

GRANNY'S SACRIFICE

"You be a fool, Sue Thorpe, that's what you be," said Mrs. Thorpe, delivering herself of the opinion to the subject thereof, while she made rattle amongst the cups and saucers in their transit from dresser to table.

Sue Thorpe sat in the recess of the kitchen window that looked out on to the sunlit garden. The drowsy stillness of the summer afternoon was only broken outside by the buzz of the bees as they flitted from flower to flower; and the only signs of active life beyond the open window were those self-same bees, and a pair of giddy butterflies that chased one another across the cabbages.

In silence the girl sewed on, paying no heed to the verdict her mother's lips had uttered. Many times had she heard it before, and no doubt she would hear it often enough—certainly so long as she remained single.

"Fancy you a-refusin' Joe Potter!" Mrs. Thorpe went on; "you ought to be 'shamed o' yourself throwin' away th' good bread th' Lord 'as seen fit to 'old out to you. Ingratitude, base ingratitude, I calls it of you, Sue Thorpe."

She filled two cups with tea from a little china pot as she spoke. Only when she saw this did Susan open her lips.

"B'ain't ye goin' to wait for Granny Grimes?" she asked. "Ye know, mother, I ha' asked 'er up to tea this a'ternoon."

"Well, she b'ain't come, then," snapped Mrs. Thorpe, stirring her tea viciously.

"But it b'ain't four yet," said Susan, looking at the old clock that ticked with slow solemnity against the wall. "An' I told 'er four."

"Well, I 'as my tea when I wants it," answered Mrs. Thorpe, "an' there be your'n, Sue. I b'ain't a-goin' to wait for anybody."

"Not for Mrs. Potter?" Susan suggested meekly.

Her mother glared at her. Mrs. Potter was her bosom friend, and the pair had set their hearts upon the wedding of their respective offspring, a setting much to the liking of Joe Potter, but nothing to the taste of Susan Thorpe.

"Not for Granny Grimes," said Mrs. Thorpe. "You think o' nought but th' Grimeses, though what ye can see in that lot of a Bob Grimes I don't know. 'E b'ain't a man, but a baby."

"'E be man enou' for me," answered Susan.

"An' old man afore ye marries un," responded her mother. "I'd be 'shamed for everybody to know I was waitin' to step into an old woman's shoes. An' ye never knows when Granny Grimes is goin' to die. She be gone seventy-five an' looks like goin' another seventy-five. Ye'll 'ave a long wait, Sue," and she laughed bitterly.

"I'd be 'shamed to talk like you an' think like you, mother," Susan answered, her cheeks crimsoned with anger. "I don't want 'er to die—"

"An' yet till she do Bob Grimes can't make ye 'is wife."

"I can wait."

"An' grow old an' ugly, so when th' time comes 'e'll find missin' all those pretty looks that 'e fell in love with; it be a nice thing to wait for; an' you won't see twenty-five again."

The girl sighed. Despite the unpleasant way her mother had of drawing the picture, making all its rugged shadows prominent, exaggerating them, perhaps, Susan had to admit its chief outlines were correct. It has been an understood thing between Bob Grimes and herself that they would marry when his grandmother died. For eight years now it had never got beyond being an understanding, and Granny Grimes, despite her having passed the allotted span, was as tenacious of life as ever.

But Susan knew that Bob loved her, and what was far more important, she loved him. Still, until his grandmother died, marriage was not for them; he had to work and keep her, as she had worked to keep him when his mother, dying, left him alone in the world, too young to fight for himself. It was his duty, and though it bore on him heavily he intended to religiously perform it. Had he married Susan, either they would all have had to starve or Granny Grimes would have had to find a cold home in that building of which she had so great a terror to the poor-house. For Bob Grimes was only a farm hand, one of many on the Squire's big farm, and the twelve shillings that was paid him weekly, while being enough for two to live on, would never have sufficed for three.

He has not realized all this eight years before, when with love in his heart he had poured its song into Susan's ears, and she had not realized either; but later the truth of it came to them both, with the blow to the man that was lightened, however, when the woman said she was willing to wait.

"I was married an' you was born afore I was your age," pursued Mrs. Thorpe, not without some pride.

