

with a faded frock. Yes, it must be true that Mamie was once here, though it is so, so long ago.

We still live in this little cottage on the downs, to which Roger brought me, a girl-bride fifty years ago. My home was in the North, and I felt strange at first amongst these slow, quiet South-country folk. Our cottage stands on the downs, about half a mile from any other house. There are in reality two cottages, but at the time I married, the other cottage chanced to be empty. I was a bit lonesome that first year, and used to feel nervous and strange if Roger did not come home till after dark. No other house was in sight from our windows, and the wind had a weird sound as it came across the even downs. But after Mamie came I was far too occupied to attend to strange noises, or to think about being alone. The village folk said she was too pretty and too good to live; but we only laughed, for Mamie was healthy, and never ailed. I do not know if she were really cleverer than most babies, I only know that none of my other children were half as intelligent.

Three years passed before our second child came. Things had not been going well with us. Roger had got into the habit of looking into the public on his way home, and spending there more money than we could afford. Once or twice he had come home unsteadily. That was back in the summer. Now! alas! his coming home steadily was the exception, not the rule.

Baby was born early in December, but I could not get up my strength as quickly as I had done after Mamie's birth, and Christmas still found me weak, and only able to get slowly through my necessary work. I had promised Mamie to take her to church on Christmas night, to see the holly put about and to hear the people sing, "Hark! the herald." But when the night came I did not feel well enough, and the weather was cold and snowy. Roger had been at home all day, seeming by his attentive helpfulness to try and make me forget how drunk he had been the night before.

We were a quiet party at tea that day. Roger, always a silent man, had grown more so lately. I was feeling tired and out of spirits, and Mamie was struggling to keep back her tears. She was usually a good child about disappointments, but this church-going on Christmas night had been talked of and planned for so many weeks!

"What ails Mamie?" her father asked, as Mamie, her bread-and-butter finished, was sitting with her head down and her tears dropping fast on her pinafore.

"Why," I said, "I had promised to take her to church to-night, and now the weather is too bad, and I'm not well enough; but Mamie ain't a good girl to cry."

"Supposing I were to take her?" Roger said.

Mamie pushed back her chair, slipped off it, and, climbing on her father's knee, she put her arm round his neck—

"Posing 'Oger was to take Mamie?" she said, looking across at me, her face shining like a wet flower with smiles and tears.

She had a habit of calling us 'Roger,' and 'Anne'; it amused us, and we had not checked her.

"Oh! will you really take her, Roger?" I asked eagerly.

Roger had not been to church for months, and if he went there with Mamie, it would keep him at least one night out of the public.

It was time to dress Mamie. I went upstairs to fetch her warm cloak and hood, and my thick shawl to wrap all round her. But she was so excited that it was no easy matter to catch her and make her stand

still. However, she was dressed at last. Such a little fat bundle, with such a rosy, laughing face peeping out of the red hood!

Her father had lifted her up in his arms and they were ready to start, when Mamie's bright face suddenly clouded over. "Put me down, 'Oger, at once!" she said. He put her down and she ran to me, where I was sitting on my low chair by the fire, with baby on my knees. She put both her arms round my neck and whispered (such a windy whisper):—

"If Anne will be terrible lone-like, Mamie won't never go; she'll just bide, and 'Oger must go alone to see the holly sticked about the church."

"Oh! no," I said, kissing the firm, round cheek, "Anne will be much too busy with Baby to feel lonesome, and Mamie will tell her all about everything when she comes back."

I threw a shawl over Baby and came to see them start. It was a dark night, and I soon lost sight of Roger's broad figure, but still I heard Mamie's clear, childish voice: "Good-night, Anne. Good-bye dear, dear Anne."

I tidied up the house a bit, and prepared the supper, and then felt tired, for I was not strong yet. I put Roger's chair ready and his slippers, and Mamie's wee chair and her tiny shoes, and then I sat down on the low chair and took Baby on my knees. As I sat there I thought of Roger, and gradually my thoughts turned to prayers. I prayed that in some way God would make this day a day of escape for Roger — of escape from the curse that was ruining his life.

Ah! and God heard my prayer.

