

shame and harm; while he leered, with all a drunken man's beastly stupidity, into her face.

"That was but the beginning of the end. For about another year Jack kept up a show of respectability. His little wife stood by him nobly. They had a little baby girl now, and, at first, that seemed to help Jack some. But his business was going to pieces fast. He lost case after case that he should have won. He was no longer reliable. Two more years passed. They were indeed wretched years for the Silverthornes. Nellie's face was white and thin now, and her hair was already beginning to show streaks of grey, but still she tried to smile bravely at the world, and to help her broken husband.

"Then a little son was born to them. It proved to be but a weak, and sickly child. It lived but a few months. Nellie was far from well herself now. She grew thinner, and thinner, and her face grew sadder and whiter with each passing month. When her little boy died, we thought she would go, too; but she pulled around right from the brink of the grave. I believe it was her great love for Jack and her little daughter (her only child now, and her only comfort), that kept her out of heaven through that awful winter.



"Jack was no good at all to her now; rather, he was a burden, and, sometimes, worse than a nuisance. They had no money left, and only a miserable home. They had moved into a poor, low, frame cottage on the edge of the town. Jack really did nothing but hang around the hotel, and drink, whenever he could find a quarter of a dollar, or a friend to treat him. I learned that Nellie was trying to keep a roof over their heads, and bread in their mouths, by doing plain sewing for Bradford families. She had had a good education in that eastern ladies' college. She was a fair musician and language student. She could sketch and paint a little, too, but she was not prepared to earn her living in any one special line. She couldn't even teach a public school, for she did not hold the necessary certificates. So she did plain sewing and nearly starved. Too many Bradford people, I fear, were secretly glad over the 'come-down,' as they styled it, that had over-taken Nellie Silverthorne; for Dr. Maynard and his pretty daughter had been very proud, and even arrogant, in the former days. So Nellie Maynard, and later, Mrs. John Silverthorne, in the early years of her married life, had been envied, and, accordingly, disliked, by not a few. Oh! it must have hurt Nellie Silverthorne's proud heart to see, and understand, their petty, devilish pleasure, as she came and went amongst them, a common, despised seamstress; but she never allowed her pain to appear in speech or look. She held her queenly head as high as ever and quietly faced her awful fate.

"There came a day, however, when even her sewing failed her. Many Bradford families did much of their own plain sewing, I fancy; and other, and more skilful sewing talent came to our little town. She and her little girl knew hunger and cold, very often, in those days, I fear.

"One day she came into this office, once her father's, carrying her little daughter in her arms. She was very pale and I asked after her health, thinking she came for professional aid.

"She smiled at me sadly. 'I have not come for medical advice, Dr. Edgar,' she said. 'I came to see—' she faltered and the tears came into her eyes. Then she raised her chin, and went on calmly and bravely. 'I came to see if you would allow me to scrub out your office. I am in sore need of the money you might pay me for my work. I have had no sewing to do for over two weeks now, and I can seemingly get nothing else to do.'

"Nellie Maynard scrub out my office? Never! Then I did a foolish thing, though I meant it kindly enough God knows, I offered her money. She drew herself up proudly, and, without one word, withdrew. I saw her walk down the street to yonder hotel. I saw her enter. Good God! What did she purpose doing! I walked up and down my office in a frenzy of suspense, keeping my eye upon the hotel door. She had not come out again. I could stand it no longer. I went over to the hotel and entered the sitting room. I did not know what I intended doing nor what I expected to see. Mrs. Silverthorne was not in the sitting room, but I found her little daughter there, carefully wrapped up upon the old hair-cloth sofa. I passed into the hall and called for Orr, the hotel-keeper. He came at my call and I asked him if he had seen Mrs. Silverthorne.

"Yes, I have,' he said, with a meaning smile and a wink that sickened me, and made me feel like knocking the fellow down. 'She's in there,' concluded Orr, briefly waving his fat hand towards the bar-room, from which I could hear the clink of glasses, and the filthy oaths and language of drinking men. Wondering, fearing, I entered the bar-room. Sinclair, I saw there a sight that would make a good man curse his fellows, and almost doubt God himself, for allowing such things to come to pass. There was cultured, educated, once beautiful and wealthy, Nellie Silverthorne, down upon her knees scrubbing the floor. She was working for her baby girl.

"At the bar drinking, and calling upon his companions to join him, stood Jack Silverthorne, once the handsome and clever young lawyer. At length, thoroughly intoxicated, he turned from the bar. He fumbled clumsily in his pocket for the coin that was not there. His bleared eyes fell to the floor, and he saw his wife scrubbing out the bar-room he and his companions made hideous with oaths, coarse stories, and all manner of foulness. The sight, at first, troubled him in spite of his intoxication. That soon passed, however, and, with a rough laugh, and a coarser oath, he turned to the saloon-keeper, saying (with a wave of his hand towards the kneeling woman), 'Or, you can take the price of the drinks out of her pay when she is through.'

"Sinclair, I committed murder there and then, in my heart. But I did want to kill him? Jack Silverthorne could speak that way to his wife! Nellie Maynard, whom, but six short years ago, he had promised 'to love, cherish, and keep, in sickness, and in health, until death did them part!' It was awful! My brain was on fire with the thought of it! I took a step towards Silverthorne, but the look on Nellie's face halted me. I looked at her in awe, in fear. She had stood erect at the sound of her husband's voice. Her face was fairly livid! and may I never see again in woman's eyes the look she hurled at her husband. Congreve must have seen just such a look in a woman's eyes when he wrote:

'Heaven knows no rage like love to hatred turned,
Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned.'

