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THE GAMBLER'S WIFE.

By Charlotte's Lane.

I remembered him as he was once, with a frank look of good nature and truth on his handsome face. Again, as he had stood in that fatal hour, bowed with shame and remorse, when his eyes wore a look of agony that my heart sickened at. Both pictures are graven on my memory and to them is added a third of him, my husband, as he opened the door and stood before me, he for whom my heart had so long ached and thirsted. I scarcely knew him then; it was not only that prison fare and prison discipline had left their trace upon him, but a reckless air of profligality. A fierce, angry expression told how sadly he had fallen, and added to this—oh, shame and sorrow—there was a flush on his face and a wildness in his air, that told me another and sadder secret still. I had often pictured to myself this meeting with my husband. I dwelt upon the kind words I thought he would say upon his repentance, and his delight at seeing little May. I had imagined every kind way in which I could welcome him; and now, alas! I stood motionless and speechless with tear and sorrow. He saw it, and advanced into the room; even then I would have flown to him had I been able to move. After a moment's silence—oh, such a silence, sister, so eloquent, so fraught with horror during which our eyes met, and we gazed at each other as though under some fearful spell. After this moment he spoke to me, and I scarcely knew that voice again.

"You did not expect me, eh? Well, I am here at last. Come to plague you again, you see."

But, oh, sister, if I could tell you what lay behind those abrupt words, what despair was in those wild eyes, what bitter shame was hidden beneath that reckless despairing look. It went to my heart, and with a loud, passionate cry, I was in my husband's arms. It was but for a moment, he turned quickly from me, and drawing a chair near the fire, sat down. I hurried myself in preparing him some tea, and during that time I read my fate. Bad companions, low associations, constant familiarity with guilt and crime, had changed that once kind, generous nature into something that I trembled to think of—Scarcely one trace was left of what he once was. There was the end of my hopes and dreams.—What I saw and heard in that one hour, showed me that the husband of my youth was gone, and in his place there stood a lost, wretched man, plunged in vice, and reckless in his great despair. Even then, my courage did not fail. I hoped still to win him back to virtue and hope; and as I stood by him in that terrible hour, I vowed in my own heart that, with God's grace, I would be a more faithful wife in this his abjection and misery, than I had been in the sunshine of prosperity, never to leave him, never to grow impatient over his faults and crimes, never to reproach him, but to be gentle, loving, and kind, God, who reads all hearts, knows, sister, that I have never broken that vow. I have kept it through the darkest scenes of trial and wrong; kept it when my heart was well nigh breaking, and my strength failing. I only asked one reward: that was my husband's conversion. For this I have offered up the toil and suffering of my later years, with their tears and prayers.—For this I offer my life now, and God will give it to me for His mercy's sake.

In the first excitement of seeing my husband, and the grief which followed, I almost forgot for a few minutes my little May. He did not ask for her for some time, then, turning his face from me, he said, in a thick, broken voice,—

"Where is the child?"

"I told him how my darling lay, how the angel of death had shadowed her, and how bright and lovely she had once been. The shock for a moment seemed to overcome him. I rejoiced that there was yet left in his heart the power of love or grief."

"Let me see her, Annie; I will be very quiet."

"I led him into her room. She was lying asleep; the light of the lamp glistened fitfully on her sweet white face, and her pretty golden curls lay carelessly on the pillow; one little hand grasped tightly the crucifix that she always wore; the might have been a statue, she lay so perfectly still and beautiful. The light awakened her; her little lips quivered, and then the large blue eyes opened, and she looked wonderingly around. I stooped down to kiss her, but her father took her in his arms and held her there; then he laid her down again, and hid his face in his hands, not daring (oh, God forgive him!) to look upon the pure face of his little child. She looked at him sadly, pitifully, with shadowed eyes and trembling lips, then turned to me and said,—

"Mamma, is that papa?"