Where'd we 'ave bin if I'd waited for some man who'd a gran'mother on 'is back? Thank 'eaven, your father 'adn't; if 'e 'ad 'e'd 'ad to 'ave chosen atwixt losin' me an' sendin' 'is gran'mother to th' workhus."

The old clock on the wall was seized with a sudden fit of rasping and sneezing that imbued the chain-supported weights with life, and as it struck four slow strokes they swung and lengthened and shortened.

Susan placed another cup and saucer on the table for the coming of Granny Grimes.

"Well," she said, "it b'ain't worth talkin' about any more now."

"No, it b'ain't," agreed her mother; "but if I was Mrs. Grimes I'd 'urry up an' die or go into th' 'ouse; an' if I was you I'd tell Bob 'e'd 'ave to choose atween me an' 'is gran'mother. O' course, it b'ain't 'er fault nor 'is'n," she added, growing somewhat conciliatory; "but you b'ain't a-goin' to go on wastin' yer life in waitin' for somethin' that might never come."

"Then, as her eyes fell on the garden, it suddenly attracted her attention.

"'Ere she be, Susan," and she crossed to the window.

She turned the next moment in astonishment. "Well, I do declare!" she exclaimed; "I thought Granny was a-comin', but it seems she be a-goin'."

Susan crossed to the window just in time to see the bent form of Granny Grimes pass through the gate, closing it carefully behind her. She turned to her mother, her face white and tears in her eyes.

"I do 'ope she ain't a-'eard," she said. "Dear old soul."

"P'r'aps it'll 'elp you a bit if she 'as," was Mrs. Thorpe's reply, given with an assumption of shamelessness that certainly did not spring from her heart. She was sorry, in a way, if Granny Grimes had heard, and there was little doubt that she had, or the old woman, she knew, would certainly have entered instead of turning back. But there, it couldn't be helped. If Bob Grimes had a duty to perform towards his grandmother, Mrs. Thorpe had also one to perform towards her own daughter, she told herself, in which excuse she found justification for whatever she had said.

Granny Grimes had set out for Mrs. Thorpe's on that sunny summer afternoon with a light heart and a brightness in her wrinkled face and aged, dim eyes; but when, after having overheard the caustic comments of Susan's mother, she turned from the cottage and passed through the gate homewards, she staggered under a heavier burden of sorrow than she had ever known before.

The discovery came to her age-dulled senses with little of that terrible shock with which it would have struck a younger woman and it resulted in no bitter resentment against the woman who had so coarsely laid bare the truth. It took her some time to properly realize its full purport.

Of course, Bob ought to be married like other men. He was young and wanted a home brightened by the presence of the woman he loved, and he would have had it long ago but for her—a millstone round his neck. She was in the way, a helpless old woman, fit only for the grave, a load on his shoulders, hampering him, bearing him down, robbing him of the joys and pleasures that only a loving husband and a happy father could know.

Slowly her feeble brain spread out plain to her sight the situation as she ought to have seen it years before. Why had Bob never told her? She wondered, recollecting how tender and loving he always had been. She remembered, too, how often she had asked him when he was going to be married, and his laughing reply that he was in no hurry, there was time enough yet; but she had never realized before that it was for her sake he had remained single, that his marriage would have meant her consignment to the poor-house.

The poor-house! Her feeble old frame shivered, her old heart ceased its heavy beating as that possibility loomed before her. She hated, with the deep hatred of a pride which she knew she had no right or reason to harbor, the thought that there, amongst the unloving and unloved, she might have to end her days. Up to the present only Bob, by his great self-sacrifice, had kept her from it.

But it seemed there was nothing for it but for her to pass within its forbidding, hard, high brick walls; Bob must not be burdened longer with her. And death was not coming her way. True she was old, old in body and feeble in mind, and utterly incapable of working for herself, but she had a tenacious grip of life, and life showed no signs of releasing its hold.

Clearly, there was nothing but the poor-house left; it was a hard, bitter thing to face, but it had to be faced, she told herself, for her grandson should be freed to marry. It would not be fair to him to spoil his chance, and Susan had waited long enough; she might get tired of waiting and marry some other man, and Bob, who would he have to thank for it but his grandmother?

