and permitted her to walk apart from him.

The horses stood waiting at the bars.

Ellen held out her hand.

"I'm sorry if I have offended you." He lowered the bars and motioned her to leave him. She went between long rows of currant bushes to the house. There were visitors in the parlour to the left of the hall. The door stood open and a stream of light marked the bare floor.

A tall, middle-aged man got up from the sofa along which he had thrown his remarkable length, and came to meet her. He greeted her as if she were but lately out of the nursery.

She hid her face under the lapel of his coat and sobbed.

"I wish you'd take me home, Brian. I want to go home right away."

When Francis came in from the stable he found his mother and Turah disconsolate at the gate. The house had grown suddenly empty.

"She's gone, Francis," said his mother, "and left her kindest love for you."

Her voice echoed through the place and intensified its loneliness.

Towards midnight the waggon with its load of vegetables was ready for market. Francis fastened the cover and climbed up on the seat.

Turah called from the door. She held a lighted lantern above her head and a bundle under her arm.

"You were going without your lunch and the lantern; and there's so many bad places in the road."

As she held them up a gust of wind caught the lantern and swept it noisily from her hand.

The air was sweet with the odour of rain rushing over drenched fields and woods. Turah ran after the lantern and brought it back.

"There's an awful rain a-coming. I can hear it. Won't you wait till it's over?"

He got down and led the horses to the sheltered side of the barn. The rain, hurling itself obliquely against the earth, caught him before he followed Turah within the door.

The mows were empty, and the vast ramshackle building shivered and creaked. Through numberless breaches streams of water poured upon the floor.

Turah hung the lantern against the wall. She and Francis leaned on opposite sides of the door and looked out.

Through the numbness that had taken possession of his faculties a sense of shame of his dishonour to her made itself felt.

She said timidly:

"She'll come back again. I heard her say so. You know she hadn't seen her brother for a mighty long time, and the other."

"Henrietta's brother?"

"Yes, Brian."

Francis repeated what Ellen had told him.

"She is to marry Brian some of these days. She has known it five years."

Turah bent forward and asked:

"What did she mean about—about—the rest of us?"

"I've been a fool, that's all. I've been worse than a fool to you, Turah."

"Don't mind me," she interrupted. "If my misery'd made your happiness, I'd be miserable all my life."

He stretched out his hand in the darkness.

"It's holding up," he said. "I'd better be going."

Turah followed him into the road. "Good night. You'd better get along in."

In obedience to a sudden impulse he leaned down and held out his hand. She took it in both her own and laid her face against it.

"Good-bye. Take good care o' your self."

It was too dark to see even the outline of the waggon. She judged of its progress by the yellow light from the lantern that flashed into pools which lay thickly over the uneven surface of the road.

Francis went onward mechanically. The actors in the Honey Path farce passed before him—his mother, Turah and Ellen, with the stereotyped sweetness of her pale face. He lived the summer over.

The lights on the outskirts of the city burned like yellow spheres through the misty rain. Across the road ran the gleaming iron of rails, from darkness into light and into darkness again. The gates were pointing skyward like ghostly sentinels.

There came the whirr and rattle of the approaching train, the flash of the headlight, and the long, wild scream of the engine leaping through the stillness.

He rose to his feet and looked down the track. A reckless impulse seized him. He raised his whip and brought it down upon the necks of the horses' flanks. They plunged forward upon the rails. He heard their shrill neighing. His eyes were blinded by the fierce light that encompassed him, and the train rolled away into the darkness, leaving a fiery scintillation in its wake.

In November Ellen drove out with Brian to Honey Path.

She told herself that after the lapse of six weeks Francis must have had sufficient time to acknowledge his unreasonableness.

She went through the superfluous gate under its green arch. The door was ajar. She pushed it back.

Turah was gathering into her apron the brown leaves that had blown in on the wind. They rustled crisply as she crushed them between her fingers. She looked up as Ellen stood in the light. There was no change in the expression of her face.

Ellen knelt down beside her and put her arms around her neck.

"You dear Turah! It is so good to see you again!"

She would have kissed her, but Turah laid a hand upon her breast and kept her away. She was surprised in a dull way that she had no reproaches, for sometimes at her work in the lonely fields or among the cows she had pictured this meeting and terrible words had sprung to her lips. Now she recognised the futility of upbraiding.

"Is any one ill?" asked Ellen. "Aunt Kitty or Francis?"

"She's in the back room," said Turah. "Come and see her."

The room had an unfamiliar look. It had been arranged for winter.

Mrs Rail sat in a corner near the fire. She kissed Ellen and made her sit down near her.

"It's chilly. The fall's comin' soon," she said. "I been lookin' for you. I thought you'd come."

Ellen glanced at Turah, who sat in the window and studied the dial of a tall clock whose hands pointed toward five.

