

HIS SALVATION

DESPITE his snow white hair, one knew he was still a young man. When he stood up to speak, one felt that each word was from a heart that was torn with grief and suffering. His look was calm, but in his eyes you saw an expression that was puzzling. He seemed to be constantly seeking to flee from something. What was it? He, a minister, could he have done wrong?

He stood up to begin his sermon. Why did he not look straight at his audience? His eyes were on his notes as he announced his text. A casual observer would have noticed that he turned pale. Why again? His text a simple one and one that was very appropriate for the day was, "He saved others; Himself He could not save." We all know the story of the Saviour's life and of His work in saving others. We know too of the sad death that was His and many have no doubt wondered why he did not save Himself. Was it because he could not? No. We may all be certain that it was because His great love for us would not let Him. When this story was told to us by this old young minister it seemed to put on a new meaning. Why was the subject so well covered by him? How could he make us feel that the Saviour was not the only one who had thus suffered? It seemed as though I had never understood the story before and as he went on, telling us with a pathos in his voice, this old, old story that we had all heard before, I felt that he too was saving others, but "himself he could not save." It puzzled me at first, but the more I thought of it, the more certain I was that such was the case. It was more than a woman's curiosity that made me wish to know what it was that he could not save himself from. I did not intend to probe his inmost thoughts but it was impossible for me to be satisfied until I knew.

Soon after this I was introduced to the minister and as my sister, whom I was visiting, lived next door to the parsonage, I met him often. No one can understand what a pleasant summer that was for me. His companionship

was all that any woman could have asked for. It was not long before I realized that my respect for him had become love. I would have been glad to have married him, but for the fact that I had what some people call a "past." I must tell it to him and that I could not do. It would be too hard to confess and I left that I would rather have him go his way, thinking that I did not love him, than to let him know I did and then suffer the humiliation of telling him, what I must tell him. But had I done wrong? Sometimes I felt that I had been sinned against.

Fall River was a pleasing little town and I was loathe to leave it. I wandered about day after day, saying that this would be a final goodbye to all the places there that I had learned to love. But somehow I could not bear to leave. Life outside of Fall River held nothing for me and I wished to stay there indefinitely. I could have done so but for the fact that I was human, and being so I fled from temptation, rather than stand bravely and face it.

We were walking through the orchard one afternoon and I was saying that I expected to leave within a few days, when suddenly the minister interrupted me by saying, "Anne, don't - - -," and then checked himself for he seemed to realize that he could not ask me to stay there on any condition but one. It frightened me and so he gently led me to a seat and told me to look the other way for he had something to tell me and he could not tell it if he knew I was looking at him. He started by saying that child though I was he hoped I would understand him. Just for the sake of hearing myself talk I said that I was no child, but a woman thirty-one years of age.

"Thirty-one." he said musingly and bent his head as though in deep thought. How I longed to stroke his hair as he sat there with his head in his hands. If I could only comfort him, as I knew he wanted to be comforted, how glad I would be. When he raised his head there was a determined look on his face and I knew that whatever he was going to tell me, was hurting him. He began by telling me something of his bringing up. What a lovely home he

had had and it was not until he confessed that his greatest fault was selfishness that I suddenly knew that I had heard that voice somewhere before. The voice that had haunted me all these days and nights for years and years. The voice that was changed by grief and suffering, but still the voice that I had longed to hear. I could look at him now and see traces of the boy that once was, but he was so intent on his story that he paid no attention to me. I kept quiet, holding my mouth so that I would not scream and tell him how I hated him. For I believed that moment that I hated him. When he told me how he had spent the Easter vacation of his junior year at college at the home of his chum, and how he had fallen in love with a young girl in the neighborhood, I knew he was speaking of me.

The story went on, and the voice that I had learned to love again that summer was telling me how he had persuaded this young girl to marry him and how they had moved to another town and were happy for only a little while. His selfishness and love of luxury soon had the better of him and once when he felt that he could bear no longer, being away from all his folks and all the wealth that was once his, he had left her for a few days and had gone back to college. His intention was to stay but a few days but life was easy there and although he wanted his little wife, he was so selfish that he could not give up his life of luxury and ease even for her sake. Time went on and when the summer vacation came, he thought he would now make up for these months that he had been away. His letters had never been answered but he took it for granted that she was only angry and when she saw him all would be well. He had not written to tell her he was coming, so it was a surprise to find their little home empty. He inquired in the neighborhood and they told him they thought she must have left the same day he had for they had seen neither of them since that time.

