

The Chains that Bind the World

By Maurice Francis Egan, LL.D.

The crops looked well; green and yellow, with streaks of brown, covered the fields; but every farmer knew what it meant, and was not joyful.

Mary Gartland read in the newspaper that the incessant rain had ruined the crops in Bavaria, but she thought it made no difference to her, and she was heartily glad that the crops were good at home, for that meant to her and her sisters a trip to France and Germany in the spring.

And so May, who always read the foreign news to her father every night, merely shrugged her shoulders. Mr. Gartland smiled.

"Too bad," he said; "but it will bring up the price of our corn. You needn't worry about the trip, May."

May laughed and said: "You dear old papa!"

Alice and Margaret were pleased too. They had made a great album of photographs of foreign places, and they were practising French and German verbs with a will. They, too, smiled. Bavaria was so far off, and the failure of the crops there would only give them additional pleasure.

"I would rather stay at home than profit by the misfortunes of others," she said. "I feel sure that no evil can happen to our brethren anywhere without its affecting us in some way. We are all bound by golden chains about the feet of God."

Mr. Gartland laughed. "You always were sentimental, Peggy," he said. "I must say I am more glad that corn will go up in price than sorry for the Bavarians."

Mrs. Gartland sighed. "You do not realize what poverty means. I was once very poor myself, after my father's failure in business, and I know."

"What's the use of talking about that, mother?" said May, rather pettishly. "I am awfully ashamed—" "Awfully, May? I thought you prided yourself on your good English," said her mother.

"I was very much ashamed when you said before Laura Wells, of all people—the most conceited, snobbish thing in our school—that you and grandmamma had often done your own washing. I could have sunk through the floor."

"I have never been ashamed of it, dear. And your grandmamma's roughened hands were more precious to me than if they had been loaded with diamonds."

"I was not at all ashamed," said Alice, hotly. "I thought it was a good lesson for Laura Wells—she is always talking about her ancestors. I'm sure they did their own washing."

"Your mother is always right," said Mr. Gartland. May raised her head haughtily.

"In our position in life, we can't talk about such things; they are unpleasant. Why, the other day Laura Wells asked me if mamma hadn't made dresses before she married papa. I was that mortified!"

"Poor, tender violet!" said her father, smiling indulgently. He admired even the haughtiness of his eldest daughter.

"It is true, my dear," said Mrs. Gartland. "It is true—and if I had not been skillful with my needle, my dear mother would have lacked many little comforts, and I," she added, with a smile, "might not have been able to wear the pretty pink dress in which your father first saw me as I was coming out of church."

May's cheeks flushed; she tapped her foot against the carpet.

"I hate poverty," she said. "I wish we had always been rich. And I think proper pride is a good thing."

"Self-respect, my dear, is a good thing—but not pride. May, you ought to remember how poor Our Dear Lord was—and I shall never be ashamed of that poverty which taught me so many lessons of patience, endurance and gratitude."

Alice and Margaret dropped their photographs, and each pressed a cheek against her mother's. Put May went out of the room. Her mother looked after her.

"Ah, poor May," she said, "she will have many lessons to learn—many. She is a good, sweet child, and after a while she will get rid of these false notions."

Mrs. Gartland went on with her work, and Mr. Gartland, who inconvenienced himself very often to make home pleasant, read aloud the description of St. Mark's in Ruskin's 'Stories of Venice,' while the girls looked at the photographs.

people? It was just horrid to have May, in the meantime, sulking upstairs. She felt aggrieved. Why those old, hateful things talked of? Other girls' mothers probably had been poor, but they didn't talk about it. "I am always tender with the poor because I was poor myself," her mother often said. Such nonsense! May herself had always found the poor and poverty very disagreeable. "There was one consolation," she said to herself—"that the trip was assured."

Karl shivered. His mother took her shawl and wrapped him closely in it. "Ah, dear mother," he said, "I have never been warm since we left the little house. If father would come back and take me in his arms again I should be warm. When shall we see father?"

Frau Wiener choked down a sob as she led her little boy along the windy street. It was in February, and drearily cold and blustering. Karl looked very quaint and funny with his gold head and blue eyes above the dark blue shawl, and with its fringe dragging behind him, people turned to look at him and his mother. They had just come from the steamer, driven from their home by the failure of the crops.

Karl, the father, had died of overwork and exposure in the fields, and his wife Gretchen and little Karl were left with almost nothing.

