

The illness of Mrs. Otway kept her a prisoner to her own home, and day by day I went to sit beside her couch and talk of John, and of scarce aught else. Women who are real and true can give sweet store of comfort to each other in time of trouble by community of sympathy, even if they be but close friends; how much more, then, could we two, to each of whom the man upon whose head sorrow had fallen was the best and dearest!

Baby, on the day of which I now write, and from which I seem ever wandering in devious pathways of thought, had seen fit to take his sleep at an unwonted hour; so I was alone in the deepening twilight for once.

The house was very still just then, for the servants were at their tea, and a thick, green-baized door shut off their premises from the rest of the rooms. It was so quiet that through the open window I could hear Lizzie whinny softly in her stable across the yard; so quiet that the sound of my own name, spoken hurriedly and almost in a whisper, made me start, and seemed, as it were, to tear the mantle of silence that was brooding over the early autumn evening.

"Miss Otway! Miss Otway!" said the voice, "for God's sake come round to t' door and let me in. I'm nigh dropping!"

In a moment I had reached the porch, opened the door and was half-supporting, half-leading a figure so ghostly, so death-like that it might almost have been taken for a visitant from the spirit-world.

It was Jim Stevens' wife; a woman haggard and fever-wasted, and whom I had seen only the day before lying weak and wan, with her two-days-old baby by her side.

"Lizzie!" I cried, as she staggered into my room, and still holding my arm in a wild, convulsive grasp, gasped out something I could not understand, "are you mad?"

"Ay, a most," she whispered, raising her fever-bright eyes to mine, and wiping the sweat from her poor, thin face with a corner of her shawl. "Listen, lady," she went on: "if they miss me fro' my bed, and Jim learns as I've coom oop here, I'm a dead woman: ha'll brak every boan in my body, as sure as there's a God above; but I dunnot care. Ye've bin a good friend to me, and the like o' me, and I won't see yo' made a widder, and yer little one fatherless."

The words struck me like blows, felling me where I stood, with their terrible force.

On my knees, with my head in that poor creature's lap, I wrestled with a pang so awful that as I write about it now, after long years, it seems to rive my heart again.

"Nay," said Lizzie, lifting my bowed head with her poor, shaking hands; "yo' munna greet—yo' mun be strong and hale—for the sake o' him that loves yo'. If summat ain't done he'll be carried whome to yo' dead this neet, wi-a bullet i' his bress."

"My God, my God!" I cried, staggering to my feet; "help me!"

"Ay, I say Amen to that, lady," said Lizzie, catching my hand and pressing it against her bosom. "Ye've help't others; happen God 'ull mind that now and help yo'."

"What can I do? Tell me—the whole truth, Lizzie. See, I'm strong and hale now; God has helped me already. He has put courage into my heart."

"Thou'll need it, my lass," said Lizzie, forgetting in her eager trouble all barriers of class, for pain, the great leveller, set us for the nonce side by side, just two sorrowing, timorous women, and nothing more. "It's Jim as is at t' bottom o' it all—may God forgive me for speakin' agen my mon, Mistress Otway—I wudna, but it's to hinder murder bein' done, and afore I tell thee, wilt swear that ne'er a word shall pass thy lips to hurt him? He's a bad mon, I know; but for a' that he's my mon—and it's hard for any woman to speak up agen her mon!"

In sorest anguish of impatience I wrung my hands the one in the other, and, with lips as white as Lizzie's own, swore the oath she craved for.

Then she told me all the shameful story.

The foreign workmen whom (so report had it) John had decided to employ were on their way to the North; there was no chance now of bringing the owner of Otway mills on his knees. The furnace of hate heated seven times with the fuel of drink, seethed like a mighty cauldron. Jim stirred it with bitter, angry words. He had been at fault more than once, and at last dismissed; he had wrongs to revenge, he said—they all had.

Thus the evil tongue tried to stir up strife; but only one or two other turbulent spirits like himself would be led into plotting against the master. These then had laid a foul plot—the plot that poor, faithful Lizzie had left her bed of weakness and pain to warn me of.

"You know," she said, "the big wood wheer t' two roads meet, half way 'twixt here an' t' mills? Weel, they're to watch for him passing by their on his black horse, and, oh, my lady! the shot 'ull coom from behind the trees."

"When—when?" I almost shrieked.

"To-neet," she whispered hoarsely, as though she feared the very walls would tell Jim of her great treachery. "There's no time to lose. They must go theesel'; they'n know summat's up if any other body goes by. Which o' the roads does the meester coom by?" she added, with a sudden look of dread in her eyes that was mirrored in my own.

"Sometimes one, sometimes the other," I wailed. "Oh, I cannot tell which!"

"It's hard on thee," she said, with wonderful, pitiful lovingness. "How wilt thou know which way to gang?"

