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For Her Father's Sake

By Alban E. Ragg

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Tick! Tick! Tick! Tick! reiterated the clock with monotonous persistency, reminding those present that the time for retiring was long since past, but the old farmer and his daughter stayed on, regardless of the fleeting hours. Neither had spoken for fully 30 minutes. The man, reclining in a high-backed chair, was comforting himself with a black clay pipe, and the woman sat gazing listlessly into the fire, an open letter in her hand.

"Tis ten years to-night since mother died," she remarked, sadly. A sudden strong gust of wind shook the door of the outhouse, making it creak mournfully as it swayed to and fro on its rusty hinges. The old man stirred uneasily in his chair, and glanced nervously behind him.

"Yes, it's ten years to-night," he replied, with an effort to appear at ease. Both again lapsed into silence. Presently the old man glanced across at his daughter and said:

"Who did the letter come from, Mary?"

"From William Dutton, father."

"William Dutton, eh? Why, it's many a long day since you heard from him. What's he been doing with himself since he went away?"

"He wrote to tell me that he's just been married, father," the woman replied, and although she tried to speak calmly and bravely, a sympathetic ear would have distinguished the sound of unshed tears in her tremulous voice.

"Married, eh," the old man remarked with a chuckle. "Well, well, the Book says it is not good that a man should be alone. He was a nice young fellow, and I trust he has found a good woman."

"So do I, father," replied his daughter, very gently.

"Mary."

"Yes, father."

"It has often been a puzzle to me that you and him never made it up. I always thought he was kind o' fond of you, but women's queer creatures; they let a good man go, and pine after a fool who doesn't care a button top for 'em."

The woman made no reply, but holding up the letter, read it through carefully for a second time.

My Dear Mary: I've took you at your word; you said it was no use waiting, and I began to reckon it wasn't, so I married a little girl I met down here last year. It was kind of lonesome, coming back night after night to cold, cheerless lodgings, with never a soul to smile at a man, and I'm fond of company, you know. I tried to bear up and told myself that I had no right to marry another woman; if I felt lonesome, why, you felt lonesome too, and it wasn't your fault. Then one night coming home from chapel meeting, all of a sudden I took hold of her hand and asked her to marry me. That's how it all happened, and we were married two weeks ago to-day. She's a kind-hearted little thing and can't do enough for me.

Good-bye, my dear friend. Don't think any less of me. My best respects to your father. Your sincere friend,

WILLIAM DUTTON.

"Mary."

"Yes, father."

"What did you keep him hanging on for all those years, if you didn't intend to marry him? I didn't like to say

what he said, for she sat staring at the blazing log, thinking, thinking, thinking of the past and of possibilities now lost forever.

Five years ago William Dutton had come to make his last appeal to her to marry him. He was employed on the railway and had received a good appointment in Chicago, and he came either to obtain her promise to marry him or to say good-bye.

Five years ago! It seemed like five hundred. How hard he had striven to overcome her conviction that to marry him would be contrary to what she felt to be her duty towards her father.

"Let him come with us," he said.

"No; it would break his heart to leave the old farm; he'd never consent," she replied, sadly.

Then William Dutton, driven to desperation, cried angrily:

"Seems to me he's a selfish old man. Parents is everlastingly talking about the duty of children, but they mostly forget the duty of parents."

"Hush, Will; he never tried to make me stay. I never even spoke to him about it. I couldn't, you know, because I promised mother when she died that I would never leave him alone."

"Then you have quite made up your mind, have you?" he said in a strained voice.

"Yes, Will; but don't speak unkindly to me. God knows it's hard enough to let you go without having you angry with me."

And with a sob she laid her head on his shoulder, and he stroked her hair and spoke a few kind, gentle words of affection.

"Mary, I've been a good father to you, haven't I?"

"Yes, father, you've always been good to me," she replied, evidently surprised at this unusual remark from her father, who had exacted so much and given so little in return, but then he was a lonely old man, and never meant to be selfish and mean and unreasonable, she thought.

"I wonder how you'll get along without me, Mary," he continued, and his voice shook perceptibly.

"Hush, father; you must not talk like that; you'll last for many a long day yet."

The old man chuckled to himself.

"I wasn't thinking of dying, Mary," he replied, significantly.

"That's right, father. Why, you're a younger man than many a one half your age," she remarked, cheerfully.

"Do you think so? Do you think so, daughter?" A look of eager hope came into his eyes.

"Of course I do; any one with half an eye can see that," she said, in a tone of mild surprise.

"Mary, I've got something I want to tell you. I've been trying to make up my mind for the past six weeks, but I never knewed quite how to do it."

"What is it, father? You are not ill, are you?" she inquired, anxiously.

"No, daughter; never felt better in my life."

"By the way, how long is it since Harry Johnston died?" he asked.

Mary glanced up in astonishment. "About two years ago," she said.

"What made you think of him, father?"

"I—I—I was—going—to—tell you that I am going to marry Harry Johnston's widow," he blurted out. "I just wanted to know what you thought of her."

"Father!" she cried, and her face lost all its healthy glow. She stood staring at him in a strange, vacant manner as though unable to realize what he meant.

"Well! Well!" he remarked testily. "What have you got to say against it?"

"Nothing, father. Do whatever you think is for the best."

Both remained silent for a moment. The clock struck 11. The old man got up out of his chair.

"Guess it's time to go to bed," he remarked.

"Yes, father; I reckon it's about sleeping time," the woman answered, wearily.

Jockeys' Tricks.

A New York jockey, while packing up to go abroad to look for work, talked.

"There are tricks of two kinds in jockeying," said he, "the legitimate and the illegitimate. Use the first and you'll prosper. Use the last and it's all up."

"Illegitimate tricks are pulling a race and getting left at the post. If you once pull a fast horse and make him lose, you are always afterwards an object of suspicion, and ten to one, if you ever pull another horse, you are done for. But getting yourself left at the post is a big and complex subject, and it is the one trick that a clever jockey can work time and again with safety."

"To cause a rival horse to swerve is an illegitimate trick that often wins your race. You cause the swerving by straightening out your leg so that your heel nearly touches the other horse's nose, or you make a wide slash with your whip, so that it nearly touches the other horse's eyes."

"The legitimate tricks are—but why give them away when it has taken all my life to learn them?"



"Yes, Father, He Was a Very Good Man, But I Couldn't Marry Him."

anything about it at the time, but now it's all past and gone, I must say you treated him shabby. He was a good enough man for you, wasn't he?"

The woman's face twitched painfully, and she answered in an almost inaudible whisper:

"Yes, father; he was a very good man, but I couldn't marry him, and that's all about it."

"You couldn't marry him, and, pray, why not?"

"I just don't want to say any more about it, father; he's married now, and there's the end of the whole business."

"All right, Mary; as you please, as you please, but the day will come you won't have any one to look after you, and as you've been a kind girl to me, I'd like to see you comfortable with some good man before—before—"

The old man stopped abruptly, and glanced up timidly at his daughter.

But she didn't appear to have heard

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