

I will take her down to the city, and while I'm there I'll see if I can arrange about your mission."

Silas' heart beat fast. At last his long-deferred hope was tantalizingly near fulfillment. He could have shouted for joy. The bishop turned his horse back after he had gone a few steps.

"It may be, brother," he said in a low tone, leaning over the saddle horn to bring his face near Silas, "it may be best that you bear down with a heavy hand. Not, of course, in an unreasonable manner, but sufficient to, in a measure, subdue her and lead her to reflect that a husband's care might be preferable to a father's discipline."

Having sown this seed, at which the devil must have rejoiced, he departed.

Silas stood for some time leaning on the gate. His mind retreated slowly from its fierce exultation over the thought of going on that longed for mission, of girding on the armor of his Master and taking the true word to the Gentiles, and then the reward that would be his when he should hear the "enter in." All the earthly buffetings he might meet, the violent death that might await him, these were nothing. Into the midst of his lofty dream the remembrance of Clarissy's heresy came like an awful accusation. What would all the glory of a mission avail him if the soul of his first born be lost? Anger, the anger of a narrow, zealous nature, began to burn against her. He walked slowly to the house. Behind the door hung a whip, a long, cruel blacksnake; his hand closed on it with a nervous grip.

Clarissy was trying to face an awful alternative when she heard her father's step. She did not look up as he came, she was very tired, yet her resolution was unshaken. Martha sat in her place as jailer. A latent sense of shame stirred in Silas.

"Go out, Marthy," he said roughly. The woman obeyed hurriedly, her timid obedience feeding the fire within him.

"Clarissy," he growled, "how long you goin' to keep up this durned foolishness?"

She raised her eyes, sad but unyielding. Their mute answer stung him beyond control. He struck her fiercely across the shoulders. She put her hands over her face as the blows fell heavily. Her silence maddened him more and more.

"I'll cut ye to pieces if ye don't talk," he swore with a great oath. She heard him, but now she felt faint and sick, then she knew no more, and Silas Dean, looking down on her lying at his feet, felt his rage turn upon himself with something like remorse.

"Sereny!" he called in a frightened tone, "Sereny!"

Serena came, and for once spoke fearlessly to her tyrant. "You've done a brave thing, Silas. I should

think you'd feel like a murderer," she said, and Silas slunk away.

Tenderly she lifted the bruised form. "Oh, mother," moaned the girl pitifully, as life came slowly back, "if I could only die." Later she sat up, stiff and sore. "I'm all right now," she told Serena, "I don't want nothin', only to be left alone."

Softened by the regret he felt for his cruelty, her father bade them leave her be; he thought she was safe until morning.

Clarissy did not undress. She lay quiet until the full moon had risen and its rich light was flooding the small room, then she rose and took from her chest a thin, yellow sheet of paper and a short pencil. After long meditation she began to write, slowly and with some difficulty, for she was self-taught since her mother's death. She wrote—

DEAR TOM:

Go way from here jest es quick es you can. I can't stand it no longer, I must die or marry some one I don't like. Good-bye.

Your loving CLARISSY.

She folded it and wrote the address, "For Mr. Tom Baker." Then, after listening a long time, she crept painfully out of the house. The night wind chilled her weary frame. She trembled at every noise as she passed down through the old orchard, where the gnarled trees writhed to and fro like uneasy ghosts. This was the path where she had walked with Tom. Poor boy, how sorry he would feel, never to see her again. She felt numb and dull. Her one desire was to reach the river—how it sparkled in the moonlight—she must get down there, even if she had to crawl.

Suddenly somebody sprang over the line fence. A moment of sickening fear, then Tom's voice whispered "Clarissy," and his arms were about her.

She felt no surprise, no hope. "Oh, Tom," she said feebly, leaning against him, "now we can die together. Come, it's not far to the river."

"Die!" he exclaimed. "My darling, we won't die. Oh, Clarissy, have they been cruel to ye? God, I'd like to kill 'em!"

He lifted her over the fence, then half led, half carried her along. In his father's yard he stopped. "Clarissy," he said, very tenderly and very earnestly, "they've mighty nigh killed ye, 'mongst 'em, an' ye can't go back there no more. I only got back las' night, an' Chalcy, she slipped out an' told me what was up, so I rode over to Jo. Bruntsell's, an' brought him an' Henry Halperson over. Jo. is a justice of the peace, an' he'll marry us this minute, then no one can't hurt ye. Will ye, Clarissy?"

She put her arms about his neck, "Tom, will ye be good to me?"