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PERSONAL MAGNETISM

The old house had been a day of such excitement since that baby was christened a month there. His wish was more respected than that of any prince. And news of him was listened to with care. Of course there was excitement when his mother told us all that for his father he, in language plain, had several times, with earnest emphasis, been heard to call "And that child will be a son again."

His mother and his father and his uncle and his aunt and the hired girl and the farmhands gathered round.

You'd have thought a famous fever had arrived to lead a chant by the way they stood and listened for the sound.

They watched his face for symptoms of an intellectual start.

No oracle was ever more revered. And when he smiled and spoke his mother held him to her heart.

And his father and the hired man whooped and cheered.

The years have passed above him. He's grown up a patriot now.

He lectures to the masses oft and long. Success has sometimes paused to place a laurel on his brow.

And his mental grasp is wonderfully strong. But he cannot hold an audience in a still, expectant spell.

Though he's been a speaker since he was a lad, as he did when, in the cradle long ago, he couldn't tell a thing we didn't know, but just said "Dad!"

—Washington Star.

THE STORM.

A sudden gale had sprung up from the north-east; great black backed gulls and feeble winged puffins had been forced inland through the smoky mists inland. Night fell amid the clash of wind and sea. A narrow track winding round the cliffs led past a cottage; light shone from the windows, and in the kitchen were three women. The youngest lay in a trundle bed, a baby against her breast; an old woman, tall, gaunt and white haired, sat at a table, the Bible before her, muttering over familiar passages with awkward lips; the third moved softly about the room preparing supper. She stood a moment by the bed, as the child broke into a long, low wail.

"Poor lamb!" she said. "He frets as if your breast was cold to him."

"Maybe 'tis cold," replied the sick girl indifferently.

"Aye, but not tonight, Nan," the other protested, "and his father out in a storm like this."

"The Lord have mercy on the lad," exclaimed the old woman, glancing up, "he's got that scamp Rab Tapp w' him in the boat. Scores o' times I've told Joss 'twould be safer to sail 'long o' decent folk."

Nan stirred uneasily. "Rab's as good as the rest o' 'em," she muttered, "and a long ways handier."

"Handy w' his tongue be like," retorted the old woman, "there ain't his equal for lying in this here parish. 'Tis only reasonable that the Lord should be angored ag'in him, though maybe the Almighty will mind that Joss has been a good son to me and spare the boat."

She was silent a moment, listening to the continuous clamor of the massive door bolts that barred back the storm. "Aye, that Rab," she burst out fiercely, "they should cast him overboard the same as the men o' Joppa cast the prophet Jonah, son of Amittai. Who knows but the Almighty may be speaking now by the voice o' the wind? 'Cast him out, cast him out, and the raging waves o' the sea shall foam upon his shame.'"

"How dare 'ee speak such words as them!" cried the girl, springing up in bed. "The Lord ain't no Moloch to devour men's lives."

"And what's Rab Tapp's life to thee?" replied the other sternly. "It'll become a mother with her first child at breast to be taking such thought for furrin men's lives."

"Come, come, mother," interposed the third woman, "let Nan be. Supper's on the table, and you'd feel better for a snatch o' sommat."

"I did well to name 'ee Martha," cried the old woman, turning on her. "Your thoughts be too much taken up w' the things o' this world. What call have I for bite or sup when the great starved sea is hungering after my son? Aye, but Joss, lad, lad," she continued to herself, "and you that fond o' whistling!"

Martha made no answer, but, pouring out a cup of tea, brought it to the sick girl. "Happen 'twill quench your thirst a bit, Nan," she said.

"Taint that kind o' thirst," replied the other wearily.

"Take it all the same, lass," Martha urged, and the girl drank.

"Tis salt as the sea!" she exclaimed, pushing the cup from her with a shudder. "Seems as if I knowed the taste o' drowning."

"And well you may," exclaimed the old woman, "when your man is forced so nigh to it."

"Joss will not be drowned," replied the daughter-in-law carelessly. "What for should he be drowned? Oh, my God," she ended, with abrupt change of voice, as the hurrying scream of the storm wrenched its way through the cottage, "why did yer make the sea?" She flung herself back in the bed, and the child began once more to cry, but she paid no heed to it.

"Poor heart," said Martha, stooping and raising the baby in her arms, "he frets over things." She walked to and fro in the little kitchen, her face pressed close against the child's, her soft brown hair mingling with his soft, downy fluff. "My own child," she continued meditatively, "was wonderful contentsome."

"Your own child!" exclaimed the harsh voiced old woman. "Why, your own child was born dead!"

"Her was never dead to me," Martha answered gently. "I used to talk a deal to her lying there so close and trustful ag'in my heart. But now I wotter feel that if me and Jim had another child maybe 'twould be born dead."

"Aye, and no wonder," retorted her

mother. "A more shifless body than Jim I ain't come across, always tramping round in searching work and never finding it. He's a poor stick. The sea never gave him no call, and you sat at home and set your virtuous content, come storm, come clear."