"I remembered the pictures I had made for her of the kind, good, beautiful father who was coming home, and never again can I feel the same and grief I did then as I answered 'Yes.' I stood guilty and confused before my truthful, innocent child. Yet I had done what I thought best. She turned to him and opened her little arms, and said,—

"Dear papa, take me again."

But he went from her with a bitter, passionate cry, and hurried into his room, and sat there, with his face buried in his hand, until the morning sunbeams shone in upon him. Before that time my darling was gone home to her Father in heaven, and pleaded as an angel in heaven for him, her poor, sinful father on earth. I did not call him when she died, for I saw all she felt, all her disappointment. I knew it when I heard the melancholy, pitiful way in which she said, 'Is it papa?' I knew all she felt, but never said when she twined her little arms so tightly around me and kissed me so tenderly. Oh, little May, my child—angel, I lost all when I lost you!—Death loosened the hold of those twining arms and chilled the warm lips that sought to comfort me with kisses long after speech failed. Ah, though years have passed since then, sister, I feel the clasp of those gentle arms and the touch of those dying lips. I saw my darling's eyes close with a look of lingering love; I saw her white lips quivering for one moment, and then May was no more with me, but had joined the angels in heaven. I laid her down again on the bed and knelt beside her. I had no tears in that hour, my grief lay beyond them; but I offered up my little child to save her father. My strength must have failed me in that prayer, for when my husband sought me in the morning he found me lying prostrate on the ground near his dead child. I cannot tell you, dear sister, in detail, all that followed. We hurried her there. I know flowers are waving over her little grave, for it is guarded and tended by kind hands, but I have never seen it since the day my darling was laid there. After that we came to London and took this house. I earned a little money by sewing, and lived as I best could. I cannot tell you how my poor husband fell lower and lower until he sank into the deepest depth of crime and misery. I do not despair, for our child is pleading for him before her Father's throne. He left me sometimes for whole weeks together, then would return, and in a fit of violence sell all that he could take from me, until I had, as you see, nothing left. To violence succeeded remorse. He would sit here upstairs, alone, for two days together, without tasting food, or allowing me to come near him. I sometimes feared his reason was going. I tried everything to reclaim him: patience, love, and gentleness, but all was in vain. He who had formerly been so kind to me, who had loved me so devotedly, and gratified my every wish, now did not hesitate, in his fits of rage and violence, to shower oaths and curses upon me. He came in one night, and found me praying; it irritated him, and he struck me to the ground; and, after that, sister, I never dare let him see me pray. I cannot hide the truth from you, though you will from others, for you have seen the bruises that cover me. Oh! remember when he has beaten me so dreadfully, he was not himself. And do, dear sister, when I am dead, dress me yourself, that no one may see those black marks upon me. The last time I ever saw him—the night you found me—I was gone to church, and he came home and found me absent. He wanted money, and searched the house to find something to sell,—there was nothing, as you see. I met him as I was coming home. He asked me if I had any money. I had but fourpence: I gave it him—it was all I had to buy bread and coal. That did not satisfy him; he said he must have more. I laid my hand upon his arm to detain him, and he caught sight of my wedding ring.

"Give me that ring," he cried, eagerly. "I must have it."

"My ring! the only tie between my former life and this. I thought for one moment of the time when it was put on, of my father's face as he had stood near me, and my mother's sweet smile and sigh as she looked at it on my hand when I came out of church; it seemed to link me to them, and to my little May. 'Oh! for the love of God,' I said—but he drew the ring violently from my finger, and felled me to the ground. Still I do not despair, for my child is pleading for him in heaven."

And so her sad story ended. Need I say how I had grown to love her, not alone for her delicate beauty and sweet winning ways, but for her piety and goodness, her great and holy patience, her untiring love and care for her poor husband, her pure love for her child—angel, her thousand excuses for his sins and the wrong he had done her, her patient hope that he would yet amend? All combined won not only my highest admiration, but my warmest affection. I remained constantly with her, and during that time had many opportunities of talking with Mrs. Weston,

Her heart was hardened with sin and sorrow; how it was softened, the story of her wrongs and woes, of her fall and repentance, is too long to narrate now. It forms one her sad and yet bright page in the diary of a Sister of Charity.

