

Another woman was added to the establishment, and Molly was respectably dressed, and looked less like a half-starved drudge than she had done before the beginning of Mrs. Kelly's reign. Peace and prosperity seemed to abound, and Mr. Charteris almost repented of having so vigorously opposed Mrs. Smith's marriage with Michael Kelly.

Then—quite suddenly—a storm broke. It was raised by the woman—a respectable, elderly woman—who was working at Kelly's house. She ran to the nearest house one night and summoned help. Kelly was drunk or mad, and was beating the girl Molly to death. This version was a trifle exaggerated; but, truly enough, Kelly was found labouring the girl with a stick, and swearing at her with all his might, while Mrs. Kelly strove in vain to separate them and called with all her might and main for help. The matter was taken up by the neighbours, most of whom thoroughly hated Mr. Kelly, and the man was summoned before the Fair Oaks magistrates. Plenty of evidence was forthcoming, although Molly preserved an obstinate silence, and escaped trouble only because it was pleaded for her that she was "not all there." Kelly was severely reprimanded, heavily fined, and hooted when he left the court. Several compassionate neighbours wanted to take Molly into their houses; but, to everyone's surprise, Molly refused to go. She clung to Mrs. Kelly, who cried over her copiously, and slunk back into the house like a frightened dog to its master's feet. That she was half-witted seemed certain after this, and Underwood expressed its opinion of Mr. Kelly's conduct by hoots and hisses and an occasional stone whenever he made his appearance in the streets.

Mr. Charteris, very much concerned at the turn things were taking, called to see Mrs. Kelly soon afterwards. She tried to talk unconcernedly of ordinary matters; but at the first hint of sympathy she broke down and put her apron to her eyes.

"Oh, sir," she said, "it is such a disgrace to us! And I did hope always to keep myself respectable."

This was not what the Rector expected her to say, and he did not know how to reply.

"He do have a temper, and there's no mistake about it," proceeded Kelly's wife. "And it falls on Molly worse than anyone—she says she's used to it, and don't mind, but I'm afraid he'll do her a mischief one of these days—he seems so set against her."

"Then you had better send her away at once. Mrs. Charteris will find a situation for her," said the Rector, almost indignantly.

"She won't go, sir," said Mrs. Kelly; and on inquiry this proved to be the truth. Molly absolutely refused to leave the Kellys' house.

"It isn't that he's not a good husband to me," said Mrs. Kelly, evidently determined to put the best face on things.

"He'd buy up Fielding's shop for me if I'd let him. He says he likes me to have as good a gown as anybody. But, do as I will, these fits of temper do come over him awful sudden sometimes, and then there's no holding of him."

"I hope, at least, he keeps his hands off you," said the Rector.

Mrs. Kelly coloured to the roots of her wavy, black hair.

"Oh, of course, sir," she said, after a moment's pause; but it was quite plain that she spoke perfunctorily—as she thought a wife ought to speak. And then she added, rather hastily: "Not but what I can take care of myself, if it comes to that. And if a man wants to lay hands on anybody, it's better he should do it on his wife than on other people."

More than that Mrs. Kelly refused to say, and Mr. Charteris went away very much disquieted. It seemed to him that there were dangerous elements in that household, and he could not be convinced that everything was likely to go on as smoothly as Mrs. Kelly wished him to believe. "What a fool she was to marry him!" said the Rector to himself. And yet he always liked the woman; she seemed to him rather silly, but very kind at heart.

But for a time things settled down, and there were only vague reports of disturbances and unpleasantnesses in the Kelly establishment. Mrs. Kelly sometimes looked ill and worn, but that was not, perhaps, to be wondered at. She had a baby in the following spring, and the little creature was so fragile that it required her unremitting care. Molly was supposed to be its nurse, but it was seldom out of its mother's arms. And Michael Kelly seemed wonderfully proud of his ailing little child.

Mr. Charteris had heard little or nothing about the Kellys since the christening of the baby. And on a certain

night in June he heard, as he sometimes said, "the last of them."

It was nearly eleven o'clock, and everybody in the Rectory except Mr. Charteris had gone to bed. He was sitting in the study when he heard the front door bell ring, and at once answered it himself, wondering who it was that called on him so late. To his utter amazement it was Mrs. Kelly, with her child in her arms, who dropped fainting on the step before him as soon as he opened the door. She was only half dressed, and the baby was in its night gown, with a shawl wrapped about it; but the night air was warm, and not likely to hurt either mother or child. The Rector called his wife, and between them they got the poor woman into the dining-room and gave her something to drink. And then—with sobs and moans—her story came to light.

"How did all this happen, Mrs. Kelly? Has your husband—"

"Husband! I have no husband," she cried, sobbing hysterically. "He's dead—he's dead!"

Mr. and Mrs. Charteris exchanged startled glances.

"Dead!" said the Rector. "Come, my good woman, what do you mean? Is Kelly ill?"

"As sure I live, sir, Michael Kelly's dead," said Mrs. Kelly with great solemnity. "And come to a bad end, he has, and through his own fault. I couldn't stay in the house, sir, and that was why I came here, begging your pardon for intruding." Then she began to shake all over, and her cheeks, usually so rosy, grew ashen-white once more. "It's Molly, sir," she went on, incoherently. "Molly has killed him."

"What! Has there been an accident? I had better go round and see," said Mr. Charteris.

"It's no use, sir," said Mrs. Kelly, evidently trying to command herself. "The house is full of people by this time. Dr. Elliott was there before I came away, and the constable and all. I just took a mad fit of feeling that I couldn't stay in the house, and you've been a constant friend to me. But this is how it was."

