

The Parson's Duplicity

Cause of the Backsliding of Timothy Simms

By CLARISSA MACKIE

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"Timothy has joined the church, has he not?" asked Mrs. Peters, looking over her spectacles at the strong young figure swinging down the path and out of the gate.

"Yes," returned Susan complacently, pushing the dark curls back from her forehead and pursing her red lips demurely; "I told him I believed he was called to join the church the same as the rest of us and feel assured of saving grace." She ended somewhat vaguely. The minister had said that to her the day before, with his slim white fingers pressed tip to tip, and she repeated it with a certain sense of importance.

"I want to know," murmured her mother uncertainly. When Susan quot-



"I GUESS I MAY AS WELL BE GOING ALONG."

ed the minister Mrs. Peters took refuge in silence, for the weighty reasoning of the young clergyman confused the old woman.

"Timothy don't seem particularly happy over it," returned Susan doubtfully. "I told him I felt as though I wanted to sing songs of praise when I joined the church and was sure of being saved, but Timothy"—She shook her pretty head sorrowfully.

"What is the matter with him? Simms all over, I expect," remarked Mrs. Peters tartly. She was on firmer conversational ground now. "Has he asked you yet?" she asked, with a keen look at Susan.

Susan blushed warmly. "Oh, mother, I wish you wouldn't ask—like that!" Mrs. Peters tossed her head indignantly. "If I can't ask my own daughter a simple question I guess I better leave!" she sniffed angrily and applied a handkerchief to her thin red nose.

"Oh, don't cry, mother," said Susan tenderly, smoothing her mother's gray hair. "I was cross and touchy, I guess—no, he hasn't asked me yet," she continued with shamed reluctance in her tones, "but he did ask me if I liked the Biggs place. He said it was for sale and he thought of buying it."

"I see," said Mrs. Peters, nodding her head wisely. "And what did you say, Susan?"

"I said I liked it first rate," returned Susan shyly.

"That's right. The Biggs place is the nicest place in the village except Dr. Halliday's."

"I wish Timothy didn't feel so blue about getting religious," said Susan, relapsing into moodiness. "He said Mr. Niles wanted him to give up smoking and drinking cider, and he wouldn't hear of Timothy's playing dominoes any more, and he did take a lot of comfort doing that. There can't be any harm in his doing that as long as he doesn't play for money."

"Just the same, if he's joined the church he's got to live up to his professions. I know your pa hated to join because he belonged to the checker club, and he didn't want to give it up, but the minister—old Mr. Leonard it was then—said if he could get along without playing games and such he guessed that pa could, but pa wouldn't join, and so he played checkers to the day he was taken with his last sickness, and I guess if any man went straight to heaven your pa did." Mrs. Peters wiped her eyes, and Susan's pretty eyes grew tearful also.

"I'm afraid I made a mistake in urging Timothy to join," she said at last. "Wait and see how it comes out," said her mother. "Now you better set about hemming those dish towels before it grows any later."

"Susan," said Timothy Simms the next evening as he sat beside Susan in the pleasant old fashioned parlor of the Peters home, "I've got something to say to you, and I'm wondering how you'll take it." His good looking face was downcast, and all the bright spirit and liveliness that were characteristic of Timothy Simms had fled. His blue eyes were dull, and there was a sullen look about his handsome mouth.

Susan blushed and looked down at her little brown hands folded so demurely in her lap. "Yes, Timothy," she said timidly.

"It's this," went on the young man

resentfully. "You know I've been trying to get a chance to ask you for a long time, but"—and Timothy frowned down at the brightly colored carpet at his feet—"just as I got up courage to ask you, why, you came out and hinted that you wouldn't marry anybody that didn't belong to the First church, so I up and joined." He looked furtively at Susan, whose rosy cheeks had paled. She looked rather frightened at the visible signs of wrath in the face of gentle, courteous Timothy.

"Now," said Timothy doggedly, "I've joined the church; I've said I'd try to be a Christian; I've always done the best I could by everybody, just as my mother taught me, and now comes the minister and says stop smoking, so I stopped. Then I had to give up playing dominoes and checkers down to the store and—"

"I should think you'd be willing to give up those little things," said Susan with some spirit.

"So I was, but it hasn't stopped there," retorted Timothy angrily.

"What do you mean?"

"Mr. Niles came up to see me last night, and he—here Timothy arose and paced the floor excitedly—"he advised me not to marry!"

"Not to marry!" repeated Susan in consternation.