CHAPTER IV.

Contrary to our expectation, she lingered for many days. I never left her. When she grew too weak to talk, I knelt by her, never tired of repeating the prayers she loved so much to hear. Each hour brought her nearer to 'the feet of the Eternal Father.' The angel who had summoned her home had left the trace of his visit. You know he had been and had spoken to her, by the radiant brightness of her white face, and the heavenly light that shone in her large dark eyes. We only awaited now the final moment, when the soul that had suffered such bitter wrong on earth should go forth to be judged, by that merciful Lord who drieth all tears and healeth all wounds.

But God knew what was the best. He had counted her tears and prayers; each one was to have its reward in Heaven. He had prepared for her a crown that even in this life she was to wear. It was a small, miserable room, such as one would have shuddered to enter, but that night it was the theatre of one of God's wonderful mercies to men. If the eyes of faith could have beheld the poor tenement, what would they have seen? Angels bending in listening reverence, filling the room with a radiance and golden light that would have dazzled human eyes; some bending over the pale, dying lady, listening to every prayer and hearing it to Heaven; and amongst them was that one guardian spirit whom God had given her at her birth, who had been with her to the font and to the altar, and who now stood there with the book of her life in his hand, praying as only guardian angels can pray, and preparing to plead her cause before the Sovereign Judge. Faith's clear eyes can see much in a death chamber—much before which the heart thrills with joy and awe. And so, while this great spiritual drama was going on, I knelt half-conscious of it, when suddenly I heard a loud noise at the outer door. I rose hastily; there was a small fire glowing in the grate, but no other light. I lighted the lamp, but while it was still in my hand the door opened, and a tall man entered quickly. At first he did not notice me, but strode towards the fire, and drawing a chair to it, sat down. Annie, who was in one of these calm stupors that often precede death, had not seen or heard his entrance. I came forward and put down the lamp; he started then; he saw me, and half rose from his seat. No matter how low, how fallen, how degraded a man may be, he shows always an instinctive respect for the religious habit; he did; he muttered something, and then, as though seized with a sudden fear, looked around and cried out,—

"What is the matter, sister, and why are you here?"

I answered him very quietly, that his wife was very ill. Poor fellow! his heart was not quite hardened, for a dreadful change came over his face, his lips became of a livid white.

"Did I—she hurt—have I—"

"No," I said; "I understand you. Through God's mercy, you did not kill your wife by that hard blow that felled her so cruelly to the ground. Hard work, cold, hunger, and misery have killed her." His eyes glared fearfully upon me, but I went on. "Do not be afraid; no one knows anything save your wife. One of her last requests to me was to dress her myself after her death, so that no other eyes but my own should see the black bruises that cover her." I thought that would touch his heart, and it did.

"When she is dead—is she so ill?"

"She has not many hours to live."

He rose, and staggered rather than walked across the room. He was fearful to behold; his face was livid, while his eyes burned with a glaring light. I tried to detain him.

"Nay, Mr. Leyton, do not go near her as you are now; wait until you are calmer."

"Let me see her, sister; I will be as quiet as a child." And by a great effort, he stood calm and still.

I went to her room and drew aside the curtain. There she lay, as peaceful and as fair as her own little May had lain years before. She knelt by her, and buried his face in his hands. She looked round with a wondering childish glance. I said, "Anne, dear, do not be alarmed; your husband is here, see, by your side." She did not look frightened, as I feared. A flush rose to her face, and a strong clear light beamed in her eyes.—She held out her arms, and in one minute her wretched repentant husband lay sobbing on her heart. One thing drew the tears from my eyes—it does even now, as I remember it. Before he spoke, he drew forth the little ring, and put it on her finger again, with a pitiful, pleading cry of—

"I could not sell it, Anne, darling; it seemed

to burn my hands. God forgive me for taking it from you."

