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THE WARP OF A CONSCIENCE

By SHIRLEY MOHON

Mrs. Josiah Hawkins stood at the kitchen stove with puckered brow, peering into a sauce pan of boiling water, wherein two eggs bubbled merrily, all unconscious of the careworn face bending over them.

"Forty cents a dozen," she repeated audibly; "I never remember a winter when eggs were so dear. It goes to my heart to boll them; it ain't right." She was a little woman with snow white hair, in striking contrast to her bright, brown eyes and general air of alertness. To a keen observer there were lines of self-repression about her mouth and at odd times a world of pathos in the brown eyes. It was whispered that she was breaking her heart about her son Sammie, a ne'er-do-well who lived in the city. If so, she never told it, but held a high head and spoke of "my son Samuel" with such an air as to command respect.

Mrs. Josiah had one vanity—she put her hair in crimpers every night to give it the natural soft wave which nature had denied it. In consequence, the neighbors thought her high-toned—they had no time for such vagaries. Outside, Ben, the Scotch cook, with his nose pressed against the frost bound window of the porch, his hot breath thawing it, gazed wistfully in at the preparation of the morning meal, now and then giving vent to sharp little yelps, indicative of hunger. Beyond him the big gray barn loomed darkly against a background of white and a giant pine, gleaming with icicles, shone a thing of beauty in the morning sunlight.

Mrs. Josiah lifted the eggs and placed them carefully on a china saucer, beside the coffee pot, on the top of the stove. She proceeded to take the crimpers out of her hair before a small patch of looking glass, perched for convenience above the sink, ere she presented herself to Miss Sophy Teddington, the new school teacher, her latest boarder, whom Providence had thrown in her way.

"Well, I declare," she cried, as a shadow passed the looking glass, "it that's not Mrs. Henry peering in! I expect she's most mad at me getting the teacher." She turned sharply around and looked toward the gate. A rotund figure, muffled in a woolen shawl, was approaching the house. The path from the gate was white with frozen snow and so slippery that the newcomer had difficulty in maintaining her footing, consequently her progress was slow. From her vantage point the little woman watched her. "I guess she's come to spy 'round. Most like she cannot understand how I got Miss Teddington, and I'm not likely to inform her. Five dollars a week, not speakin' of the use of the buggy when she goes, a visitin', is something of a windfall, specially when you're not expectin' it. I never thought Miss Teddington would mistake my house for Mrs. Henry's. It was just the Lord sent her, particularly when I wanted the money so badly. I was most surprised when she took the parlor bedroom. I'll be able to send Sammie the money; poor boy, he wants it badly." The lines about her mouth took a softer curve and her eyes looked less metallic in their brightness.

"Good mornin', Eliza," said a soft voice. Mrs. Josiah, with a feigned little start of surprise, turned around. "Lam-sake, Mrs. Henry, how you frightened me. It's dreadful cold this mornin'. Sit down and I will put some more slivers of wood in the stove." Mrs. Henry Hawkins was a fleshy woman, about 60 years old. Her face was sallow and lined with wrinkles, and when she threw back her woolen hood side streaks of gray hair were revealed, drawn tightly back into a scanty topknot, but the eyes that twinkled beneath the bushy black brows were so full of the light of human kindness and so fraught with humor and the wide lippled mouth was so benevolent that the homeliness of her countenance was forgotten.

"You're out early this mornin' Susan," said Mrs. Josiah. Her voice had an inquisitive ring in it. "Is Henry keepin' well?" "Henry's fust rate," said the newcomer, as she settled herself comfortably in a rocker, while Mrs. Josiah bustled herself about the stove, now and again glancing surreptitiously at her visitor.

"I hear you've a new boarder," said Mrs. Henry, her gaze involuntarily resting on the eggs. "My, but you are lucky, Eliza! How many hens are layin'?" Mine stopped a fortnight ago; and there's Henry, he's dreadful fond of eggs. I hear they are fifty cents in New York. Is Miss Teddington the name of the new teacher? If so, I have a letter for her. I guess by the writin' it is from Miss Manning, who stopped with me last term." She unplanned her shawl as she spoke and in a voluminous skirt searched vainly for her pocketbook.

