



A Curate's Temptation.

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III.

In his own room once more, Oswald took out the purse, and examined its exterior carefully. Then he opened it, and turned its contents out on the table. His head swam as he saw the unusual glitter of gold; and with amazement he counted the coins. Five sovereigns, two half-sovereigns, and a total of sixteen shillings in silver. He surveyed the treasure with startled eyes, and murmured: "It is a fortune; such a sum would tide us over our present difficulties, and with Edith strong again, I could once more try for work." Then he pushed the money from him, crying: "I will not be tempted; I will not imperil my soul; I will return it!" He half turned, as if to carry his purpose into instant execution, but suddenly remembered he had no means of tracing the owner. As the thought occurred to him, he once more examined the purse, but, despite himself, he could not help feeling relieved when he found neither name nor address. Stay! In his hurry he has overlooked the ticket pocket. What is in it? A card! He draws it out, and in astonishment reads—"Mr. George Morley, 59 Burton-crescent, W. C."

"What!" he cried. "This is indeed miraculous. My father's friend, the man who owed so much to him. Surely the hand of the Almighty is in all this! I will go to him. He will help me for my father's sake. Ah! but will he? Did I not write to him some months ago? Did I not open my soul to him, and yet he has not even deigned to reply to me. Alas! my last hope is dead. Doubtless he will take his money and let me and my darlings starve. Yet no, by Heaven! it shall not be. For myself I care nothing, but they shall not suffer. Let the sin and its consequences be mine, and mine alone; I will keep what God has given into my hand." He paced the room excitedly, still dragged first this way and then that, by conflicting emotions, till he was roused by the entrance of his landlady.

She paused as she noticed the strange, stern look on the curate's face. Then, standing by the open door, said: "I'm mortal sorry to trouble you, Mr. Campion; I'm sure it grieves me sorely to think of your good lady ill up-stairs, but I am in great straits myself, and if I don't get some money I'm sure I don't know what will become of us."

The young man looked at the woman gravely as he answered:

"You have been more than kind to us, Mrs. Martin; you have helped us when you were ill able to do so, and, believe me, I am not ungrateful. Is your present need so very great?"

"Indeed it is, sir. You know I'm a widow with no one to help me, and now the baker says he won't leave any more bread without the money; and the landlord has just called for the rent, and declares he'll disown me to-morrow."

"I owe you 42," Mrs. Martin. Will that be sufficient for your wants?" said Campion quietly.

"Oh, yes, indeed, sir, more than enough," answered the woman, her face brightening.

"God be merciful to me, and pardon my sin!" said the curate to himself. "I cannot let this woman and her little ones suffer on my account—the temptation is too great."

Then aloud: "Take your money, Mrs. Martin; there is plenty on the table."

As his landlady stepped forward, he turned to the window so that she could not see his face, for he feared that his emotion would betray itself.

"Oh, thank you, sir," said Mrs. Martin, as she picked up the coins. "I'm truly glad to see you with so much—as much for you and your dear wife's sake as for my own. Then, as he did not speak, she withdrew quietly."

Campion turned from the window, trembling violently. "Thus," he cried, "are my fetters forged. Now, the time is ripe for escape! Then he added, bitterly, "I am fit to be neither saint nor sinner. As I have fallen, at least let me face my crime like a man. If I have lost my soul, I will take its price as my reward, and behave like a man, not like a weak-minded boy."

He gathered up the money, and without waiting to give himself time for further reflection, ran up-stairs to his wife's bedroom.

The girl was awake, and received him with a look of love. She noticed at once his excited face, and, gently drawing him towards her, said:

"Have you had good fortune, dear?"

"Yes," he replied, cheerfully. "Indeed, I have. See here!"

And he showed her his hand full of gold and silver. The girl's face flushed with pleasure. Not for a moment did any possible suspicion of his honesty enter her mind. She trusted him to the fullest extent, and was too weak to question how he had become possessed of so much.

