

received. "There can find the way out, aw reckon."

And the next instant the young man was gone. Left to herself, the old woman rose to her feet, for she had scarcely moved from her chair while her visitor was there, and then you could see she was lame, had, in fact, a wooden leg, and moved about with the aid of a stick.

Yet, for all that, her actions were quick, sharp, jerky, and gave you the impression that despite the loss of a limb, she was both active and energetic.

Twisted, lopsided, and stamping about with a dot-and-go-one sound, she nevertheless gave you the idea of power and intensity of purpose either for good or evil, and a certain mesmeric influence, almost fascination from her black, bead-like eyes, never failed to leave a scarcely agreeable impression on the mind of the observer.

The light in her eyes this evening when she found herself alone seemed to have acquired a new and more glittering light, as though the sight of gold and the promise of so much more of the shining metal had fired her whole being.

First she thumped on the floor with her wooden leg across the room, turned the key in the door, hung a handkerchief over the keyhole, then made her way to the window, and examined the shutters to see, not only that they were secure, but that no one could peep through them.

Satisfied on these points, she approached the fire-place again, and having removed the fender, lifted up, by the aid of a chisel, a stone which, though apparently firm and well-fitting as the rest on the floor, was in reality, simply dropped into the hole it fitted, without mortar or any cement to fasten it.

Having lifted this from its place, the withered arm of the hag dived down into the hole which the slab had covered, and came up again holding a bag, so heavy, however, that both hands were required to lift it.

This she untied, still on her knees, and the bright fire-light reflecting the tallow candle, shone upon a mass of golden coins.

A perfect pile.

So many that it would have taken some time to count them; but this was not the intention of the owner—she had other work to do.

For a few seconds she remained gazing over her treasure, and passing her skinny fingers through the yellow heap.

Time was precious, however, and with something like a sigh of regret at having to shorten her pleasure in gazing on her wealth, she took the eight sovereigns given her by the stranger, marked them with a red pencil she had in her pocket with the sign of a cross, then added them to the rest, and tying the bag up quickly, as though fearing to trust herself longer with it, consigned it to its hiding-place, returned the stone to the position in which she found it, put back the fender, then rose from the floor.

There was a wicked look on her face, as well as a leer of malice and spite, as she muttered—

"Now, Lizzie Bolton, aw'll pay yo' and yo' son out, aw reckon, for the scorn yo's heaped upon me. Witch, am aw? Yo'll find out aw'm more nor a witch, afore yo've done wi' me."

And thus muttering, she took a large shawl, planned it over her head, plied fresh coals on the fire, extinguished the candle, and prepared to go out.

Out into the cold, bitter snow.

But what was the weather to her when her cupidity and desire for revenge were both interested in the object of her journey?

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A TERRIBLE TEMPTATION.

The Reverend Sidney Beltram sat in his study the morning after Frank Gresham's visit in a state of intoxication to his house, looking and feeling, it must be confessed, as though some great grief and agony were upon him.

And so there was.

Sidney Beltram was but a man, a very weak man, with all his vows and high resolves, and he found this out now to his bitter cost.

A face had for more than a month haunted the sleeping and waking moments, and filled the heart and brain of the young clergyman.

It was the face of a woman, too, young, beautiful, and strangely sad, as though some great grief or dread had passed over and left its impress behind it.

He had seen beautiful faces before, many far more lovely than that of the mill girl who had crossed his path, but none that so persistently refused to be forgotten.

A kind of madness was upon him, he knew it, felt it, struggled, fought against it, and yet all the time yielded to it.

Day after day found him, by some strange fatality, in the path of the troop of girls that came out of Gresham's mill, and, though it seemed accidental, perhaps was so, Florence Carr's eyes, by some strange and subtle fascination, met his, to be withdrawn again abruptly and with something like a shudder of fear.

The girl feared him, shrank from him, it seemed, and he, too, tried to shrink away, to forget, nay, even hate her, but in vain.

Vainly he told himself that his vows prohibited such thoughts and feelings as had taken possession of him, they would not be reasoned away or exorcised even by prayer; the spell was upon him, and fight and struggle as he would, it bound him in its overmastering strength.