Mrs. Josiah's lips took a greeny tinge. She turned her back to her visitor to hide her agitation. In fancy she saw herself bereft of her boarder. Miss Manning's letter would surely enlighten Miss Teddington as to the mistake she had made in not going to

Mrs. Henry's. In a flash she made a resolution and acted upon it. "Never mind, Mrs. Henry," she said smoothly, "wait until I bring in the breakfast." She whipped up the tray and went quickly from the kitchen.

In the meantime Miss Sophy Teddington, all unconscious of the little drama in which she was the center-piece, stood at the window overlooking the breakfast table and stared disconsolately over the snow covered fields and wished for the thousandth time that she had never left the delicious clamor and exhilarating atmosphere of New York. The deadly monotony of her surroundings sickened her. She had no love for country life; it was only an exceptional inducement in the way of salary that led her to settle for the winter in the little out of the way place in Long Island, fifty miles from New York. As Mrs. Josiah entered the room she turned round, a disconcerted look on her bright face. "Any mail?" she inquired eagerly.

There was a catching in Mrs. Josiah's throat, which she verged off into the semblance of a cough. "No, Miss Teddington; we're never sure of mail here. I have been expecting a letter from my son Samuel for the past week, the last I had from him has made me terrible uneasy; he tells me he has chills and fever. It's high time there was an improvement in the mail delivery. The country people should be as well attended as the city folk. Josiah generally stops at the postoffice when passing that way and brings mine." "How far is it to the postoffice?" inquired Miss Teddington. "I am very anxious about a letter I was expecting, if it was not too far." She hesitated.

"The road's in a dreadful state," said Mrs. Josiah hastily; "what with the snow knee deep in some parts and the road not been tracked it wouldn't be safe. Besides, it's a good two miles to the store; in the summer it's a pleasant walk, but in the winter"—she paused significantly.

"Don't think of it, Miss Teddington," said Mrs. Josiah earnestly. She left the room as she spoke.

"My, you do look bad, Eliza; are you ill?" said Mrs. Henry, when Mrs. Josiah returned to the kitchen. "I hope you're not going to take the grip; it's dreadful prevalent. Robbie Duncan brought it into the school and it has gone over most of the scholars." "I do not feel a bit chilly," said Mrs. Josiah, her eyes resting on the letter, which lay, Nemesis like, on Mrs. Henry's lap. She looked at the clock. In another five minutes Miss Teddington would pass through the kitchen and the two women would meet. If she could only hasten Mrs. Henry's departure. A bright inspiration struck her. "Are you goin' to the store this mornin'?" Susan?

"Well, I was thinkin' of it," acknowledged her visitor. "Do you want anything?" "Heaps," said Mrs. Josiah emphatically. "You see, I didn't get my marketin' done last week, and it has left me a bit behind. I particularly want some tea for Miss Teddington's lunch." "I'll just go and hitch up the buggy," said Mrs. Henry good naturedly. "It's all the same to me to go now, or an hour later." She rose to her feet.

"Thank 'ee, Susan; it ain't very hospitable to drive you out and you just in. I'll give the letter to Miss Teddington." She opened the porch door, and in her eagerness to see the back of her visitor fairly pushed her forward. It was none too soon. A sound of footsteps warned her that Miss Teddington was approaching. Hastily concealing the letter in her bosom, she busied herself about her pots and pans.

"Mrs. Hawkins, if your husband would drive over to the store I would feel more satisfied," said Miss Teddington abruptly. I am very anxious about my letter. I am sure it is there; I gave the correct address, care of Mrs. Henry Hawkins." Now or never was the time for Mrs. Josiah to make a clean breast of it, without losing her self-respect. It would be so easy to say, "Your husband made a mistake, Miss Teddington; I am Mrs. Josiah, not Mrs. Henry." But no; the first wrong step had left a deep furrow, and the ground thus trampled on was hard to make smooth.

