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**ECCE HOMO.**

A HYMN FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

BY MRS. A. MAC GILLIS, WINNIPEG.

Look back, my soul, along the years,  
And see thy Saviour on the tree,  
For thee he dies, and bitter tears  
Cannot assuage His agony;  
Though Zion's daughters wail and mourn,  
They cannot take from Him one thorn.

Full wearily His sacred feet  
Had toiled up Calvary's rugged hill,  
For to my blessed Lord 'twas sweet  
Ever to do His Father's will;  
He drank the cup of wrath that I,  
Though death deserving might not die.

He bears it all, the Lamb of God,  
The grief the shame; the anguish; now  
Is laid on Him the mighty load  
Of a world's sins; His sacred brow,  
Pierced by the thorns encircling round,  
With precious blood bedews the ground.

Oh! King of Glory! Can it be  
That Thou for me art hanging there!  
Fainting and agonized; Lord, I see;  
I hear my Saviour's dying prayer!  
"Father, forgive them!" Oh may I  
Yet hope for mercy ere I die.

Oh! blessed Christ, I come to Thee;  
Prostrate before Thy cross I fall.  
Oh! turn thy dying gaze on me,  
With looks of love, which tell that all  
My sins are cleansed in that pure tide,  
Flowing so freely from Thy side.

Thou wilt, I know, Thy loving eye  
Is fixed upon me where I kneel;  
Thou hear'st my spirit's mournful cry,  
Save Jesus, all my sorrows heal.  
Have mercy, Lord, my sins forgive,  
And in Thine arms of love receive.

Oh! when my last dread hour shall come,  
When heart and flesh shall fail for fear  
Of the dark valley's gathering gloom;  
Oh! then, my dying Lord, be near,  
And hold me with Thy pierced hand,  
And lead me to the Promised Land.

## THE POOR GENTLEMAN

"My brother was saved, and I concealed most carefully the assistance I had been to him; he left the country and went with his wife to America, where, ever since, he has worked and gained hardly enough to support a miserable existence. His wife died during the voyage. And, as to ourselves, we no longer possess any thing; for Grinselhof and our other lands were mortgaged for more than they were worth. Besides this, I was forced to borrow from a gentleman of my acquaintance four thousand francs upon my bond.

"When your mother heard of the sacrifices to which I was forced to submit, she made no reproaches; at first she fully approved my conduct. But very soon we became necessarily subjected to privations under which your mother's strength declined, till, without a sigh or complaint, she began to fade away slowly from earth. It was a dreadful situation; for, to conceal our ruin and save our ancestral name from contempt, we were forced to part with the last ounce of our silver to pay the interest on our debts. Gradually our horses and servants disappeared; the paths that led to our neighbors soon became grass-grown and we declined all social invitations, so as to avoid the necessity of returning the compliment. A rumor about us began to spread through the village and among the noble families that had formerly been on terms of intimacy with us; and scandal declared that avarice had driven us to a life of meanness and isolation! We joyously accepted the imputation, and even the coldness with which our holiday friends accompanied it; it was a veil with which society thought proper to cover us, and beneath its folds our poverty was safe from scrutiny.

"But I am approaching scenes, my child, the recollection of which almost unnerves me. My story has reached the most painful moment of my life, and I beseech you to hear me calmly. "Your poor mother wasted away to a skeleton, her sunken eyes were hardly visible in their deep sockets; a livid pallor suffused her cheeks. As I saw her fading,—fading,—the wife whom I loved more than life,—as I gazed on those death-struck features and saw the fatal evidences each day clearer and clearer,—I became nearly mad with despair and grief.

Lenora shuddered with emotion as her breast heaved convulsively under the sobs she strove to repress. Her father stopped a moment, almost overcome by the recital; but, rallying his courage quickly, he forced himself to go on with his sad recollections:—

"Poor mother she did nothing but

weep. Every time she looked at her child—her dear little Lenora—tears filled her eyes. Thy name was always on her lips, as if she were forever addressing a prayer for thee to God in heaven! At last the dreadful hour arrived when she heard the Almighty's voice summoning her above. The clergyman performed the services for the dying, and you my child, had been taken from her arms and sent out of the house. It was midnight, and I was alone with her whose icy lips had already imprinted on mine their last sad kiss. My heart bled, Oh God? how wretched—how wretched—were those parting hours! My beloved wife lay there before me as if already a corpse, while the tears yet trickled down her hollow cheeks as she strove to utter your name with her expiring breath. Kneeling beside her, I implored God's mercy for her passing hour, and kissed away the sweat of agony that stood upon her brow. Suddenly I thought I perceived an effort to speak, and, bending my ear to her lips, she called me by the name, and said, "It is over, my love it is over; farewell! It has not pleased the Almighty to assuage my dying hour and I go with the conviction that my child will suffer want and wretchedness on earth!"

