

ing away when I felt a little hand in mine, and looking down I saw little Nellie with her face raised to mine as though expecting a caress. I lifted her in my arms and kissed her good-night, the little one running away apparently as happy as a lark. Such is youth.

I turned into my study, drew a chair to the fire and was once again with the past, when the joyous notes of the Christmas carollers fell softly on my ear, and going to the window I joined in the song:

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

And as the glorious notes of the hymn floated on the midnight air, I felt a calm stealing over me. The Past is forgotten, and I see the hand of an All-Wise Providence in leading me to go with the little child to that humble dwelling, and in rescuing from want one whom I had known in happier days. And I sing:

All glory be to God on high,
And in the earth be peace;
Good will henceforth from heaven to men
Begin and never cease.

III.

EMILY'S STORY.

Christmas Day! And a glorious Christmas Day it was. The storm of the previous evening had passed away, the clouds had vanished, and the morning opened bright with sunshine, the air clear and frosty—a truly Canadian winter day.

I was early astir, and hurriedly dressing hastened downstairs to the breakfast room, my thoughts reverting to the scenes of the night before; and glancing at the bright sunshine my heart seemed lighter than it had been for many a day. I seated myself at my little melodeon and commenced to play, the only air that would come to my mind being that of the glorious Christmas carol that sounded so joyously on my ears the night before.

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground.

and as I played, joining my voice to swell the melody, I heard timid little notes mingling with my own, and turning saw that Nellie had entered the room.

But how different she looked! Her rags had been replaced by more becoming robes, her little feet were now covered with neat warm stockings, and her hair had been nicely combed. Truly I should not have known her but for her voice.

Seeing that I was looking at her she came timidly to my side, and putting up her little face for a kiss wished me "a merry Christmas."

I took the little one on my knee, gave the desired salute, and was questioning her in regard to her mother, when the lady entered.

But how altered! If the child was changed, how much more so was the mother. Good food, warmth and a comfortable night's rest had indeed made a wonderful change.

She was still very weak, and I hastened to her side to assist her to a sofa, after which she held out her hand to me, saying:

"Dear John, if I may call you so, how can I ever repay you for all you have done for me?"

"By saying nothing about it," I interrupted.

"Permit me to wish you a merry Christmas, coupled with a hope that long before another Christmas comes round you will be fully restored to health."

She tried to answer me, but I could see that the effort was too much for her, and immediately changed the subject by saying:

"It is time we had breakfast. I wonder what my landlady is doing to keep us so long waiting?"

"I am afraid I am to blame," said Emily. "She has been with me for the last hour, helping me in every possible way, else I fear I should not have been able to do so."

Further conversation was put a stop to by the entrance of May bringing in the breakfast, for which I was quite ready, and which, notwithstanding Emily's weak state, was a merry meal, little Nellie ably seconding me in my efforts to cheer up her mother, and we were partially successful, for after the meal was over I had the satisfaction of hearing Emily say that it was the best and happiest meal she had eaten for years. And there was a smile on her face as she said it—a smile that took me back to former years—many years ago.

"And now, John," said Emily, when I had once more helped her to a sofa, and taken a chair by her side, with Nellie on my knee, "I cannot consent to longer share your hospitality till you have heard my miserable story. If you can give me your attention for a little while I will make it as brief as possible, for the story is painful to me, and I fear would bury the past, but justice to you compels me to let you know the reason of my mysterious disappearance twenty-five years ago, and what has transpired in the interval."

I tried to dissuade her, telling her that if the past was painful to her it was equally so to me, and I was willing to forget it; but she insisted, and I finally consented to hear her story; so, after giving little Nellie some pictures to amuse her, I took my seat by the side of Emily, who began:

"It is unnecessary for me to tell you of my childhood's home, of my father and mother, for I doubt not you remember them almost as well as I do. As you know, I was an only child, the heiress of vast wealth, and as such petted and

given way to in everything. My lightest wish was gratified, and as I grew up I became proud and arrogant, looking down on my inferiors and thinking every one beneath me who was not one of fortune's favorites. Your father's estate joined ours, and it was the wish of our parents that we should be married and thus unite the two estates. Everything seemed to progress favorably. You, I know, loved me, and I—although my love was not so deep as yours—I loved you until there arrived in our peaceful village Count Sorloff, the dashing Russian."

