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day, and his last departing rays lengthened the shadows in the room where Annie was lying in bed, taking her last look at the bright world, and bidding farewell to those kind and loving hearts she would know no more on this side of the grave. She knew she was dying; she felt sure of that without the kindly warning of Dr. Heartyman, but she felt no fear; she had long ago prepared herself for this and tried to make her peace with her God. She wanted to die; life had lost all its sweetness and freshness to her, and she was anxious to pass that mystic boundary between the known and the unknown, and solve the problem of the hereafter at once; so she had no fear, only a firm, quiet confidence in God's mercy and goodness to aid her through the awful valley of the shadow of death, and to bring her to His everlasting kingdom.

It was a very sad group which assembled around her bed, Mr. Howson, Julia, Miss Moxton, Dr. Heartyman and Charlie Morton. Annie had taken leave of all of them except Charlie, somehow she seemed purposely to have left him for the last. Her voice was very low and weak, but she retained perfect consciousness, and was in possession of all her faculties; her illness had wasted the once plump form, and hollowed and paled her cheek; the color had faded from her lips, and the old bright, laughing sparkle of her eye was dimmed; but a purer, holier expression had come over her face; a quiet, dignified calm which lent it a higher tone of loveliness. It was the first imprint of the beauty beyond the grave; the beauty which we are taught to believe, and hope comes when the deformity and unsightliness of sin has been shaken off, and when the spirit stands in the presence of its Creator.

"Charlie," she said, holding out her attenuated hand to him, "I am so sorry for all the grief and misery I have caused you. I know, I can see it now, that much of what has happened was the result of my thoughtless, heartless flirting; I didn't mean to pain or grieve you, Charlie, you have always been good and kind to me, my 'dear, big brother,'" a faint smile wreathed itself around her lips as she used the term, and she continued; "Yes, my big brother, for you always have been like a brother to me; but I know I have pained and grieved you, Charlie, and you must try to forgive and forget me. No—don't forget me; don't let me pass out of your mind; think of me sometimes, Charlie, but don't think of me as the headstrong, willful woman who caused you pain and suffering, but think of me as the little girl you used to take on your knee and pet and caress. Love me, Charlie, as you used to in those days."

He was down on his knees by the bedside now with his face buried in his hands, and great heart drawn sobs shaking his whole frame; it seemed so hard to him that all he loved must be taken from him, and in the bitterness of the trial he prayed that it might please God to take him too.

"Don't cry, Charlie," she continued, "don't cry for me; I shall be happier, I hope and trust, in the world beyond the grave than I ever have been, or could be on earth. I haven't been as good as I ought to have been, but God is very merciful and I feel calm and happy in His love."

There was a pause of some minutes broken only by the half-suppressed sobs of the spectators, and then she spoke again, but so low, so feeble that the words could scarcely be heard.

"It is coming now, I can see it, death; but I do not fear it, I see a bright and radiant form beside it, and fear is swallowed up in hope and thankfulness. Kiss me, Charlie, let the last memory I take out of this world be of your pure and noble love, kiss me."

Fondly and reverently he folded the frail, loved form in his arms and imprinted a kiss on the pale lips; the first kiss he had pressed on them since she had grown to womanhood. A happy gratified smile stole over her face, a bright joyous light danced for a moment in her eyes; her lips trembled as if they strove to utter something but only a faint sigh escaped them, and while he held her in his arms, while his lips were pressed to hers, the last beams of the setting sun flooded the room with a momentary burst of glory, and ere its brightness had passed away, Annie's spirit had taken its flight.

#### SCENE LAST.

#### THE CURTAIN FALLS.

Time, April first, eighteen hundred and seventy-three; place, the author's office.

My story proper ended with the foregoing chapter; but, somehow, I cannot sever the connection which has existed between my readers and myself for the last twelve weeks, without a few "last words." Even a criminal on the scaffold is allowed a few last words, and I suppose this culprit may be permitted to claim the same privilege.

I cannot claim any very high or mighty moral for my tale; it has a moral, I suppose, that crime and wrong doing is sure to meet its just punishment, that vice may be triumphant for a while, but retribution is certain to overtake the wicked; I have not tried to gild evil so as to make it look like good, and I have not endeavored to place virtue on stilts so that it may be admired from a distance, like some sculptured marble; I have tried to paint human nature as we see it around us every day, and if I have succeeded in that, and in interesting and amusing you, I have attained my purpose as nearly as I ever expected to do.