"I know not what love inspired me to say in that solemn moment; but I called God to witness that you should escape suffering, and that your life should be happy? A heavenly smile illuminated her eyes, and she believed my promise. With an effort, she lifted her thin hands once more round my neck and drew my lips to hers. But soon those wasted arms fell heavily on the bed;—my Margaret was gone—thy mother was no more!"

De Vlierbeck's head fell on his breast Lenora's bosom heaved convulsively as she took his hand without uttering a word; and, for a long time, nothing was heard in that sad confessional but the sobs of the maiden and the sighs of her heart-broken father.

"What I have yet to say," continued the poor gentleman, "is not so painful as what I have already told you: it concerns only myself. Perhaps it would be better if I said nothing about it; but I need a friend who possesses all my confidence and can sympathize with me thoroughly in all I have undergone for the last ten years.

"Listen, then Lenora. Your mother was no more, she was gone;—she was my last staff in life! I remained at Grinselhof alone with you, my child, and with my promise,—a promise made to God and to the dead? What should I do to fulfil it. Quit my hereditary estate, wander away seeking my fortune in foreign lands, and work for our mutual support. That would not do, for it would have devoted you at once to the chances of a wretched uncertainty. I could not think of such a course with any degree of satisfaction; nor was it till after long and anxious reflection that a ray of hope seemed to promise us both a happy future.

"I resolved to disguise our poverty more carefully than ever, and to devote my time to the most elaborate cultivation of your mind. God made you beautiful in face and person, Lenora; but your father was anxious to initiate you into the mysteries of science and art, and while he endowed you with a knowledge of the world, to make you virtuous, pious and modest. I desired to make you an accomplished woman, and I hoped that the nobility of your blood, the charms of your beauty, the treasures of your heart and intellect, would compensate in society for the portion that was denied you. Thus was it, my child, that I thought in time, you would make a suitable alliance which would restore you to the position you hold by birth. For ten years, Lenora this has been my occupation and my hope. What I had forgotten or never learned, I studied at night to teach you next morning, I labored hard that I might not only instruct you wisely but that you might acquire easily; and, at the same time, I strove by every honest means to conceal from you every thing that could give a hint or cause a sus-

picion by which your life might be shadowed. Oh, Lenora,—shall I confess it?—I have suffered hunger and undergone the most cruel privations; I have passed half my nights mending my clothes working in the garden, studying and practising in the dark, so as to hide our poverty from you and the world. But all that was nothing; in the silence of night I was not forced to blush before any one. By day I had to encounter all kinds of insults, and, with a bleeding heart, swallow affront and humiliation."

Lenora looked at her father with eyes moistened by compassion. De Vlierbeck pressed her hand, and continued.

"Be not sad, Lenora, if the Lord's hand inflicted deep wounds with every blow, he bestowed a balm which cured them. One little smile of thy gentle face was sufficient to make him pour forth an ejaculation to Heaven: you, you at least were happy, and in your happiness I saw the fulfilment of my promise!

"At length I thought that God himself had thrown in our path one who would save you from threatening danger. A mutual inclination arose between Gustave and you, and a marriage seemed the natural consequence. Under these circumstances I apprized Monsieur De-necker, during his last visit, of the deplorable condition of my affairs. but no sooner did I make the disclosure than he peremptorily refused his consent to the union. As if this terrible blow, which withered all my hopes, had not been sufficient to overwhelm me, I learned almost at the same time, that the friend who loaned me four thousand francs, with the right to renew my obligation to him every year, had died in Germany, and that his heirs demanded the payment of the debts. I ran all over town rapped at every friendly door, ransacked heaven and earth in my despair, to escape this last ignominy; but all my efforts were fruitless. To-morrow, perhaps, a placard will be stuck on the door of Grinselhof, announcing the sale not only of our estate but also of our furniture and of every trifling object that memory and association have rendered dear to us. Honor requires that we shall surrender to public sale, every thing of the least value to pay our debts. If fate were kind enough to allow us to satisfy every creditor it would be a great consolation, my child, in our misery. Does not this fatal history break your heart?"

"Is that all which makes you despond, father? Have you no other grief conceal no other secret from me?" asked Lenora.

"None, my child. You know every thing."

