

The Family Circle.

TWO.

I dreamed I saw two angels hand in hand,
And very like they were, and very fair.
One wore about his head a golden band;
A thorn wreath crowned the other's matted hair.

The one was fair and tall, and white of brow;
A radiant spirit-smile of wondrous grace
Shed, like an inner altar lamp, a glow
Upon his beautiful uplifted face.

The other's face, like marble carved Grief,
Had placid brows laid whitely o'er with pain.
With lips that never knew a smile's relief,
And eyes like violets long drenched in rain.

Then spake the fair sweet one, and gently said:
"Between us—Life and Death—choose thou
thy lot.
By him thou lovest best thou shalt be led;
Choose thou between us, soul, 'ere thou
not."

I pondered long. "O Life," at last I cried,
"Perchance 'twere wiser Death to choose; and
yet
My soul with thee were better satisfied!"
The angel's radiant face smiled swift regret.

Within his brother's hand he placed my hand,
"Thou didst mistake," he said, in underbreath,
"And choosing Life, didst fail to understand.
He with the thorns is Life, and I am Death."
—Laura Spencer Porter, in *Harper's Magazine*
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A MASTER OF DECEIT:—A DRUM- TOCHTY STORY.

BY IAN MACLAREN, AUTHOR OF "BESIDE THE
BONNIE BRICK HUSH," ETC.

'Ye'll no want a hame here, Lily; it was braid Scotch noo, an' it never sounded sae sweet; an', Jamie—here the whisper was so low, Jamie had to bend his head—a' saw the tears in his een.'

'Rest a wee, Lily; a'm followin'; sae he took ye tae his ain hoose an' pit ye in the best room, an' they've waitit on ye as if ye were his ain dochter; ye dinna need tae speak; a' wudna say but Sir Andra might be a Christian o' the auld kind; a' mean, "I was a stranger, and ye took Me in."'

'Jamie,' whispered Lily, before he left, 'there's juist ane thing hurtin' me a wee; it's the wy ma mistress . . . hes treated me. A' tried tae be faithfu', though maybe a' didna answer the bells sae quick the laist sax months . . . an' a' thoct she might . . . hae peeted a lone cratur mair.'

'It's no that a' hev ony cause o' complaint aboot vages or keep—a' wes twice raised, Jamie, an' hed a' thing a' need—an' s'm no hurt aboot bein' carried tae the hospital, for there were five stairs tae ma room, an' . . . it wudna hae been handy tae wait on me.'

'Na, na, Jamie, a'm no onreasonable, but . . . a' houpit she wud hae come tae see me or . . . sent a bit word; gin a body's sober [weak] like me, ye like tae be remembered; it . . . minds you o' the love o' God, Jamie,' and Lily turned her face away. 'A' wes prayin' tae see a Drumtochty face aince mair, an' a've gotten that, an' gin ma mistress hed juist said . . . 'Ye've dune as weel as ye cud.' . . . a' wudna ask mair.'

'Ye hae't then, Lily,' said Jamie, taking an instant resolution, 'for a've been tae see yir mistress, an' a' wes fair . . . ashamed the wy she spake aboot ye, being Drumtochty mair, an' no wantin' tae show pride.'

'As sure's a'm here, she cudna find words for her thochts o' ye; it was naethin' but yir faithfulness an' yir gude wark, hoo a body liket ye an' hoo gratefu' she wes to you. A' wes that affeekit that a' hed tae leave.'

'What wud ye say, wumman, gin yon graund lady has been twice a day at the hospital speirin' for you, kerridge an' a', mind ye; but ye ken they're terrible busy in thae places, an' canna aye get time tae cairry the messages.'

'But that's no a', for the glow on Lily's face was kindling Jamie's inspiration, and he saw no use for economy in a good work. 'What think ye o' this for a luck-penny? twenty pund exact, an' a' in goud; it looks bonnie glintin' in the licht; and Jamie emptied on the table the store of sovereigns he had brought from Muirtown bank, without shame.'

'The mistress surely never sent that . . . tae me?' Lily whispered.

'Maybe a' pickit it up on the street; they think awa in the country the very streets are goud here. "Give her this from us all," were her vorra words,' said Jamie, whose conscience had abandoned the unequal struggle with his heart. "Tell her that she's to get whatever she likes with it, and to go down to her home for a long holiday."'