"I'll tell Josiah soon he comes in to hitch up the mare. I saw 'em tinkerin' 'bout the barn while ago. I'll call him to go right away." "Thank you," said Miss Teddington, gratefully. "If he would just leave it at the school when passing I could read it at lunch time." Mrs. Josiah heaved a sigh of relief as she watched the light, springy figure of her boarder disappear to her daily occupation. She slipped the letter from her bodice, gazing long and earnestly at the address, then with a sudden movement threw it into the crackling wood fire, watching it until it became a heap of feathery ashes.

"For Sammie's sake," she murmured with quivering lips.

A sudden change passed over her face; it became drawn and haggard. "What have I done?" she thought, aghastly; "stolen a letter and burned it." "Visions of Uncle Sam passed before her as in a mirror she saw herself—before a jury charged with stealing United States mail. It was no letter than last week that a carrier was sentenced to several years' imprisonment for just such an offense. A look

of terror crept into her eyes; she glanced around like a hunted thing. What if the letter were traced? Mrs. Henry would swear that she had delivered it safely into her hands. She felt like fleeing to the far ends of the earth. "Thus conscience makes cowards of us all."

In the meantime Miss Teddington waited patiently the advent of Josiah with the letter. Every time the sound of wheels broke on the stillness she made a pretext to the window, only to be disappointed. Lunch time passed, but no Josiah, and the young lady, much perturbed in spirit, had to return homeward without her letter. The truth was she expected a check in it, and wanted the money badly, first, to pay Mrs. Josiah her week's board, and sundry other little debts. She hated that thought of having to ask her landlady to wait, but there was nothing else for it if the letter did not come. It was an awkward predicament to be in. She was a stranger in a strange country and had no one to help her out of her dilemma. It was not in a very pleasant frame of mind she re-entered the farm house. A glance at her landlady's face told her the important mislaid had not arrived.

"I sent Josiah to the postoffice, but there was no mail for you," said Mrs. Josiah glibly. "I'm sorry." "I should not mind it so much," said the young lady finally, "only I expected a check."

Mrs. Josiah clutched at the table for support. Her head swam. A check in the letter! Good God! and she had burned it! All unconscious of the effect of her words, Miss Teddington continued. "To be candid with you, Mrs. Hawkins, I cannot pay you until it comes. Are you ill?" she cried, catching a glimpse of the ashy pallor of her listener's face. "I hope you do not feel the want of money so badly; if I thought so why I would send a dispaten."

"No, don't, don't!" cried Mrs. Josiah wildly. "There is nothing the matter with me; only a sudden pain at my heart." She leaned for support against the table. Inevitable ruin stared her in the face. Should she throw herself on Miss Teddington's mercy, confessing what she had done, or leave it to Providence? It was her first great temptation and she had succumbed. She saw herself disgraced, branded as a thief—she who had been held up as a model of rectitude in the neighborhood—and poor Josiah would be dragged down along with her. She shrieked aloud at the vision that floated mentally before her.

"Mrs. Josiah!" cried Miss Teddington in alarm, "are you ill; tell me what I can do to relieve you!" She stayed helplessly around the kitchen for some means to alleviate the woman's suffering. As if in answer to her unspoken appeal she saw the figure of a man approaching with a bag slung over his shoulder. She beckoned wildly at him to hasten.

"Who is it?" said Mrs. Josiah, her senses all on the alert despite her sufferings, and she raised a miserable white face toward the porch. "Why," she murmured faintly, "it's Jimmie, the mail carrier, who sometimes brings special deliveries." "Oh! perhaps he has my letter!" cried Miss Teddington, a note of relief in her voice. "And you will get your money?" Mrs. Josiah groaned, hiding her face in her apron.

