

dwellers in rural places—far from the throb of progress. They were of the soil, and they loved it. Animal they were; how could it be otherwise? Work, food, drink, raiment, made up the sum total of their aspirations. Yet rough wit and laughter, helping hands and tears there were in plenty. Of crime there was little, and it was the village boast "as none of 'em 'ad been to jail for a matter of ten year."

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A Saturday evening in August, and harvest time. Martha was a bit behind with work, and parson's surplice was still on the line. She skimmed the iridescent bubbles from her arms—and ran into the field to fetch it, from where it hung this airless hour as still as a corpse. Cuckoo Flower was in the garden she loved giving drinks from her little green can to the fainting flowers, and cheering their thirsty roots with happy inspiration. As her mother hurried back with the surplice over her arm, she stopped to listen to the quaint conceits of conversation.

"Never did I 'ear the like," she murmured to herself, "but o'course she's one of 'em."

"Cuckoo Flower," called her mother presently through the kitchen window, "You mun take parson's gownd to vicarage—put on a clean pinny and bonnet."

When a few minutes later the child came to the kitchen for the basket, dressed in her fresh cotton garments—faintly pink with much washing—she might have been likened to many flowers. A tender rose bud of a dewy May morning, her eyes intense and violet as any pansy, marigolds flaming for hair. Mother Martha absorbed all the sweetness and gathered the child to her heart. "Kiss us goodbye, little darlint," she whispered softly. Then she went out with her to the gate, and watched her trip lightly across the parched pasture. "Come quickly back," she called after her, as the child came within the shadow of the wood.

Cuckoo Flower—pretty lamb—nothing fearing, waved her bonnet and disappeared from view.

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Half an hour passed. Martha was busy ironing. Once she thought she heard the child's voice calling. She stepped across to the window, but there was no Cuckoo Flower in sight. A little well-worn bible lay upon a mat on the window ledge, between pots of white geranium and golden musk. Martha opened the book, and her eye fell on words she

loved, "Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child." Thus God spake. She smiled. She was a strong, tender, faithful creature, and she believed in the protective love of God for little Cuckoo Flower. She felt that the fatherless and the widow were precious to the Most High. She closed the Holy Book. Again she glanced through the window toward the wood, then back at the clock. How furiously it ticked and ticked.

Ah! all precious passing moments of time—for ever and for ever lost!

Martha Martin lived for forty years after that summer's day, but the moments in which she held God's Word in her hand, and looked up through the golden haze—beyond the high vaulted purple heaven, to where she visualised the white steps to the Throne—were, had she but known it, the moments in which she could have saved her heart from breaking and her soul alive! But she did not know.

The sun was sinking. She went out to the gate and shaded her eyes.—She called the child by name—and then, suddenly panic stricken—trembling yet surefooted, she ran across the field and into the wood.

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It was an hour later when they found little Cuckoo Flower. Those with her mother shook when they thought of it, and spoke low in the throat.

She lay trampled and abandoned—her garments rudely torn, her dead eyes open wide—still mad with horror, her little, piteous white face blotched with blood.

It was Martha who gathered her up—crushed and broken—a sapless flower!

Those who have seen an imprisoned beast scorched with flame know something of the inhuman cry wrung from this heartbroken mother as she swept past with her dead. It was a sound fresh escaped from Hell.

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The doctor, kind man, came and gave his opinion—in terms human enough. Death from outrage and shock. Others came later, men of law—if not of justice—and with them twelve good men and true. These were more ambiguous in their use of words. Murder? No. Manslaughter? Perhaps. If so, against some person or persons unknown. And much indecision as to how to hunt the criminal down.

Then the mother, calm for the time being, stood up and said her say, and there was no mincing of words as to her verdict. "This be black and bloody murder," she cried, "murder most horrible, of body and of soul. Him as 'as done this fearsome deed must swing. Men,

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