

'Her name henceforth,' said Sister Brenda, 'will be—'

'Aunt Brenda,' said a musical voice at our side, 'father and mother and Francis, Rosalie and Katherine are all impatient to see you. Father cannot speak, but mother is all smiles through her tears.' And the radiant novice of the ceremony stood there. She had not seen me.

With the half-finished sentence on her lips, Sister Brenda disappeared behind the cloister door with her happy niece, casting a glance of apology towards me and murmuring, 'Later on.'

'Too late!' I cried, and I rushed to a side door, my eyes filled with blinding tears, my heart full of pain. The opened door of my lost happiness was once more revealed to me. The light of the peace and predestined gladness that might have shone over my daily life forever glorified my pathway for a brief moment, but only for a moment. My youth was gone, my heart flowers withered and the pain of my unheeded call swept over me like a sea of bitterest regret. It was too late! I was an old maid.—'Catholic Standard and Times.'

## THE MAN WITH THE SCYTHE

He watched the strong, athletic figure as it swung from side to side with something like admiration in his lazy eyes.

'Jove!' he muttered, 'the fellow does it in good form. After all, these American peasants—working people, I mean—are superior to our English. If that chap were on horseback now, in a hunting costume or at a reception in a dress suit, it would really be difficult to tell his class. What a figure he would make on canvas. I believe I'll try it.'

He left his easel, which had been placed in position for a study of a century-old work, and went to the fence, raising two fingers as he did so to the young man, who was swinging toward him with the long, regular strokes of the mower.

But instead of dropping the scythe and coming forward with hand to forelock, as an English peasant would do, this fellow merely nodded toward the uncut swath ahead without breaking the regularity of his stroke.

De Masters frowned a little, then forgot his irritation in watching the lines of the figure as it swung nearer.

'Jove!' he muttered again, 'an American sovereign of the soil! I'll put him in the foreground of one oak with his scythe. They shall typify time and age and strength.'

His fingers had brought up a coin from his pocket—now, almost unconsciously, the coin was permitted to fall back, and a larger one was brought up in its place. It seemed more fitting. The smaller would have done for England.

As the fingers came from the pocket with the coin conspicuously in sight there was a last long s-s-swish of the scythe and the young man was wiping his face with his handkerchief.

'Now, what is it, sir?' he asked pleasantly. 'I did not want to stop back there on account of losing so much time. I'm tasking myself to finish this field to-day, and it's going to be a sharp work. You see, there are a lot of young trees in the field, and we don't like to put in a machine for fear of bruising them, so I'm doing it in the old-fashioned way. You're an English artist, I take it, who is stopping at the house for a few days?'

'Yes,' quickly, 'and that is what I want you for, to pose with your scythe in a study of the old oak.'

The coin was raised temptingly, but though the mower was looking straight at him, he did not appear to see it. There was no change in the expression of his eyes, no added color to his face.

De Masters looked perplexed. Over in the old country a peasant would have seen the first motion toward the pocket, and his hand would have been in readiness for whatever might be forthcoming.

'I shall want you more than two hours,' he said suggestively, 'and this—'

'I'm sorry,' the young man interrupted quietly, 'but the fine weather isn't likely to last, and we must give every moment of it to the haying. I should like to oblige you, and if you think it worth while to put the picture off until I have leisure I shall be glad to do what I can. You will excuse me now.'

'Well, anyway, take this,' began De Masters, 'and I will—'

But the sharp s-s-swish, s-s-swish of the scythe was now moving back across the field. De Masters balanced the coin doubtfully upon his fingers, thinking also that the dull eyes might not see it and that the coin would fall off and be lost, finally let it slip back into his pocket.

But the man and his scythe had taken hold of his fancy, and he moved the easel to another part of the field, where there was a big rock with a brook twisting around it and some alders leaning over.

He would let the oak go for awhile. There was no hurry. His invitation was unlimited. Perhaps the mower would have leisure after the hay was made, and—there was another reason why he was willing to stay on.

Kate Reumer was on the verandah when he returned, and the look of approval in her eyes as they rested upon him brought an unusual light into his own.

On the other hand, there was something in the thoughtful, unaffected manner of the country girl that appealed to De Masters as had none of the beautiful women he had met on his travels. He placed his easel and unfinished canvas on the verandah, and then dropped down to one of the steps.

'No, you needn't look at the picture yet,' he said, as her gaze went toward the canvas; 'it is only crude outlines like the limbs showing through a fog. I shall put in the details and finish it to-morrow.'

'You didn't try the oak, then?'

'No, I haven't yet; I have a new idea for it.' He was silent for some minutes, then added, with a laugh: 'Your peasants—working people, I mean—are different from ours on the other side. Over there I need only to raise my hand—with money in it, of course—and they come to me at a run. They are always ready to earn two or three honest pennies where their regular work yields but one.'

She looked at him inquiringly.

'I tried the same thing here,' he went on, 'but the man seemed too dull, or too fond of work. You see it was a man with a scythe, and I wanted him with the oak.'

'Did you offer him money?'

'Of course,' simply, 'I could not expect him to come otherwise. But in spite of all my efforts I couldn't make him see the money, and he talked to me just as I am talking to you—on terms of perfect equality. He didn't even touch his hat.'

A half smile was parting her lips.

'Who was it?' she asked, 'Porter or Smith, or Cibber?'

'I don't know, only that he was a handsome young fellow, with collar open and a very wide-brimmed straw hat.'

The half smile broke into a rippling laugh, instantly checked.

'I beg your pardon,' she said, 'but that was Less—Lester Longstreet, I mean.'

'Anything remarkable about him?' curiously.

'Why, no; I don't know as there is, not any more than about a good many of our young peasants in this country who are working their way up. But Lester is a very fine young man. He was left an orphan at eight, and has made every bit of his way since then. He has worked for papa three summers to help pay his college expenses.'

'College!' incredulously.

'Yes. He graduated from Yale in June, and is now earning money to pay for a post-graduate course in medicine and chemistry. Then he is going through a regular medical college, and afterwards will study a year in your country. He is only 21 now, so there is plenty of time. When he finishes his study I expect to marry him.'

Her eyes were shining a little now, and she looked at him frankly, as though half expecting some word of congratulation, perhaps of commendation for the young mower. His face was averted for an instant, then it turned pale, but equally frank.

'I thank you for your confidence,' he said, simply. 'I came here with an idea of staying for three days, and have been six already, and I should have to remain till after having to get the picture. I don't believe it would be wise for me to stay so long. I will say good-bye to you now.'

He bent over her hand for a moment, and was gone.

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