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In a quiet, pleasant neighborhood in Kansas lives a good woman with whom I sometimes spend a few restful weeks in midsummer. Just up a little slope and on the opposite side of the road from her home stands a beautiful cottage with the grounds about it so well and tastefully kept that one is surprised to learn that only an ordinary farmer and his family live there; usually western farmers are too busy to keep ornamental grounds in order, or to cultivate the desire for them. It was pre-eminently a happy-looking place, from the father and mother and children down to the cat in the doorway, including the canaries in their cages in the window, the lamb on the green grass of its lawn, down to the placid cows in the meadow near. I became interested in the place and the people, and when my hostess, Mrs. Simpson, said their story was somewhat romantic and interesting I was anxious to hear it at once. We sat on the wide front porch shaded by thick morning glory vines, whose cheery purple, mauve and pink blossoms were still open to the blue sky, and the air was still and warm; Mrs. Simpson was shelling peas, but I was idle, as I had meant to be when I came.

"Let's see," she began meditatively. "It's about forty years ago this summer since Mrs. Hampson came out west here with her son,

Abner, then a boy of about ten. She was a widow, she said, but she wore no mournin', though she always dressed plain and quiet. That forty acres of her's across the way was then as bare and plain except for sunflowers and prairie grass as ground could be; there was a stake in the ground for her to drive up to and that was as much as ever. Her brother come with her, in a great covered wagon, and the boy rode a pony and drove two cows. They brought a big tent, a couple of cots, a little cook stove and some boxes; the man put up the tent, the cots and the stove, opened the boxes which were made to serve as trunks and tables and chairs. Then he drove to the nearest town which was then fifteen miles away, and hauled some lumber and put up a shed to shelter the horses and cows and their feed in bad weather. He then went away leaving the woman and her brave little boy to live and make their way as best they could by themselves. But they were hosts—both of 'em. You never did see such a lad as that Abner. He seemed somehow to know inwardly what needed to be done and how to do it, and I don't believe he ever got tired. Mrs. Hampson, too, could work like a man, an' I don't think she ever was afraid or discouraged. It was too late to put in any regular crops, but that little boy plowed a patch o' ground, an' they put in a few potatoes an' other vegetables, an he got some good chicken wire and some posts an' he an' his mother build a fence around it. An' they had some good vegetables, squashes, turnips and the like. At odd times when he could, he hauled lumber from town, an' before the snow fell that fall they had up a neat, warm little board house of two rooms. They had a couple of carpenters for two weeks but they done lots of the work themselves.

Well, that's the way they got along. Mis' Hampson hired some o' the hardest work done, but she an' her boy made two full hands at whatever was under way. They put in wheat and corn and garden stuff; anything semed to thrive with 'em. About a year after they came a peaked-lookin' man with a pretty, weak little creetur for a wife and a seraph for a baby came an' took up land just south

He took her in his arms, and they understood each other. She stayed, and they have lived there ever since the happiest people I know.

of Hampson's. And other folks kept a coming, until pretty nigh all the land around was taken, and this little town of B——-, just above here, was laid out and folks began to settle there. It was a sort of "boom" for this part o' Kansas. This peaked little mail was a preacher an' he'd come out Here fer his health and to be out in the open air as much as possible. He was too sickly to preach right along an' he hoped to make a livin' farmin'. People think they can farm when they don't know a thing about it, but expect to learn everything else. Of course they had a hard struggle—an awful hard struggle. He had a very little money in the first place—had to mortgage his land to borrow some, an' he couldn't work hard enough to make much. He used to preach occasionally for the people here and they paid him as liberally as they could and come an' helped him and his wile, too. If they hadn't, I don't know what them two unfortunate children would 'a' done. The poor delicate wife knew more about poetry and picters than she did about what ought to be done on a new Kansas farm, but she tried her best. They struggled along for about three years, neither of 'em well and strong, until Preacher Farnsworth broke down completely, burdened with anxiety as to what would become of his helpless wife and child, and so died. Mis' Hampson was there takin' care o' them a good deal of the time, an' she thought a good deal of 'em all. We soon see the wife couldn't outlast her husband long, and in a few days she, too, died and left her four-year-old baby girl alone in the world. There were no near relatives. The mother had been raised by some aristocratic aunts who had resented her marryin' a penniless minister, and so there wag no one to go to. Mis' Hampson took the little Rose home with her and did by her as if she were her own. She was the most beautiful child ever seen in these parts, everybody loved her and she loved and trusted everybody. She was of a delicate build, but healthy and strong and as full of fun and merry tricks as a kitten.