"Mornin', Mrs. Hawkins," said the newcomer. "I've got a special mail for you, or someone stoppin' with you." Miss Teddington, in her eagererness, almost snatched the letter from the man's hand. "It is for me!" she cried delightedly, while Mrs. Josiah stood looking at her, picture of dumb misery.

To watch Miss Teddington's face as she read her letter was a study; joy succeeded amazement and incredulity. "Mrs. Hawkins," she cried excitedly, "here it is!" She waved triumphantly aloft a slip of paper. "What do you think, my friend Miss Manning thought she mailed it in a letter; she wrote me two days ago, which I have not received as yet, and now she sends me a registered letter, enclosing the check." "Thank God," said Mrs. Josiah, fervently.

How the Japanese Live. Baron Kaneko says: "Well-to-do Japanese do not live so very differently from Americans. For breakfast they have their coffee—from your latest possession, the Philippines; condensed milk from Chicago, bread from flour milled in Minnesota. They smoke a cigarette from Virginia, leaf, and they read a morning paper, printed on paper made in Wisconsin."—Boston Record.

Charity in France. It is said that there are in London about 2,000 charitable institutions and organizations to advance the cause of progressive and advanced civilization. The number included large and small institutions, affording more or less relief to the afflicted and those in distress. They are supported almost entirely by personal contributions.

The Ozar of Russia, who is considerably below the average height in men, is fully a head shorter than the Ozars.

FLOWER ARRANGEMENT.

They Are Made to Represent Months and Days by Japanese.

The general ideas of Japanese floral arrangements may be summarized in this way:

Each setting of flowers or plants must represent earth, air and water, or heaven, earth and man. In placing the blossoms in a vase, the vase and water are earth, the short-stemmed flowers man and the tall ones heaven. The ramifications of this principle, the delicate subtle meanings and properties, are infinite.

There are flowers which represent months and flowers which represent days, and as every Japanese house contains flowers, they form a calendar for the initiated.

Every family of standing has artistically correct vases, vase-holders and flowers, and the manner of arranging an honored visitor is to ask him to arrange some flowers. The guest is governed by rigid laws.

He must not make too elaborate an arrangement, for that takes overmuch time. He always offers to destroy what he has done, to prove he considers it valueless. Only when he is urged by his host does he leave it—these are examples of the long list of restrictions. The Japanese knows them as he knows his language and his literature.—Harper's Bazar.

English Women Not Mercenary.

A writer in the "Chronicle" suggests that the majority of Englishwomen marry not for love, but for a larger, and gives three instances from her own personal friends. No doubt there are women who marry for convenience and a little liking, and perhaps even a few who marry for convenience alone, without the liking; but they are really very few—much fewer than appearance or alleged post-matrimonial confidences would lead one to believe. The last thing an Englishwoman would think of confessing, even to an intimate, is the existence of such a sentimental weakness as love in her case, and her husband is quite as reticent on the subject. The man or woman who talks about such things is generally looked upon as a bore, and the common attitude toward the sentimentals is so well known that few care to risk being branded. The deeper feelings are kept for the matrimonial tests—tests, and sparingly unveiled—when they are there in more cases than the "Chronicle" contributor would credit. With all her faults, the Englishwoman is less mercenary than most of her sisters abroad.—London Tatler.

An Industrious Hen.

A more or less truthful Australian relates that he put an unusually large porcelain egg in the nest of a hen and found that the next eggs she laid were of increased size. Then he put a good egg in the nest. The hen laid an egg just as large. He was so pleased with the scheme that he put a whitewashed football in the nest. When he went the next time to search for eggs he found one as big as a football, but he had no sight. Securing the egg, he saw engraved on it by her photograph these words: "I'm no chicken, but I've done my best." Later he found the hen hiding the egg.

Diamond Fields.

For more than 100 years it has been thought that extensive diamond deposits are hidden in the island of Borneo and recent rumors have given the old suspicion new life. A diamond of 287 carats, found on the west coast in 1871 and named the Malin, was a brilliant but brief career terminated as a mere block of rock crystal. Should it now prove that Borneo was yielding diamonds in paying quantity, the British empire will be in possession of practically every diamond field of any importance in the world—South Africa, Australia, India and Borneo.