As he sits there, his elbow resting on his desk, his hands clenched in the nails seemed to penetrate the skin, you can see that the struggle has been a severe one, and that the temptation has conquered.

A knock at the study door arouses him from his reverie, and the next instant his sister, Lady Helen Beltram, with a small packet in her hand, entered the room.

The struggle in her heart was over.

A trifle paler than usual, perhaps she looked, her lips may have slightly trembled, and, had one examined them closely, a trace of tears which could have been detected in the swollen eyelids.

Too trifling, however, to be noticed unless you looked for them, and Sidney Beltram was far too much occupied in the thoughts raging in his own heart to be very critical on his sister's personal appearance.

"Sidney, may I speak with you?" she asked, with a slight amount of nervous timidity, for when in his study, the rector was supposed not to be disturbed even by his aunt or sister.

"Yes, come in. What is it?" he replied, hurriedly, rousing himself by an effort from his dark, painful reverie.

"I—I want you to send those letters and presents back to Mr. Gresham," she said in a calm, but evidently strained tone; "and request all he has ever received from me in return."

"Yes; is that all?"

It was only by an effort that he could fix his mind, even upon his sister's disappointment and the insult and indignity offered to her.

Her next words, however, roused him.

"No. I don't know how to say it, but I have heard that there is a girl, a mill hand in his own employ, one who has seen better days, though she is still young and very lovely, and that—how can I tell you—that—"

And she drew a deep struggling sigh, as though the explanation were more than she could endure.

But she nerved herself with an effort and continued—

"That Frank—Mr. Gresham, I mean—admits and is trying to ruin her. Oh, Sidney," she went on, with a burst of feeling; "if it is not too late, save her; pray, save her. She may be good and innocent and pure now, but will she, can she remain so, surrounded with poverty, and that men trying to tempt her? Do try save her, Sidney. I feel as though her salvation lay in your hands."

"In mine! What can I do?" asked her brother, in a kind of dazed helplessness.

"Do!" repeated the girl, with a flood of impatience, almost of irritation, in her tone and manner; "why, you can go and see her as a clergyman, ascertain if she is good and virtuous and willing to be helped to escape from that man; if so, we might help her to get a situation in some other town out of his reach and where he would not find her."

"Perhaps you are right, but I—I could not go to her on such an errand; it is the work for a woman, not for a man to talk to her of such things."

"But what woman can go to her?" returned Lady Helen, determined to gain her point, and get her brother to do as she wished. "I would do so myself in a moment, but she would think, and she would say, I was afraid and jealous of her, and only wanted to get her out of the way, when the fact is, nothing would induce me to marry that man, now that I know him in his true character."

"But you might send some other woman."

"No, there is no one I dare speak to on the subject, but my aunt, and she is too irritable at the whole affair to take any interest in the girl's fate or care what becomes of her; besides, she would not have the patience or tact to try to save and help without offending her, so if you will not do it, Sidney, no one else that I know of can."

There was a silence for a few seconds, and the clergyman hid his face in his hands as though in deep thought, but there was more than simple meditation written on his countenance which it might be as well to hide.

Little could his sister dream of the temptation she was laying before him.

To her it seemed strange that he should hesitate.

It was not often he was so reluctant to save a brand from the burning fire, a soul from possible destruction, and she had learnt to look upon him as one exempt from the common feelings and passions which are the usual heritage of humanity, and to take him at his own valuation—a being superior or inferior, but utterly distinct from the ordinary run of mankind.

He would not marry.

He had taken a vow to that effect, she knew, and she could not dream of anything less sacred or holy in connection with her brother's life or thoughts.

Presently he raised his head and uncovered his face, when, for the first time, his unnatural pallor struck her.

"Sidney, you are ill," she cried, and she darted to a cupboard, poured out a glass of wine from a decanter in it and brought it to her brother, holding it to his lips.

But he pushed it away coldly, almost mechanically, as he said—

"No, I am not ill; don't alarm yourself. I will think of what you have said. Do you wish me to take or send the letters?"

