

HELL FOR HER BROTHER'S SAKE

A Touching Tale of Sisterly Devotion and Effection

Was Ready to Make Any Sacrifice to Save Him From the Curse of Drink.

A knock sounded at the door, and the grandfather's quavering, peaceful voice bade the visitor "Come in, an' welcome!"

"I'm sorry," he said, wiping his face recently with a turkey red handkerchief, "to be the bearer of sorrowful tidings, but your son Maurice's wife has just departed out o' this life—may the Lord be merciful to her soul, amen. Terrible sudden it was. At 10 o'clock last night you'd take a lase of her life; at 6 this morning she was in eternity. The quency they call it."

The old man gazed at the fire, and shook his head. "I was sudden, sure enough," he said. "God rest her, poor woman! Is there any rest, after another slight pause, 'is there any news going? Any rumors of war, or shipwrecks, or such?"

The newcomer started at the old man, shocked at this stolid acceptance of such bad news, but the benignant old face had nothing in it but peace and mild inquiry.

"There's no other shipwreck that I know of but the one I'm after telling you about," he said severely, "an' that's a serious one enough to your son an' his children. I'm but a neighbor an' well-wisher of his, an' his misfortune lies heavy on my heart."

"You're a well-meaning an' well-spoken man, an' I'm proud that Maurice has a friend like you," said the old man heartily. "He's doing pretty well, I believe."

"He was till six months ago," said the man, "but he lost his employment then, an' not a stroke did he get to do since."

"I suppose he had a little money saved?"

"Not a penny, poor fellow, an' 'twas the hardships an' fretting that left the poor widge such an' aisy prey to the sickness."

"God help us! An' four children?"

"Five," said the man. "From eight year to three. I left 'em crying for their mother in a way that would pierce a stone. Eheu! 'tis a terrible old widge entirely."

"Well, sure he'll have to come here an' bring the children. Isn't it well for 'em to have a home?"

The stranger got up and in his enthusiasm wrung the old man's hand. He knew that Maurice had not dared to hope this. Maurice, who ten years ago had run away, and married against his father's wish a portionless girl, thereby leaving the old man to struggle through a sea of difficulties which a moderate "fortune" would have cleared away. The struggle had been a successful one, happily for Maurice and his flock now.

Three days later a cart drove up to the door, a tall, ghastly pale man sat beside the driver, and behind him, on the heaped-up hay, five hollow-eyed, spindling children, ill-clad, and shivering in the bitter November air. The grandfather and Aunt Peggy were waiting to receive them.

"The boxes and furniture are on the way, I suppose?" said the old woman, who had been expecting a more imposing arrival than this.

"Here isn't a stick of anything of the kind," said Maurice, wretchedly. "Al, that I have in the world is here," said he, pointing to the children, who stood round him, chilled and forlorn.

"An' sure isn't that a good deal?" said the grandfather, "bring 'em in, Maurice. An', Peggy, hurry up with the hay for the creatures. They're destroyed with the cold."

A comfortable meal must have been wolfishly unfamilial to the children, for the smaller ones languished and clapped their hands in ecstasy at sight of the thick oatcakes, and "tinies" of "hot tay" ranged down the table standing before the blazing turf fire.

The old aunt placed them at the board kindly enough, but with none of the effusion that would have marked the action if these had been things of "value" accompanying them. She forgot, as she would not have done in the other case, to butter their oat-bread, and the allowance of milk in the tea was very slight, but the children were not particular.

"That away now like good children!" said the grandfather. "This is yer own house, an' don't be shy or ashamed. Where's the eggs, Peggy? Of course, bring 'em in, woman, dear. Maurice, that's right. An' so, Maurice, you have no news at all—no rumors of war, no losses at say?"

"The quency" did not pass away without its one victim. By degrees the unhealthy children were down, until they all lay dead in the great loft over the head of the grandfather. When the infection had broken out

spontaneously was not known, but the whole townland soon reeked of the illness, and nurses were not to be had for love nor money. The old aunt, unable and, truth to say, very unwilling to cope with so much sickness in the house, discovered that there was something wrong entirely with her "breast-bone," took to her bed, and spent her time loudly braying and lamenting over the cruel fate that had left her to die, "without a soul to hand her a drink of water."