"How, indeed?"

"One—two—three—four," rang out the little clock upon the bracket by the window. We both started, and Lizzie gathered her shawl about her. "I must gang my way," she said, her head drooping on her breast.

But she lingered a moment more, holding my hand close and peering eagerly in my face.

"If Jim catches me," she said, "if he murders me, if I see thy face no more, dunna forget my little 'un, for heaven's love!"

"No, no," I cried; "but do not speak such words! they break my heart! God keep you from harm. He will! He will!"

She shook her head, and a tear trickled down her cheek. "Tell thy errand to none," she said earnestly. "The men love the sight o' thy bonny face, even the roughest o' 'em; but they're not theesel's now; they're loike wild beasts mad wi' the taste o' blood; they'd shoot yo' down loike a rat if they guessed yer errand."

I had hurriedly fetched a glass of wine, and now held it to her drawn lips.

"Drink's a good servant but a bad master," she said, when she had swallowed it, "and happen I'll get whome the better for that. Good-bye, my lady."

I have always been impulsive—at least, I believe so; at all events, in another moment my lips were pressed against Lizzie's sunken cheek, and her tears and mine mingled. We stood thus, hand in hand, no longer divided by any thought of class or caste, only two sobbing, troubled women and then—

Time—precious time—was passing by. I had—how long to reach the mills? Scarce na hour.

How should I go? By which of the two roads would John come? I stood out on the green, velvety lawn where of an evening he smoked his cigar while I sat by. I remembered this as I stood there, and had to crush back a cry that rose to my lips.

Just at that moment, once more a low, soft whinny came from Lizzie's stable. Then I knew.

The groom was crossing the yard, and speaking measuredly, as one in great haste, I told him to saddle the little mare. "I am going to ride to meet your master: you need not come with me."

Then I turned hastily toward the house, fearing some expression of surprise upon the man's part.

I remembered what Lizzie had said: Let no one know thy errand.

To fly rather than walk to my bedroom, to equip myself in my riding-dress, in so short a time that it was a wonder that mortal fingers could achieve the task, and then, just for one moment, to steal to my darling's little bed; not to weep, tears weaken at such a time, but just to kiss the cheek flushed in sleep, and lying in such sweet repose upon the tiny open palm.

"Oh, baby!" I said, bowing my head upon my hands as I knelt, "I am going to save him for you and for me!" And I sobbed, though my tears were dry.

It was Christmas eve, too. To-morrow would be celebrated in numberless happy homes the advent of that baby, eighteen hundred years ago, whose birth the angelic choir heralded o'er the sun-embrowned hills of Palestine—"Peace on earth; good will towards men!" "Oh, that the Blessed Infant's mission were fulfilled!" I murmured. "What a fair world would this be! What suffering, wretchedness and want would be alleviated if men only practically carried out in their daily intercourse with each other that simple utterance of the lowly Nazarene, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself!'"

Who, watching a sleeping infant, has not seen that sudden, ineffable smile that, like the sunbeam playing on the petals of a flower, parts the sweet milk-bedecked lips, and passes swiftly as it came?

I chose to take that smile as a good omen; I chose to think Heaven's angel, in my hour of need, stood by me, and the closed violets of my darling's eyes saw the ministering presence.

I heard the clatter of Lizzie's hoofs upon the stones of the yard. I stayed one fleeting instant at the nursery door and then down the stairs, out through the pretty porch, one spring to the saddle.

Oh, it did not take long, and we were on our way—on our way upon the journey that meant life or death for him and for me—worse than death if the worst befell.

I dare not hurry much at first; I knew that the hedges had eyes and the trees ears. How they sighed above my head as the evening wind swayed them gently.

I clinched my hand on the handle of my riding-whip. I set my teeth hard. I fought for patience.

Every moment was a "jewel of great price," and yet I dare not hurry. Not yet. Once the horrible gloom of the thick wood past, and then the terrible choice between the two roads would lie before me.

My heart beat so thick and fast I scarce could draw my breath; and just as we were near the thickest part of the bush and trees something stirred, while Lizzie gave a sudden start, then a bound.

"Steady, steady, little one," I said, speaking out loud; "it is but a poor, silly sheep that has strayed into the wood."

Lizzie trembled, as I could feel; but she stepped on quietly enough, and—Heaven knows where a woman's strength comes from at such

times—I let the reins drop loosely on her shining neck, and sang to myself as I went along.

The ears that listened could not think a woman rode a race of life and death for the sake of the man she loved; could they?

We had reached the fork of the two roads; the dark shadow of the wood lay behind us. A touch, and the mare stood still.

"Which! which! O my God! help me! guide me!" I prayed.

Then I let the rein drop on Lizzie's neck, closed my eyes, and gently urged her on. She took the way that lay to the left. The choice was made.