So a" number of years went by and we all worked as hard as ever we could, sometimes gettin' our reward and sometimes havin' winter come on with starvation starin' us in the face. There was

years of drouth and years o' grasshoppers, then we had to sell off all that we had saved fer somethin' to live on, and I've seen times when we had to have help from the outside. When the railroad was finally put through and we only had to carry our produce to the depot in B——-, we thought we would prosper right along then, but we had to pay so much freight comes and buys up all the wheat right after comes along and buys up all the wheat right after harvest when it is cheap and farmers have to sell in order to pay their harvest expenses and the interest on their mortgages. The great financiers manage to put up the price o' wheat by winter when the poor workers of the cities need it worst. We work all summer from daylight to dark and receive sometimes not enough to live over winter; while the wage-earner in the city who manufactures the things we have to use scarcely earn enough to buy their food that we raise.

But taking good and bad years together we got along slowly and made the homes and the few comforts you see around us now, and most of us wouldn't live no other way. Many of the young folks, seein' no chance to learn anything of the world or to make any money, or gain any fame here in this simple place, have gone to the cities to try their fortune, and who can blame them?

When Rose was about fifteen, they had a second cousin or some distant relation, an accomplished young lady, come to live with them and teach Rose what she knew, an' the two girls used to wander round over the prairies carryin' books with queer soundin' titles, and sittin' under the trees by the brook a-readin' by the hour together. I guess Mis' Hampson didn't get much useful work out o' either of 'em for some time, though Rose was willin' and bright and at times she would work right smart, but Laura Ennis thought too much of herself—she hadn't time.

Well, the winter Rose was eighteen, Mis' Hampson took a heavy cold an' couldn't get rid of it nohow. Toward spring she grew worse and finally took to her bed and pretty soon we all knew there was no hope. Rose then proved her true worth and would scarcely take

him fondly, then dispatched him on some little errand. "The stupid, stupid man!" I thought.

One day while she lay in bed, a carriage drove up to the door and a finely dressed lady alighted. The gentleman with her remained in the carriage. She came up to the door all affectation and perfume and airs and then I discovered it was Laura Ennis. She scarcely waited to be admitted, but would see "dear Rose" immediately and found her way to her bedroom before one could hinder. She talked to her excitedly, effusively—in a manner that made me anxious. Pretty soon Rose called me to summon her husband. I found him and told him Rose wanted him. How pleased he looked as he hurried into her chamber! He was surprised to see Laura there, but greeted her kindly.

"Now, Laura, tell Abner what you proposed to me just now."

Laura hesitated, a little more at a loss to tell her errand to this sober, sensible man that she had to the sick woman.

"Well, you know that this marriage of yours was one of convenience and for the time being. I don't suppose your hearts were in it, either of you. I have married a very wealthy gentleman and have a fine home in Chicago. I can do well by Rose, if she will tome with me, and in time you two could—could be divorced, you know,—it is no new thing nowadays, and she might make a splendid match yet. And you, Abner, would in time marry some one more suitable and be happier than she would ever make you. What do you say? Or, stay, I will not ask you to decide so momentous a question so suddenly. I will come again tomorrow morning and if you will, take Rose away with me. She seems to need change at any rate."

Rose reached for Abner's hand and gave him a loving glance. "Shall I go, Abner?"

"Would you go? Am I keeping you a prisoner? I can offer you no gold, no splendor, no fine husband, only my true, honest love and my whole life's devotion. Rose can you stay happily with me?"

"Do you love me, Abner? Keep me, if you do."

One afternoon I sat watching at her bedside with some light work in my hands, when she woke and I thought had a better look in her eyes. She said suddenly:

"Mrs. Simpson, you should have let me die. I was glad when I thought that the Heavenly Father had called me home."

"Why, Rose Hampson, what do you mean to talk in that way?"

"Nothing wicked," she smiled faintly, "but I have spoiled Abner's life for him. He married me only to give me a right to my home. And now I must be a burden to him as long as I live. It would have been such an easy way out of the trouble, if I could have gone."

"Rose Hampson," I said in my most emphatic tones, "if ever there was a mistaken woman you are one!"

"Oh, I know," she said with a sad little smile. "He loves me as his little sister, and that would be all right, but he might want to marry some one else. He might wish to make many plans which he cannot because of me. I ought to be out of his way."

"Rose, have you been all this time thinking Abner did not love you?"

"Certainly. He never said he did."

"I know he does. He was almost wild when he thought you might die. Haven't you noticed how he stands in the doorway looking at you so despairingly, longing to help you but not knowing how or not daring to try? Now, maybe he is thinking the same thing of you, wearing his heart away because he thinks you married him to help him keep him home, and that you are mourning over your lost freedom. Have you ever thought of that, Rose?"

A startled, wildly-glad look came into her eyes, but she aid not speak.

"Watch him for a few days. You will see."