Maurice and the grandfather were but sorry, although thoroughly well meaning and anxious—nurses, and they tried the temper of the overworked and irritable dispensary doctor sorely. Their whey-making was deplorable, and in administering the medicines they yielded too easily to the whimpering objections of the sick children. The pious complaints of the old aunt about their want of attention to herself and the daily increasing list of her bad symptoms had a stupefying effect on them, and between Maurice's own lassitude, the result of six months' worry and semi-starvation, and present anxiety and want of sleep, and the senile feebleness of his father, it was a hopeless household enough.

It was just at this time that, one wintry evening, he was standing, dispirited and gloomy, at the house door. Overhead he heard the delicious babbling of the younger children, and an occasional moan from the patient older ones; the old aunt was at her usual groans and complaints in an inner room, and the grandfather with many a sigh was trying to make up in his elbow-chair near the fire for his broken night's rest.

"I'm after killing the two poor old people," groaned Maurice miserably to himself. "An' what in the world will become o' the children? I'll lose 'em; there's no one to help me pull 'em through," and a pang of overpowering wretchedness went through him like a knife. In a dull way he watched two wind-blown figures—a boy and a girl—running up the road. They stopped hesitatingly and whispered together when they neared the door, and then the girl came timidly forward.

"Well," said Maurice kindly, seeing that she was at a loss for words, "did you want to speak to me?"

"We're the Colemans from the Coombe, sir," she said, with a queer little curtsy, "Norry and Lar."

"An' what in the world drove ye down from the Coombe on an evening like this?" he asked, for, unprotected by cloak or shawl, she was soaked with the mist, and the boy was in almost as bad a plight.

"Oh, what then, but to be seekin' our fortune?"

"Seeking your fortunes?" he asked with a smile at the queerness of the thought.

"Yes, looking for service. I'm a great hand at the work. Sweeping an' scouring is only child's play to me. I can milk an' churn with any o' an' boil pigs' pots an' feed calves an' do everything—wash, bleach an' iron—like a real indushterious woman. (I'll be fifteen year in harvest.) An' as for the chickens an' ducks, if I had seventeen clutches of 'em at a time, I wouldn't lose one of 'em."

She was young and slight, but there was something so tidy in her poor but perfectly neat frock and shoes and stockings, something so brave and capable in the look of her blue eyes, that a hope came into the tired man's mind—here might be the very help he needed.

"Are you any good at all to take care of sick people?" he asked.

"Is it me? Sure I'm the remains of sick-nursing! Barley-water, gruel, arryroot, why, cream-o'-tartar drinks—you couldn't puzzle me with anything of the kind. An' I'm like a clock in giving the doctor's physic. Oh, I'm a great sick nurse entirely."

"You wouldn't be afraid of ketching the quency?"

"Wisha, God help you, afraid? Why would I, that never took anything after all my experience? We had everything on the Coombe from typhus to the maistes."

"Well, what would you say to trying to take care of the five sick children an' the old aunt inside? You'll get good wages."

The girl looked as though she could not believe her ears. But a cloud came over her joy.

"But Lar?" she said, looking at her brother. "I promised the poor mother to have him under my eye till he came to an age of sense. He's a thrife childish an' unstuddy still, she confided in a half-whisper, "sure only for that he need never lave Cyprus Collins, the big farmer."

"An' why didn't he stay with Cyprus?"

"Oh, why?" said Lar angrily, "an' to be livin' on strirabout night and day?"

"And what better than strirabout had you in your mother's house?" questioned Norry indignantly.

"It was well biled, though," said Lar. "Twasn't fit for the pigs at Cyprus?"

"We spilled him," said Norry, shaking her head. "We were very foolish with Lar, but we had only him, you see, an' we were very well off. We had our little Kerry cow, and she seven speckled hens, and the five good poor ducks. But we made him over-particular, an' that's a ruination to them that have to make their living. He's a great boy at the spade an' shovel an' the sheep-minding, though; there's no doubt about that at all."

"Well, I'll see the grandfather, an' tell ye in a minute," said Maurice. With beating hearts the two outside heard the muffled sound of the collo-

quy within, when Maurice opened the door once more. "Come in, children," he said; "the grandfather thinks ye'll be a help to us an' I think so myself."

The few kind questions of the old man, who had known their mother, were easily answered, and when the generous wages were arranged Norry, her eyes full of grateful tears, said to the two men in broken tones: "Ye'll never, with God's help, be sorry for this good turn to two that hadn't a shelter under the wide an' empty night sky for this. Lar an' I will be faithful souls to ye, never fear."