When he told of his suffering and remorse, I seemed to be living my life all over again. He pictured the long life that he had spent and told how he had in his misery

repented for his wrong and vowed that he would go out into the world and save others from sinning as he had done. For he felt that there was but one way to atone for his sin. So he had gone to her home and begged forgiveness from her parents but they had refused it. More miserable than ever he had gone to his own home. He expressed a wish to become a minister, but his father did not approve of it. He said nothing more and only studied the harder to have time in which to prepare himself for the work his heart was set on. By working hard and saving all of his allowance he had managed to collect a sum that was sufficient to have a search made for his wife. For several years all his earnings had been spent in this way. After seven years he had given up the search as useless.

He had finished his course at college, had taken up law and in his spare moments was either studying for the ministry or preaching and helping others as much as he could. At the age of thirty he had become a minister. He had wished to stay in the city where he could go among the very poor and help them, as he hoped other people would help his wife wherever she was. But his health gave out and he was obliged to leave the city and come to Fall River. He ended by saying, "So Anne, although I love you and want to keep you near me, because your name is hers and because you are the woman that she would have developed into if she had had the chance, I cannot because I am a married man. You are just the age she would have been if she had lived; not that I believe she is dead, but that she has gone so completely out of my life that I cannot help but feel that we will not meet again, Oh! Anne, why cannot I save myself from all this misery? I have asked myself many and many a time until I am weary with the mere thought of it. I love you Anne, but my life must be given to the atoning for my sin. My life has been so full of her that I have not cared for other women except to wish to help them. With you it is different, and now you see why I want you to stay and why I cannot ask you to do so."

I sat there in misery fighting with love and hate. Knowing that I loved the man as I had never loved the boy. Why must I feel that I could not forgive him? I too had suffered much and long. Would not our suffering bring us nearer to each other? My whole past flitted before me and I wondered if he would still care for me if he knew that I was his own Anne that he had been searching for these many years. Would he be so relieved at finding me again that the mere thought of salvation from this sin of his would make him forget that he wanted me? Still I must tell him.

Quietly I told him how I had waited patiently in the little cottage for him to come back and when the money was all gone, there was nothing to do but leave. I wrote to my sister and told her that we were married and were going west. I really went west and there I felt it would be necessary to assume another name, for the one my parents had given me I could not use and his I did not care to claim as mine. I secured a position as a school teacher in a small town. My great loss had made me look older than I was and I knew that if they had been aware that I was but a young girl not yet out of my teens, they would not have given me the position. There I worked for years, waiting patiently for him to come, for I knew he had money enough to search over the whole world for me. When he did not come I decided that the best thing to do would be to forget him, On this I bent my mind and soon afterwards began to try and recover my lost youth.

"You see the result, but you do not know how hard it was to be happy and gay when with others, and how many a time I faced you alone in my room and fought with you for my own happiness. You had no right to expect me to remain faithful to you when you had proved yourself untrue to me." So time went on and when I felt that I could bear up no longer I wrote to Lou and asked her if I could come home for awhile and if they would forgive me. Her letter came a month later and she told me to come. Although father and mother had both gone, she would be

glad to have me make her home my home. So I came here and the first time I saw you was at church when your text was "He saved others; Himself He could not save." My heart went out to you then, but I could not give you my love, for like you I felt that it belonged to another, and I still thought of him who was my husband. I firmly believed that I could not love you as I had loved him, but I knew that I respected you more and therefore would be better able to love you. "You save others, Dan, yourself you cannot save; but dear, let me save you. Let me come to you now and we will begin again. These years of suffering will be as a dream to us some day. We will love each other twice as much to make up for all the sorrow and suffering that has been ours. We were both faithful."

"Say dear," I begged of him, "say that you still care," and for answer he knelt at my feet and I brushed back his hair as I had so often longed to do.

—PETRA T. FANDREM, '12