

'Now? dear child,' said Mr. Linton—'now? when such a cloud rests on Howard!'

'That is the very reason,' said Mildred, 'why I wish him to know how much I love him; I think it may comfort him.'

'But should I be doing my duty, do you think, Mildred, to allow such a confession to be made to him now? Consider the accusation against him.'

'But, dear father, you do not think Howard guilty?'

'No, I really do not; but still his innocence must be proved before I can allow him to think of you as his wife.'

Mildred was silent a few minutes, and then said, 'You may be sure, father, I would never have proposed to hint this to him were it not to comfort and cheer him; and it would be the best proof I could give him that I feel convinced of his innocence. Now for the favor: Will you let me go to the prison with you to-day when you go to see Howard? and will you tell him all I wish?'

'It is hard for me to refuse anything to you,' replied Mr. Linton.

'If it were not for the trouble he is in, I should never have asked,' urged Mildred.

Mr. Linton thought a moment, and then said, 'I will tell you what I will do, Mildred, and you must ask no more. I will see Howard to-day, but you must not go with me; I will tell him that the day which sees him honorably acquitted, that day shall be to him a pledge that at the end of one year I will give him my precious child to be his wife.'

Mr. Linton spoke firmly, and decisively; and Mildred well knew that when he had made up his mind on any point it was useless to try to alter it; so she thanked him, and retired to her own room to think of the past, the present, and the future.

And slowly and surely did the day of trial draw on. Mr. Briscoe employed every means he could devise to prove the guilt of Howard; not, however, for the sake of justice; but in the spirit of revenge for the loss of his treasured bags of gold. Bernard Sylvester was equally active in his endeavors to prove the innocence of his friend and client. He was a man of few words, very cautious in expressing an opinion; hence the public knew nothing but from rumor. At length the day arrived; and so intense was the interest excited that the court in which the trial took place was crowded to excess.

The first witness called was Mrs. Latimer, the prisoner's mother. She had to tell only of her son going out at an unusually early hour in the morning for the avowed purpose of taking a walk; but in her cross-examination she was obliged to admit that it was raining at the time he left home, and also that he was not in the habit of walking before breakfast.

Next came Farmer Bray, who detailed, rather at more length than was needed, the circumstance of his being disturbed by his dog barking; of his looking out of the window to see what made it bark; of his seeing Mr. Latimer, and of Mr. Latimer's confusion and hesitation—till the Judge stopped him by saying, 'Keep to the facts, Farmer Bray, and others will draw inferences from them.'

Then followed the most important witness of all—Mr. Page. He spoke as cautiously as he could; but still the fact of the young man making his escape by the window just as he arrived made the case look dark indeed. He was obliged to go on to tell of his finding, on entering, the inner doors all open, and, on passing into Mr. Briscoe's office, of his seeing a large desk lying on the floor, with papers strewn about. He further stated that he went at once to call Mr. Briscoe, who found that the bags of money

that he kept in his desk had all been taken away.

Every face in the court was expressive of sorrow and dismay, for Howard Latimer was generally respected and beloved; but all eyes eagerly turned to Mr. Bernard Sylvester as he rose to speak for the defence.

After dwelling on the previous good character of the prisoner, he said, 'Now, my lord, I have two witnesses to bring forward whose silent testimony will, I think, make a vast difference in the case before us. This, my lord, is one; and he drew from his pocket a very small piece of paper, in which something was carefully wrapped. It proved to be a minute bit of a dressing-gown; which, he said, on carefully examining the lock of the desk, he had found had been drawn into it with great force. The pattern was very peculiar, and was at once recognized. Mr. Joseph Briscoe was known to wear such a dressing-gown. It was immediately brought into court, and the small piece was found to fit exactly in a rent in the cuff.'

Every face brightened, for Joseph Briscoe was as much feared and disliked, as Howard Latimer was loved and respected.

But Sylvester, unfolding a still smaller piece of paper, now continued—'Perhaps, Mr. Joseph, as we have been so successful with your dressing-gown, you will allow us to see if this small piece of steel may be the point of your penknife.'

The knife was produced, and the little bit fitted exactly on one of the blades.

And now the wisdom of the Wise Man was indeed made manifest, when he said, 'The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips'; for young Briscoe, too enraged to command either his thoughts or words, cried out, 'There you are wrong, — you, sir, for I did not use my knife at all.'

Directly the words had escaped his lips he was aware of their significance, and the guilt they had acknowledged; for it mattered little that the knife had been broken on the back of the window some days previously—he had himself confessed that he was the thief.

We need hardly say that Howard Latimer was honorably acquitted, and Joseph Briscoe's guilt was proved. He confessed to having arranged to leave home with the friend of whom he had spoken to Howard, and the plan of robbing his father was arranged between them. Their intention in breaking open the doors and windows was to have it supposed that the house had been entered and the money stolen by house-breakers; and it was just as the thief was retiring with his stolen hoard that Howard entered at the window. Joe heard Mr. Page stop Howard; and it was actually while the conversation between them, which we have related, was going on in the front of the house that Joe passed the money-bags to his friend at the back, and hurriedly whispering to him the lucky chance of Howard's visit, bid him be off instantly to the appointed place of meeting in London and wait for him there, while he crept back to his room without having been seen by a single person. He therefore felt sure that he was quite safe.

Before taking leave of Joseph Briscoe, we must say that his friend, 'the right good-fellow,' taking the lesson from his own example, walked off with all the ill-gotten wealth, and neither money nor friend was again heard of.

THE END.

That man may last, but never lives,
Who much receives, but nothing gives,
Whom none can love, whom none can
thank,
Creation's blot, creation's blank.
—F. Gibbons.

Polly's Birthday.

'I say it's a shame — a great shame!'

It was one o'clock in the afternoon, and Polly had gone to her own room to have a fit of crying.

'I wouldn't let anybody know how I feel about it for the world. But—to think of it's being my birthday, and not a single thing done to make it a greater day to me than any other day! Well—I don't care!'

And, to show how little she cared, Polly burst into another flood of tears.

'If mamma had been here, it wouldn't have been so.'

But mamma was not here, and Polly knew she would have to make the best of it.

'I wouldn't let one of them know I expected to have anything done. No, not for the world! If they don't want to think about my birthday, they needn't.'

'They,' meant Polly's grandfather, grandmother, and Aunt Sarah. Polly's father was dead, and her mother had come back to her old home to live. And two weeks ago her mother had been sent for to go to another aunt, who was ill. It was owing to her ab-



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sence that her birthday had not been remembered.

She stood at her window, feeling very forlorn and wretched indeed. The late autumn day was raw and cold, and everything looked wretched and gloomy.

'And there's Aunt Sarah going out, Where's she going, I wonder? Down to the village. Well, I do think she might have asked me to go with her. Even that would have been better than to stay here alone.'

She followed Aunt Sarah with her eyes until the last flutter of her dress in the wind had disappeared, as she turned a corner of the country road. Half a mile further on was a little village.

'Perhaps if I were downstairs she would have asked me.'

But it was too late for that now. She sat looking out of the window. The roof of a long porch sloped below it. It was very old, as was all the large farmhouse. The shingles on it were loose and warped. Grandpa had told her she must not get out on it.

No danger of her doing that, Polly had thought, when he spoke of it. It always made her dizzy to be in high places, and nothing would have tempted her to step out on to that steep roof. So she thought.

At the back end of the porch was a low building used for a wood house. The shingles of this were also old and loose.

Now, as Polly's eyes wandered idly on outside things, they stopped near the edge of the woodhouse roof.

'What's that?'

'It is—yes, it's smoke.'

For one moment she stood with hands