Maddening thoughts throbbed in my brain. Was John, even now, as Lizzie's willing hoofs rang out on the hard road, coming along the almost parallel route, each step of his trusty steed leading him nearer death? Or had some blessed chance delayed him? Should I find him at the mill? Would heaven be so merciful as that to me?

Three miles! three miles! Did ever the road, gleaming palely white before me in gathering dusk, seem so long before? The night, like a soft curtain, was falling upon the world; I saw a single star glimmering above—the robin sang no more.

We were in the open country; we passed no more dwellings where lights twinkled through the trees, and seemed to speak of human companionship and happy homes. Alone in the twilight of that Christmas eve two solitary figures—my little mare and I.

"On, Lizzie, on!" I cried to her. "Faster, faster!"

I saw the smoky canopy that overhung the town, though now—ominous sign!—it was less dense than its wont. I could have cried aloud for joy.

"Lizzie! Lizzie! make a good speed, little mare—we have not an instant to spare!"

The road seemed to rush along beneath us.

"Quicker, quicker! make good speed! make good speed, little mare!"

I touched her flanks lightly with my whip; she tossed her pretty head, flung off the white foam that had gathered on her bridle, and sprang forward with added life and spirit.

"Lizzie! dear Lizzie! bonnie Lizzie! see the tall chimneys are in sight; we are getting near him now, Lizzie; we shall save him yet!"

I knew not what wild words I uttered in my mad excitement; hitherto I had managed to keep the curb upon my terror and my pain; but now as the goal of my desire was nearly reached, I could have tossed my arms aloft; I could have shrieked out to the night; I could have been guilty of any mad thing.

At the entrance to the town I drew rein, and Lizzie and I tried to look as quiet and respectable as we could, as we passed through the narrow streets, where men stood about in little groups, and women, with poor starved little children clinging to their petticoats, stared at me and my panting steed. The great gates that led to the millyard were closed.

How strange a contrast to when they stood widely opened, and a swarm of men, like bees out of a hive, came pouring through them, while the great bell, that meant "work is over," clanged out its welcome message.

A man looked through a grating, and not without some curt expressions of amazement.

"Has the master gone?" I asked, in a voice that did not sound like mine.

"No, my leddy," he answered in the north country tongue.

Once inside the yard I stepped from my saddle, and left Lizzie there panting and foam-flecked. Gathering my habit in my hand I went up the steps into the cold whitewashed passages, and so on to a room I knew well—John's room.

He was writing at a table, and the flaring gas above his head showed me his face, grave and anxious, change to a look of uttermost surprise as he saw his wife standing in the doorway.

Perhaps the moment of relief is more trying than the suffering we have waded through to reach it—I cannot tell; but I know that as I met my husband's eyes—as I saw John there before me—as I realized the mighty truth that he was saved, I gave a great cry, and fell down without sense of life at his feet.

These things happened a long time ago. People have almost forgotten the year of the great strike; I have not.

Baby is a young giant now, a head taller than his mother; and owns a sister whose inches reach well-nigh to his stalwart shoulder. John still smokes upon the lawn of a summer evening, while I sit by; but I tell him he is growing fat and lazy. At which he laughs, and says he shall soon turn Otway mills over to his son altogether.

Our mother rests now from all earthly sorrow, and her memory is like a beautiful presence among us.

On the table in my own sitting-room is a little hoof, shod in a silver shoe. The relic is kept under a glass shade, and I always dust it with my own hands. I am sure you will know without my telling you that it is held dear for the sake of Lizzie, the little mare. You will divine that it is one of those willing feet that carried me to Otway mills through the dusk of that memorable Christmas eve to save a life dearer than my own.

That dear life cost another, for poor Lizzie left her baby motherless, and I had to fulfill my promise. Weakened with fever, and her recent trial, the strain of that errand of love that she set out upon to warn me of her husband's plot against mine, proved too much for her feeble frame.

I kept my oath sacredly, and no one, save John and I, ever knew that Jim's wife, with a noble disloyalty, "spoke up agen her mon."

DOMESTIC.

MINT SAUCE FOR ROAST LAMB.—Put four table-spoonfuls of chopped mint into half a cup of vinegar; sweeten to taste and let stand for two hours before serving.

STEWED LOBSTER.—Take the meat from a boiled lobster, cut it up small and put it in a stew-pan with just enough water to keep it from burning and to make the gravy; let it simmer five minutes, add tea-spoonful good butter, salt and pepper to taste, heat to boiling and serve hot.

STUFFED ONIONS.—Parboil some good-sized onions; take out the middles and fill with force meat; put them side by side in a casserole, with butter; sprinkle a little salt and a little sugar on them; cover the onions with thin slices of bacon; cook thoroughly and serve with their own sauce.