The sick girl raised herself on her arm. "There's one thing I never could fathom," she exclaimed with sudden interest, "and that's his being own brother to Rab. Why, he ain't no patch on him."

"No," rejoined her mother-in-law sharply. "He's more fool than cheat for certain. If 'twere he out in the boat w' Joss, happen the Lord might overlook him."

The girl's dark eyes flashed, and Martha interposed in a hurt voice: "Maybe Jim ain't so quick at the tale up as Rab, but he's mortal perseverin' at trying. After all, Nan," she added, "you ain't never seen Rab but twice."

"No, I ain't never seen him but twice," the girl repeated.

"And when you did meet never spoke much to one 'nother," continued Martha wonderingly.

"No, no never spoke much to one 'nother."

"Aye, certain," exclaimed Martha. "Why, the last time he come in here 'twas a matter of three weeks ago. You was sitting up in front of the fire nursing the child, and he just stood over again 'ee by the chimney-piece, sorter thoughtful. 'Do you love it?' he axed, 'do you love it?' but you didn't make no answer. Them were his words. Do you mind, Nan?"

"Yes," said the girl softly, "I mind."

"'Twas a queer question I reckoned to put to a mother, but there, you ain't never been terrible up w' the child."

"No."

"Maybe you didn't speak to him sorter tender after you borned him, same as I did my little girl."

"No."

"Yet 'twere my child that was born dead."

"Aye," the girl answered fiercely, "and ain't mine born dead too?"

The older woman glanced at her in astonishment. "What ails you, Nan?" she exclaimed. "Why, the poor lamb is calling for the breast."

"I don't hear it call," the girl answered stonily.

Martha looked down with sad eyes at the child on her knee. "You don't love it terrible tender?" she said.

The girl, turning away her head, made no reply. Without the storm clamored more fiercely and the faces of the listening women grew white and tense.

"Pray for them at sea," exclaimed Martha, glancing at her mother.

"And ain't I praying for 'em?" expostulated the old woman passionately. "Say the word aloud, mother, and let us join in."

The old woman clasped her hands, worn with toil, knotted with age, and sank on her knees. Her lips trembled, but no words broke from them. Wind and sea, as if in derision at her helplessness, burst into more hideous combat, and the thunder heaved its way through their clamor with a noise like the splitting of mountains.

"O God!" sobbed the woman, "he was a good son to me, a good son to me." She was silent a moment, and the storm without upheaved itself against the cliffs, rocking the cottage in its heavy enhance. "O God!" she burst forth again, "Ye would have spared Sodom for the sake o' ten righteous men, and 'twere a terrible big and wicked city—spare the boat cause o' Joss! I wouldn't have axed so bold if 'twere a ship, but it's nought but a boat, mortal small and tiddeliwinkie, w' only three men and a lad in it, and the lad's a decent lad come o' respectable church folk, no chappolites a-setting o' their selves up above their betters. Happen you're angored ag'in Rab Tapp, and well you might be, for he's not over and above conspicuous in good works. Still he's young—and youth's larning time—but, if ye be terrible set on cutting him off—and I'll not deny the temptation—then, O Lord God, speak to Joss through the mouth o' the winds, same as ye did the men o' Joppa, so that he shall rise and cast Rab forth into the deep, and the sea shall cease her raging!"

As she uttered the last words the sick girl sprang from the bed and caught the old woman by the shoulders. "How dare 'ee mind the Almighty o' Rab's weakness at such a time," she cried passionately.

"And do you reckon that the Lord has forgotten 'em?" replied the old woman in a hard voice. "Ain't they all written in the book o' judgment?"

"There be scores and scores o' folk on the sea tonight," the girl answered, "dear wicked folk than Rab, and why should the Almighty be special took up w' 'ee? Oh, 'twere cruel, cruel o' yer to put him in mind o' the lad."

"Ain't the names o' all sailor men written on the same page, that the Lord may read and choose in the twinkling o' an eye? And shall I see my own cast away for fear o' speaking out?" remonstrated the old woman fiercely. "My firstborn, that lay at my breast and milked me trustsome. Shame on you to think o' stranger folk afore your own wedded husband!"

While she spoke there was the sound of heavy knocking on the door without. Martha crossed the room, shot back the great bolts, and a man, pale faced, drenched and battered, staggered in. The old woman gave an abrupt, keen cry. "My son!" she exclaimed, and would have taken him in her arms, but he put her gently aside and came toward the girl, who stood barefooted on the cold stone floor, her long brown hair curling over her coarse nightgown.

"Nan," he cried, "sweetheart, woman, wife, God's law given me back to 'ee."

"And Rab?" she said hoarsely.

"The sea has taken its toll. Rab's drowned," he answered.

"'Twas he I loved, not you," she cried and fell at the man's feet as dead.

—London Outlook.

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