"What," I interrupted, "is it possible you went away with that adventurer?"

"Adventurer, yes, I know now. But let me tell my story in my own way. The Count came into our village like a meteor, taking me by storm. His dashing manner, brilliant conversational powers and stories of magnificence in his native country fairly dazzled me, and I met him clandestinely several times—deceiving everybody,—you, my parents and myself. Yes, myself more than any body else. While I was meeting the Count in this way preparations for our marriage were proceeding rapidly, and I knew I was powerless to stop them, for my father, who, like many Englishmen, was bitterly opposed to foreigners, would as soon have seen me dead as wedded to a Russian. The day of our marriage was fast drawing near, and I, hypocrite as I was, did not let you see anything of the change that had taken place in my affections, but still treated you in the manner I had always done—more like brother and sister than accepted lovers. We were to have been married on Christmas Eve just twenty-five years ago. The night previous I managed to escape from the house to hold an interview with the Count—my parents thinking I was in my room, for I pleaded a severe headache, as an excuse."

"Well I remember how sorry I felt," I again interrupted, "when, on my paying my accustomed visit—the last I thought I should pay to the old house in my capacity of lover—I heard you were too ill to see me, for I had looked forward all day to a quiet evening with you," and I buried my face in my hands, for my feelings overcame me. After a little I bade her proceed.

"My feigned illness," she continued, "as I said before, was only an excuse to meet the Count, and while you were regretting my absence, I, guilty soul, was holding converse in the summer-house at the end of our garden with that man, who, uttering all manner of protestations, declared he would shoot himself if I would not break off my marriage with you. I argued with him, but to no purpose, and finally agreed to elope with him the following evening. Oh, my God," she added, "how can I ever hope for forgiveness from you? The thought of all the misery I occasioned is maddening," and she sobbed aloud.

It was some time before I could pacify her, but I finally succeeded, assuring her of my entire forgiveness, and she proceeded:

"The only excuse I can offer was my extreme youthfulness. As you know, I was only seventeen years of age, and had very vague notions of the difference between right and wrong. But I will make no excuse, my guilt being inexcusable. But to continue. The wedding preparations went on as though nothing had happened, the wedding presents were coming in, and I moved about as though there was nothing to prevent the ceremony taking place. How the day passed I hardly know. It seems almost like a dream to me. The wedding was to have taken place, at your suggestion, I think, at 8 o'clock in the evening, and after a hasty tea, I hastened up to my room, accompanied by my principal bridesmaid, to prepare for the ceremony. I allowed myself to be arrayed in bridal costume and was all ready about ten minutes before the time specified. My trunk was packed and everything in readiness for my departure after the ceremony. I had also taken the precaution to place in a small valise that I could carry in my hand all my jewels and a complete change of wearing apparel, including a travelling costume. All being in readiness, I made some excuse to get rid of my maid and the young lady friends who clustered round me, and hastily throwing a large cloak over my bridal array, I made my escape from the house by a private entrance from my room. Once in the garden I hastened to the summer-house, where the Count anxiously awaited my coming, and was hurried away by him to a lane dividing your father's property from mine, where a carriage was waiting, into which the Count lifted me, and jumping in after, the vehicle rolled rapidly away, leaving peace, happiness and contentment behind."

At this point the speaker's emotion completely overcame her, and I allowed her to remain silent for some moments; my own feelings were wrought up to the utmost tension. At length she resumed:

"I remember no more till I found myself in the cabin of a steamer, the Count supporting my head. I must have fainted, the mental strain through which I had passed being too great for me to bear. On returning to consciousness the Count informed me that everything had happened as he had wished; that we had not been followed; that we were on the Dover packet, and would be in Calais in a few hours, where we would be immediately united, and that then no power on earth could separate us. I listened to him in a kind of haze, and finally fell off to sleep, not awakening till we had arrived at Calais, where everything happened as he had said, and I was saluted by him as the Countess Sorloff. But why continue my miserable story? You have branded the Count as an adventurer, and you have said truly, for I had not been a

week married when his true character was exposed to my gaze in all its hideousness."