III. Like magic a change was wrought in the Dorney household. Before daylight on the morning after her arrival Norry had a "bleach" out on the hedge, and that same night the children, refreshed by well-made drinks and the faithful administration of the doctor's medicine, slept restfully in the fresh sun-and-air-dried sheets. The old aunt, although she was loud in her condemnation of the "foolishness" of employing "a trifling slip of a colleen," was yet made more comfortable than she ever remembered to have been in her life. She submitted as willingly as the children to the active hand-maiden's remedial measures, and was even fain to admit that there was no further occasion for Burgundy-plaster plasters for the "breast-bone." Every wearable in the place was washed, all the corners which the old woman's dim eyes had been unable to explore were cleared of their gatherings, dust and cobwebs were swept down, whitewash lavishly applied, floors scoured and white curtains hung over the clean windows where Norry's own geraniums—her only salvage from the wreck of the good times of the Kerry cow and other stock—grew. She was even something of a dressmaker, too, and in the evening when the pigs' pots were boiled and the calf feeding and milking and all the numberless day's duties were over, she employed herself making warm winter clothes for the children. Comfort, cleanliness, order and the content and health that accompany them took the place of the general wretchedness which Norry had found there. In herself the girl was the very personification of cheerfulness. No amount of work—and of that she had plenty—nor of weariful grumbling from the old woman, who thought that time given to floor-scrubbing and window-cleaning and "too much bleaching" was an injustice to the cattle and pigs, had power to dim her sunny temper. The children, bright and rosy from her care and merry companionship, loved her dearly, and to the old man and Maurice she was as a right hand.

And yet she had her secret anxieties. Lar, though outwardly steady enough, began, when they had been about two years at the Dorneys, to form a comradeship with some lads in the town—a few miles away. This involved his sneaking off after supper and spending his time and well-earned money among a crew from whom he learnt nothing good. When Norry discovered this, which she did early, for her watch over the boy was keen and anxious, she pleaded with him to give it up, and remember their mother and this he promised with answering tears to do.

But there was some fatal weakness in the lad. The charm of the "bad boys" was too much for any resolution of his, and night after night, promise as he would, he made his way to the public house and their society. Driven desperate by his courses—he had of late been hinting that he would "go sojerin," and see "a bit of life"—she went one night to the drink-shop, and, after explaining Lar's circumstances and her own promise in his regard to her dying mother—she was dismayed at hearing the drink-woman's declaration that so long as a customer paid for his drink she would supply it to him and that there need be no more talk about it. The hard, merciless face of the woman, the reek of the place and the sodden, brutal faces of the people who sat there and sang their horrible songs and uttered their dreadful jests brought a blinding storm of tears to her eyes, and she was making her way through the streets and yielding to her sense of the hopelessness of destiny, for Lar's ruin—and there seemed to be nothing else before him—it meant lifelong misery for herself—when she felt a hand laid gently on her shoulder. Throwing back her cloak she saw a strange young man, with a rather bashful but eager look on his face.

"You're Lar's sister?" he said. "Yes, I overheard you talking to Mrs. Mullins; I saw that you were fretted. Well, look here, now; I'll promise you this: I won't let Lar drink any more—I'll break him off of it—for your sake!" and he was out of sight before she could thank him.

After that, instead of going into lamisodyle, Lar spent his evenings with the other country lads and his regular after work hours, in games of hurley and other harmless rustic diversions. To say that Norry was grateful to the friend who was at such pains to save the precious soul and body committed to her care is to speak but faintly of the feeling, that filled her warm heart. She could willingly go to the stake for Lar's friend.

IV. The children were the first to perceive a change in Norry. She had

been a marvellously vivid and faithful narrator of the performances of "joyants" and "faiges" in "the old, ancient times," but now somehow she began to lose her grip of these interesting and merry people; the stories would be interrupted by long pauses of abstraction, and sometimes she would forget the beginning and sometimes the end of them. She used to be seized with strange fits of passionate affection for the children, and once or twice Katie, the eldest, felt her face wet after Norry had been arranging her pillow for the night. They did not like Tom Hayne, the town lad, who came so often, meeting Norry, and walking with her in the dusk. Once, when she was out with him later than usual and Katie and her father were sitting on the bench in front of the house, the little girl was unusually silent. The April air had in it the breath of primroses and laurel blossoms, the fall of the glen water sounded musically soft in the distance, and overhead the exquisite blue with its million stars "was throbbing like Erin with sorrow and love." The night seemed to have laid its touch of tender, inexplicable pain upon Maurice, too.

