

THE GOLDEN SNAKE.

CHAPTER I.
HIS STORY.

There are questions in morals which a convict is not called upon to discuss. There are commandments in the Bible which are sometimes impossible to fulfill. How can a man honor his father and mother when he is abandoned at the very hour of his birth; dropped, as it were, in the cesspools of iniquity? And if he rises no higher than his surroundings, which have no lower depths, is he, or those who abandoned him, responsible for his misdeeds? He goes by the light that lights his way, and knows no other path. Our simian cousins care for their offspring until they can care for themselves; it is only man, with his boasted intellect and affections, who leaves his offspring at the doors of foundling hospitals and in the wards of vice.

The last was my fate. Is it blue or pauper blood in my veins? I only know that my path has been ribbed with sweat and toil and hunger and cold, with no other ending than the prison door. What was my childhood? A waif dropped by an inhuman mother into the very slums of vice; a son of nobody, carried in my infancy in the arms of a beggar woman, pinched back and blue that my wailing might extort undeserved charity; taught, when I was older, the rogue's code, that whatever was desirable belonged to those who desired it, and that the only sin in the world was the sin of being caught in the act. Thus I grew to manhood, living as best I could, and in the end attaining a position of honor among my kind.

I was a born mechanic. From the time I could walk I used to hang around the doors of smitheries. The red cutters, as they darted away from under the blacksmith's hammer, seemed instinct with life, and I used to long to make them fly under my own blows.

I never needed instruction, everything came to me, and my methods were nearly always quicker and less laborious than those of other workmen. I spent my first money in fitting up a forge, and I had plenty of crackmen for my patrons, men who demanded the best work and cared little what they paid for it. I made the most delicate tools for the engravers and did a few plates myself; the most complicated locks had no windings I could not follow, and once or twice I assisted in relieving bank vaults of their contents before their cashiers or their presidents had matured their plans for the same purpose.

Finally, the police, suspecting that all was not right, began to watch my place of business. Outwardly, I was a manufacturer of tools for the general trade, but I deemed it advisable to move my plant to another city. It made little difference where I was located, my customers were sure to find me.

I had only fairly become settled in my new quarters, when I exemplified Puck's saying regarding the foolishness of mortals. There was not the remotest need to tempt me, I had a superabundance of money and was daily adding to my store, and only indirectly was I a partaker in crime.

There was in the city, of which as yet I was almost an entire stranger, a wealthy family of founders, known as Carmichael, Son & Company, the Company being the daughter of the house, famous for her beautiful creations in bronze.

They lived in an elegant swell front on Beacon street, which had long been regarded by crackmen as a plum worth picking.

I had scarcely struck the first blow on my new anvil, when Terwilliger, an old chum, came on from New York.

He had been in the city but a short time when he spotted the Carmichael mansion, and urged me to assist him in cracking it.

A fortnight later I was called into the warden's presence, and had placed in my hands the Governor's letter of pardon.

I went out of the prison doors with my resolve for a new and worthy life only the more intensified. My forge still remained as I had left it, for I had paid the rent some months in advance, but I quickly disposed of it, and the next day presented myself at the office of Carmichael, Son & Co., asking to see Miss Carmichael.

After a little I was shown into her studio. She was at work on a large statue of the famous Indian chief King Philip, seated high up on a scaffolding, and very much occupied. When she finally turned toward me she recognized me instantly, and came down the steps, giving me a very gracious reception. She showed me the little golden snake coiled around her wrist, praised its delicate workmanship, and said I owed my release to it as much as to her own intercession.

Then her father came to me, and offered me a position when ultimately I should be called upon to assist in making molds for the casting of the King Philip.

He combatted my demurrers, and when I left the studio I had not only accepted his proposition, but, at his instance, had even changed my name.

For the first few months that followed I rarely saw Miss Carmichael during business hours. The foundry swarmed

and I turned and went out of the window I had entered without touching a single article, carrying with me only the memory of her divine face.

When I reached the bottom of the trellis I found myself between two policemen, and I surrendered without a struggle. A moment after we heard the report of a revolver, and soon Terwilliger came flying out of the back door he had previously opened, and fell dead at our feet.

I was unknown in the Boston hall of justice; I had no friends; and in such cases the law knows no delay. In less than three weeks after my advent in modern Athens I was transferred to the country, with Emerson and Alcott for neighbors.