She kissed his face as he bent over her, and murmured: "I am so thankful, Oswald; now I can go to sleep comfortably to-morrow you shall tell me all about your wonderful good luck."

Someone tapped gently at the door. The nurse came over to him, and whispered, "You are wanted, sir." He arose quietly, and with one fond glance at his sleeping wife, descended the stairs. Then he underwent a sudden revulsion of feeling. He pictured to himself that the police were waiting for him, his charge him with theft. Before his mind rose a vision of his denunciation by the owner of the lost purse, and in a state of nervous agitation he laid his hand on the handle of the sitting-room door.

IV.

As the curate paused irresolutely at the door, Mrs. Martin handed him a card; but his head swam so much that, in the dull light, he vainly tried to read. Mastering his emotion, he flung open the door, and with the pasteboard still in his hand, entered the room. He stopped, and almost staggered back, as he saw a short, stout gentleman standing with his back to the fire. Instinctively he recognized the owner of the purse, and an intense horror took possession of him. His crime had found him out full soon, and with the desperation of despair, he advanced like a culprit to his doom. But as the mist cleared from his eyes, he saw that his visitor's face did not bear the look of an avenging Nemesis. His mouth was parted with a genial smile, and the soft eyes shone with good humor.

The stranger sprang forward, as he saw the curate, and grasping the young man's hands in his, said, in a voice quivering with excitement: "My young friend, I am delighted to find you at last. Believe me, this is a happy meeting to me."

Dumbfounded at his unexpected reception, Campion was silent for a moment; then he exclaimed in a stiff manner, the better to conceal his agitation: "Sir, I am at a disadvantage, I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance."

"What?" said the other, in surprise. "You have my card in your hand. Do you not recognize the name? I am George Morley, your father's friend."

"True, true," murmured the curate, absently; "but what has that to do with me?"

"Surely you are not well. What has it to do with you? I intend it shall have a great deal to do with you. Besides, did you not write and confide in me?"

"Yes, but that is long ago. You did not answer my letter."

"Now, look here, young man, don't be too ready to take umbrage. Your letter only reached me two weeks ago, when I returned from the continent. You gave me your address at Middlethorpe, and a nice hunt I've had to find you. I went down there at once, but your late rector couldn't tell me your

present place of residence. I've been looking for you ever since, and had almost given up in despair, when, not an hour ago, I luckily thought of Pearson; he knows all the parsons, and, by a curious coincidence, he said you had only left him; in fact, your card was still on his desk; so I came on at once."

"Did Mr. Pearson tell you why I had called on him, and how he received me?"

"I don't remember that he said anything special; but he mentioned that you were looking for work, though I don't know whether that's quite a correct word to use with respect to a clergyman's duties."

"And why have you sought me out now?" asked Campion, huskily, his intense feeling making him brusque and almost discourteous.

"Oh, look here, Campion," said Morley, rising, "your whys and wherefores are getting too much for me. Don't you know your father helped me very materially in my early days, and now I want to do something to repay the debt."

"And how can you tell that his son deserves your assistance?" Then, springing to his feet, he cried: "I cannot, dare not tell you why, but you shall not help me; I am unworthy of it!"

Then he sank down on a chair and buried his face in his hands and groaned in anguish. "If I had but waited!" he thought. "Had I but resisted temptation for one short hour, all would have been well, and I should have been an honest man. Now, I can never hold up my head again."

Morley stood looking at the young man for a moment in silence, then he gently approached him, and laying his hand on his shoulder, said kindly:

"Campion, for your father's sake, you must let me help you. Whatever wrong you have done, or think you have done, need not affect the question. You are overwrought, and doubtless exaggerated matters. But, be that as it may, whether your fault is real or imaginary, it is not against me."

Campion once more sprang from his chair, and facing his visitor, cried out, as though the words were rung from him by torture:

"You! Yes, it is against you and God, that I have sinned. Did you not lose your purse to-day?"

"Yes, I did; but how do you know that?"