'Did ye thank her, Jamie? Nae man hes a better tongue.'

'Ma tongue never servit me better; sall, ye wud hae been astonished gin ye hed herd me,' with the emphasis of one who stood at last on the rock of truth.

'A'm rael content, noo,' Lily said, 'but a' canna speak mair the noo, an' a've something tae say that 'ill no keep till the morn'; and Jamie promised to return that evening.'

Jamie waited in the hall till the last of the famous physician's patients had gone; then he went in and said:

'When a' entered this hoose ma hert wes sair, for a' thoct a defenceless lassie had been ill used in her straits, an' noo a' wud like tae apologize for ma hot words. Ye've dune a gude work the day that's no for the like of me to speak aboot, but it 'ill hae its reward frae the Father o' the fatherless.'

'Toots, man, what nonsense is this you're talking?' said Sir Andrew. 'You don't understand the situation. The fact is, I wanted to study Lily's case, and it was handier to have her in my house. Just medical selfishness, you know.'

'A' might hae thoct o' that,' and the intelligence in Jamie's eye was so sympathetic that Sir Andrew quailed before it. 'We hev a doctor in oor parish that's juist yir marra [equal], aye practeesin' on the sick fouk, an' for lookin' after himsel' he passes belief.'

'Juist Weelum MacLure ower again,' Jamie mediated, as he went along the street. 'London or Drumtochty, great physeecian or puir country doctor, there's no ane o' them tae mend anither for doonricht gudeness. There's naebody 'ill hae a chance wi' them at the latter end; an' for leevin' tae, a' believe Sir Andra wud beat Weelum himsel.'

When Jamie returned, Lily had arranged her store of gold in little heaps, and began at once to give directions.

'Ye maun pay ma debts first, ye ken, Jamie; a' cudna . . . leave, thinkin' that a' wes awin' a penny tae onybody. Grannie aye brocht us up tae live sae that we ad look a'body in the face, and except a' Chairlie . . .'

'Twa shilling tae the shoemaker, an honest, weel-dacin man; mony a time he's telt me aboot John Wesley. And a poond tae the dressmaker; it's no a' for mazel; there wes anither Scotch lassie . . .'

. . . but that disna maitter. Cud ye pay thae accoonts the nicht, for the dressmaker 'ill be needin' her money. . . . It wes ma tribble hindered me; . . . a' started ae day, an' the catch in ma side . . . a' hed tae come back.'

'Noo, there's ma kirk, an' we maunna forgot it, for a've been rael happy there. Masittin' wes due the beginnin' o' the month, and a' aye gied ten shillings tae the missions. An', Jamie, they were speakin' o' presentin' the minister wi' some bit token o' respect aifter bein' twenty-five years here. Pit me doon for a poond—no ma name, ye ken; that wud be forward; juist . . . "A gratefu' servant lass."'

'Ye 'ill get some bonny han'kerchief or sic like for the nurse; it wudna dae tae offer her siller; an' dinna forget the hoosemaid, for she's hed a sair trachle wi' me. As for Sir Andra . . . naething can py him.'

'Here's five pund, and ye 'ill gie't tae Grannie; she kens wha it's for; it 'ill juist feenish the debt. . . .'

'Ye can haud yir tongue, Jamie. Wull ye write a line tae Charlie, an' say . . . that a' wes thinkin' o' him at the end, an' expectin' him tae be a credit tae his fouk . . . some day; an', Jamie, gin he ever come back in his richt mind tae the Glen, ye 'ill . . . no be hard on him like ye wes laist time.'

'Chairlie 'ill ne want a freend gin a' be leevin', Lily; is that a' for ye're tirin' yersel?'

'There's ae thing mair, but a'm dootin' it's no richt o' me tae waste Grannie's siller on't, for a' wantit tae leave her somethin' wise-like . . . but oh, Jamie, a've taken a longin' . . . tae lie in Drumtochty kirkyaird wi' ma mither an' Grannie.'

'A' ken it's a notion, but a' dinna like thae cemeteries wi' their gravel roadies, an' their big monuments, an' the croods o' careless fouk, an' the booses pressin' on them frae every side.'

'A' promised Janet,' broke in Jamie, 'that a' wud bring ye hame, an' a'll keep ma word, Lily; gin it be God's wull tae tak yir soul tae Himsel, yer body 'ill be laid wi' yer ain fouk,' and Jamie left hurriedly.