"Not to marry. He said it was better for a man to wait until he was thirty or forty years old, and—"

"You are twenty-five," interrupted Susan falteringly.

"And I am twenty-five. He said a man didn't really know his mind until he reached thirty-five and then he was competent to pick out a wife whose disposition would suit him." Timothy choked wrathfully.

"What did you say, Timothy?" asked Susan, with a dazed look in her eyes.

"I haven't given him my answer yet. He's trying to get a lot of us young men together and get us to promise we will wait until we reach years of discretion before we marry. Then he says there won't be so many unhappy marriages. He's going to call it the 'Band of Thinkers.'"

"I suppose," ventured Susan wistfully, "that your taste will change after ten or fifteen years and you'll marry some one who's real sensible."

"I don't know anything about that," returned Timothy fretfully, "and I don't care. What I'm doubtful about is this: If I belong to the church ought I to do just as the minister says or else leave? You ought to know, Susan. What shall I do?" He looked appealingly at her.

"I don't know what to say!" cried Susan tearfully. "I didn't know anything about the Band of Thinkers or—no—nothing!"

"You see how I'm fixed, Susie," said Timothy despairingly; "there's things I want to say to you and I can't because I've done what you wanted me to and joined the church! I guess I might as well be going along," he said moodily as he turned toward the door.

Susan watched him walking down the gravelled path between the rows of boxwood with tear filled eyes. She was dazed at the sudden and unexpected turn that affairs had taken in her simple life, and she wished very heartily that she had not urged Timothy to join the church. "I don't believe he's got just the right feeling after all," she murmured sadly as she closed the door.

Several weeks passed, and Timothy Simms came no more to the Peterses' home. Nor did Susan see him. She heard that he was working very hard, but Susan did not see him again. He came no more to church, and there was a rumor that Timothy had been lured back to the checkerboard and the domino table by the jolly members of the Stove club who gathered weekly in the rear of the general store.

In the meantime Susan grew pale and thin. It is true that Mr. Niles, the pale young minister, came to see her frequently, for he was deeply interested in this young soul and fully determined that it should lack no spiritual nourishment that he could administer.

Susan was pleased and comforted at first by the evident interest displayed by the clergyman, but after a little his extreme delicacy of physique and his punctilious manner, with its little undercurrent of conscious superiority, palled upon her, and she grew to dread his coming. He was a poor substitute for stalwart Timothy Simms, with his rough, unpolished ways and broad kindness of heart.

For some reason Mrs. Peters frowned upon the young minister when he came to see Susan. Mrs. Peters had long been a member of the First church and an ardent worker therein, but the advent of a new minister, and one so young, had rather displeased the older parishioners, for they did not like his brusque manner or assumption of calm superiority.

One day, several weeks after that evening when Timothy had last called upon Susan, Mrs. Peters walked up the long dusty road that led to the station. She wore her best gray dress and her best gray straw bonnet, with its bunch of silver wheat nodding over her gray hair. She held her alpaca skirts daintily away from the dust, and she gave them a little shake as she emerged flushed and panting upon the station platform.

"Good morning, Timothy," she said pleasantly as the young man peered at her from behind the wire screen.

"Good morning, Mrs. Peters," said Timothy, reddening beneath his tan and shifting awkwardly from one foot to the other.

"I want a ticket for Bensonville. I'm going to see my sister Eliza," said Mrs. Peters as she opened her pocket-book. "When does the next train go?"

"In fifteen minutes—the 10:45," replied Timothy as he passed over the bit of pasteboard.

"You're quite a stranger, Timothy," pursued Mrs. Peters as she turned away.

"It ain't my fault," returned Timothy sullenly.

"Who's it, then?" demanded Mrs. Peters indignantly. "I am surprised at you, Timothy Simms! I thought you had more grit than to let a little peaked upstart like the Rev. Mr. Niles boss you around and say when you can marry and when you can't!"

Timothy reddened. It began at his forehead and spread over his broad face and down around his throat. He clenched his great fists and shook them passionately.

"I wish I just had him here," he muttered wrathfully; "he made a fool of me until it was too late for me to make it up to Susie."

"Humph!" said Susie's mother, with an enigmatic smile. "I'll say this much, Timothy—the minister asked Susan to marry him, and she wouldn't do it. She said, 'No; I thank you!'"

"Do you think she'd look at me again?" asked Timothy eagerly.

"I don't know why not. What in goodness have you done, Timothy Simms, that you hold yourself such a sinner, I want to know?"