But somehow Gretchen felt more hopeful every time she looked at Karl's curly head. Surely the dear Child Jesus would help this little one. And so she took her little boy, and embarked on the cold, wide sea, trusting in God.

She could speak no English, and, after she had reached Boston, she became afraid for the first time. After all, she said, perhaps she and Karl had better have remained among the ruined crops at home than to have come among these strange people, who hurried so, who were not Christians—for she saw nowhere images of the dear Lord or the saints. It was Sunday, and yet the people hurried. She had been directed to a German boarding-house, and there she had left her mattress and her little box, so that she might go to Mass. She carried her basket, in which she kept her own shoes and Karl's, when they did not wear them, for Gretchen looked upon shoes as very precious. They were to be worn only on Sundays and in the town. In the country they were to be carried in the basket. After Mass, she would try to find work as a servant. Karl and she tramped on, Karl feeling very uncomfortable in his stiff shoes.

"Oh, mother," he said, "I must take them off; they hurt."

"But we are going to Mass," she said, and we must be well dressed before Our Lord."

Karl hobbled along, and many eyes were turned to the poorly-dressed woman and the curly-headed little boy. The wind caught Gretchen's usually smooth locks, and turned and twisted them in most unruly fashion. At last Gretchen caught sight of a gilded cross. She was heartily glad. Here were rest and hope at last. She gave Karl the holy water and piously crossed herself. The candles were lit for High Mass. She entered the beautiful vestibule. It was warm and bright with the soft glow from the stained windows.

"Oh, little mother," whispered little Karl, "let me take my shoes off. They hurt so."

The church was empty, so Gretchen took off the little fellow's shoes, and put them carefully in her basket.

"Oh, how good it is to be warm," she said, "and in God's house."

Gretchen pressed him close to her heart. She looked at the red light before the Blessed Sacrament.

"We are at home, Karl," she said—"we are at home as much as if we were in our own little house."

"Let us go in."

Some people, in fine clothes, had entered. And Gretchen followed them. She had no fear. In the house of God poor and rich were alike. The pews puzzled her; there were no pews in the little church at home; she drew aside the soft red silk cord that hung there and walked into one. People passing up the aisle did not notice her. Remembering her basket, she hastily left Karl in the pew and put it under the bench in the vestibule. Karl was alarmed.

"Are you sure, little mother," he asked, in a whisper, "that the good God will take care of my shoes?"

She did not answer; she had taken out her rosary, and had lost herself in prayer. She was in her Father's house. She began to be warm again. She did not shiver now, and poor little Karl raised his clubby hands and began to pray for his dear father with all his might.

Up the aisle—by this time the Mass had begun—came May Gartland and

her schoolmate, Laura Wells. Behind them was Mr. Gartland. His wife and Margaret and Alice had gone to early Mass.

May was conscious of her well-fitting dress, her new hat, and her fashionable air; and Laura Wells had flattered her—by whispering as they entered:—"Dear me! Quite respectable—no poor people—just like an Episcopal church."

Laura herself was an Episcopalian, and she had come with her Catholic friend "just to have a look at things."

May walked up the aisle with her head in the air. It was so lucky that all the pews were filled with well-dressed people. It was lucky, too, she thought, that those horrid, dowdy Smiths, who occupied the pew next to theirs, were not at church. Mr. Gartland had quietly slipped into the last pew; he had no desire to be disturbed by Laura's restlessness and questions. May made her most graceful genuflection, with her mind entirely taken up with Laura. As she rose, she caught sight of the woman with the old shawl, the tangled, wind-blown flaxen hair, and the shabby little boy. They did not see her. Karl's little hands were clasped, his eyes fixed devoutly on the altar, and his mother had forgotten all earthly things.

May touched her on the shoulder. "Will you please leave this pew?" she asked, in a sharp whisper. "People like you ought to go to early Mass."

"Fraulein!" exclaimed Gretchen, awakened from her vision of the angels.

May dropped into her German. She knew enough to give the command; "Leave at once. This seat is mine."

Gretchen arose, bewildered. It was a new thing to be driven out of church. She drew Karl by the hand, and walked quickly down the aisle.

Mr. Gartland, absorbed in his devotions, did not notice this.

