

drunk, so that Nelly's been a cripple and on her back ever since. Barton's dead now, and Nelly and her mother live together."

She dared not look at his face, but she felt conscious that it was drawn and livid, and that the brown eyes were full of an unspeakable grief and shame. There was a moment's bitter silence; then he turned about, said in a hoarse altered voice, "I'm going to see her now," and strode out of the inn.

Next day the village rang with a marvellous piece of news. Will Harrison had come back, and he was resolved to make up to Nelly Barton for all that she had suffered, in fact, he was going to marry her out of hand. Some of the Underwood villagers voted him a fool; but more said that he was an honourable man, who was trying to undo the ill effects of the harm that he had done. Gossip reported that he had had a long conversation with the Rector, and that Mr. Charteris had shaken hands with him warmly at the Rectory door, which proved that Will's behaviour had at least recommended itself to the clergyman of the parish.

But to think of poor Nelly being married after all! Will Harrison would have a sad life of it with an invalid wife upon his hands. "However," as one of the village good wives said, "he brought it upon her, and it's right that he should try to make amends." And Mrs. Barton went about the village beaming with smiles, and declaring what a good son Will was going to be to her.

But Will Harrison himself did not look as if he were happy in the consciousness of reparation for past misdoing. He had a harassed, downcast air, as of a man who was being urged to some painful duty. Even Nelly did not seem very happy. She was nervous, restless, alternately elated and depressed. And sometimes she cried when people spoke to her of Will.

I was present at the wedding, which had, of course, to take place in Nelly's little bed chamber.

The bride was flushed and trembling; Will Harrison, in full regimentals, looked desperate, like a man who stakes his life upon one hazard; Mrs. Barton cried and laughed at the same moment; Polly, in a white frock, stared open-mouthed at the strange apparition of a soldier and a clergyman in her mother's room; Mary Parker stood beside Nelly throughout the ceremony. I thought that she was very pale, but she smiled gently at the trembling girl, and kissed her affectionately as soon as the service was concluded. Then she reached out her hand to Harrison, and looked steadfastly at him for a moment. What there was exactly in that look to cause Harrison to turn pale and bite his lip, I could not possibly say, but it certainly produced an agitating effect, and was noticed by Mr. Charteris as well as by myself.

Another odd incident of this strange wedding may also be noted. Harrison, on turning away from Mary, caught sight of little Polly, whom he immediately snatched to his breast and covered with kisses. "I'll be your father, now, child," we heard him say, and thought it an odd remark, considering the circumstances.

There was one point which I liked about Will Harrison—this new Will Harrison, for he as was unlike the one whom the Underwood folk remembered as he well could be—and that was the care which he took to seek out Phil Marks' parents, and give them several little keepsakes from their son. It seemed that Phil had died in India two or three months only before Will's return, and that he had been Will's closest friend out there. "He was a very much changed man before he died," Will was heard to say, in a grave and gentle tone. "He steadied down, and talked of coming back to Underwood and making up to his parents for all the trouble he'd been to them. But he died, poor old chap, and asked me to do all I could for them that he'd left behind."

Will went to church regularly, with little Polly clinging to his hand; and after a time he was asked by the Rector to take his old seat in the choir, a request which excited some discussion in the village, certain precisians holding that his past error ought to disqualify him forever from church work, and others declaring that repentance availed to wash out even the remembrance of transgression. "Besides," said one whose wit was nimbler than the rest, "nobody has ever heard Will Harrison say that he led Nelly Barton wrong. We've taken it for granted that he did, because it ain't likely that anybody else would want to marry her; but has anybody heard him say so? Tell me that?"

And nobody had heard him say so, and only one dissentient murmured that he went by Mrs. Barton, and Mrs. Barton ought to know.

And so a few months went on. Nelly looked brighter and happier every day, and really seemed to be growing stronger. Will made her a most devoted husband. I asked her once if she were happy, and she replied with almost passionate fervour, "I never was so happy in my life. And I don't deserve it. I don't deserve it! Will is so good!"

Let me hasten to the conclusion of my story. It makes my heart bleed to think of the lives that were wronged and spoiled for one man's sin. And yet good comes out of evil, and perhaps the souls of four men and women have cause to bless that man's repentance, although they suffered one and all for his wrong-doing.

On one dark evening in December, William Harrison's cottage took fire. It was afterwards supposed to be through the carelessness of old Mrs. Barton, who had dropped asleep with the candle too near her cap. Nelly could do nothing to save herself; William was out, but Polly, shrieking lustily, attracted the attention, fortunately for her, of a passer-by, and help was at hand in a few minutes. But in these few moments a great deal of mischief was done. Will Harrison came flying from the other end of the village to learn that although his mother-in-law and little Polly had been rescued, his wife still lay upon her bed in the upper room, where nobody had been able to reach her. It needed but a word and he rushed into the burning cottage, regardless of the roaring flame and stifling smoke. The lookers-on held their breath aghast. I had been sent for, as the village people knew that Nelly was always a favourite of mine. I was just in time to see him emerge from the cottage, with the senseless figure of Nelly in his arms. And even as he staggered forth, a terrible thing happened. The wall of the cottage gave way, the roof fell in, and a great fragment of masonry struck him to the earth. He had cast his wife from him out of the range of danger, but he himself lay half buried amongst the blazing ruins of the house.