I did not regret my incarceration. A slight upheaval of the earth will change the course of the mightiest river; and into my life there had come a new light, and I had made up my mind to abandon my past, and to commence creating a new and better one.

There was a face that haunted me ever. I could never be anything to Miss Carmichael—very likely my eyes would never behold her again; but I determined henceforth to live a life without fear and without reproach, and one she could commend.

I had been an inmate of the prison but a few weeks, when one Sunday, as the convicts were filing into the chapel for the purpose of attending divine service, I saw upon the platform which held the clergyman's desk the lovely face which, since the first and only time I had seen it, had haunted my waking and sleeping hours.

I caught her gaze, and knew instantly that she recognized me, and I blushed the deepest crimson to think she did so. She turned to the warden, who was sitting by her side, and at once commenced a conversation of which I was the subject. I have no difficulty in reading words by the mere motion of the lips, as far as my sight can reach, and not a syllable escaped me.

How could I ever give expression to the profound and lasting pleasure that conversation afforded me! I learned then, for the first time, that a human being, and such a being, had faith that I was not wholly bad; that while in the trance-like sleep in which I had first seen her she had unconsciously studied my features for the purpose of her art, and that she found nothing evil in it; that if I was a felon, it was owing to circumstances, and not from innate depravity; and then she appealed to the warden to second her efforts for my release, to which he cordially responded.

When the services were over I went back to my cell in a sort of delirium. At my own request I had been placed in the blacksmith shop.

The prisoners during their leisure hours, were privileged to fashion any article for sale, and I had already a credit on the books of the warden from this source. I asked to be furnished with some gold coin, and out of it commenced to fashion a trinket in every way worthy of her acceptance.

I had on, when arrested, a pair of sleeve-buttons set with a cluster of the purest and most perfect rubies, and it was a happy moment when I asked the warden to convey to Miss Carmichael a little golden snake, whose elastic coils would go twice around her delicate wrist and clasp beneath the jeweled head.

The next day the warden brought me a letter, in which, in her own beautiful chirography, she conveyed to me the expression of her pleasure and admiration for my gift, and an intimation that the house of Carmichael, Son & Co. would be glad to give me a place in their foundry if I should ever care to ask for it. I asked the warden to give me the letter, and, shrouded in a fitting casket, I have since worn it over my heart.

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with workmen, but I chose to have as little as possible to do with them, treating them with due deference, but avoiding any approach toward intimacy. I went directly from my lodging to my work, and returned as I went, fearing to meet some of my old-time associates, and thus run a chance of exposure among my present fellow-laborers.

I commenced an exhaustive study of chemical and kindred technology as bearing upon my new pursuits, and, when I was called upon to assist in preparing the molds for the statue of King Philip, I approached the task with a knowledge of the minutest details, and with mechanical details, and with a mechanical skill that was only equalled by my enthusiasm.

I had every incentive to excel. I worked under the personal supervision of one supreme woman, the hem of whose garment I was not worthy to touch, but whom I worshipped with as profound and respectful an homage as was ever rendered by one mortal to another.

My life, however, did not flow in entirely untroubled currents. My reserve among the other workmen, the superior skill which I manifested in whatever work I undertook, and the evident favor with which I was regarded by the firm, created for me many enemies.

There are men who, from their very birth, seem to have been nourished on sour milk alone—every their very souls curdled—and whose life presents nothing sweet nor savory. Such a one singled me out as the particular object of his dislike. I had never injured him in thought or deed; possibly, if I had, he might have thought more kindly of me.

For a long time his spite vented itself in offensive remarks to others, made expressly for me to overhear. Finally, he took to brushing rudely against my person, until one day I told him quietly not to repeat such acts.

He resented by instantly and insolently brushing past me, and I turned and knocked him down twice, when he crawled away out of my reach.

That night he was discharged, but, finally taken back, after the most abject appeals. From that time he has avoided me, but he watches my every movement with a baleful eye.

Such is the idle story of my life; but my days of work in the foundry are drawing to a close. The molds for the statue of King Philip are completed, and when, on the morrow, the bronze is cast, I shall surely throw up my position.

For the last year I have lived alike in heaven and hell. If my fellow-workmen should learn that they had been associating with a "prison-bird," they would strike in a body; but that even I do not fear so much as that Miss Carmichael might discover that I have dared to love her with every fibre of my being. Can I bear to bring the blush of shame to her cheek by such knowledge? Could I only die for her, and thus be wrought into her memory as one not utterly unworthy to have lived, then my life would have its fitting ending, and my soul, purified as in a crucible, might pass into the presence of the Great Unseen.