"I saw you drop it. I picked it up. I, that you imagined honest and upright, have stolen your money and paid my debts with it."

"But you did not know whom it belonged to?"

"I did. Your card was in the purse."

"Ah!"

"I see," said the curate, almost with relief. Now you appreciate the true character of the man you offer to assist. Go, call in the police, and give me up to justice."

Morley's face became overcast, and a look of deep sorrow settled upon it. He sat in silence for a few moments, that seemed an age to the man cowering before him. Then he said, in an authoritative, yet kind voice: "Campion, I am an old man, and your father's friend. I beseech of you to look on me as standing in his place, and tell me all about this sad affair. Do not seek either to condemn or excuse yourself, but tell me as simply and as straightforwardly as though you were speaking of another."

Thus assured, the young man described in detail the doings of the day, in a voice often broken by his agitation. He did not seek to palliate his offence, but his narrative showed how circumstances had combined to urge him to dishonesty.

The elder man listened to him attentively, but in silence. Then, as he concluded, he took his hands in his and said:

"My poor friend, your tale has greatly moved me. Believe me, the offence is of no importance to me, but I dare not ask you to look lightly on your sin. You use the hard term theft for your act, but I do not think it is that. I am not a lawyer, but I imagine that the law has a milder term for such offences. However that may be, now more than ever, I claim my right to help you. If you accept my assistance, a useful career is before you, and your error will serve as an incentive to future work. Then I ask you to think of your young wife and helpless child. Surely they appeal strongly to you to take the help I offer you."

"You heap coals of fire on my head," murmured the young man, in broken accents.

The two men sat talking far into the evening, and when Morley rose to leave, he had gained his point. The curate had learnt the lesson, that oftentimes appears so hard to believe, that if God is willing to forgive, it is meet that man should not condemn himself too severely, and should accept human forgiveness, if fully and freely offered.

The Rev. Oswald Campion is now a well-known preacher. He holds an important living in the south of England, and his preaching has drawn a large congregation around him. It is not his eloquence or rhetorical display that effects his hearers, for he speaks in simple language, as an erring man to fellow-men liable to fall into temptation, and the sincerity of his words none can dispute. His early error has impressed his soul, and he never tires of preaching the doctrines of mercy and forgiveness.

Nobody Else.

Two little hands so careful and brisk,
Putting the tea things away,
While mother is resting awhile in her chair,
For she has been busy all day.
And the dear little fingers are working for love,
Although they are tender and wee—
"I'll do it so nice," she says to herself—
"There's nobody else, you see."

Two little feet just scampered up-stairs,
For papa will quickly be here;
And his shoes must be ready and warm by the fire
That is burning so bright and so clear.
Then she must climb on a chair to keep watch—
"He cannot come in without me.
When mother is tired, I open the door—
There's nobody else, you see."

Two little arms around papa's dear neck,
And a soft downy cheek 'gainst his own;
For out of the nest, so cosy and bright,
The little one's mother has flown.
She brushes the tear drops away, as she thinks:
"Now he has no one but me,
I mustn't give way; that would make him so sad—
And there's nobody else, you see."

Two little tears on the pillow, unshed,
Dropped from the two pretty eyes;
Two little arms stretching out in the dark,
Two little faint sobbing cries.
"Papa forgot I was always waked up
When he whispered good-night to me;
O, mother come back, just to kiss me in bed—
There's nobody else, you see."

Little true heart, if mother can look
On from her home in the skies,
She will not pass to her haven of rest,
While the tears dim her little one's eyes.
If God has shed sorrow around us just now,
Yet His sunshine is ever to be!
And He is the comfort for every one's pain
There's nobody else, you see.

—Mary Hodges.

Well Put.

A woman is like the pins she uses. She generally has a head of her own and a point to carry, and she will make herself useful and shine wherever you put her. But get her crooked, and somebody is going to get hurt; and if she loses her head, she is worthless.

THE QUIET HOUR.