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I think I must have slept, for when I roused myself the fire had burned low, and I felt cold. I got up and looked at the old clock against the wall. Nine o'clock! why, wherever could Roger and Mamie be staying? I went to the door and looked out. Fast driving snow, but no sound of returning feet. I trimmed the fire, did a few things about in the room, and then went to the door again.

Still only the whispering silence of falling snow. Could it be possible that Roger had, after all, gone to the public, and taken Mamie with him?

Half-past nine. Ten.

The thought struck me: "If Roger is drunk he will be unfit to carry Mamie home!" I would go and find them. Baby was too young to get out of his crib, and crying a bit would not hurt him. I did not stop to think if I were strong enough for the walk. I just wrapped an old shawl round me and went out into the snow. The cold, biting air seemed to revive me and give me strength. There was no moon, but the white snow lying on the ground gave a certain light, and I knew my way well. Across the down along a lonely road, and through the village street. I reached the door of the public-house, and was just going to push it open, when someone coming out stumbled against me. I recognized my husband.

"Roger!" I cried, "where is Mamie?"

He had been sleeping heavily and had slept off part of his drunkenness, though he was still dazed and confused.

He never could bear to speak of that night, but it seems that he had met some companions on the way to church. They had asked him to come with them for a drink, and when he had refused, had laughed at him and had taunted him with his church-going and his baby.

He promised to go with the men after he had carried the child to church. He placed Mamie in a safe corner, promising her he

would soon be back. "Only a few moments," he said to himself as he entered the public. But, alas! the moments lengthened into hours, and, his mind clouded with drink, he had forgotten Mamie.

"Where is the child?" I asked again.

"I left her in church," Roger stammered, "she must be waiting for me there."

The cold night air, and the shock of seeing me, had sobered him a little.

We both set off in the direction of the church, but I found that my strength was nearly gone, and that if I went further I might not be able to get home. So I left Roger to go to the church, and alone through the blinding snow, that now lay thick on the ground, I dragged myself home.

The fire had gone out, and baby was crying. It was nigh on eleven o'clock.

Unlike most cottages we have a fire-place in our upstairs room. I kindled a fire there now and made Mamie's little bed warm and ready for her. "She will be cold and weary, poor lamb," I thought. But I still had many anxious hours of waiting.

I think it must have been going on for three o'clock before I heard the welcome sound of voices. I saw men approaching—quite a little crowd—but I could not distinguish Roger's figure. Then as they came up to the door, I saw him with Mamie in his arms. There was something in his face that frightened me. I was soon told all there was to tell. Mamie had not been found in the church; no one had noticed the child, or had seen where she had gone, after the close of the service. Roger had thought it most likely she would have tried to find her way home. So all night long with lanterns and spades they had searched for poor Mamie on the snow-covered down. They had found her at last, sleeping peacefully, half-covered with soft snow. "Ah! but was it sleep, or the longer sleep that men call death?" She had wandered nearly a mile out of the right path. What must she not have suffered of cold and fear, and misery, before she fell asleep! Oh! our poor, wee, laughing bairn! The doctor was quickly called. He was very kind and patient; "Mamie is not dead," he said.

After many hours he did, indeed, bring her back to life, but only to the restless tossings of fever and delirium.

For three days she turned and tossed and moaned ceaselessly. Then one night the fever left her, and she fell asleep; "She will get well," I thought.

The doctor had bid me send for him should there be a change, and Roger went for him now.

He came. He felt the little feeble pulse; he listened to the halting breath. He did not tell me what he thought, but asked me where my husband was, and went downstairs. After a while I saw a change come over Mamie's face, and I went to call Roger. He was sitting with his arms on the kitchen table and his face buried on them. It is an awesome thing to hear a strong man cry!

I just touched him on the shoulder: "Mamie's going, Roger; won't you come and wish her good-bye?" He did not seem to hear me, and I went back, but he followed me soon, dragging himself slowly up the stairs.

For an hour we watched and there was no further change. Then Mamie opened her eyes slowly.

"Anne!" she whispered.

I was kneeling by her, and I took her wee hand in mine. But she still looked as if anxious for something more.

"'Oger!" she said, quite out loud.

He came and knelt close on her other side. Very slowly and feebly she put her arms round his neck. Then she looked from him