"Hard to Beat," has frequently proved hard to write; but as I have gone on from week to

week it seemed as if I was being drawn closer and closer to my readers, and it is almost with a sigh of regret that I have to lay down my pen. I will not, however, say "farewell," but au revoir, trusting that ere long we may again have the pleasure—mutual I hope—of meeting in the pages of THE FAVORITE.

It is now almost two years since the date of my last chapter, and perhaps you would like to know how some of the characters I have been writing about have fared in that time.

Charlie Morton is not married, nor is he likely to be. His heart lies buried in Mount Royal Cemetery under a pure white marble cross, bearing the inscription "Annie Griffith, aged 20 years 3 months," and he is not a man likely to love twice. He discovered where his niece had been taken, and finding she was in good hands with the kind-hearted nuns of the Hochelaga Convent left her there, content to visit her frequently and endeavour as far as possible to fill a father's place to her. She is all he has to live for now, and Miss Fan stands a good chance of

the next year. He did not suffer by it, however, for Morton made him a handsome present, and he now keeps a hotel in the Eastern Townships and is doing well.

Theophilus Launcelot Polydor Johnson, Esq., is about to commit matrimony. Since Annie's death, Mr. Johnson has discovered that Julia is the girl for him and he proposes to lead her to the nuptial altar some time next month, you know, and settle down and be steady, don't you see.

Mr. Augustus Fowler—commonly called Gus—has abandoned the study of medicine and devoted himself to the legal profession. He says he has made up his mind that he was not quite equal to murder, therefore, he is not suited for the medical profession; but he thinks he can tell lies in a plausible sort of way, and that will be of great advantage to him if he ever gets a case to plead. Mrs. Sudlow has been more gracious to him of late, and there is every prospect of a wedding in St. Dominique Street sometime this summer; the golden haired little beauty

her restless hands in the last long rest). The one ewe lamb, patient, noble, brown-haired Helen.

It was autumn, and a cheery fire blazed in the open grate, throwing its fanciful shadows over the golden curls and perfect faces of the city cousins, Nellie and Minnie Johnson, who had come from London to spend a few weeks ere the opening of the winter season; over the black hair and tall form of Hugh Vaughan; Helen's accepted lover; over the bonnie braids that crowned Helen's own shapely head; over the quaint old furniture and pictures, lingering around the piano, and dancing into the dark corners.

"Just this once, my dear cousin, in honor of our grandmother's memory," still pleaded the coaxing tones.

"Well, Nellie, I've no objection, I am sure, provided you wish it. Of course there is nothing in it. But as we are all sensible, and above the silly superstition, the amusement will be harmless. Let us adjourn to the kitchen. Cook has a good fire, and we will very soon settle our destinies."

"I pray you, fair ladies, do not doom me to solitude. I humbly crave permission to accompany you to the sybil's haunts, that I, too, may learn somewhat of the good that Fate has in store for me," said Hugh, as his laughing eyes sought Helen's blushing face.

"Oh, knight of the woful countenance, our Hege lady grants your petition. I see it by her smiling lips. So, forward march for the kitchen it is!"—and Nellie's laugh rang merrily through the clean, wide room as they entered.

The smouldering fire was soon crackling in the fireplace. The lead was melted and poured into water, where, after spluttering and hissing for a time, it assumed many and various shapes, causing much merriment. Then apples were eaten and the brown seeds counted, "one I love, two he loves," with blushes and smiles; and at last the crowning trial, naming chestnuts and placing them in pairs upon the coals. Helen bent down over the coals to arrange the nuts properly, when an explosion suddenly took place, and, with a low moan, she fell back, tightly pressing her hands over her eyes.

The mischief-loving Hugh had placed a percussion cap upon the hearth "to startle the girls," laughing in imagination at their terrified screams. But now, when he saw the result of his cruel trick, his lips grew pale, and raising the prostrate form in his arms, he cried passionately, "Darling Helen, are you hurt? Speak to me, sweet one. Have I murdered her?" with an appealing look to the sisters, who stood in dumb, pallid terror beside him.

"No! no! Dear Hugh, I am alive, but oh, my eyes! The pain is maddening. Please assist me to my room, and then go for a physician. I am afraid I am blind. Do not alarm father; but hasten, dear."