CHAPTER II.
HER STORY.

Carmichael, Son & Co., that was the name of our firm. It should have been Carmichael, Son & Daughter, but John the son, demurred; not that he objected to the female partner, but he thought such a firm-name would prove too startling an innovation.

We were manufacturers of bronzes, and prepared to execute any orders, from the smallest medallion to Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty.

The beginning of the firm had been small enough. Father commenced life as a modeller, and finally built a small furnace for the casting of his own work, never employing but one or two molders.

His little studio, just outside of the business office, was the enchanted region of my girlhood, while John found his delight in the office itself. His heart was given wholly to business; he played at book-keeping, at buying and selling, at hiring and discharging workmen; while I never tired of watching my father as he molded in clay and wax, from which the plaster casts were taken.

I had a little bench and tools set apart for myself, and, when freed from school or the vexatious duties of the house, which mother conscientiously imposed upon me, I used to spend hours, and hours at this bench, putting my girlish fancies into tangible shape, and, long before I had reached my teens, some of these fancies my father considered sufficiently meritorious to have cast in bronze and put upon the market.

When John was twenty, and I six years younger, he turned his back upon school, and assumed the business control of the house of Carmichael. From that time every thing began to prosper. Orders came with ever-increasing frequency, furnace after furnace was added and the works swarmed with men.

A few years later I persuaded my mother that my education was complete, and, after a run with my father through the most famous foundries and art gal-

leries of Europe, we came back, and, in my new studio, I was inspired to do work that so pleased my father, that I was admitted as a co-partner in the firm.

We lived in a house befitting our income, and my windows opened out on a broad-mouthed river, salt with the taste of the Atlantic. The garden stretched down to the river's edge, and just beneath my window was the roof of a piazza that ran the breadth of the house. An immense grapevine spread itself over this roof, its wealth of leafage and fruit, forming, in summer, a mottled carpet, alike restful and charming to behold.

I had come home to this room one lovely night in June, worn out in vain search for a face to fit into a little group which I was modelling.

It was a group representing the flower prophecy in Goethe's "Faust," where Marquette plucks the star flower, and picks its leaves one by one, repeating, "He loves me, he loves me not."

For hours and hours I had hunted the streets for a face that would fill my ideal of Faust, and which my imagination had failed to supply.

Utterly worn out, I had retired to rest, and must have immediately lapsed into a sort of waking trance, for I seemed once more to be searching for this face, when suddenly it seemed to me that Faust himself was coming to me, clambering up the trellis which supported the grapevine.

As nothing surprises us in our dreams, I turned expectantly towards the window. I heard his steps crushing the soft leaves without, the blind swung slowly back, and he stooped and entered my room through the open window.

He was tall and lithe, with piercing black eyes, clean-shaven but for a heavy mustache, with a countenance alike handsome and manly. He came to my bedside, looked at me a moment, took a leisurely survey of the room, and then turned and passed out by the window he had entered.

It seemed but a moment later when I was startled by the sharp report of a revolver, and heard hurried steps running along the upper hall and down the stairway, and then came the heavy bang of the door leading from the lower hall to the piazza.

I sprang out of bed, threw a dressing-robe about me, and hurried to the window. The roof of the piazza hid all objects from my view, but I heard voices below, though I failed to catch the import of the words that were uttered.

Then I went out into the upper hall and lit the gas, and, as I did so, my brother John came up the stairs, holding a revolver in his hand.

"Is it you, Lucile?" he said, when he saw me. "I thought you would be terribly frightened, and I hurried back to you. Have you heard nothing from father and mother? Ah, here they come neither harmed nor frightened!"

And then, to our hurried questionings, he told us that he was suddenly awakened by some one rummaging through his bureau drawers, that he seized his revolver and fired, and that the thief turned and ran down the hall. He followed him, but when he reached the piazza he found the man lying dead.

There were two policemen in the garden, who had just arrested an accomplice, and who were just putting the steels upon his wrists. They had been along the shore looking for river thieves, and had discovered these two men in a boat, which they followed until it was moored at the foot of our garden.

They saw the men embark, scale the garden fence and effect an entrance to the house, one by the basement window, the other seemingly by clambering on the roof of the piazza, though when the policeman reached the scene he was returning as if unsuccessful.