They managed to get him out and place him on the sward outside the garden wall. It was no use doing anything for Nelly. She was dead—had died of the shock, the doctor said, before ever he lifted her from the bed on which she had lain for so many years. But William was still living, and conscious, although mortally hurt. Dr. Elliott examined him, and shook his head. "It won't last long," he said to me, in an under-tone.

"Shall we remove him?" someone asked.

"No time. Let him alone; it's a matter of a few minutes only. One can't do anything."

Will must have heard, for he fixed his eye on the doctor for a moment with a look of sad intelligence, then turned them upon me. I was kneeling at his side, holding a teaspoonful of brandy to his white lips. I saw that he wanted to speak, and bent my head to listen.

"Mary's not here, is she? Mary Parker?"

"No, but I will send for her, if you wish."

"It's no use; she wouldn't come in time." Then, in a still lower voice, "Will you give her a message from me?"

"Certainly I will."

"My love first, please; and then tell her—I've tried to do my duty."

"Yes, my poor fellow, I'm sure you have."

"I was Phil's friend; I couldn't do less, could I?"

I thought his mind was wandering, and I did not speak. "I didn't think I could ever have the chance of telling her; but I don't think Phil would mind now. Nor Nelly either. Stoop down, please ma'am. Lower, please; I don't want anybody else to hear. You'll keep the secret, and so will Mary too. My love to her—and it was Phil, not me. She'll know what I mean. I can't die while she thinks so hard of me, and nobody's to know but her. She'll be kind all the same to poor little Polly, when I'm gone. And Phil was very sorry before he died—and told me—to make amends. Tell Mary—I did—my best."

"Stand back, please," said the doctor. "A little more air. Put his head down, Mrs. Daintrey, if you please; he'll never speak again."

And it was at that moment that Mary came running up, to look at the face of the man she loved, and had so long misjudged, and to take the child of poor dead Phil Marks and Nelly Barton into her motherly arms.

[THE END.]

## POINTS.

BY ACUS.

To point a moral and adorn a tale!

—Johnson: *Vanity of Human Wishes*.

A halo hovers about the "days of old." It is not alone to distance that this enchantment is due. One of the characteristics of those days was not, perhaps, that there was more honour, but that there was, as it were, a different kind of honour. Look at it in a business light. In the "early days" of a country there are no banks, there is none of the legal and commercial paraphernalia, such as notes and bonds. In the absence of these things, a man's word was "as good as his bond." Such, according to Bret Harte, were "the early days of '49" in the Western States. Now it is not to be supposed that to-day this kind of honour is entirely wanting; but as a fixed principle I fear it is not so universally recognized in business. By tying men down with our legal and commercial conventionalities, we imply a suspicion of them. They are not put upon their honour. Trust a man and the probability is he will try to deserve it; suspect him and you may have reason to. That is principle. That is partly the cause which has brought it about that notes are not met at maturity, drafts are dishonoured, and debts of honour are avoided upon legal technicalities.

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Advertising of late has called so much fine art into requisition, that it might almost be said to be one of the fine arts itself. The advertising sheets at the front and back of the great magazines, I sometimes think, are quite as interesting as anything between the covers. Everything is graphically and pictorially set out, from a needle to a haystack. Cleanliness being one of the highest virtues, the highest art has properly been used to set forth the merits of soaps. Wares for the fair sex are daintily and aesthetically portrayed to catch the feminine eye. And from the sums expended in advertising patent medicines, one would imagine that there is nothing like being unhealthy to make a man "wealthy and wise,"—that is, some other man who vends patent medicines. Truly the veriest prose is transformed into poetry, and business transformed into pleasure, by the developing hand of the skilful advertising artist.

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Many great men, notably Napoleon, have been believers in "luck." Whether or not "Chinese" Gordon himself was a believer in luck certain it is that many of his followers were; and they attributed to his little staff something of the potency of a magic wand. But Napoleon, like many another who has wooed and won her, found Luck fickle, for she forsook him at last. I have heard persons say that if they enter a game, say of cards, feeling that they are bound to win and going to do it, believing they are going to be lucky, they are likely to be so; and they tell you, as an aphorism, to "believe in your luck." Certain gamblers consider that luck and chance are regulated by fixed laws; and elaborate treatises have been produced dealing with the subject mathematically. It strikes one as odd that a science like mathematics should be employed with such a visionary thing as luck. How many important events in the world have turned upon the tossing of a copper. No doubt many. "It is better," we are told, "to be born lucky than to be born rich." But I suppose most of us, if we had a say in the matter, would be satisfied to be only born rich, and to run our chances as to the rest of it.

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What memories of clear, frosty, moonlight nights, of pretty girls picturesquely clad, of unconventional displays of exuberant spirits, and of exhilarating speed, are associated with our Canadian sport, tobogganing! Coming up the hill again is the only literal "drawback;" not a material one, however. It is a case where labor is rest. The sport seems linked, as it were, to the genius of the country. Its Indian origin, the mountainous nature of the land, and the reliable winters that do not depend upon weather predictions, associate with it eminently Canadian characteristics. But the number of slides having been increased in Montreal, and more or less apathy in regard to the sport being observable elsewhere, apprehensions have arisen lest it should be dying out. The sport is one which is hardly likely to die out; it will probably subside, as it were, for a season or so, and then come in again with redoubled vigour. It was the same with skating. Skating waned a little a year or so ago, but it has come in again, and the wicked (and the good, too,) in large numbers try with considerable success, to "stand in slippery places."