

SWEET REVENGE

The doctor took one of her jewelled hands in his own and quietly felt her pulse

"You must endeavor to keep yourself quiet and calm. But don't think of trying to go away—you are really not well enough to travel."

"You don't think I am going to have it, Dr. Eade?" she exclaimed in violent alarm, clutching him eagerly by the sleeve, "Say you don't think so! Oh it would be too horrible, too—"

"A person to speak to you ma'am," interrupted a servant flinging open the door.

"Ah, sister, you are a welcome sight," said the Doctor heartily, as a young woman, in the quaint distinctive garb of a Sister of Mercy, entered the room.

Mrs. Letheby had thrown herself upon a sofa, pallid and shivering, and she offered no greeting. The Sister glanced enquiringly from her to the Doctor, who drawing her aside, whispered.

"You will have your hands full. Husband and wife, both, I fear. It is a bad business. 'You are not afraid?'"

"Afraid!" repeated the Sister, with the faintest foreign accent imaginable, as she smiled a quiet fearless smile. "Certainly not. It is, however, my first case of this kind, so you must forgive me if I require much teaching. Perhaps a more experienced Sister will join me in a day or two."

So Sister Mary Gabriel was installed as nurse; and next day, as Dr. Eade predicted, she had two patients on her hands. Somehow, as the Doctor left the house, he was thinking more how pitiful it would be to behold the Sister's sweet peaceful face seamed and disfigured by the hideous disease, than of the sadness of a similar catastrophe destroying the proud beauty of the future Lady Letheby.

Neither of the patients died. Dr. Eade declared that the recovery was chiefly owing to the wonderful nursing they had had—nursing which had worn the tireless, devoted young sister to a mere shadow of her former self.

Mrs. Letheby had recognized her from the first—had known her for the same Armande Dovalle she had treated, as she afterwards found, with such harsh injustice five years before but she could not resist, and she had to submit to the humiliation of availing herself of the priceless services of one whom she had wronged.

"You need me no longer—I am to return to the convent to-morrow," remarked Sister Mary Gabriel, when Gordon Letheby had

feebly crawled to a chair in his wife's boudoir where she equally feeble, though her attack had been much slighter, awaited him, and after a few half-sad jests upon their weakness and mutual congratulations upon their recovery had passed.

"To-morrow? What shall we do without you?" said Constance. "I can't let you go," she continued, with a hasty glance at her husband, "without mentioning a very painful subject. I want to apologize for—"

"Not only you, but I also, Constance," interposed Gordon, with a dark flush rising on his pale face.

"Hush!" said Sister Mary Gabriel, lifting her finger admonitory, with a bright smile. "I must not allow any mention of painful subjects. But, of course, I know what you mean and so I will say that all is forgiven and forgotten. Perhaps I was foolish and a little vain—very likely it was so—I did not understand. And you believed yourself justified, madam. But I have long been glad that it happened so. It made me think seriously, and I believe it led to my discovering my true vocation. I thank the good God for it. It is impossible that I could ever have been so happy otherwise as I am now."

They could not doubt her happiness as they gazed at her placid face with its quietly joyous smile, and looked into the depths of her earnest innocent, child-like eyes.

"You have revenged yourself nobly," murmured Gordon, feeling humbled and shame-stricken as he thought of the past.

"Do you call this revenge?" asked the Sister, laughing. "Then the saying is true that 'revenge is sweet' for I have found it very pleasant."

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It is a trite remark that "Time works wonders," but perhaps it was never more clearly exemplified than in the fact that the once lazy, half-cynical Will Markham has become not only a Catholic, but a most energetic and hard-working priest. Gordon Letheby has succeeded to the baronetcy now, but though Constance has thus attained the summit of her ambition, she is no longer as selfishly haughty and imperious as of old. Her illness did her good, people say, and her beauty suffered but little.

As for Sister Mary Gabriel she pursues her chosen career of holy self-devotion with peaceful mind and happy heart. The Letheby never knew that she had entreated and obtained permission to exchange duties with the Sister who was to have been sent to the small, pox-stricken house, and so had intentionally earned her "Sweet Revenge."