The feelings in the old soul's heart did not find reflection on her face when Bob trudged in from his work in the fields to tea. He was tired, for it had been a long, hot day, but as happy as ever.

"Well, Granny," he said, as he

kissed the withered cheeks, "you enjoyed tea wi' Susan?"

"I didn't go," she said; "my head was bad."

"I'm sorry," he answered; "Susan'll be disappointed."

"I be goin' some other day, Bob."

While the man sat at tea the old woman watched him with her dim eyes in silence. Presently she said:—"When be ye a-goin' to marry, Bob?"

"By-and-by," said Bob, with a laugh. "Why? Are ye anxious, Granny?"

"I've bin a-thinkin', Bob."

"Thinkin' what, Granny?"

"That I'll never be at th' weddin'," she answered.

Bob, with the cup half raised to his lips, looked at the old woman opposite. He knew in his heart she undoubtedly spoke the truth.

"An' don't 'e think Susan'll get a bit tired o' waitin'?" she went on.

"She's waited these eight years. An' you've waited long enough; you be thirty next August, Bob."

"Oh," he said, with an assumed lightness of heart. "She don't mind. P'r'aps this year; p'r'aps next, Granny. It just depends."

"When I die, eh, Bob?"

The question was so unexpected that Bob almost dropped the cup to the floor.

"O' course," the old woman went on, "ye can't keep yerself an' me an' a wife on twelve shillings a week, Bob."

"Who's bin tellin' these things?" asked the man.

"No one, Bob. I just thought 'em out; an' I'm goin' in th' poor-'ouse."

"Not as long as I live, Granny," cried Bob; "not as long as I can work."

"But I am, Bob; then ye can marry Susan," persisted Mrs. Grimes.

"If Susan don't like to wait—"

"She's bin a-waitin' eight years, an' it ain't fair, Bob, to expect 'er to wait longer."

Bob realized the truth of his grandmother's words.

"But," he said, "but—she said she'd wait, an'—"

"If she don't like to wait any more she can find someone else."

"But you love Susan, Bob, don't 'e?"

"Oh, don't talk about it, Granny," the man asked, with a pained look on his face. "O' course I love Susan, but it was you kept me as a baby, an'—Granny, Granny, I wish I was rich," and he dropped his head on his arm.

She bent over him, smoothing his hair with her bony hand.

"Now, don't 'e take on, Bob," she said, softly. "Don't 'e take on."

He lifted his face and caught her hand.

"Mother's mother," he cried, looking up into her wrinkled, tear-stained face. "Never the poor-house, Granny, never."

It was twelve o'clock at night and the man slept a troubled sleep in his little room, when Granny crept to the door of it and listened carefully.

She caught his regular breathing, and softly turning the handle entered the room, shading the feeble light of the candle she carried from the sleeper's face. She stood a moment and looked at him, her heart filled with love and sorrow, big tears coursing down her faded, hollow cheeks. She heard him murmur, "Granny—Susan" in his sleep, took a step forward to kiss him, then stopped, turned out of the room, and softly closed the door.

"I might 'a' waked 'im," she muttered.

She threw a shawl over her head, took up her stick, gazed round the old room, where she had passed all her life, smothered a sob, and, pinching out the candle, passed out of the house for ever.

There was no moon, the night was black, but she knew well the road, and without fear made her way along it, with one refrain singing through her brain: "Never the poor-house, Granny, never." Well, the poor-house it should not be, since Bob would not yield; but it was the poor-house or—death.

She passed through the sleeping village street out into the hard, long road and trudged it bravely. She was old and helpless, old and useless. Nature had forgotten to make provision for such human derelicts, though a more thoughtful Government had filled the gap with the poor-house.

She turned off from the road up a narrow lane, whose shadows were made the more profound by the thick, overhanging trees. Presently she paused; it was somewhere here, the gap in the hedge she wished to find. Ah! here it was. She crawled through and stood up, a dense wood around her, through whose darkness ran a narrow path. She took a few steps forward, then halted. How black and silent it was here!

Above the song of the wind came suddenly the short, sharp sound of a gun-shot. The old woman started and trembled. It was followed immediately by another, by the loud cry of voices, and the sound of heavy bodies rushing through the wood. Not six paces ahead of her a man sprang across the path and disappeared; there was the report and the flash of a gun to the right.