And he laid his hand on the packet she had placed before him.

"Whichever you like, Sidney, but do drink this wine, you look so pale and ill. It is all over between Mr. Gresham and myself, please remember that. I will accept no excuse, apology, or explanation."

And to Lady Helen's satisfaction, he swallowed the glass of sherry she had poured out for him.

The wine brought a faint tinge, not of color, but of the appearance of life, to the rector's pale, ghastly-looking face, and he was about to make some further remark to his sister, when a tap sounded on the door and a servant opened it, announcing that Mr. John Gresham had called, and was in the hall.

"Show him in," said the master of the house, and the next moment the young ironmaster stood before him.

Of course it is very wrong to rejoice over another person's shortcomings or downfall, especially when the prize we ourselves have coveted is thus left within our possible reach.

No doubt Jacob felt very much ashamed of himself for taking advantage of his brother Beau's hunger and absence, but that feeling, supposing it to exist, did not, as we know, prevent his taking away both his birthright and his father's blessing.

And John Gresham, though he was heartily ashamed of his brother's conduct, and somewhat remorseful also at feeling secretly glad of it, was quite ready to take advantage of all Frank's folly had left him to reap.

It is not the fashion nowadays to carry one's heart upon one's sleeve, or the thought of one's mind and record of one's feelings upon the countenance, and following the way of the world, John Gresham looked far more humble and deferential than enthusiastic and triumphant as he entered the sacred study.

A faint tinge of color so slight and transient that it could not be termed a blush, passed over Lady Helen's cheek as the brother of the man she had loved entered the room.

The first greetings over, the visitor observed—"I could not persuade my brother to return home last night; have you heard from him to-day?"

"No," was the cold reply. "I have given orders that he shall not be admitted. My sister desires to end all the relations between them, and declines to see or hear from him again. She wishes to return and receive back certain letters which have passed. I do not wish to meet him myself; my temper will scarcely stand it; but if you will undertake the commission of exchange, you will confer a favor upon all parties."

For a moment John Gresham hesitated.

His brother knew his secret, would no doubt taunt, perhaps quarrel with him about it; but then the desire to stand well with the inmates of the Rectory, the wish to have a certain hold upon their gratitude and friendship, and also the determination to supplant his brother fully and entirely in Lady Helen's affections, all these considerations urged him, reluctant as he felt, to do what he was asked to undertake.

"Thanks, you have relieved me of a disagreeable duty," said the clergyman, with a sigh, "and I am not very well to-day. Of course we shall be happy to see you as usual. I think my sister and aunt are going into the church to assist in decorating it for Christmas Day. Perhaps you will go and help them. I have some of my parish duties to attend to. Good-bye for the present. You will come in and dine with us to-day or to-morrow?"

"Perhaps I will; but you look ill. You'd better take care of yourself, or we shall have you laid up, perchance. Fastening may be all very well in its way, but it soon knocks a fellow up, and saps the very life out of him."

But the Reverend Sidney Beltram sighed wearily, even sadly, as he shook his head and said—

"Don't be alarmed; I usually look pale. I am past being hurt by many things now. You will join the ladies in the church. Good-bye for the present."

And feeling dismissed, somewhat reluctantly, the young ironmaster left the room, and Beltram was once more alone.

Starting to his feet as the door closed, he turned the key in the lock to prevent further interruption, and then the mask seemed suddenly to fall from him.

His face became distorted, he clenched his fist, tore his hair, and seemed as though he would drag his very heart out, muttering, in the deepest agony—

"Fast, penance, prayer! Yes, they take me for a saint, and I am a demon. But do the demons suffer the pangs I endure? No, no! It is impossible, and yet I sink deeper and deeper, until 'he power to struggle against and baffle them is gone! Oh, Heaven! to what have I come when I sink so low as this!'"

And he threw himself on a chair and sobbed like a child.

After a time he rose, pale, weak and dejected, all the fire and passion of remorse gone, the last effort was over; he would beat his breast no more like an imprisoned bird against the bars of his cage, but yield blindly to fate, whatever it held in store for him.