"Well, I don't know myself exactly," returned Timothy sheepishly, "only Mr. Niles kept at me till I got to believing that I was a terrible sinner and not fit to offer myself to any good girl like Susie, so I stopped going to see her, and after that I didn't care what became of me. I've left the church, and I drink sweet cider, and I play checkers and dominoes down to the store. I am a backslider!"

"So was my husband, and pa was as good a man as you'll ever find," returned Mrs. Peters. "Well, here's my train, Timothy. If you ain't got anything better to do tonight you can come around and play dominoes with me!" She smiled meaningfully as he helped her on to the train, and when he returned to his office there was a light of hope in his eyes and he whistled cheerily.

That same evening after prayer meeting Mr. Niles stood on the church steps drawing on his kid gloves. He looked the door and walked thoughtfully down the path and out of the gate. Then he paused irresolutely for a moment, finally turning abruptly and walking through the short cut that led past the Widow Peters' house.

Suddenly out of the gloom there appeared a bulky figure. Mr. Niles started timidly back. "Who is it?" he asked.

"Only me," returned Timothy Simms' deep voice as he hooked viselike fingers in the clergyman's coat collar. "Just you come along of me, sir. I've got a little job for you!"

"What do you mean, Simms?" demanded the indignant man. "What do you mean by this extraordinary behavior?"

Timothy made no reply. He merely tightened his grasp and hustled Mr. Niles along until he reached the Peterses' home. Through the gate and into the house and finally into the brilliantly lighted parlor, where stood Mrs. Peters, her sister Eliza and Susie—Susie, dressed in white and looking very rosy and thind and happy.

They all started as the minister made his hurried entrance through the door, but none had seen the heavy hand that had forced him through. He shook himself angrily and turned toward Timothy, his face white with wrath.

"Parson," drawled Timothy, with a hard gleam in his blue eyes, "we got a little job for you—Susie and me—so if you'll get around to it now we'll be much obliged!" He took his place

beside Susie, and the other women gathered solemnly about the little group.

Slowly, reluctantly, the minister drew a prayer book from his pocket; then, with agitated mien and a voice trembling with suppressed feeling, he united the young couple in marriage. Then, with a few curt words of congratulation, he took his departure.

"Susie," said Timothy a little later as he caressed his young wife, "I don't know what you'd say if you knew what a backslider I am. I've backslid tonight, but I couldn't help it!"

"I don't care, Timothy," whispered Susie happily. "I don't care what you have done as long as you didn't join that band."

His Defense.

It was shortly after midnight, and the colonel had caught Rastus red handed.

"Well, Rastus, you old rascal, you," said he, "I've caught you at last. What are you doing in my henhouse?"

"Why, Marsie Bill," said the old man, "I—I done heard such a cacklin' in dis yere coop dat I—I thought mebbe de ole hen done gone lay an' aig, an' I—I wanted ter git it fo' your breakfas' while it was fresh, sub."—Harper's Weekly.



HE TURNED TOWARD TIMOTHY, HIS FACE WHITE WITH WRATH.

The Unknown Quantity

A Difficulty Overcome With the Aid of Cupid

By O. HENRY

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The poet Longfellow—or was it Con-fucius, the inventor of wisdom?—remarked:

Life is real, life is earnest.

And things are not what they seem.

As mathematics are, or is—thanks, old subscriber!—the only just rule by which questions of life can be measured, let us by all means adjust our theme to the straight edge and the balanced column of the great goddess Two and Two Make Four. Figures—unassailable sums in addition—shall be set over against whatever opposing element there may be.

A mathematician after scanning the above two lines of poetry would say: "Ahem! Young gentlemen, if we assume that X plus—that is, that life is real—then things (all of which life includes) are real. Anything that is real is what it seems. Then if we consider the proposition that 'things are not what they seem,' why?"

But this is heresy and not poetry. We woo the sweet nymph Algebra. We would conduct you into the presence of the elusive, seductive, pursued, satisfying, mysterious X.

Not long before the beginning of this century Septimus Kinsolving, an old New Yorker, invented an idea. He originated the discovery that bread is made from flour and not from wheat futures. Perceiving that the flour crop was short and that the stock exchange was having no perceptible effect on the growing wheat, Mr. Kinsolving cornered the flour market.

The result was that when you or my landlady (before the war she never had to turn her hand to anything; southerners accommodated) bought a five cent loaf of bread you laid down an additional 2 cents, which went to Mr. Kinsolving as a testimonial to his perspicacity.

A second result was that Mr. Kinsolving quit the game with \$2,000,000 prof—er—rakeoff.

