

ever alternating between two opinions, and he grew worn with the struggle. One morning he sought the now well-known and familiar tarn, determined to make his irrevocable choice, for on the morrow his probation would end, and he must return home; and he must have his answer ready. The time for dallying and indecision was over. It was the stern hour when he must dare to take his life choice in his hands and hold to it.

The silver bed of waters was gleaming under the noon sunshine. Whatever mysteries it might have, it presented a calm, unalterable face to the world. If it held mysteries, it held them in defiant secrecy. Why could not he? Why should he not bury his conscience under a Sphinx-like calm, and under that impenetrable veil defy the stinging condemnation of his heart and accept his uncle's offer, and win Aileen, if she were to be won? Why should he not? He would. He would hesitate no longer. It had been weakness to hesitate so long.

He lifted his eyes suddenly. Almost by his side lingered a bowed woman, old and grey, with a look on her face that fascinated yet terrified him. She was regarding him curiously, and then her piercing eyes would wander to the surface of the silver waters.

'You spend over many hours by the side of yon water,' she said when she met his eye; 'but I guess you haven't known it summer and winter for sixty and more years as I have, mister.'

'No, but it interests me. How calm it always is—like life in your village.'

He spoke musingly, and she peered up strangely into his face, and drew nearer.

'Calm? Ah, young sir, when you've lived a bit longer you'll learn that a calm like that isn't the sort that never had a ruffle; and if you had lived in these parts as long as I have, you'd know that sin and evil and sorrow—ay, and madness—sweep under the outward calm of what you call life in a village. Oh, yes, I've heard it all before. You strange visitors of a week or two smile at us and think we've never had reason to find out we have hearts; but I tell you that the Lord never yet set six human souls together in the fairest spot but the enemy of souls found 'em out. Six? no, nor yet two; for there were but two in the Garden of Eden, and the enemy was there, and brought his curse with him.'

Guy shivered slightly. What eerie things for a woman to say! But she went on, unheeding his uneasiness.

'Do you see yon building?' pointing with one skeleton finger where in the dim golden, hazy distance could faintly be seen a huge ugly structure of blackened bricks; 'that's a brewery!—a great, rich, wonderful brewery, where beer is brewed, which makes men and women mad, and lower than the poor brutes that would shame them by turning aside from the same sin. A brewery, young man! You know what a brewery is, don't you?'

'What of it?' asked Guy, shivering once again. Why should this singular woman talk to him about breweries?'

'I'll tell you. Listen. That brewer had a son, a young man, a young man who was as straight and handsome as you, young sir; and, as young men will, he fell in love with a sonsie face and a pure soul, and fell in love with another enchantress, too.

The drink that is made in his father's great brewhouse cursed him body and soul—that and the terrible "fire-water," as the poor Indian brothers across the big ocean call brandy and the like—and he grew to hate the very light of day and all things true and good. Till there came a night, ah! a winter night of such ice and frost and snow as you know nothing of, young sir, and he broke away from his bonny homeside, and in his madness took yonder moor path till he reached this spot, and no one ever saw the rest.'

She lowered her voice, and gripped his arm with a force that made him wince.

'The tarn was covered with a thin sheet of ice, and the snow lay over it, and it looked for all the world like a bit of the rocky moorland itself. It was dark as the most utter darkness can be, and the wind howled pitilessly.

'Up from the village, following in his footsteps, sped a woman with a babe in her arms. You'll guess the truth, 'twas his bonny wife of a year and a half, with his little child held to her bosom. Ah, my heart grows cold as the stones under the water of the tarn as I think of it. For why? Wasn't it my own bonny Ellen and her child? My own one, wee girl that I'm telling of? Yes, yes, Ellen, with her brave and sonsie face, that I never saw again save in my dreams.'

'What happened?' asked Guy, fascinated against his will into listening.

'In the morning light the searchers saw a hole in the ice that covered the tarn, a hole as though some heavy body had crashed through it; and on the snow, a yard or two further, frozen and stiff, they found a cap—the cap he was wearing when he left his home that night. He was never seen again. They say the tarn has no bottom. I can't tell. But it wasn't till weeks after, when the great frost broke and the snowdrifts melted, that the men came upon two dead bodies near about here—a woman with a baby in her arms, and the woman's face was the face of my Ellen.'

'Horrible!' Guy put his hand to his brow. 'But this was exceptional. The father; is he not alive and well? The other was just a tragedy, surely.'

'Alive? No, young sir, no one can dare to say he lives. His existence is one endless torture. His rooms are peopled, to his maddened fancy, with spirits and powers of evil, and his days and nights are one round of unmitigated horror. Who can call it living?'

'Ah! but this is only one family. There might have been a predisposition.'

'Only one family? Nay; I swear to you it is one of thousands.' Her voice rose till the autumn echoes awoke on the moorland and nature seemed to repeat and emphasize her words.

'Is there not the story of Willie Blake, who killed his old mother when she was trying to keep the whiskey from him? and Andy Ferrell, who shot himself to end his mad misery? and Katie Macquire, who, when the drink had hold of her, took her baby's life?'

'Stay! It is enough. I can bear to hear no more,' cried Guy Aylmer, hoarsely. 'Mother, you will never know what your terrible words have done for me to-day. I can only say to you that they have come as the warning voice of God. I am going home to-morrow, and then it will be for me to live out the sermon you have

preached me here by the silver tarn this morning.'

He turned abruptly away, and walked back over the rugged moors to his lonely rooms. The next day he left the wild beauty of Yorkshire behind him, and began his hard battle for conscience and for truth.

His father was hopelessly stern and cold and unplying; his mother broken-hearted and in tears.

'The choice is your own. You have chosen to ruin your prospects in life, and I have no further advice to offer you,' his father said curtly. 'You must make your own future.'

But while Guy was feeling his burden almost too heavy to be borne, Aileen Adair came with a light of proud triumph in her eyes.

'I am proud of my friend,' she said in her sweet yet thrilling voice; 'never so proud as now that he has given up fortune at the call of duty.'

'Aileen,' his voice trembled, 'it is not only fortune; it is something far dearer and sweeter. Had I been my uncle's heir I might have dared to tell you what I do not dare now.'

'Why do you not dare?'

The light in her eyes dazzled him.

'Because—because I am poor, and you—'

'You may dare to tell me now what you would not have dared had you sacrificed conscience and goodness for mere gold,' she murmured softly.

* * * * *

The day came when Guy Aylmer, a rising commercial man, with the wife who loved him, blessed God again and again that the money he passed through his hands daily had no shame on it from the ruin of men's souls. From his one act he built his future.

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'We sow an act and reap a habit; we sow a habit and reap a character; we sow a character and reap a destiny.'

They Were Partners.

A sturdy little figure it was, trudging bravely with a pail of water. So many times it had passed our gate that morning that curiosity prompted us to further acquaintance.

'You are a busy little girl to-day?'

'Yes, 'm.'

The round face under the broad hat was turned toward us. It was freckled, flushed and perspiring, but cheery withal.

'Yes, 'm,' it takes a heap of water to do a washing.

'And do you bring it all from the brook down there?'

'Oh, we have it in the cistern, mostly; only it's been such a dry time lately.'—
'Canadian Churchman.'

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