Next morning Sir Andrew and the minister were standing by Lily's bedside, and only looked at him when he joined them.

'Jamie . . . thank ye a' . . . ower gude tae . . . a servant lass . . . tell them . . . at hame.'

Each man bade her good-bye and the minister said certain words which shall not be written.

'Thae . . . weary stairs,' and she breathed heavily for a time; then, with a sigh of relief, "A'm comin'."

'Lily has reached the . . . landin',' said Sir Andrew, and as they went downstairs no man would have looked at his neighbor's face for a ransom.

'A' wrote that verra nicht tae Drumshough,' Jamie explained to our guard between the Junction and Kildrummie; 'an' a'm no sure but he 'ill be doon himsel' wi' a neebur or twa juist tae gie Lily a respectable funeral, for she hes nae man o' her blude tae come.'

'Div ye see onything, Robert?' Jamie was in a fever of anxiety; 'the Kildrummie hearse stands heich, an' it sud be there, besides the mourners.'

'Kildrummie platform's black,' cried Robert from the footboard; 'the 'ill be twal gin there be a man; ye stick by ano'

anither weel up the wy; it's no often a servant is brocht hame for beerial; a' dinna mind a case sin the line opened.'

While they went through Kildrummie, Jamie walked alone behind the hearse as chief mourner, with a jealously regulated space of three feet between him and the neighbors; but as soon as the pine woods had swallowed up the procession, he dropped behind, and was once more approachable.

'Ye've hed a time o't,' said Hillocks, treating Jamie as an ordinary man again; 'wha wud hae thoct this wes tae be the end o' yir London jaunt? Sall,' and Hillocks felt himself unable to grapple with the situation.

'This is juist naethin',' with vague allusion to the arrival by railway and the Kildrummie hearse; 'no worth mentionin' wi' the beginnin' o' the beerial at the ither end,' and Jamie chose Whinnie's box, out of three offered, to brace him for the descriptive narrative.

'Ye maun understand,' began Jamie, knowing that he had at least four miles before it would be necessary for him to resume his position of solitary dignity, 'that as sune as Lily turned ill she wes taken tae the hoose o' a great London doctor, an' Sir Andra waited on her himsel'; there's maybe no anither o' his patients without a title; a' herd him speak o' a Duchess ae day.'

'When it wes a' ower, puir lassie, if they didna fecht tae py for the beerial. The minister threipit wi' me that he hed a fund at his kirk for sic objects, a sonsy man, wi' a face that pit ye in mind o' hame to look at it, but a' saw through that fund; it's fearsome hoo Scotch fouk 'ill lee tae cover gude deeces.'

'Div ye think he wud hae py'd it oot o' his ain p'cket?' interrupted Hillocks.

'Na, na,' a' said tae the minister, for Hillocks was beneath notice, "ye maun lat her mistress bear the beerial"—twenty pund, as a'm on this road, she gied; 'a faithfu' servant, she's tae want for nothin'; it wes handsome, an' 'ill be maist comfortin' tae Janet.'

'Ye saw the coffin for yersels,' and Jamie now gave himself to details; 'the London hearse hed glass sides and twa horses, then a mournin' coach wi' the minister an' me; but that's the least o't. What think ye cam next?'

'Some o' the neeburs walkin', maybe,' suggested Whinnie.

'Walkin',' repeated Jamie, with much bitterness, as of one who despaired of Drumtochty, and saw no use in wasting his breath; 'juist so; ye've hed mair rain here than in England.'

'Never mind Whinnie, Jamie,' intervened Drumshough; 'we maun hae the rest o' the funeral; wes there anither coach?'

'What wud ye say,' and Jamie spoked with much solemnity, 'tae a private kerridge, an' mair than ano? Ay, ye may look,' allowing himself some freedom of recollection. 'Sir Andra's wes next tae the coach, wi' the blinds drawn doon, an' aifter it an elder's frae her kirk. Ho heard o' Lily through the minister, an' naethin' wud sateesfy him but tae dao her sic honor as he cud.'

'Gaein' around the corners o' the streets—a' cudna help it, neeburs—a juist took a glist oot at the window, an' when a' saw the banker's horses wi' the silver harness, a' washed ye hed been there; sic respect tae a Drumtochty lass!'

'Ye saw the lilies on the coffin,' wound