No Special Duty.

A negro hack driver in Washington was driving along the street when he encountered a funeral. A long line of coaches was behind the hearse, which was moving along at a lively rate. The negro was superstitious and did not want to cross between the carriages in the funeral procession. He tried to drive around in front of the hearse, but could not make sufficient speed. After driving alongside the hearse for two blocks the negro called out to the driver: "Say boss, hold up an let me go past. My passenger is in a hurry and your fare's gone."

Ships on the Links.

An irascible old colonel who used to play golf at Sandwich, on the River Stour in England, had a habit common with many, of blaming everybody but himself for his bad strokes. Finally one day, becoming badly humiliated, he first took mighty vengeance on the turf with his club. Then, glancing around in expectation of the usual friendly comments and nobody saying anything, he blurted out: "How can you expect a man to play decent golf on these cursed links with ships peeling up and down the channel?"

Our Glart Forefathers. A French scientist combats the prevailing opinion that the noses of today are the sons of a taller and stronger

race. The idea so frequently heard is that the nose is a form of sweat excretion, held in place in default of real glands in modern man, secretion is made of the inhabitants of Patagonia. Magellan according to them the height of the nose, but the average height of these people has been given by different authorities as 7 feet, 10 feet to 11 feet and 5 feet.

An Inattentive Child can take the content out of a wife's meal in short order.

DOTY THE SUCCESSFUL MAN.

He Was the Merchant of the Town— Was at Stars When Wanted.

I remember in the little town where I was born there was a little merchant named Doty, says Manly M. Gilliam. He had a store about twenty feet square and his whole stock might not have amounted to over \$50. In that town there were several rather pretentious grocery stores, and a general store, and people used to speak disparagingly of Doty. To illustrate the kind of smallness, we would say "Doty." When I returned to that town, after an absence of about twenty years and asked "where's so and so, and where's so and so?" people would say "Well, so and so's dead, and so and so's carrying on business here and there" but when one asked what had become of Doty, the people said "Doty is the merchant of the town."

Doty was there during business hours and when any one wanted Doty, Doty was there. Nobody ever estimated that Doty had any capacity, but by and by the people began to find a reason for the growth of Doty's business, and they found that he had the very elements of business success. When people were making fun of him, he was attending to business, and the result was that he had a large business.

To Test Wood and Linen.

It often happens that woolen goods will be doctored with cotton. To discover this there are several tests that can be made. One is the match test. By applying a lighted match to a sample of the goods, the manner in which it burns will be evidence of its genuineness. Wool will burn slowly, while cotton will go like a train of powder. Another test is to untwist the threads, and the cotton can easily be detected. To the experienced buyer the "feel" of linen is a sufficient indication of the quality, but for those who lack this knowledge there is an infallible test which our manufacturers need which is unfeeling to show if there is cotton in the linen. Dampen the finger and apply to the surface of the linen fabric. If the moisture is seen on the other side you may know at once if it is linen. If it is linen coming through, without doubt there is an admixture of cotton. Another method is to unravel the threads, as in the wool test.

Knowing Chinese Dogs.

Prince Fu Lan, the Chinese minister to the United States, attended the race at Grandmas, early in the month. A number of New York dogs were presented to the distinguished visitor, and he inspected the prominent ones. He was a dog lover, and he was very much interested in the dogs. He was very much interested in the dogs. He was very much interested in the dogs.

The Scotch Convention Is Humane.

Russia contains many more Scotch immigrants than would be believed. Some of these are in various occupations. Not long ago a Scotchman from North Britain, finding it difficult to obtain service in a Great Britain, and had his attention attracted to a significant statement in the presence of who furnished an agency with good skill, which seemed familiar to the Scotchman. Listening intently he made out the sentence to run: "I'm no Scotchman, I'm a Scotchman."

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