"I can very well understand," replied Lenora; gravely "that others would consider a blow like this as a misfortune, but how can it affect us? You even appear calm. Why, father do you, like me appear indifferent to the inexorable decree of fate!"

"Because you have inspired me with courage and confidence, Lenora; because your love is restored to me fully after a long constraint; because you let me hope that you will not be unhappy. I know what you want me as a shield against every ill! Well I will encounter ruin without bowing my head, and submit with resignation to the hand of God! Alas!" continued he, sadly "who can tell what sufferings are yet in store for us! We may be forced to wander about the world,—to seek an asylum far from those we love and know—to earn our daily bread by the labour of our hands (Oh, Lenora, you know not how bitter is the bread of misery,—of poverty!)

The maiden shuddered as she saw the cloud falling once more like a curtain over her father's face. She grasped his hand tenderly, and, fixing her gaze intently on his, said in beseeching tones,—

"Oh, father! let not the happy smile that just now lighted your features depart from them again! Believe me we shall we shall still be happy. Fancy yourself in the position that awaits us; and what do you see in it so frightful, I have skill to do all that women can do; and then your instructions have made me able to instruct others in the arts and sciences you have taught me, I shall be strong an active enough for both of us, and God will bless my labor. Be

hold us father, peacefully at home, with tranquil hearts and always together in our neat apartment: we will love one another, set misfortune at defiance, and live together in the heaven that our common sacrifice has made! Oh, it seems to me father, that the true happiness of our lives is only beginning! How can you still give yourself up to despair when pleasure is in store for us,—a pleasure such as few upon earth are permitted to enjoy."

Monsieur De Vlierbeck looked at his daughter in rapture. Those enthusiastic but gentle tones had so touched his heart, that noble courage had inspired him with so much admiration, that tears of joy filled his eyes. With one hand he drew Lenora to his bosom, and placing the other on her forehead, he looked to heaven with religious fervor. A silent prayer, a blessing on his child an outpouring of thankfulness arose from his heart, like the sacred flame from an altar toward the throne of Him who had bestowed that angelic child!

## CHAPTER VIII.

A few days afterwards, as De Vlierbeck had predicted, the public sale of all their property was inserted in the papers and placarded over the city and neighborhood. The affair made some noise, and every one was astonished at the ruin of a person whom they considered rich and miserly.

As the sale was stated to be in consequence of his departure from the country, the gossips would have been unable to find a plausible motive if the news had not been confirmed by the fact that De Vlierbeck had paid his debts and was wretchedly poor. The cause of his misfortune—that is to say his liability for his brother—was known though all the circumstances were not fully understood.

As soon as the publication was made, the poor old gentleman had a more retired life than ever, in order to avoid explanations. Resigned to his fate, he quickly awaited the day of sale; and, although his feelings often strove to master his resolutions, the constant care and encouragement of his noble hearted daughter enabled him to encounter the fatal hour with a degree of pride.

In the mean while he received a letter from Gustave at Rome, containing a few lines for his child. The young man declared that absence from Lenora had only increased his affection, and that his only consolation was the hope of future union with by the bonds of marriage. But in other respects the letter was not encouraging. He said with pain that all his efforts to change his uncle's determination had, up to that time, been fruitless. De Vlierbeck did not conceal from Lenora that he no longer had a hope of her union with Gustave, and that she ought to strive against his unhappy love in order to escape from greater disappointment. Indeed, since her father's poverty had become publicly known Lenora was convinced the duty commanded her to renounce every hope; yet she could not help feeling pleased and strengthened by the thought that Gustave still loved her, and that he whose memory filled her heart dreamed of her in his distant home and mourned her absence.

She kept her promises to him faithfully. How often did she pronounce his name in the solitude of that garden. How often did she sigh between the cat-alpa, as if anxious to trust the winds with a message of love to other lands! In her lonely walk she repeated his tender words; and often did she stop musingly at some well remembered spot where he had blessed her with a tender word or look.

But poor De Vlierbeck was obliged to undergo additional pain; for, as if every misfortune that could assail him was to be accumulated at that moment on his devoted head, he received from America the news of his brother's death! The unfortunate wanderer died of exhaustion in the wilderness near Hudson's Bay. The poor gentleman wept long and bitterly for the loss of a brother whom he tenderly loved; but he was soon and roughly turned aside to encounter the catastrophe of his own fate.

The day of sale arrived. Early in the morning Grinselhof was invaded by all sorts of people, who, moved by curiosity or desire to purchase, overran every nook and corner of the house, examining the furniture and estimating its value.