"Is—Francis—?" She could not complete the sentence.

"Bars ran over Mrs Rail's wrinkled cheeks.

"Oh, my poor boy—my good boy! For him to die like that. So young, too, not twenty-three till March. He never gave me a cross word in his life. All gone an' him the only one left. He was my baby; no more'n six months when his father died. Seems like he always nearer to me for that—never to have no futher to do for him. An' he was such a good boy."

Turah had taken her gaze from the clock and her eyes looked into Ellen's with unmeasurable reproach. To avoid this Ellen knelt down by the bereaved woman's chair and laid her face upon her knee. She wanted, too, to shut out the sight of that little old figure with the quick tears falling down upon the knotted hands which clasped and unclasped themselves in a restrained passion of grief. She felt those hands touch her hair as the story went on.

"At three in the mornin' I woke out of a sound sleep. Somebody called me. I got up and went to the window. The night was so black you couldn't see yo' han' before yo' face. I t'warrn't no use to go back to bed. I set there until daybreak, an' when

I went down, Turah she was already up an' through with the milkin', an' by an' by a man come up on horseback an' I knowed he had bad news for me. Seemed like I had been waitin' for him the endurin' night. An' then later on—they brought him home."

The dignity of her grief changed to a tone of complaining. She wiped her tears away with the back of her hand and sighed.

"What am I to do with never a body to say a comfortin' or a pleasant word? Some people are like a stock or a stone. No more feelin'. You'd a-thought Turah would have taken on some, considerin' her an' Francis was courtin' once. I ain't seen her shed a tear. Not that I got anything ag'in Turah in general. She's a good girl, but she ain't got any feelin'. When the men that holds the mortgage come to me after the funeral an' said now Francis was gone the best thing I could do was to get out an' sell the place for what it would bring, Turah stood up an' told 'em that so long as the interest was paid that's all they had to look to, an' that she was goin' to take Francis' responsibility, an' I should die here if I liked. An' Turah works outdoors an' in. Rails wasn't used to this before the war, but what's to be done? She tends market just as he used to. She ain't afraid. Things go on, as far as money's concerned, as well as ever. I can't deny; better, maybe. Francis, poor fellow, hadn't patience to look after small matters. She got nine dollars a hundred for the last cabbages, an' with mournful complacency, 'cabbages are still a-risin'. But Turah ain't got any feelin'. If I begin to talk about Francis she says it's time to feed the hogs or milkin' time, or she's got to get up the land for market."

Turah said nothing. At seventeen her girlhood had left her.

The reflection of the sun slipped from the wall.

Ellen made ready to leave. Mrs Rail rose weakly from her chair and kissed her.

"God bless you, child! He thought a monstrous lot of you."

At the door her eyes met Turah's for an instant, and Turah said in an impersonal fashion:

"It's hard for her. Seems like it'd be good of God if she could go along with him, for she don't take any comfort with me. All I can do for her is to work, and I'd do that, anyway; I don't ever want to stop. His death wasn't the hardest blow. But for her there ain't nothing more but just to wait by herself till she dies. No son, no daughter—nobody but me."

"Good-bye," said Ellen.

She would not brave enough to offer her meaningless pretty blandishments.

Turah watched her drive away into the mists that were shutting out the stretch of road. She looked the door and lifted the heavy bar. Afterward she went back to the grey room and took her place in silence by the desolate old mother whose tears at some potent recollection were again beginning to flow.—"Short Stories"

Mr James Booth, Stipendiary Magistrate, of Gisborne, died at his residence, Roseland, on Monday, after a brief illness. Deceased came to the colony in 1852, in connection with the Church Missionary Society, and in 1856 settled down at Pipiriki, on the Wanganui River, and engaged in teaching and pastoral pursuits. At the time of the Hau Hau outbreak in 1864 he and his family were made prisoners, and for three days and nights were kept in constant fear of being murdered, but their lives were spared, and they escaped, losing everything they possessed. Mr Booth subsequently took an active part in warfare against the rebels, being given a military charge at Upper Wanganui. When friendly natives were assailed at Jerusalem and run short of ammunition Mr Booth, with a Maori crew, paddled to Wanganui for fresh supplies and thus saved the allies, services for which he was thanked by the Native Minister. In 1865 he was appointed Magistrate at Wanganui, and two years later he was actively engaged in the suppression of the native rebellion in Patua district, living in constant danger of being murdered. In 1883 he was transferred to Poverty Bay, where he gained the respect and esteem of the whole community. Mr Eyre Bennett, the Wanganui Magistrate, arrives tomorrow to take up the duties of Magistrate temporarily. The "Herald" urges that Mr Burton, clerk of the court, is fully qualified to succeed Mr Booth, possessing the entire confidence of the community, and should be appointed to the vacancy.