She smiled, and motioned me to go away. I went and left them together. I knelt, and prayed that her hopes might be realised, and that when she went to heaven she might bear the repentance of her husband with her as a most precious offering to our dear Lord. Then I heard her voice, strong and clear, pleading with that wretched man, even as guardian angels plead.—The words must have been powerful, even though they were few, for in a few minutes I heard him sobbing like a little child, and then she comforted him. There was silence for a time, then he said loudly, "I swear it; I swear it; bear me, my God." Then a passionate cry of "Anne, darling, do not leave me. God have mercy on me. She is dead?"

What had passed in that half hour only God and his angels ever knew; it was a secret that rested between the dead wife and her living husband. I only know that he entered her room reckless, buried in crime and vice, his heart hardened by sin and passion, and that when he left it the angels had rejoiced over him as they do over one who does penance, and the hard heart was softened; God's grace had touched it; the eyes that so long had been dry shed tears of the deepest contrition; lips that had only been opened to give forth oaths, curses, and cruel words, had uttered a prayer for mercy, had embraced the pale face of his dying wife, and had been pressed to the feet of the little crucifix she held in her hands. God had given her strength in her dying hour to speak such words as only He can inspire, and that poor sinful heart was touched by them, and yielded to the sweet grace God poured into it.

When I heard this last cry I ran into the room. Alas! too late. The poor husband still knelt there, his hands clasped in hers, and the crucifix between them; but she was dead; peace and rest had come at last, and the wearied spirit had gone home. She died as I entered the room. A sweet smile rested on the fair quiet face, so beautiful in death. I took his hands from hers, and oh! God preserve me from ever witnessing again such a scene of agony and remorse. He refused to be comforted; he went from me into the other room, and threw himself on the floor, where for hours he lay writhing in the depths of remorseful despair. True to my promise, no hands but my own touched poor Anne; but heavy tears rained from my eyes as I robbed her in her white shroud. Ah me! reader, had you seen those dark bruises on the fair arms, those marks of ill usage and cruelty that she had been so anxious to hide, you could but have wept. When I gathered the still luxuriant hair and hid it under the little cap, taking first one long shining tress for the poor husband, who I knew would prize it dearly, and lastly, when I folded the thin white hands on the tired heart, and saw the bruised finger and the little ring, my strength failed me, and I wept such tears over her as I never shed before. So young, so beautiful, and so unhappy, yet making such glorious use of her sufferings; but one thought alone consoled me,—she was at rest and had seen again her little May.

I pass over the scenes we had with poor Mr. Leyton. The good priest and myself did all we could to console him, but in vain. Until Anne was buried he never left her, night nor day. I have seen remorse in many shapes, but I never saw anything like his; none so great, or so dreadful to behold. I cannot think of it without my heart aching and the tears streaming from my eyes. He was taken from her at last by force, and then Anne was laid in her 'long, last home.' She has a simple green grave in the new cemetery, marked only by a cross. I visit it sometimes, for her story haunted me; and the recollection of her beauty and wrongs, and her sad history, never left me. Poor Mr. Leyton remained some time longer near us. He made a general confession; and on the morning after he had been to communion he called to bid us good bye. He went to America, and leads a good and useful life there. Every year there comes a long letter from Sister Magdalen with an accompanying present of something for the church, and a very humble request for our prayers. Once he sent me some very precious flower seeds, begging me to plant them over his wife's grave. I did so, and many a thought that poor repentant exile sent over the great ocean to the flowers waving over that green grave. What would he give to recall the years that are gone; to give life again to the beautiful and gentle wife whose life had been shortened by his cruelty and neglect. I have heard it said, and I believe it, that from the time of her death he never smiled; and I know that he would prefer death in any shape to breaking that promise made to Anne, never to touch cards again.