To spare her feelings as much as possible, although I must confess that her story interested me deeply, I entreated her to make it as brief as she could, passing over minor events, and giving me only the principal points in her career.

"To be brief then," she continued, "only a few days after my marriage I discovered the true character of the man I called my husband. It was in this wise: We were in Paris, whither we had gone immediately after my ill-fated marriage. We were stopping at the Hotel Anglais. The hour was late, past midnight, and I was waiting for my husband, who said he had business that would keep him out late. Presently I heard unsteady steps ascending the stairs. They stopped at my door, which is opened and my husband creeps into the room. Oh, the horror of that moment! I can never forget it. The Count advances unsteadily to me and demands money. I give him all I have, which is not a great deal, for leaving home in the haste I did, I thought little of money or anything else. He demands more, and when I tell him I have none to give him he upbraids me and forced me to sit down and write to my father, informing him of my marriage, and demanding that he receive us under the parental roof. The letter written, he placed it in his pocket, threw himself on a sofa and was soon in a semi-drunken slumber. This was the first of many similar scenes. When the Count found I had no more money he took whatever piece of jewellery he could find belonging to me and converted it into money, which he spent in riotous living and gambling—for he was an inveterate gambler. These things went on, my husband enquiring day by day if I had received any answer from my father, and when I answered in the negative he heaped all manner of abuse upon me, upbraiding me with faithlessness, when had I been less faithful to him how different had been my lot! A letter from my father at length arrived, a cold formal letter, informing me that he had placed five thousand pounds to my credit at a Paris bankers, but telling me to expect nothing more from him and never to show my face to him again. He did not reproach me, if he had I think I could have borne it better, but to be disowned as I was filled my cup of bitterness to the brim. While I held the letter in my hand the Count came in, and taking it from my grasp, and uttering an oath, started out. I never saw a penny of the money and never heard from my father again, for although I wrote several times to both him and my mother, the letters were returned unopened, and when my mother died, followed a week later by my father, the only notification I had was to the effect that a will had been left leaving everything to a distant cousin and cutting me off with twenty pounds, which was enclosed. Meantime, the Count was going from bad to worse. While the money lasted he spent it in gadding and liquor, and when it was all gone and we had to leave the Hotel Anglais for more humble lodgings, I was in such a state that I knew not and cared less where the money came from for our support. It was at this time that my first baby was born. But it did not live, and I thanked God for taking it to himself. But why prolong the miserable tale. In a gambling fight the Count stabbed a man and had to flee the country. We went from Paris to Baden-Baden, from there to Berlin, and thence to almost every town in Germany, staying at each place until the Count was found out in some gambling trick, when he had to leave. And so from place to place, leading a sort of vagabond existence for fourteen years, during which time he had so worked upon my fears that, although I had made several attempts to leave him, he had thwarted my every attempt, and threatened me with death if I made another. Eleven years ago he changed the base of his operations to St. Petersburg, where he became the head of a band of counterfeiters, living there three years playing his nefarious game undisturbed, but, being betrayed by a confederate, with whom he had quarrelled, and a hue and cry being raised against him, he again had to flee, only escaping arrest by shooting a Cossack who was sent to capture him. We then went to London, but feeling unsafe there we took passage to New York, where we arrived eight years ago, and where little Nellie was born. I had had three other children, but they had all died in our wanderings. But my last little one," she glanced affectionately at the child, "has seemed to thrive where the others would have died, and is the only thing that has prevented me at times from wishing I could lay down and die."

She again paused for a few moments, as if in communion with herself, and I took the opportunity of taking to the child some more engravings to amuse her; and giving her a kiss and a caution to remain quiet, I resumed my seat. The mother then looked me with her eyes and continued:

"My story is drawing to a close, and I will not much longer weary you with my sufferings. We remained in New York a few months, where my husband landed it at the St. Nicholas Hotel, his title of Count securing him the *entree* into the best American society, and I thought he had given up his evil ways. But one day he was missing, and a note was handed to me informing me that he had been connected with a great diamond robbery that was agitating the public mind, and that fearing detection he had fled to Canada, bidding me follow him. The note was not signed, but I knew the writing too well to doubt its authenticity. I considered for

some time what I had better do, and finally made up my mind that I would try to earn my own living. I left the hotel I was stopping at and went to Boston, where I endeavored to scrape up a precarious existence with my needle for a few months, but failing health compelled me to desist. Such jewellery as I had managed to save supported us for a time, but it went piece by piece, and poverty and hunger forced me to seek such work as I could get. We wandered from place to place, my child and I, often sleeping by the roadside without a crust to eat. Finally, nearly a year ago, we came to Montreal, and I managed to get work to do at my home, but the pay I received barely kept body and soul together, and I had to take to my bed about three weeks ago, living on such crumbs as my child could scrape up till you rescued us from starvation last night. I have not seen my husband since he left New York, and hope I may never see him again. This is my story, and now I have told it to you I feel better, for I know that whatever happens to me I can safely leave my little one in your care," and she caught my hand and pressed it to her lips.

III.

THE DOCTOR'S STORY.

The story is told—a story of wrong, suffering and misery,—and I glance at the woman before me, wondering how she could have borne up under the series of hardships to which she had been subjected; but what does my glance see?—she has fainted. It has been too great a strain upon her in her weak state.

Being a physician, I knew exactly what to do, and soon restored her to consciousness, when leaving her in care of my landlady, I started out to pay my usual calls, telling her before I left that I had a story to tell also—a story that would lighten her heart, and bring her back, I hoped to peace—if not happiness.

My round of visits being made, I entered the Cathedral, the glorious Christmas service seeming to lull me into a quiet repose, and when I entered my dwelling again I felt at peace with all men.

After a hearty Christmas dinner, I amused little Nellie till she was thoroughly tired, when, giving her into the charge of my landlady, I again drew my chair to the side of the sofa on which Emily lay and commenced *her* story:

"I suppose you think it strange, Emily," I said, "that I should be in Montreal? The reason is this: After your mysterious disappearance, I was almost distracted. I hunted for you everywhere: set detectives on your track; telegraphed all over the Kingdom; even went so far as to have the river dragged for miles, thinking that probably you had wandered out and fallen over the bank. But to no purpose. I spent the greater part of my time at your father's house, and he seconded all my endeavors the first few days you were missing, when suddenly he changed, bade me cease my search and informed me you were dead. This must have been the time he received your first letter. I beg'd, and prayed of him to tell me where you had died, that I might visit your grave, but he only answered that you were dead and that I should never see your grave."

"Yes, I was dead, indeed, to him—my heartlessness killed both my kind father and mother," sobbed Emily, as though her heart would break.

After partially pacifying her, I resumed:

"Finding I could get nothing out of your father, I started in quest of you, travelling all over England, Ireland and Scotland, never thinking that you had left that country, but to no avail. You were not to be found. I returned home, but could settle down to nothing. My father recommended that I take a voyage to America, which I did, wandering from place to place, with no aim in life, seeming to care for nothing. But, finally, a change came over me—I longed for something to drive away my thoughts—I wanted employment—and with this object in view I took the Allan steamer "Moravian" from Quebec, whither I had wandered, and was once more on my way home. The passage was delightful, and was, I think, the best thing I took an interest in since your disappearance. Once more in my father's presence I made known to him my desire, that I should go back to college for a time and qualify myself to practice as a physician. My good old father seconded me in everything—thinking that if I had something else on my mind I should in *due* forget you. And to college I went—man as I was. Well, to make a long story short, I took my degree and settled down in the old village. But old thoughts came back to me, and I was getting into my former lethargic condition when the Trent affair occurred, and there was likelihood of trouble between England and the United States. My resolve was made. My poor old father was no more; so leaving my estates in care of my brother, I obtained an assistant-surgenship in one of the regiments ordered to Canada, and once more crossed the Atlantic. That was, I think, the happiest time I had spent since that fatal evening twenty-five years ago. My brother officers were nearly all gay, dashing young fellows, full of life and spirits, and the hours sped merrily along, leaving me no time for thought till I sought my couch at night, when the excitement of the day having wearied me, I generally dropped off into the arms of Morpheus, burying thought in oblivion. But there was no war; and when the regiments were ordered home one by one, I felt as though I could not again face the familiar scenes of my