She said nothing, absolutely nothing, Sinclair, but she just looked at him in that way that makes me shudder yet to recall. Then she placed both hands over her heart and went out of the bar-

room. We heard her call to her little girl, and then we heard them go away.

"We men stood in that bar-room for a time, as still as death, after Nellie Silverthorne had left the hotel. We were frightened, each and all of us. I believe we feared a sudden striking of the vengeance of God in our midst. But God didn't strike. (He does not seem to work in that way nowadays. I wonder why? But that's more along your line, Sinclair. You can tell us all about it next Sunday; if you know anything more about it than the rest of us.)

"After the power of locomotion came back I took poor, drunken Silverthorne home with me. When he had sobered up I told him what he had done, and I added a few embellishments of my own composition. No! his dissipation had not crushed all the man out of him—brute as he was! As he learned what he had done his face became as grey as the shadow of death. When I had finished he dropped his face in his hands and wept. I had never seen Jack weep before, not even as a boy.

"Jim,' brokenly, he said, at length, 'take me home to Nellie.'

We went out together to his poor, little cottage. He went in alone. Only the angels, and God know what passed between husband and wife under that humble roof that morning.

Bye and bye Jack came out to me, softly closing the door behind him. Oh! the look on Jack's face! I imagine just such a light might rest upon the face of some poor sinner who, expecting to be banished to the darkest hell by God, had been forgiven, and called close up to the throne. 'Jim,' Jack whispered, 'she's forgiven me, and I'm going back home with you to fight, and you've got to stand by me, and see me safe back to manhood.' His big, black eyes burned into my brain, as he spoke to me in that awed whisper.

"So Jack and I came back here together to fight his appetite. The week that followed was the darkest and longest I've ever put in in all my life. Please God I don't care for another one like it. There was little I could do to help Jack. What I could I did. He was dreadfully run down, and that told against him in his struggle. His long, and terrible dissipation had weakened him, body and mind. The odds were fearfully against him, but Nellie's spirit fought with us.

"Sometimes, when the desire was strong upon him, I'd hitch my little thoroughbred mare to the open buggy and give Jack the lines, getting in beside him and saying to him, 'now drive like the devil, Jack, and forget if you can,' and he would. That week ruined my little mare, and Jack and I had many a narrow escape from accident in those wicked drives. One night, the worst night he had but one, he gave up entirely, and declared he would have a drink. I got him into my bed-room by promising him a drink. I never gave it to him. I knew if he got that first drink it would be the end of his struggle. When he saw me lock the door upon him and myself, and put the key in my pocket, he turned upon me like a wild beast. His eyes were blood-shot. Foam gathered upon his lips. He cursed me, his wife, his child, all men, and God himself. Then he threw himself upon me. We fought. At first I thought he would kill me, but eventually I succeeded in over-coming him. I struck him very heavily, and he passed into blessed unconsciousness. I put him into bed, and went away, keeping the door locked. The next morning he thanked me, in a choking voice, and with tears in his eyes. Jack gained ground rapidly after that. I was beginning to feel quite easy about him at last. I was sure now he would win.

"It was towards the end of the week, when, one evening, a very urgent call came to me from about ten miles out in the country. I asked Jack to come with me. He declined, however, saying I would need to make quick time, and his added weight would impede me. He gripped my hand and said he would be all right. I looked into his eyes and believed him. It was just breaking day when I came driving easily homeward the next morning. I felt sleepy but quite pleased with myself and all the world; for I knew I had saved two lives, a mother and her new-born babe.

"At the railway crossing, on the edge of the town, my jaded horse shied suddenly and nearly ditched me. I drew him up sharply and then—I got out of my buggy and knelt beside Jack Silverthorne's body, as it lay huddled in a heap in the ditch by the side of the railroad track. He was quite dead, had been dead some time. It was quite apparent that he had been drinking heavily, and that he had been struck, and thrown where he lay, by a passing train.

"I could prove nothing, but I felt convinced in my own mind, and am to this day, that Orr was to blame for Jack's fall. Orr had sworn to have Jack drunk before a week, when he had heard of Silverthorne's attempt at reform. All the boys about town had bets up on the same issue. I had known about it all but had thought little of it, and so had paid absolutely no attention to Orr's boast.



"I found an empty liquor bottle lying upon my office desk. That it had come from Orr's I knew, but I couldn't prove that Orr had brought it. I am convinced, however, that Orr must have seen me leave without Jack early in the evening, and had gone up with that liquor after I had driven away, and tempted Jack to his death.

"We never knew whether poor Silverthorne had committed suicide in remorse after his fall or not. The crossing where he was killed was but a few rods from his own cottage door. He may have been going home to his wife and child, and been accidentally killed, or, his remorse might have overcome him as he neared his home and—but I always try to give him the benefit of the doubt.

"Yes, the blow was a terrible one to Nellie Silverthorne, just when she had begun to hope again. Her hair, that night, turned as white as you saw it to-day. Her eyes have told that story ever since that night, as they told it to you to-day.

"She lived for her little daughter. She would accept no charity. The God who watches over the sparrow alone knows how she lived. Her daughter now teaches our town school, and in her turn cares for her mother. Mother and daughter live together out there on the edge of the town, still, by the railroad crossing, in the same humble, frame-cottage. Mrs. Silverthorne will not leave it. I fear, however, she will be compelled to leave it soon and go out upon her last, long journey. Her broken heart has nearly finished its work. When she is gone, the daughter will be left alone! Sinclair, it's your duty to go and visit them, and do them all the good you can."

I ended by narrative abruptly and turned Sinclair out. Then I ordered my horse around. It was nearly four o'clock and I had a few calls to make in the country.