Gretchen went into the vestibule. She picked up the prayer-book which Karl always liked to hold open in church—it was his father's prayer-book—and looked back into the beautiful church. Ah, surely, she thought, the people were not Christians in this country, though they had such a beautiful church; she sat for a few minutes on the bench, and then, fearful lest somebody should drive her away, she put on Karl's shoes, and, taking her basket, went out upon the front steps.

The wind whirled past her. Karl cried; he wanted to go back into the lovely, warm church; he was so cold.

"Be content, mein Liebling," she said; "we shall hear Mass here; the people within do not want us."

"But God wants us. I know he wants us. Let us not mind the people."

Gretchen shook her head. She wrapped the boy in her shawl, and knelt, saying her rosary, with the sharp wind cutting her like a knife, until she heard the "Te, Missa est." Then she could kneel no longer; she fell forward on the cold steps, fainting, and little Karl cried out for help with all his might. Mr. Gartland, being in the last pew, was the first to come to her.

"Poor creature!" he said, as he opened her eyes. "Why, she has a high fever."

Gretchen seemed to be burning up and shivering both at once. Mr. Gartland lifted up her head and said to Karl:

"Don't cry, little boy, your mother will be well soon."

Karl did not understand the words, but he felt the kindness of the look, so he ceased to sob. May and Laura passed by.

"Papa is so queer," May said, "We'll just go on ahead. I suppose that woman has been drinking. Somebody ought to keep such people away from respectable churches. It's just awful."

"We have a chapel for such people as that," said Laura, lifting the long-handled single eye-glass she used so constantly, and the possession of which May envied. "They never come near our church at all. Do you know," Laura continued patronizingly. "I think if you would not let such a miscellaneous lot come to your churches, we'd come often, just to hear the music."

May tried to feel grateful. Mr. Gartland called a carriage and drove to a hospital. He could not understand Karl, and Gretchen could not tell where her boarding-house was.

The doctor at the hospital, who knew Mr. Gartland, said that Gretchen was very ill. "She has been exposed to the cold for some hours, and may have a fever." Then he dropped into German, speaking to Karl.

"The little boy says that a young lady drove him and his mother from the church, and that they had to kneel on the steps in the cold."

"Is it possible?" asked Mr. Gartland. "What is the matter with the woman?"

"Scarlet fever—possibly; it looks like—developed by exposure. But I can't tell yet."

"The Sisters will take care of her and the boy. You may count on me for expenses."

When Mr. Gartland reached home—he had walked slowly through the blustering wind—he found May and Laura and Margaret and his wife in

the parlor. Alice came in with a telephone message.

"The woman is worse, papa," she said. "Dr. West tells me to tell you so. He says that she probably would not have had the fever at all if she had not taken such a bad chill."

"I am sorry," he said. "Her little boy will die of grief. He is a nice, frank-looking little fellow."

"How could you be so awfully silly, you foolish papa," said May, with her eyes on Laura, "to take so much trouble about that untidy-looking woman? I had to ask her to leave our pew."

"You!" exclaimed Mr. Gartland. "You did that?"

"And very properly," said Laura. "The church was not a place for her."

Mr. Gartland did not notice this. "May," he said, "I thought that your frivolity had touched only your head; I had no idea it had affected your heart. Go to the telephone, Alice, and tell Dr. West that I will call this afternoon, that it was my daughter who ordered that poor woman, out into the cold, and that, as I am responsible in a manner for her illness, he must spare no expense for her or the boy."

"Your father is awful," whispered Laura. "The church was not a place for her."

May blushed and began to cry, and Mr. Gartland told the story to his wife.

"It is my duty to make all the amends I can," he said.

Mrs. Gartland, for the first time in her life, spoke very sharply to May. That young lady went up to her room and refused to come down to dinner. Laura looked as if she had been insulted, and pitied "poor, dear May," in a whisper.

The dinner was not as cheerful as usual. Mrs. Gartland was uneasy; her husband was silent; Alice and Margaret were as polite as possible of course to Laura, but they felt less so now, because of her heartless chatter.

It seemed to Mrs. Gartland a real misfortune that her daughter should have been unkind to any poor person. And to think of having driven that woman and child out of church! Mrs. Gartland resolved to have a serious conversation with May. In the evening, when Laura had gone home, Mr. Gartland spoke little; he went several times to the telephone and made anxious inquiries.

"No better," he said—"worse, in fact. Oh, May, how could you have been so heartless!"

May pouted. "There's one thing he will not do," she said to herself. "He will not take back his promise about the trip. I am sure of that, at any rate."