EXCELLENT COFFEE RECIPE.—Dr. Foote's *Health Monthly* says: "Stir into the ground coffee sufficient white of egg to make a smooth paste; add the proper quantity, by measure, of boiling water, and let it boil gently for twenty or thirty minutes. Made thus it is exquisitely clear and transparent, the coagulated albumen holding every finest particle of solid matter."

NEW WAY TO COOK CHICKENS.—Cut the chicken up, put it in a pan and cover it over with water; let it stew as usual, and when done make a thickening of cream and flour, adding a piece of butter and pepper and salt; have made and bake a pair of shortcakes, made as for piecrust, but roll thin and cut in small squares. This is much better than chicken pie and more simple to make. The crusts should be laid on a dish and the chicken gravy poured over while both are hot.

HINTS ON COOKING POULTRY.—Steaming is preferable to boiling for tough fowls.

Remove the threads before sending roast fowls to the table.

In winter kill the poultry three days to a week before cooking.

Poultry and game are less nutritious, but more digestible than other meats.

Singe with alcohol instead of paper—a teaspoonful is sufficient for either a turkey or chicken.

Remember, much of the skill of roasting poultry is the best manner depends upon basting frequently.

To roast birds a frothy appearance, dredge, just before they are done, with flour and baste liberally with melted butter.

When onions are added to the stuffing, chop them so fine that in eating the mixture one does not detect their presence by biting into a piece.

Ladies doing their own marketing will do well to remember that young poultry may be told by the tip of the breast bone being soft and easily bent between the fingers, and when fresh by its bright full eye, pliant feet and soft moist skin.

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC.

GREAT preparations are being made at Otwaymargan for the representation, next year, of the great *Passion Play*, which takes place every ten years.

A PARIS manager to add to the comfort of patrons, furnished each purchaser of an admission to his house with a ticket which places at his service immediately after the opera a vehicle to take him home.

THERE will be a fierce operatic war in New York in January next, as Manager Strakosch has thrown down the gauntlet to Col. Mapleson, and announces that the public will have an opportunity of judging the respective merits of the two Italian opera companies, as he will commence a season of four weeks at Booth's Theatre on the 13th of that month.

RISTORI's success in Sweden has caused the greatest satisfaction in Italy—and the papers are full of thanks to the King of Sweden for the honours with which he has laden the veteran actress, who must now be as old as Queen Elizabeth, whose death she so marvellously depicted.

RICHARD WAGNER, the famous composer, who is in the habit of writing upon a great variety of things foreign to the music, has been prompted to publish a pamphlet upon vivisection. In this eccentric production the learned maestro inveighs against physiologists for inspecting the nerves of animals when so much more might be learned from looking into the deep and pensive eye of the living brute. As to the scientific uses of vivisection, he does not deny, but deprecates them.

SOTHERN and Bancroft some years ago happened to be dining at the house of a mutual friend in London. Among the good things set before them was a very fine goose, to which Mr. Sothern paid particular attention; and, on extolling its good qualities, he was informed by the host that Boney, who had just come over from "Old Ireland," had brought it with him as a present; whereupon Lord Dundreary was heard to mutter something about "birds of a feather flocking together." This intimation was too much for the only original dramatist, who caused a general roar by remarking, "Sure it was plucked." But the laugh turned when Dundreary retorted, "At the Dublin University."

THE public smiled at the union between the great Parepa and the little Carl Rosa when she might have been a Countess. The story of the engagement is characteristic. Rosa was a leader, quiet, worthy, modest and adoring. He never ventured to press his claims, but his faithful services made a deeper impression than he had any idea of. The company was travelling by rail one day, when Parepa seated herself beside her silent lover and remarked his melancholy. Rosa was blue and down-hearted, and the good creature tried to cheer him up. She recommended matrimony to him, and, receiving the despondent reply that no woman would marry a man in his position, she is reported to have patted him patronizingly on the head with the remark: "Cheer up, my little man; if that is all I will marry you myself." And she did. A happier or more devoted couple than the big-hearted prima donna and her little manager never existed.

CONSUMPTION CURED.

An old physician, retired from practice, having had placed in his hands by an East India missionary the formula of a simple vegetable remedy, for the speedy and permanent cure of consumption, bronchitis, catarrh, asthma, and all throat and lung affections, also a positive and radical cure for nervous debility and all nervous complaints, after having tested its wonderful curative powers in thousands of cases, has felt it his duty to make it known to his suffering fellows. Actuated by this motive, and a desire to relieve human suffering, I will send, free of charge, to all who desire it, this recipe, with full direction for preparing and using, in German, French, or English. Sent by mail by addressing with stamp, naming this paper, W. W. Sherar, 149 Powers' Block, Rochester, N.Y.