In compliance with the forms of the law, John was arrested and immediately discharged on his giving bail to appear when wanted.

Two months later I went to a neighboring village for rest, and attendance upon a summer school of philosophy. This school was held in a little wooden building, close to a dwelling supposed to be haunted by the ghosts of Plotinus and Hegel.

On the borders of the village the Commonwealth had erected an imposing residence for its criminals. The warden, whose daughter had been my room mate at Holyoke, invited me to spend the Sunday with them, and in their company I attended the religious services held in the chapel of the prison.

Alice played the organ, which was placed upon the platform from which the clergyman made his address.

As I sat there listlessly watching the prisoners as they filed into their seats, I was suddenly startled by beholding, among the many stolid faces, the handsome one of the Faust who had bent over my bed the night of the robbery.

As if drawn by a magnet, his eyes were suddenly riveted on mine, and then I saw the red blood mount up and suffuse his face with the deepest crimson.

"See," I said, turning to the warden, "that is the man who entered my room the night John shot the burglar. It seemed to me like a dream; he came to my bedside, bent over and looked at me, and then turned and went out of the

window without touching a thing. Do you know, I do not believe he is a bad man."

"He is the best of prisoners, at any rate," returned the warden, "and the most exquisite worker in iron that I have ever seen. He is in the blacksmithshop, and as an artist would do no discredit to your own famous house. The prisoners are all allowed to turn out as much extra work as they will, and, when sold the amount it brings is credited to them. There seems to be nothing in his line that Rutherford is incapable of accomplishing, and, since he has been with us, he has been the model of what a man should be."

"I am glad to hear you say so much; and, may I tell you why I am so positive regarding him? I had a little group from Goethe's 'Faust,' which needed but a face to finish it, and which I could not find. I found it one night in my bedroom, belonging to that man. You know how quick we artists grasp the salient features of a countenance, and, when you come to my studio, I will show you a likeness that you will not fail to recognize. Do you know anything of his history?"

"Only that he is a *filiius nullius*; thrown from his infancy among vicious people, cared for by no one, and finding it impossible to rise above the level of his surroundings."

"Poor fellow," I said; "he is to be commiserated." Then a new idea occurred to me and I added; "The Governor sometimes honors my studio with his presence; he is watching the growth of my *magnum opus* with great interest, and has promised to recommend its purchase by the Commonwealth. If I should intercede for poor Faust, will you second my efforts?"

"I certainly will say anything I can in his favor, and I wish you the fullest success," the warden answered.

Here Alice commenced a voluntary on the organ, and our conversation for the time came to an end.

After getting well saturated with the philosophy peculiar to this literary Mecca of Yankeeedom, I went back with renewed energy to the completion of my great work. It was a colossal statue of a patriot and king.

It had been the dream of all my maturer years to make some artistic representation of King Philip, and I had selected his hour of agony occasioned by receiving news of the first bloodshed of the whites. Upon this work I had spent the inspired moments of the last three years of my life, and I had strong hopes that the Commonwealth would pay the mere expense of putting my work into bronze; asking nothing for my own labors, and as one her daughters, if any work of mine could contribute to her glory.

I did not forget the original of my Faust, but had to wait before I could call the Governor's attention to the matter, for he had torn himself away from office and office seekers, and was somewhere in his yacht on the broad bosom of the Atlantic.

The days went by so hurriedly that I scarcely counted them, so absorbed and happy was I in work, when, one morning, there came to me a little package, accompanied by a note. On opening the letter I discovered it to be from my friend the warden, who wrote:

"DEAR MISS CARMICHAEL.—I am requested by Rutherford to forward to you a specimen of his workmanship. You will remember him as the original of your Faust. He possesses the unique accomplishment of following conversation by the aid of the eyes alone, and so far as he can discern the movement of the lips not a syllable escapes him. He begs you will pardon him for thus catching the import of our conversation in the chapel, since it contained the first expression of human interest in himself or belief in his manhood. He thanks you, profoundly for your interest in himself, and begs you will accept the accompanying trinket, the forging of which, he says, has given him more happiness than any other work he has ever done."

I opened the box, and there, in a little nest of rose colored cotton lay coiled a small golden snake. It was made from hammered coin, the scales ingeniously fastened into each other, so as to bend freely in any direction, while the eyes were two sparkling rubies, and under the throat was a latchet so that the coils could be wound around the wrist, and fastened as a bracelet.