Another man bounded into the path, with yet another at his heels. The pursuer caught his prey, they grappled and fell, and, fighting, rolled from side to side, while the old woman, paralyzed at the sight

for a moment, stood inactive. Then she saw one man rise above the other, whom he held by the throat; she heard a voice cry feebly for help—a voice that she recognized well enough as that of the Squire—and she sprang forward and brought her stick down on the head of the uppermost man. He collapsed like a log, and the Squire scrambled to his feet as two keepers dashed to the scene. One fell on the man, the other seized the woman, then fell back in surprise.

"Squire," he cried, "'ere's a woman!"

The Squire caught her arm.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded. "Who are you?"

"I be a-doin' nothin', Squire," answered Mrs. Grimes, while she trembled violently, not from fright or fear, but because she found herself so unexpectedly in the great man's presence. "I be Granny Grimes," she went on. "I was a-passin' when I 'eard guns, an' 'eard you cry for 'elp, so I 't th' other man with me stick."

"A very strange story," said the Squire, "but I know I owe my life to someone who aimed a blow at the poacher before either of you arrived," speaking to the keepers "I'll take the woman to the hall; you two bring that chap along."

It was half an hour later, when the captured poacher was safely locked up in a barn till the morning, that the Squire took Granny Grimes in hand.

"Now, it strikes me your grandson is mixed up in this," he said, sternly, with his cold eyes fixed on the old woman's face.

"I swear 'e b'ain't, Squire," she answered. "'E be at 'ome in 'is bed."

"What were you doing in the wood at that time of night?" asked the Squire.

The old woman trembled, but made no answer.

"Now, come along; no nonsense," he said, gruffly, "or you will also be in the police-court in the morning."

"No, no, Squire," she pleaded. "I'll tell ye; I was passing through the wood to the pond to drown meself," and she began to cry bitterly.

"Drown yourself!" cried the Squire, in surprise. "What for, in the name of Heaven?"

"'Twas that, Squire, or th' poor-'ouse," an' I be afraid of th' poor-'ouse."

By degrees he got from the old woman her astonishing story of her grandson's inability to marry, of her determination to commit suicide, of her night walk to the pond; and then the Squire did a strange thing. He took her old, wrinkled hand, shook it, and kissed the back of it, for he could see there was truth in the old woman's words, and he knew that to her he owed his life.

"Well, you won't go to the pond," he said, when he had made her drink hot coffee. "You will go home again, and I will see your grandson in the morning."

"And, Squire, you won't tell 'im? I wouldn't like 'im to know," Granny Grimes stammered.

"He ought to know," he answered—"know what a dear old grandmother he's got, but since you wish it I will say nothing. You are not afraid to go back alone?"

"There be nothin' to be feared of, Squire," and she started out once more on the road she had never expected to tread again.

"Such news, Granny," cried Bob, rushing in the next night. "The Squire's given me a cottage an' doubled my wages. There be a good un for ye, eh? I wonder what I ha' done to deserve it?"

And, wondering still, while Granny cried and laughed in her joy, he rushed away to tell the glad news to Susan, and suggest their marriage in the following month.—London Answers.

THE KING'S COLLECTIONS.

The King carefully preserves the artistic programmes of proceedings in which he has taken part. These souvenirs, which number several thousands, are all pasted in large albums, which are kept in the library of Buckingham Palace. In the same way the King has kept all his theatre programmes since his earliest playgoing days. This is, without doubt, the most curious and valuable collection of its kind in the world, for managers do not give kings and princes ordinary programmes. The bill of the play placed in the Royal box used to be printed on silk or satin, with a heavy fringe. It is now, as a rule, less elaborate, but not for that reason less artistic.

CHRISTIAN ACTION.

An interesting story revealing a splendid trait in King Edward's character is attached to a silver inkstand which was long in daily use at Marlborough House, and is now at Buckingham Palace. When Prince of Wales, King Edward one day watched a blind man and his dog vainly trying to cross the road, in the most congested part of Pall Mall. Placing his hand on the man's shoulder the Prince himself conquered the man safely across. A few days later a beautiful silver inkstand arrived at Marlborough House with the inscription: "To the Prince of Wales from one who saw him conduct a blind beggar across the street—in memory of a kind and Christian action." The donor is still unknown.

