

'Something ought to be done, men.' He could hardly control his voice. 'It'll be a low-down shame to let Uncle Charley be sold out.'

'What can we do?' asked Jones, rather idly.

'I don't know exactly what we can do,' continued Todd, 'but let me tell you what he's done for me. When I came here I didn't have a red cent, and he trusted me for a whole year's living, and never asked me for it once. I couldn't pay him, but I got ashamed and wouldn't buy any more. Well, the next fall when I took down with the fever there wasn't a thing in the house to go on. I tell you, we were in a mighty bad shape, and didn't know what in the world would become of us, until one evening Mr. Johns came over and brought the doctor. Says he, "Doc. and I just thought we'd drop in." And while the doctor was fixin' me up some medicine, he called my wife to one side and says, "Mrs. Todd, you send one of the boys down to the store and get what you need, and Jim can pay when he gets well."'

No one spoke for some time. 'Now, see here,' continued Todd, 'I'm a mighty poor man, but Bill says he will give me 100 dollars for my bay mare, and I'm going to sell her and give the money to Uncle Charley to help pay off that debt.' Several others volunteered to help.

'I don't think,' said Mingus, 'that it would be best to give him the money. He wouldn't feel right about it, you know. It ain't so much the loss of the money; he can make that back in three or four years, but it's just taken all the stiffening out of the old man, and he's lost all heart. If we could fix it some way so he could go on with the store and see some way to pay out, it would be just the boost he needs.'

'Say, don't you suppose Adams would loan him the money?' asked one.

'Oh, Adams would loan it to him quick enough, if he can get the security; but how's he going to get it?' said Willis.

'Well, I never went on a note in my life,' said Haney, 'but I'll be one to go on old man Johns' note for three thousand dollars.'

And so said every man there.

A note was made out and put in the hands of Haney. The word was quickly passed round, and for two or three days men kept coming in at all hours to sign that note.

'He lent me fifty dollars when I was hard up,' said one.

'He helped Tog get through school when I was too poor to help him myself,' said a father who was now well to do.

'After working all day many is the time he came over to my house and sat up with me when I was down with the slow fever,' said a neighbor.

'Fifteen years ago,' remarked a prosperous young man, as he sat down to sign the paper, 'I was too worthless to kill. But Uncle Charley called me into the store one day and persuaded me to go to school, got me some books and sold me clothes on credit. Nobody thought he would ever get a cent for it.'

'I want to put my name on that note,' said a poor widow. 'I know it's not worth anything, but I want it there. Nobody knows, Mr. Haney, how kind Uncle Charley has been to us. The winter after Jim died Lizzie went up to the store one day almost barefooted. He pretended to have her help him count some corn, then he gave her a pair of shoes. He's done lots of things like that.'

'He is always so jolly and whole-souled you can't help but feel that he is interested in you and wants you to be happy,' was another's tribute.

There were but four more days of grace. The old man sat crouching in his chair as if shrinking from the coming blow. The whimsical humor, the independence, the courage were all gone. He was a poor, hopeless old man, down never to rise again.

Two or three farmers came in and sat on the edge of the porch. He tried to be sociable, but made a pitiful failure of it. Others came in, and then more, until there were two or three dozen seated on the porch.

The old man knew they had come to sympathise with him, but he could not bring up the subject of his loss.

There was an awkward half-hour in which nobody talked of the important matter. At last Haney nudged Todd, and urged him to speak. Todd shifted his position once or twice, got up awkwardly and stood before Johns, trying to speak, but the words stuck in his throat. Then he fumbled in his pocket, drew out a paper, held it out to the old man, and managed to say:

'Maybe it'll help you.'

The old man tried to speak, but could only call:

'Mary!'

His wife came quickly and looked at the paper.

'Thank 'em, ma, I can't!' said the old man, with a sob in his voice. The tears were running down her face as she turned toward the men. They were all looking away.

'I can't, either,' she said, as she slipped down beside her husband, with her arm round his neck, 'but they know.'

'Looks sorter like rain over in the south-west,' said Todd. 'Guess we'd better be going, boys.'—*Catholic News.*

A HAPPY ACCIDENT

The face of the girl presiding over the fancy department of Messrs. Hinton and Company's great china emporium looked very wan and wistful in the grey November light. She was a little bit of a thing, 'only a handful,' as the old woman with whom she lodged was used to say of her, and the simple straight lines of the plain black gown which she wore and which was only redeemed from shabbiness by its entire neatness and the tiny bands of spotless cambric at her neck and wrists served but to accentuate the extreme slinness of her figure.

Kitty Delaney, with her fair hair and dark-fringed blue eyes and petite, delicate features, would have been an extremely pretty girl had she had but the faintest touch of color in her cheeks or a less obviously timid and unhappy air. Poor child, it would have been hard for her to look otherwise, with not a friend in the world whom she could really call her own and no other cheer or brightness in life save that derived from the long day's work under the watchful eye of Mr. Hinton, who was a hard taskmaster and took very good care to extract every half-penny of his money's worth from the weary brains and hands and feet of his ill-paid employees.

She was wrong, after all, in saying she had not a single friend in the world, for was not Father Donegan, the dear old priest with the kindly face and the child-like blue eyes, the best of all possible friends to her, in spite of his well-known poverty and other priestly limitations. It was he who had got her her position at Hinton's, such as it was, but he did not know, nor would Kitty have troubled him by telling him that she was still working for the same meagre wages that she had started with three years before, with the promise then of getting a speedy rise in salary if she suited.

She did suit all right, she knew, though the only outward evidence she had of the fact was an increase of duties and responsibility. Sometimes, when Mr. Hinton's manner had been particularly harsh and overbearing, she had thought of throwing up her situation and seeking another. But that might savor of ingratitude to Father Donegan, and she would not hurt or disappoint him for the world. Besides, she knew from the experience of some of her associates that it was not so easy to get another situation, especially on leaving an employer like Mr. Hinton, who as often as not, after bullying his unfortunate assistants into open rebellion, refused to give a recommendation for further employment. And there was old Mrs. D'Arcy to be thought of, who, despite certain good qualities of her own, would certainly look very blue if Kitty were to leave her many weeks running without the meagre salary which was barely sufficient to support her.

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