While I was admiring this exquisite piece of work, the door opened, and my father entered, accompanied by the Governor. His arrival was most opportune, and I gave him the warden's letter, and showed him my beautiful present, and told him all I knew about the maker. I showed him to my little statuette, and showed him the face of the prisoner, and before he went away, he promised to look up the man's record, and if he found him worthy of executive mercy, he would not withhold it.

I wrote to the warden asking him to inform Rutherford that I accepted his artistic creation with sincere pleasure, and that, with the hearty concurrence of my father and brother, the firm of Carmichael, Son & Co. would be glad to give him employment whenever he saw fit to accept it.

Then I dismissed the matter wholly from my mind, for my statue was nearly completed, needing only the final and inspired touches.

One October morning, when I was out the staging, busily at work, John opened my studio door, and told me that a man was waiting for an audience.

I was absorbingly engaged, and begged for the time to be excused, but John thought I had better see the party then, and so I could but assent.

Soon after, I heard a strange and hesitating step approach and pause halfway down the room, and, when I turned to greet my visitor, I found him to be the original of my Faust.

"I have come in compliance with your kind request, and to thank you as well as words will allow for your intercession with the Governor, which, you see, has resulted in my pardon," he said as I came down the staging toward him.

"My intercession cost me nothing but a few words, and I was very glad to speak them," I answered. "And, after all, it was the exquisite workmanship of your golden snake that interested the Governor the most in your behalf. He happened to come into the studio at the moment I received your beautiful gift, and, being a skilled virtuoso, his interest was at once awakened. 'See,' I added, holding out my wrist, around which the delicate coils were wound, 'it is such a perfect piece of work that I wear it even here.'"

"Your words fill me with a strange pride," he answered, in a voice husky with emotion. "It is an honor to fashion something worthy your praise."

Then my father approached, and recognized him as the original of my Faust.

"Is it Faust?" he asked, with a smile. "I am glad you responded to Lucile's request to visit us. We have an opening for a skilled artisan, and you must fill it. Lucile's *magnum opus* is quite ready for the molds, and an artist capable of hammering from coin so perfect an ornament as this—touching the coils on my wrist—cannot but be of infinite service to us."

"You forget," I am nothing but a convict, just from the prison door, and unworthy to associate with your workmen," he answered.

"Nonsense," said the dear old father, laying his hand kindly on Faust's shoulder. "Let the dead past bury its dead. You are young, your life is all before you. Lucile is infallible in her judgments; it was at her instance that we invited a conference. She is really the senior partner, and we all obey her. 'But your workmen will not associate with me.'"

"They are a touchy set, like all workmen," my father answered, "but you are unknown to them. People call you Rutherford, but your past is dead. Let me re-name you; you are Gellini Faust—first, in honor of the old Italian whom you rival; second, in honor of Goethe's hero and Lucile's statuette."

After this conversation, for the next few months, I saw little of Faust, as he was henceforth to be known. He was busy in the foundry, learning its processes, and getting ready to assume the supervision of the casting of my King Philip.

After this I saw him almost daily. He was reserved in his ways, avoiding as much as possible his associates, and, naturally, the object of their dislike.

One of them, a modern Therites, "loquacious, loud and coarse," began a course of systematic bullying.

Faust bore it all kindly, making no return, until one day the man, reaching for a tool, rudely pushed him from a bench at which he was working. Faust told him in the most quiet manner that he was free to take the tool, but in future he must keep his proper distance.

This aroused the insolence of the aggressor, and in passing he again rudely pushed his antagonist.

In an instant he lay sprawling on the ground, and when he arose, with a wild imprecation on his lips, Faust knocked him down again, and the man was glad to creep out of reach on his hands and knees.

That night John discharged him, but a week later he came back, pleading for his starving family, and begging to be put on the pay-roll once more, and to our lasting and infinite sorrow and detriment John did so.

It took many months to complete the molds, Faust working unceasingly, and displaying wonderful and unwonted resources.

His mechanical dexterity was only equalled by his superior intelligence. He seemed to grasp my ideas before they were fairly shaped into words. It was a delight to have such a workman at my command.

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E. E. B.

"I tried every think of for rheu the any relief, Blood Bitters, highly recommen was." Henry Su

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A Van F. P. Tanner, he has not only one for Dyspeps to be the best i and invigorating ever taken. B. B. regulator.

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