And she launched into her tale. It seems that, although the Kellys had prevented the fact from transpiring, Kelly's conduct had of late been growing worse and worse. He drank a good deal and was brutal and unreasonable in his drunken fits. His spite against Molly seemed to increase, and Mrs. Kelly could not always protect the girl against her husband's savage blows. She began to reflect seriously on the best means of getting Molly away from the house, but up to a recent date Molly had absolutely refused to go. Of late, however, a change had come over the girl. From being listless and frightened she became sullen. She looked at Mrs. Kelly and at the baby, sometimes, with a wide, fierce gaze which alarmed the mother for her child and caused her to redouble her persuasions to Molly to take service elsewhere. And at last Molly agreed to go.

"We had just finished supper," said Mrs. Kelly, "and I was thinking of going to my bed, when Kelly came in from the public house in one of his raging fits. He struck her more than once, and he struck me, too. But at last he quieted down, and sat without speaking for a bit. Then he looked up quite sudden at Molly, who was clearing the table, and called her an ugly name—the worst name a woman can have, sir, and not one I would sully my lips with to repeat. And Molly, she snatched up the carving-knife from the table, and went at him straight—him too stupid like to see what was coming—and the knife went in, sir, to his heart. And then I called out 'Oh, what have you done, Molly? what have you done?'—and she answered back: 'I've killed him, the false liar, that was mine afore ever he was yours! and promised me marriage many a time, he did! And my baby's buried in the old cottage garden, and yours is alive; but I've got my revenge in spite of that!' And then she fell down in a faint or a fit, and I roused the people nearest us, and they brought the doctor and took Molly up. But I was wild-like, and ran on here without knowing what I did."

The story was all too true. Kelly had lived with the girl Molly for some years before he chose to advertise for "a Christian woman" with a settled income of her own. When he married, he gave her the choice of staying on as Mrs. Kelly's servant or of leaving his house altogether; and she, cherishing a strange dog-like affection for the brutal man, preferred to stay. But her intelligence, never very great, dwindled from the first hour of Mrs. Kelly's entrance; and she would probably have lapsed by degrees into a state of harmless imbecility but for the cruelty with which Kelly treated her. Her presence was perhaps a silent reproach to him, and it seemed at last to irritate him beyond measure.

And then the poor mad girl took her revenge. She was declared to be hopelessly insane, and was consigned to a lunatic asylum for the rest of her days.

Mrs. Kelly sighed no more for the variety and excitement of married life. She had had enough of it, and craved only for the peace which she had formerly despised. Her money was partially spent; but enough remained to furnish her with a small income for the rest of her days. She went back to Little Waltham, in Essex, with her child—the only link that binds her heart to that short and stormy period when she was known in Underwood as "Kelly's wife."

[END OF THE SERIES.]

POINTS.

BY ACUS.

To point a moral and adorn a tale!
—Johnson: *Vanity of Human Wishes.*

That one should have any objection to a five dollar bill may seem unaccountable. Nevertheless there is a serious objection to it,—namely, the difficulty of getting change for it. That this difficulty really exists, anyone in a hurry to get change will find to his sorrow. At the banks, however, they assure us that there are plenty of "ones" in circulation, so that there ought to be no dearth of change. It is a weariness of the flesh to have to trudge away off to a bank every time change for a "five" is wanted. The next best place to a bank for change is probably an express office; but even there one is liable to disappointment occasionally. The disinclination of merchants to part with their small change will only partially account for the difficulty; for even where one makes a purchase there is hard work skirmishing about to get change. One gentleman tells me he went about with a five dollar bill and, owing to the inability of merchants to change it, obtained innumerable goods on the strength of it, of course on credit; and the beauty of it was he had his bill into the bargain when he got through. The device was worthy of Dick Swiveller. The best policy is to carry a small supply of "ones." Have you change for a "five?" No! I thought not.

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What a delightful relationship is that of cousins, provided they be of opposite sexes. One may be attentive, without fear of being asked his intentions; and he may be fairly familiar, without being accounted rude. A cousin is a very formidable weapon in the hands of a coquette. A coquette well knows how to play off a cousin, in a fit of chagrin against an unhappy suitor, or to brandish him as a hint to some dilatory lover to come to time. Cousins, therefore, are often half relatives and half lovers: just a happy medium. Such an enviable relationship is frequently counterfeited; there are artificial cousins. There are waht may be called *adopted* cousins. Pending an engagement or the announcement thereof, when a young couple have to submit to the usual teasing about one another by their friends, it is the usual thing for the couple to aver that they are only cousins you know. So that there are liable to be more cousins in a family than a genealogical chart would indicate. As I am running rather short of cousins I think I shall have to adopt a few myself. Fair readers, don't all speak at once.

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Many attempts have been made by the scholastic authorities to abolish the annual Oxford and Cambridge boat-race, on the ground that it interferes with the course of studies. It is possible that the studies may be thus interfered with, more or less, but students who go in for athletics usually stand fairly well in their studies, though rarely in the first rank. The non-smokers, too, among the students are said to make a better showing generally than the smokers. But as the scholastic authorities are more or less addicted to the habit themselves, they do not say so much about it. Of course anything may be carried to excess. It takes the German student to mix learning with lager, and philosophy with pugilism. But so far as the Oxford and Cambridge boat-races are concerned, all attempts to abolish them have so far resulted in failure. The annual match seems destined to remain the most popular and important English sporting event of the spring season. And an oar in the winning boat is regarded, not only by the students but by the majority of their countrymen, as a far higher honour than mere university prizes.