Another element had been added to the torment of his mad infatuation, the impetus of jealousy.

Little did Lady Helen think the mischief she was doing when she urged her brother to try to save Florence Carr from the snare of the cotton-spinner.

He would save her, he vowed, but for what? He dared not answer that question, even to himself.

But when darkness came on, ending the short wintry day, and dinner, which was barely touched, was over, Sidney Beltram went to his study, and a few minutes after, left the house and walked out into the night with the falling snow around, on a mission which we shall learn as we proceed.

(To be continued.)

## For the Favorite. DAYS OF YOUTH.

BY HENRY DUNDAR.

The soft regret that o'er the soul,  
When happy youthful days before us roll,  
When fancy weaves its transient dreams,  
And from old age our youth redeems.

When from the busy toils of life,  
Wearied and fainting with worldly strife,  
We turn and for relief let fancy reign;  
And live those happy moments o'er again.

The glorious joyous days of youth,  
When warm with love and hope and truth,  
Then romance flung o'er every thought,  
Its mystic charm will never be forgot.

With noble thoughts and aspirations high,  
Our bright ambition bounded to the sky;  
What height was there it could not climb,  
When drifting lightly with the stream of time.

But soon, how soon, the transient dream,  
Fades and is lost like summer's beam;  
Old age draws near with winter's icy hand,  
And puts to flight the happy joys we planned.

Yet in old age though merging to the tomb,  
All is not pain nor yet all gloom,  
Some purer joys unknown to earlier days  
Then glow forth in their brightest rays.

Our thoughts are turned with hope and prayer,  
That we by faith in heaven may share  
Those sacred joys which open from the tomb,  
And from dread death dispense all the gloom.  
MONTREAL.

For the Favorite.

## HOW I LOST MY EAR

AND

## HOW I WON A WIFE.

BY W. S. HUMPHREYS,

OF MONTREAL.

The events I am about to narrate occurred nearly twenty years ago. I had been outspending the evening with a party of rollicking young fellows like myself, and probably I might have indulged a little too freely in wine, but nothing to speak of. I was vending my way homewards about midnight, when I thought I heard a cry of distress. I stopped to listen, but, hearing nothing more, and thinking I must have been mistaken, I was turning to leave, when again I was startled, and this time I heard distinctly, in a woman's voice:

"Help! help! Will nobody come to save me?"

I turned in the direction from whence the sound proceeded, and saw a dilapidated old mansion—an old house that was well known to me, it having the reputation of being haunted, and I had no idea that anybody was at present residing in it. The last tenant had left it about six months previous, being frightened away by strange noises, as chains creaking, doors slamming, and all other sounds supposed to appertain to a thoroughly haunted house, since which time the house was supposed to have been uninhabited.

While hesitating whether to advance or retreat, the cry of distress once more fell upon my ears:

"Help, help! murder! police!"

I hesitated no longer, but made a rush for the door, which resisted all my efforts to open—it was locked. I tried the windows—the shutters were all closed and locked. I rushed round to the back of the house—there was a faint gleam of light, which I discovered proceeded from an open door. I hurried in, following the light, which gradually grew brighter and brighter as I proceeded, until I emerged into a large apartment, furnished in a style that must at one time have been beautiful, but which was now so covered with dust as to be scarcely discernible. I looked around, but could see no living thing except a cat, who gave me a welcome in the shape of a "mehow," which sounded, to say the least, ghastly in the extreme.

Again the cry falls upon my ears, much more distinct:

"Help! help!"

What was I to do? I could see no entrance to or exit from the room except the door by which I had entered. I was perplexed. Was the house really haunted, and was it only supernatural cries that I heard? or was it my imagination which conjured up the signals of distress?

While debating these thoughts in my mind, a feeling of dread crept over me, and a cold perspiration gathered on my forehead. I would have retreated, but something seemed to hold me to the spot. I made a desperate effort to shake off the feeling, and had partially succeeded, when again came the cry.

"Help! help! Will nobody save me?"

Where did the sound proceed from? Not a human being was in the room, and yet the voice seemed to proceed from some one very near.