Who shall count the wonders worked by the gentle patience of Catholic wives. Courage and hope, drooping hearts; suffer on; God will crown you some day, when these trials will be of

infinite merit. Bear wrong with patience, give kindness for cruelty, attention and care for neglect. The time will come, sooner or later, when you will conquer, and will reap the reward of those who are faithful unto the end.

A STORY OF KILLARNEY.

There was once upon a time, near the western coast of Ireland, a romantic valley inhabited by a few peasants, whose rude cabins were surrounded by the most luxuriant trees, and sheltered by mountains rising almost perpendicularly on every side. Ireland has still many beautiful green valleys, but there is not one so deeply, so securely nestled among the hills, as the one of which I speak. Add the depth of the deepest of these lakes to the height of the loftiest mountain that towers above us, and you may then form some idea of the deep seclusion of this forgotten valley.

Norah was the prettiest girl in the little village. She was the pride of her old father and mother, and the admiration of every youth who beheld her. The cottage of her parents was the neatest in the neighborhood; Norah knew how to make the homeliest chamber look cheerful, and the honeysuckle round the casement was taught by her hand to twine more gracefully than elsewhere.

There was but one spring of water in the valley; it was a little well of the brightest and clearest water ever seen, which bubbled up from the golden sand, and then lay calmly sleeping in a basin of the whitest marble. From this basin there did not appear to be any outlet; the water ran into it incessantly, but no one could detect that any part of it escaped again. It was a fairy well!

In those days there were fairs, so says the legend, and so says Crofton Croker, that mimable historian of the little people of Ireland in olden time; ours is not a story involving in its detail national habits and characteristics; on such ground who would dare to compete with him? Not I.

To return to the well; it was, as I said before a fairy well, and was held in great veneration by the inhabitants of the valley.

There was a tradition concerning it which had come out of mind, been handed down from parent to child. It was covered with a huge stone, which, though apparently very heavy, could be moved with ease by the hand of the most delicate female; and it was said to be the will of the fairy who presided over it, that all the young girls of the village should go thither every evening after sunset, remove the stone, and take from the marble basin as much as would be sufficient for the use of each family during the ensuing day; above all, it was understood to be the fairy's strict injunction that each young maiden, when she had filled her pitcher, should carefully replace the stone, and return to her parents without one sad thought to drive away sleep from her pillow.

This could not last for ever. Norah was formed to be beloved, and soon a stranger youth came to the valley—a soldier—one who had seen the world. He was clad in armour, and he talked of brighter scenes. Ah, could there be a brighter scene than that lone valley. He dazzled the poor girl's eye, and he won her heart; and when she went at sunset to fetch water from the well, Coolin was always at her side.

Her old parents could not approve of such an attachment. The young soldier's stories of camps and courts possessed no charms for them; and when they saw that Norah loved to listen to him, they reproved their child for the first time in their lives, and forbade her in future to meet the stranger. She wept, but she promised to obey them; and, that she might avoid a meeting with her lover, she went that evening to the well by a different path to that which she had been accustomed to take.

She removed the stone, and having filled the pitcher, she sat down by the side of the well and wept bitterly. She heeded not the hour; twilight was fast fading into the darkness of night, and the bright stars which studded the heavens directly over her head, were reflected in the crystal fountain at her feet.

Her lover stood before her.

"Oh! come not here," she cried, "come not here. I have promised not to meet you; had I returned home when my task was done, we never should have met! I have been disobedient.—Oh, why did I ever see you? You have taught me how to weep."

"Say not so, dearest Norah," replied the young soldier: "come with me."

"Never—never!" she emphatically exclaimed, as she hastily arose and advanced from the well. "I, who have never broken, my word, have broken it to-night! I said I would not meet you, and we have met."

She uttered this in an agony of tears, walking wildly forwards, while Coolin, with her hand clasped in both of his, walked by her side, en-