I smoothed her pillow and told her not to talk more then. I saw that from that moment she watched Abner without seeming to do so, and gradually there came into her eyes the sweetest, happiest look—and once or twice she called Abner to her side, looked at

any rest at all. She devoted herself entirely to her foster mother. Poor Mis' Hampson! She had done her last hard day's work, and she gladly entered upon her eternal rest. They mourned for her sincerely and so we all did, for she was a good neighbor and friend, and Abner he seemed sort stunned like, couldn't seem to realize it. Some one else had to take the lead, give all the directions, etc., and this was where Miss Ennis shone. She really was of great value at that time, and managed everything with tact and good judgment. Poor Rose was overcome with grief and worn out with watching. She contrived to keep up until after the funeral, then she went to bed and kept there for two weeks. We neighbors took turns taking care of her so that some 01 us were there nearly all the time.

But Rose began to recover finally, and when once the change took place she improved rapidly and soon was nearly as strong as ever.

Then it began to strike all of us who were interested that it was a peculiar case. Here was a young man owner and master of the place and two young ladies of no blood relation to him and all of them with a claim to a home in the cottage. It would never do in a staid, well-regulated community like ours for the three to go on living together. But what a pity to break up the home! I confess I worried over it a good deal and could come to no conclusion. But meantime, Laura Ennis had been thinking and was taking affairs into her own hands. She had been in correspondence with another distant relative who had more money than Abner possessed, and the result was an invitation for her to come and be companion and amanuensis to the lady of the house, which she accepted. Then she took Abner in hand and pointed out the situation to him. He must not desert the farm, and Rose could not go—she had no other home. Her forty acres joined his and together they would make a good farm. He must marry Rose. There simply was no other way. Abner was struck with astonishment. "Marry Rose! Why, they had always considered one another as brother and sister. She could never be brought to look upon me as a husband!"

"You *must* marry, anyway. Go on living as brother and sister as long as you feel that way toward one another. There must be a ceremony or you cannot go on living together. You see—there is no other way."

Just what Laura said to Rose and exactly how it was all brought about I do not know. Long afterward, I found that Rose had always considered Abner her ideal of a man, and that she could not do too much for him though she had not dreamed she loved him any other way than as a brother until she discovered how happy the thought of being his wife made her.

They were quietly married before a justice one morning with only John and myself and Laura present. Then we had a nice pleasant little breakfast with some white flowers decorating the table, and that was all. Laura "took the wedding trip," as she laughingly said, and we all drove to the depot to see her off. Then we went home about our duties.

Rose and Abner drove home, donned their everyday clothes, and took up their daily tasks as usual. To all appearances, their life went on in a matter-of-fact manner and both were happy. The spring work came on and Abner hired a couple of men to help with the plowing and seeding, while Rose had her hands full with house cleaning, cooking, making butter, gardening and taking care of her chickens. She seemed gay and cheerful, her brown eyes were bright and her cheeks rosier than ever as she regained her ordinary health. But, I noticed, as the hot summer days came on that she began to droop and her cheeks paled and her dark eyes grew dim and sad like. I made her get some help, for she was not fit to do the heavy work necessary on a farm. Abner was perfectly willing to hire help when once his attention was called to her need, and a strong woman from the village was engaged for two or three days in the week to do the hardest of the work. But Rose still drooped. One never heard her sing any more and she seldom smiled. She grew so unlike her old cheery self I scarcely knew what to think.

In the fall, she took a sudden cold and became very ill. Abner came over after me late one evening, looking white and scared with a look of dumb anguish in his grew eyes I could not bear to see. I hurried over and seeing her lie there gasping for breath, and thought of her poor father and her delicate mother, I did not wonder at Abner's agony. I made a poultice for her chest the first thing 1 did and handed it to Abner to put in place while I hurried to make a drink I knew was good for such cases.

"You put that on her chest and cover it good with flannel, then go for the doctor as quick as ever you can, but stop and tell Mis' White to come over and stay with me awhile," I said, hurrying away with my work, and then I looked up and there was that man standing there yet with that poultice held gingerly in his two hands and look in' dreadfully anxious and bothered. •"

"Mis' Simpson," said he, "I—if you please— won't you put this on I She might not like it if I was to try."

1 was surprised of course, but I took it and hurried it on to the sufferin' girl. I heard him slam out of the house, and a few moments after I heard his horse's hoofs tearing down the road like mad.

I did all I knew how for the poor girl, and it seemed awful lonesome in the house alone with her, and the wind moaning about, an' she apparently fightin' for life. But others came presently, and in good time the doctor. Then with all our efforts, about two o'clock, she lay white and still, but breathing, and out of immediate danger. I went home in the morning, some one else taking my place. She was quite sick for about two weeks, and some one of the neighbors were there 'bout all the time; not so much, that she was in danger as to see that she did nothing to catch more cold. I noticed that Abner never came close to her bedside or ventured to touch her hand or face, but he would stand at the foot of her bed or in the doorway with the look in his eyes of a dumb suffering animal. I could make nothing of such a situation, though I sometimes wondered if they had quarreled and were too proud to make up.