BIG TREASURES VANISHED

TROPHIES THAT WOULD BRING RICH REWARDS.

Arm of Venus Would Bring a Fortune—A Famous Bronze Bowl.

The greatest treasure in sculpture the world has ever known is imperfect, and the piece missing—a right arm—would bring the finder in a King's ransom, so may be termed a treasure in itself. This arm, of course, belongs to the Venus de Milo now in the Louvre at Paris, and twenty-eight years ago it turned up in England, and was proved by experts to be the genuine arm of the Venus. The owner, however, refused to part with it, and concealed it somewhere lest it should be stolen by thieves. When he died he left no record as to where the arm was hidden, and from that day to this its resting-place has remained a mystery.

Somewhere there is an old bronze drinking-cup which would easily realize \$100,000 if put on the market. It is the famous bronze bowl found in Egypt a century and a half ago, on which was engraved the ancient history of the Pharaohs. It was stolen from an Egyptian temple in 1739 and brought to Europe. From that time it miraculously disappeared, and forty years later the French Government offered \$14,000 for its discovery, but the famous cup had vanished, in all probability for ever.

GREAT PICTURES.

have an unhappy knack of disappearing, and lucky would be the individual who came across Sir Joshua Reynolds's "Countess of Derby," for it would realize \$150,000. This was acknowledged to be Reynolds's greatest portrait, but not long after it was painted it disappeared from the Earl of Derby's collection and has never since been heard of. There are also two Vandykes and a Rembrandt missing for which the National Gallery would willingly pay \$200,000, and no doubt the Earl of Crewe would give a four-figure reward to anyone who restored the Cupid cut by some vandal from the picture of a former Countess of Crewe and her son, who was painted as the little sprite.

Half a century ago the Italian Government offered \$50,000 to anyone who would rediscover the Florentine chalice. This is a goblet of green Venetian glass, made in the sixteenth century for the Pope and engraved with a picture of the Resurrection. Its manufacture is said to have occupied two years, and the secret of the glass, which was thinner than paper is lost. The cup was stolen from the Vatican; but no one came forward to claim the offered reward, and the probabilities are that the cup has been smashed.

A SIMILAR TREASURE,

which vanished in an equally strange manner, was the Marsella vase of Dresden china. It is the only piece of china missing from the famous Marsella collection, the value of which is set down at \$75,000, and it bears upon it the cross arrows and a lion's head. A few years ago the vase was said to be in the North of England, and it is safe to assert that if anyone rediscovers it he can command a price running well into four figures.

Probably in some lumber-room in England there is an old sword which, if the owner only knew it, is worth \$10,000. It was the State sword presented by the nation to Edward III., and at one time the hilt was studded with large rubies, but these disappeared long before the weapon followed them into obscurity some years ago. Any one of our national museums would purchase the sword for the sum mentioned, while it is not unlikely that in a public auction-room the bidding would rise even higher.—London Tit Bits.

THE SHOWMAN'S DESCRIPTION.

"Mr. Showman, what is that?" "That, my dear, is the rhinoceros. He is cousin German or Dutch relation to the unicorn. He was born in the desert of Sary Ann and feeds on bamboo and missionaries. He is very courageous and never leaves home unless he moves, in which case he goes somewhere else unless he is overtaken by the dark. He was brought to this country against his will, which accounts for his low spirits when he's melancholy or dejected. He is now rather old, but has seen the day when he was the youngest specimen of animated nature in the world. Pass on, my little dear, and allow the ladies to survey the wonders of creation as displayed in the ring-tailed monkey, a animal that can stand hanging like a fellow-critter, only it's by its tail."

TEACH YOUR BOY TO SWIM.

The parent who has a boy who doesn't know how to swim should see that he learns. Possibly some day that knowledge will save his life. Certainly during many days it will add to his stock of happiness and health. There are few more thorough forms of exercise than swimming. Every muscle is brought into play. The chest and lungs particularly are developed. Greater chest development, if it does not take the form merely of pectoral muscles enlarged by artificial means.