God's Appointments.

This thing on which thy heart was set, this thing that cannot be,
This weary, disappointing day, that dawns, my friend, for thee,
Be comforted; God knoweth best, the God whose name is love,
Whose tender care is evermore our passing lives above.
He sends thee disappointment? Well, then, take it from His hand
Shall God's appointment seem less good than what thyself had planned?

'Twas in thy mind to go abroad. He bids thee stay at home!
Oh! happy home; thrice happy if to it thy guest He come.
'Twas in thy mind thy friend to see. The Lord says, "Nay, not yet."
Be confident; the meeting time thy Lord will not forget.

'Twas in thy mind to work for Him. His will is, "Child! sit still."
And surely 'tis thy blessedness to mind the Master's will.
Accept thy disappointment, friend, thy gift from God's own hand;
Shall God's appointment seem less good than what thyself had planned?

So day by day, and step by step, sustain thy failing strength
From strength to strength, indeed, go on through all the length
God bids thee tarry now and then, forbear the weak complaint;
God's leisure brings the weary rest, and cordial gives the faint.

God bids thee labor, and the place is thick with thorn and brier;
But He will share the hardest task until He calls thee higher.
So take each disappointment, friend; 'tis at thy Lord's command!
Shall God's appointment seem less good than what thyself had planned?

—Margaret E. Sangster.

"The truth comes to us more and more the longer we live, that on what field or in what uniform, or with what aims we do our duty, matters very little, or even what our duty is, great or small, splendid or obscure. Only to find our duty certainly and somewhere, somehow to do it faithfully, makes us good, strong, happy and useful men, and tunes our lives into some feeble echo of the life of God."

Relaxation.

Work when you work, but when the measure of one's duty is done, then thoroughly relax. There is as much virtue in refreshing soul and body by yielding up all responsibility and care as there is in the courageous meeting of active obligations. When we have done our best, and worked to the limit of our capabilities, then we should rest upon the law of life, and, with the faith of a little child, feel assured the Father is all good, and what is, or must be, is best.

If we faithfully do our duty, and repose in peace upon the will of the Father for results, we may have the freedom from anxiety that gives each moment of rest thorough relaxation and pleasure. New strength then flows to us abundantly for the sustaining of the next obligation duty places in our path. It is thus we conserve our energies and are faithful servants in the required hours of service. One can exhaust more force in an hour's unnecessary fretting than would enable him to do a day's work. It is the useless worrying that ages, and robs mature life of its beauty and power.

Fretting and worrying never turned a wheel or brought sustaining help to any crisis. We are but children in the arms of the Infinite Father, and rebellion breaks our powers upon the wheel of the law, but does not change the turning of the wheel. In harmony with the law, we are carried onward and upward. Resistance is our own destruction.

That which we cannot make or break is not our care. When our daily duty is done to the best of our cheerful ability, we must rest in heart and brain, in soul and body, and feel that the wisdom that produced the marvel of life has a crown for its brave fulfillment. Thus petty trials are forgotten, and great ones dignified.

Mites.

There are some people who get weary of life's work and become disheartened because they are kept all the time doing little things. They see here and there a man or woman doing great things, and their lives seem very unimportant in comparison. They long to be doing great deeds. They think God does not care much for the little they do. To all such the blessed Master says: "He that is faithful in that which is least," is the faithful man. Whoever does his lowly, humble work well and faithfully, day by day, and hour by hour, is pleasing God just as well as he who does great things. And nothing is small in God's sight which is done for love of Him.

Great men came far with their wealthy offerings for the temple treasury. There were gifts of gold and gifts of silver. The very smallest offering that day was the gift of the poor widow who came, sandal-shod, wearing tattered garments, and bearing on her face the stamp of hard, grinding poverty. Her gift was so small that it would hardly be counted among the great gold and silver coins that were poured into the treasury.

But Jesus sat by and watched how men cast in, and He said that she had done more than they all. Her gift pleased Him most.