

A precious child was sleeping soundly in its bed.

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Watertown was smoking one evening, all the way up from the giant red chimneys of Jean and Farwell's iron works down to Mrs. Margaret Turner who, in her green and red parlor sat smoking too.

Something, evidently, was weighing upon her mind, which, had it not been for the general atmosphere in which she lived, would have been a sufficient excuse for her present indulgence; for we understand that smoking is a habit to which only worried women or very old women are addicted; and Mrs. Turner was still young.

She sat there meditating, and as she became more involved in smoke and thought she spoke aloud: "Tom, poor Tom. I wonder whether he's dead—surely he ought to be—its six years today since he set sail in the "Good Luck," and never's he sent a word to his Margaret. I might have died or starved for all the good he's done me—dear Tom—I'm sure he's dead. Now there's that box, if only—why good evening, Shamus; come in, take a chair."

Mrs. Margaret Turner laid her pipe aside; her blue eyes shone more brightly and her cheeks burned a vivid red as she looked at the figure in the doorway—Shamus Boland, a raw and sandy specimen freshly over, but not so green but that he had an eye for business.

"Shure, and its not me who'd be a refusin' a chair from the loikes of ye, Mrs. Margaret. Niver yit hev I seen sich sparklin' eyes, nor sich red cheeks as yourn be."

He took the red stuffed chair that she offered him.

"Hev ye bin thinkin'," he continued, "of thet matter as what we were talkin' of yisterday—about ye and me? Pwhat do ye say to it?"

She was silent, for she was comparing mentally her husband as she had seen him last, with the young giant beside her, with his pale eyes, jovial face and gaudy clothes. The latter picture proved more pleasing.

"Yes Shamus," she said, "I've been thinking. But, you know, my husband may not be dead—"

"Ye need'nt worry about thet, Margarit, shurely and he'd niver stay away from ye thet long and not be dead, och no, ye need not worry."

"Tom was always so good and—"

"Niver so good as I'd be to ye."

Mrs. Turner was overcome. She burst into tears: she never, never could forget dear kind Tom, she could never find another man like Mr. Turner had been; he had not written to her, it is true, but he had died, she was certain, when he first went to sea and she had not known it and could not get the poor man a tombstone, and he was so deserving too! At this thought her grief became uncontrollable. It was some time before she could continue, and then she confessed, sobbingly, that she knew she was'nt handsome—she truly had been once—she was growing old, but if Shamus really wanted her she would marry him, yet she never, never could forget dear Tom as long as she lived.

Shamus had listened with quiet tolerance to this unavoidable outburst. "So thin, tomorrow, ye'll be Margaret Boland," said he.

"Yes, I guess so," answered the blushing hysterical Margaret. "Johnny will tell the neighbors," she murmured.

A cozy fire on the hearth cast a ruddy light upon the two as they sat there talking, and brightened the whole room with a light so effulgent that the pea-green parrot—Tom's gift to Margaret many years ago—perched high on the ten-day clock shone glossy bright even through a thick layer of long undisturbed dust.

And this was the picture that Thomas Turner saw, who, on this dark and clammy night stood shivering outside, close beside the window.

This was his home; yet he stood out in the cold, sad and troubled.

He pressed closer to the wall and looked in through the very corner of the lower