Mr. Kinsolving's son Dan was at college when the mathematical experiment in breadstuffs was made. Dan came home during vacation and found the old gentleman in a red dressing gown reading "Little Dorrit" on the porch of his estimable red brick mansion in Washington square. He had retired from business with enough extra two cent pieces from bread buyers to reach, if laid side by side, fifteen times around the earth and lap as far as the public debt of Paraguay.

Dan shook hands with his father and hurried over to Greenwich village to see his old high school friend, Ken-witz. Dan had always admired Ken-witz. Kenwitz was pale, curly haired, intense, serious, mathematical, studious, altruistic, socialistic and the natural foe of oligarchies. Kenwitz had foregone college and was learning watchmaking in his father's jewelry store. Dan was smiling, jovial, easy tempered and tolerant alike of kings and ragspickers. The two foregathered joyously, being opposites. And then Dan went back to college and Ken-witz to his mainsprings—and to his private library in the rear of the jewelry shop.

Four years later Dan came back to Washington square with the accumulations of B. A. and two years of Europe thick upon him. He took a filial look at Septimus Kinsolving's elaborate tombstone in Greenwood and

me poor old dad's collection of bonds and doodle. It amounts to \$2,000,000. Ken. And I am told that he squeezed it out of the chaps that pay their penalties for loaves of bread at the little bakeries around the corner. You've studied economics, Dan, and you know all about monopolies, and the masses, and octopuses, and the rights of laboring people. I never thought about those things before. Football and trying to be white to my fellow man were about the extent of my college curriculum.

"But since I came back and found out how dad made his money I've been thinking. I'd like awfully well to pay back those chaps who had to give up too much money for bread. I know it would buck the line of my income for a good many yards, but I'd like to make it square with 'em. Is there any way it can be done, old Ways and Means?"

Kenwitz's big black eyes glowed fiercely. His thin, intellectual face took

on almost a sardonic cast. He caught Dan's arm with the grip of a friend and a judge.

"You can't do it!" he said emphatically. "One of the chief punishments of you men of ill gotten wealth is that when you do repent you find that you have lost the power to make reparation or restitution. I admire your good intentions, Dan, but you can't do anything. Those people were robbed of their precious pennies. It's too late to remedy the evil. You can't pay them back."

"Of course," said Dan, lighting his pipe, "we couldn't hunt up every one of the duffers and hand 'em back the right change. There's an awful lot of 'em buying bread all the time. Funny taste they have. I never cared for bread especially, except for a toasted cracker with the Roquefort. But we might find a few of 'em and chuck some of dad's cash back where it came from. I'd feel better if I could. It seems tough for people to be held up for a soggy thing like bread. One wouldn't mind standing a rise in broiled lobsters or deviled crabs. Get to work and think, Ken. I want to pay back all that money I can."

"There are plenty of charities," said Kenwitz mechanically.

"Easy enough," said Dan in a cloud of smoke. "I suppose I could give the city a park or endow an asparagus bed in a hospital. But I don't want Paul to get away with the proceeds of the gold brick we sold Peter. It's the bread shorts I want to cover, Ken."

The thin fingers of Kenwitz moved rapidly.

"Do you know how much money it would take to pay back the losses of consumers during that corner in flour?" he asked.

"I do not," said Dan stoutly. "My lawyer tells me that I have two millions."

"If you had a hundred millions," said Kenwitz vehemently, "you couldn't repair a thousandth part of the damage that has been done. You cannot conceive of the accumulated evils produced by misapplied wealth. Each penny that was wrung from the lean purses of the poor reacted a thousand-fold to their harm. You do not understand. You do not see how hopeless is your desire to make restitution. Not in a single instance can it be done."

"Back up, philosopher!" said Dan. "The penny has no sorrow that the dollar cannot heal."

"Not in one instance," repeated Kenwitz. "I will give you one and let us see. Thomas Boyne had a little bakery over there in Varick street. He sold bread to the poorest people. When the price of flour went up he had to raise the price of bread. His customers were too poor to pay it, Boyne's business failed, and he lost his \$1,000 capital—all he had in the world."

Dan Kinsolving struck the park bench a mighty blow with his fist.

"I accept the instance," he cried. "Take me to Boyne. I will repay his thousand dollars and buy him a new bakery."

"Write your check," said Kenwitz without moving, "and then begin to write checks in payment of the train of consequences. Draw the next one for \$50,000. Boyne went insane after his failure and set fire to the building from which he was about to be evicted. The loss amounted to that much. Boyne died in an asylum."

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