"Father," said Katie, "do you know what time it is?" They were sitting at school today? That Norry and Tom Hayne would be married as soon as ever Shrove began, and that they'd go away with Lar to America. Won't that be frightful entirely—to leave us and put all that wilderness of water between us?"

She did not see, in the dark, how her father started at her words and changed color.

"Who told you so, Katie?" he asked.

"Oh, they were all saying it. 'Tis true, father—Everyone knows it, an' isn't it terrible? Thousands and thousands of miles of water between us and Norry," and she began to cry desolately.

"Whist, Katie, she'll never do this!" "Oh, but she will, because he saved Lar from the drink. But if you'd marry her, father, not to be getting married, or going away, I don't think she'd refuse you. Won't you ask her, father, oh, won't you?"

"Well, maybe, I'll have a little talk with her," he was beginning, when Norry herself, candle in hand, came from the kitchen, calling Kate.

In her pretty cotton gown, with her face of wild rose-bloom, the candle light bringing out the shimmer of her brown-gold hair, she was a picture that pleased well the eyes of father and daughter. "Something in the questioning gaze of the former brought a momentary look of embarrassment over the girl's face."

"Norry," he said quietly, "I'd like to say a few words to you after the children are in bed."

When the house was quiet, she stole into the kitchen, knitting in hand, and seated herself humbly in the opposite corner of the chimney place.

"You wanted to see me, sir?" she said a little tremulously.

"Yes, I was going to ask you about these rumors we're hearing, Norry. Surely you wouldn't be going to take a step of the kind without telling the poor old grandfather or myself?"

"No, I was meaning to speak to you this very night."

"An' so 'tis all true, Norry, you're going to be married an' lave us?"

"Yes," she answered.

"Well, the children will miss you. We'll all be lonesome."

"I'll be lonesome myself," wept Norry.

"Ah, you won't. You'll be going to a strange an' a prosperous nation where there's nothing but hope and happiness. 'Tis we in the old place that will have time to think of—every thing. In the long summer days that's coming what'll we do at all without our little Norry?"

Norry, trying forlornly behind her apron, pictured it all with an aching heart.

"I'll stay with ye," she cried with sudden determination.

"An' give up the boy an' the life of your choice? Ah, Norry, why should we let you do such a thing? No, acushla, take the good way and prospect before you—we have no right to interfere in your lot."

In all her distress, for the tears that she so seldom gave way to had turned to a storm of sobbing, she glanced at him and saw, as she thought, only the concern that any kind master might feel at parting with a faithful servant.

"Very well, sir," she said, quieting by an effort the violence of her grief. "As 'tis your wish, I'll keep my promise to Lar. 'Twas for his sake, and by his desire, that I agreed to take this step." She was going, to say more, but she checked herself, and, rising, hurried out of the room.

Nothing more was said on the matter by Maurice, notwithstanding all Katie's entreaties to him to "stop the marrying," and so the wedding day came round.

Norry's wan looks were attributed by the old aunt and neighbors to her nervousness at having to appear in public in the conspicuous position of a bride, but something seemed to strike Lar that morning.

"Norry," he said, "do you know what's in my mind? Maybe you don't care for Tom Hayne at all? Maybe 'tis on account o' me entirely you're marrying him? Tell me the truth for my mother's sake."

"What's the good of telling it, Lar? 'Tis too late now to be drawing back."

"Too late? Look, Norry, sooner than have the weight of this on my

mind, I'd face anything. I promise you here on my bedded knees that I'll never talk of sojerin or emigrating again if you'll give up Tom Hayne, an' live here where I know you'd be happier than anywhere else in the world."

For a moment Norry's face shone with a look such as a reprieved criminal might bear, but as quickly clouded. She remembered how calmly her master had discussed her leaving, how unwilling he had been to "interfere" in the "good prospect" before her.

"Never mind, Lar, 'tis too late, as I said, to be thinking of making changes now."

Everyone agreed that Norry's wedding procession was one of the handsomest that had been seen in the parish for many a year, but all who knew her declared that the honor was no more than her due. Maurice and the grandfather on horseback headed the cavalcade, then came the car containing the bride and Aunt Peggy and the oldest little girls. Carts with feather beds covered with quilts of the gayest pattern contained the rest of the children and all the neighboring women folks, the procession winding up with a throng of mounted men and boys.

The bridegroom and Lar were waiting in the chapel and it was remarked by those who knew him that the former was looking very much "unsettled," but they had little time to comment on this, for his reverence was already on the altar, to which everybody hastily followed the wedding party.