Carefully, tenderly they led her to her own quiet room, shaded the light, bathed the swollen eyelids, and then the cousins sat down to wait.

The physician came, a kindly, good man, and pronounced his verdict. Only one eye was injured, but that so severely that it must remain curtains in night.

"Oh, doctor, do not say that!" wailed the sufferer; but it was so, and no human agency could remedy the mischief.

Her beauty was gone; and amid the agony, the thought that he, for whom she would have shed her life's blood (strange how much stronger is woman's love than man's), might look with aversion upon the face he was once so proud of, made it still harder, and so there was a great sob in the voice that said, "Not that, doctor—oh, not that, doctor! I cannot bear it."

But heaven is merciful, and her heart did not break—not even when heartless Hugh so readily accepted the freedom she offered him. He was proud, and could not for a moment think of marrying so very plain a woman as Helen Weston with one window to the soul shaded. Weeks of pain she passed in the darkened chamber, and then came once more among her friends—pale, but, oh, so sad and sweet that one could almost weep to see her. Her father would gaze upon her altered countenance, and in his heart cursed the cowardly hand that caused the blight. But no one ever heard Helen murmur; and when they brought her the paper recording the marriage of Hugh Vaughan with Nellie Johnson, not even a repining word mingled with her good wishes.

Years have passed, and Helen is thirty. Calmer, sweeter, more lovely than of old, art has in a great measure remedied the defect in her beauty; and there are those who will tell you to-day that in all the Cumberland village there is not one young face so handsome as Helen Weston's. Old Farmer Weston went to join the wife he loved some years ago, blessing his daughter with his latest breath. Golden-haired Nellie has long since joined the angel-band; and Hugh, with his four lovely little girls, came back to his native place soon after. He saw our Helen, and his old love revived; but she refused to listen to him.

Said she, "I think I buried my love for you twelve years ago to-night, when you so gladly severed our engagement. I can never be caught else to you save a friend. That I will try to be, for, with all your selfishness, I do not hate you."

He went away then a sadder and, let us hope, less selfish man. For a time he was angry and would not permit his daughters to visit the farm-house; but after a while his ire passed away and though he never darkens the door, yet four little golden-haired girls think "Aunt Helen" is perfection itself.



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being a spoiled child as far as he is concerned, for her will is law with him and he cannot bring himself to believe that the word "no," was ever invented to be applied to her. Often as he takes her out with him memory carries him back twelve years in his life, and he can almost fancy the fair-haired little creature by his side is Annie as he first knew her when a little girl. Very quiet, still and methodical is Mr. Morton's life now, having but one object, the education and happiness of his niece and time slips by easily and pleasantly for him. Let us hope that the future may bring him all the happiness and love in an old age, which his single heartedness and simplicity of character deserve.

Mr. Harway was not so fortunate as he hoped to be; the detectives were rather too smart for him and that perfect gentleman is now serving out his time in the Vermont State prison where he will, probably, spend the next three years. He complains a little about the prison rules which do not permit the consumption of any cold gin; and he protests strongly against the turnkey for taking away his handkerchief, thereby depriving him of the pleasure of dusting his boots and wiping his face afterwards; but, I think he is well taken care of where he is, and there I shall leave him.

Mr. Boggs does not drive a cab now; his participation in the body snatching business came out rather strongly at the inquest, and he was consequently refused a license when he applied

having expressed her opinion that she preferred June to July because—well, she didn't state the reason, but I suppose it is because June is one month earlier than July. I think that is all, and that everybody is disposed of, and therefore, I will retire, and—

"Prompter, drop the curtain!"

FINIS.

## HELEN WESTON'S TRIAL.

"Hallowe'en, girls!" exclaimed Nellie Johnson. "Are we to sit quiet when just this one night of the three hundred and sixty-five, Fate lifts the dim curtain of the future to our wondering comprehension! No, a thousand times no! So, my dear, puritanic Helen, for once lay aside your scruples, and let us try what that mysterious future has in store for us;"—and the animated speaker threw her arms lovingly around Helen's neck.

It was a dear old house where our friends were gathered, nestling among the Cumberland hills. Helen's grandfather had built it. Here Helen's mother had opened her black eyes, and Helen's own sweet blue orbs had first beheld the light. Dear, gentle, charming Helen, the idol of her father's heart, (for the energetic mother had years ago closed her eyes and folded