"The doctor told me this afternoon over the wire," said Mrs. Gartland; "that this poor woman was a Bavarian peasant driven over here by that failure of the crops May was reading about."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Gartland, languidly; "Do you know, Peggy, I am tired to-night, and I have a sort of headache."

May looked up from her book. "Shall I play something for you?" she asked.

"No,—not to-night—thank you," he said, coldly.

May pouted again. The idea of making people uncomfortable about a wretched woman. What would Laura Wells think of the whole thing? And Alice and Margaret evidently felt that she had done wrong; she might have gone into the Smith pew and let the poor woman say her prayers in peace, they said. The idea! Was not the pew her property, as well as Alice and Margaret's? Having come to the conclusion that she was deeply injured, May went upstairs again, hastily said her prayers—all the time wondering whether her father would choose to go by Hamburg or Havre line of steamers—and closed her eyes for the night.

On Monday morning Mr. Gartland did not appear at breakfast. He was ill—a slight fever. He was anxious about Gretchen Wiener and Karl. He seemed relieved when he found that the boy had been taken care of, and the woman was no worse.

The girls enjoyed the pleasure of waiting on their father; it was "so nice" to have him at home. Alice took in her pots of white hyscynthins, Margaret made all sorts of dainties, and May hovered about. Her father was very gentle to her.

"You need sorrow, dear," he said, "to soften your heart. If we are a little hard through too much prosperity, sorrow always comes—always."

On Wednesday the doctor said that he was really ill; he had scarlet fever, and the girls, who never had the disease, were forbidden to enter the room.

May went about the house sobbing. "He caught it from that wretched woman!" she cried. "Oh, why did he trouble himself about her?"

"If you had left her to say her prayers in peace," said Mrs. Gartland, sternly, "she would not have fainted on the steps, and he would not now be ill. In future, daughter, learn to respect poverty."

Days of anxiety passed. Gretchen Wiener grew steadily better. One day little Karl was permit-

ted to see her, and on that day the priest came out of Mr. Gartland's room and said to his wife:—

"God help you! It is over—he passed away blessing you and the children—and he was well prepared. You know he received the Holy Eucharist yesterday, and I had just given him absolution after confession to-day when he—"

May's wild cries rent the air. She could not be comforted.

"God's will be done," Mrs. Gartland said; "God's will be done."

After this, times changed for the Gartlands. They were obliged to move from their fine house, and Laura Wells ceased to know them. It required the greatest economy for Mrs. Gartland to live and educate the girls. She was in delicate health herself; and yet she could not bear to think of obliging one of them to neglect her education, to hold in the household work. May offered to stay at home; she had changed wonderfully; she was now as meek as she had formerly been arrogant.

"Sorrow has come, as father said," she often thought. "But, oh, if I could only have him back!"

They lived outside the city in a little house surrounded by a garden.

"If I only had somebody to help me, how bright I could make it," Mrs. Gartland said, one day in the spring, looking at the budding buds. She was tempted to help May at home; but that would mean that the girl should miss her chances of an education. "Ah," she said, "if I had only somebody to assist me, I could raise plants and flowers for the city market—it would help so much."

It seemed as if her thought was answered:—

"Lady," said a voice behind her, "Ach, dear lady, I have found you. I am well now, and I have been told all. Will you let me and my little Karl work for you?"

It was Gretchen, who had learned some English; and there was curly-headed Karl, in his stiff shoes, looking up at Mrs. Gartland, with his frank blue eyes.

Mrs. Gartland stooped to kiss him. "So you are the little boy?" Karl nodded as if he would never stop. He liked Mrs. Gartland's look. And so it was arranged that Gretchen and Karl should stay, and they made themselves very valuable.

You see that the failure of the crops in Bavaria did influence May Gartland's trip.

A CHRONICLE OF THE PARISH.

An incident which happened a few days ago illustrates the faith and courage of those whom we like to call "the old stock." An old lady entered a grocery store in which those present were discussing the death of the Queen. Said one, who, by a strange coincidence, happened to be the old lady's landlord:—"I know she is now in Heaven, with the Crown upon her head." We will let the old lady tell the rest in her own words:—"Beggin' your pardon, Sir," says I, "there is only one in Heaven that wears a crown." "And who is that?" says he. "The Virgin Mary," says I. The old lady added somewhat irreverently, and perhaps irreverently, "Devil a word more he said."

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