The latter were on their knees for the priest's blessing, when a sound between a scream and a creak, a kind of gasping expression of intolerable agitation broke from the bridegroom.

"I believe, sir—I believe, your reverence," he at length managed to say, and he struggled to his feet. "I believe I won't marry this girl at all!"

The horrified people gazed at him and at each other with incredulous eyes. Then the women began shrill expostulations, and some of the men advanced threateningly towards him, but Maurice—Dorney, with a wave of his hand, bade them have peace. He came up and stood in Hayne's place.

"I'll marry her, your reverence," he said, "if she'll have me. Will you take me, Norry, for better or worse?"

The priest interpreted the eloquent confusion of blushes and silence and happy tears correctly.

"Let me ask the questions, and do the marrying, Maurice," he said, gently, proceeding with the service.

The children could hardly contain themselves until the ceremony was concluded.

"Now, you can't leave us, little second mother," they cried, hugging her to them as they never meant to let her go again.

The old grandfather held her hand in his own kind, tremulous one.

"'Tis this little hand, an' no other, will close my eyes at last, an' I'm content," he said.

The aunt was not so glib, for she had her own ideas about the fortune that Maurice's wife ought to bring, but then she remembered that Maurice wasn't a man for fortunes at all, some way, and that girls with money were mighty apt to take a high hand with the old people. Norry would be always good to them—there was nothing but kindness in the girl. She brought the best of good luck with her the day she came in to them etc.

Tom Hayne met them in the porch as they went out, and he wrung the hands of bride and groom.

"'Twas Lar opened my eyes to a part of the truth this morning," he said. "Thank God it wasn't too late. 'Tis a better folk to me, but I'm leaving for America, and I can forget there maybe. 'Good luck to ye, at any rate better luck than mine!"—Julia M. Crotte.

FOR SALE—Prisco Restaurant, opposite Standard Theatre. Also two good dogs. Owner leaving for outside. Good bargain.

WORD "ALASKA" INTERDICTED

According to Porcupine Miner Dr. Gibbons.

Seattle, Dec. 18.—Dr. C. H. Gibbons, who came down from Skagway on the Cottage City last Monday, fully confirms the story that the Dominion authorities have laid claim to Skagway as a part of Canadian territory. The fact that such action was a matter of common report and belief was published in the Post-Intelligencer several days ago.

Dr. Gibbons has been in Southeastern Alaska for the last two years, spending most of his time in the Porcupine district. His daughter was with him in Alaska and accompanies him on the present trip. They are now at the Hotel Northern, but will take the steamer City of Puebla for San Francisco next Friday. After spending the winter in California, the two will return to Alaska in the spring.

"The Canadians now claim two-thirds of the country lying between Skagway and Juneau," said Dr. Gibbons. "Their latest move has been to forbid expressions from marking packages 'Skagway, Alaska,' and demanding that they be simply marked 'Skagway.' The Canadian customs authorities have had all the labels destroyed on which the word 'Alaska' appeared and new ones printed without it. They claim that Skagway is about forty miles inside the line."

"All this trouble has been caused by the new line! It cut the Porcupine district in two and placed a large number of American miners in Canadian territory. The result is that they are taxed every time they make a turn. Small boats now run up the Chikita as far as Wells, a town built near the line since it was run, two years ago, and in many ways this offsets inconveniences under the new arrangement."

"My opinion is that the Porcupine is one of the coming districts. I have property there in which I place firm faith, and I wish neither to sell, it nor to secure a partner. It can be seen, for this reason, that I have no axe to grind. As a matter of fact, I have never had a man owning property there offer to sell me a claim or even a fraction of one, except on a single occasion, when a drunken miner did make a largain and went back on his word the next day, with the plea that he was intoxicated and did not know what he was doing at the time he agreed to dispose of his holdings."

Harry I. Clegg, who arrived from Whitehorse yesterday returns to Dawson as the agent for the Canada Life Assurance Co. The Canada Life is well known as one of the largest companies doing business in the Dominion and Mr. Clegg will do a nice business. He had an extended trip, visiting among other places San Francisco, Chicago, Buffalo, Toronto, Owen Sound, Winnipeg and Vancouver. Mr. Clegg reports a fine time during his vacation.

LOST—Long black pocket book on evening Jan. 2nd, near Pioneer barber shop. Finder will confer a favor to owner by mailing same to box 584 and may keep the money contained therein as a reward for his trouble.

Shoff, the Dawson dog doctor, Pioneer drug store.

Job Printing at Nugget office.

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