

I waited in the hall that Mr. Hubert's room opens from, and in a little while I heard some one coming up. It was so dark I knew I couldn't be seen, and I thought it would be better to stay there till he came. I was about to pass, for fear it might seem queer to find me in that place at such a time. I could tell by the sound of the steps there were two persons coming up, and by the rustling of a dress that one of them was a woman; I heard whispering, but I couldn't understand what was said, till they came so close that it was only by wedging myself into the niche in the wall, that I saved myself from being found out, and then I heard one of them whisper:

"Don't ask me what has happened."

"They passed on, and I heard some door softly opened and closed. I went back to my own room, thinking queer things of what I had heard, and dreaming of it when I went to sleep. I didn't speak of it next day, for I feared you'd hear it, and that perhaps you wouldn't believe how I came to be listening at such a time of the night. Afterwards, when we came to know that you were held as a witness, and saw in the papers all about that case I kept thinking of what I had heard that night; but I didn't think anything about Mr. Hubert. I didn't think one of the whispering voices was his, though I was almost sure the rustling dress belonged to you. I didn't speak of it, for, somehow, there was a great fear on me that if I did it might injure you. I didn't think of Mr. Hubert at all, for I believed as, all the help did, that he was far away then. But when Mr. Plowden examined me in the court—when he asked me if there was ever anything to make me think your actions strange, or to suspect Mr. Hubert hadn't left home at all—you looked at me, and somehow in a minute, it all came into my mind. I knew then that one of the whispering voices was Mr. Hubert's; that what had happened was this murder, and that you knew all about it. But I'd have cut my tongue out before I'd have told it there, or told it anywhere. My heart ached for you, and many a time since, when I've seen you sad and sick, and heard the rest of the help remarking on the ill looks of yourself and your cousin, I knew it was the secret that was killing you both."

"I'd have tried to comfort you in my humble way, but I feared you'd be frightened at my knowing so much, or that you'd be angry at my presumption. I never spoke of it to the others and I tried to keep down the suspicions that would come in their minds sometimes."

"When I saw Mr. Plowden coming here so regular, and the warm way yourself and Mr. Hubert seemed to take to him, my heart misgave me, for I knew what his nature was. I'm bound by a promise to the dead—his dead—not to speak, so I can't tell you something which would make you distrust him too. I didn't know him in the court at first, for I didn't look at him much till it came my turn to be examined by him, but then I knew him, and he knew me; he couldn't help but know me, and I saw he did by the look in his eyes. Oh, why was Mr. Hubert mixed up with this case at all! Why did he have anything to do with the murdered man lying in his cold grave this night, and I not able to tell you what I know!"

And Hannah Moore flung her apron over her head, and sobbed bitterly.

Margaret was as white and motionless as a statue. She could make no attempt to bring order out of the chaos of thoughts caused by this strange communication. Her imagination was too wild and too swift in its erratic resolution to succumb to her will now, so she could only wait as one on a rack might do, not for relief, but for change of torture.

Hannah lowered her apron, and resumed:

"I wanted to tell you many a time to be careful how you'd trust the smart lawyer. I feared he'd ferret Mr. Hubert's secret out, and use all his means to bring the poor young man to punishment, for the sake of getting himself a fine name. I thought of trying to see him in some secret way, when I'd let him know that I was watching his actions, and that perhaps I'd tell something in the long run if he meant any harm to Mr. Hubert; but I didn't know how to manage a secret meeting with him, so I only kept on fretting to myself, and worrying, when I saw you two young things sinking under the secret you thought no one else knew anything about."

"Sometimes the help would talk of Mr. Plowden's attentions to you, and to day when you went out with him it was said that he was really paying his addresses to you; then, I couldn't rest, knowing what I do about him. When you came down stairs to-night and told us of Mr. Hubert's arrest my heart jumped into my throat, for I thought it might be through Mr. Plowden he was taken, and then I resolved that I'd tell you all that I could, without breaking my promise to the dead. Maybe he's different now; maybe he's sorry for the poor heart he wouldn't comfort before its death, and maybe he's very good; but be careful of him, Miss Calvert—don't trust him too much, and forgive me my boldness in telling you this."

And again she covered her face with her apron and sobbed bitterly.

It seemed to be little use for Margaret to seek light out of the thick darkness which was settling upon her.

More perplexing and more numerous were the mysteries which appeared to grow out of this one sin. If Hannah Moore could but tell what she knew of Plowden, but to stop short, just where doubt and conjecture became absolute

pain, seemed so cruel. All that the cook related might, after all, be only the vagaries of a suspicious mind which had been too ready to build huge piles of evidence on slightest foundations; but Plowden's inexplicable look of the morning rose before her; as if to strengthen the testimony just given. There was something, nay, there was a good deal, in what Hannah Moore had just told, and there was much in that appalling look.

Did it mean that he had been hunting Hubert to his doom, that his passionate avowal of love to her, his affection for Hubert, his expressed determination to save him, were but so many masks to hide his base object—was it possible that he had been working of her wild conjectures there swept into her soul such a flood of bitterness as she had experienced never before even in her moments of sharpest agony.

Trust betrayed; and such a trust! Winning friendship and affection only that he might effect a base purpose—truly in the past hour, the world had turned upside down to her and left her drifting hopelessly out to an unknown, bleak shore.

Hardest of all was the search for her own line of conduct, amid so much broken trust and cruel deception. Since Hubert's arrest she had clung to Plowden as the one mutual friend whose legal skill, whose powerful influence was to bring some degree of light out of the great darkness. Now, if this was to be no more, if she must discard him herself, and warn Hubert against him, what would be left? Nothing; no one—for in all the vast city Margaret could think of no friend whose influence would assist in this case, or whose sympathy could support her, and amid Hubert's friends there were none who possessed the skill, or influence of Plowden.

The warm-hearted cook had only made the lot of her young mistress harder to bear, and had she not been too absorbed in her own tears, she might have seen more suffering in Miss Calvert's face than she had seen there ever before.

Sorrow makes the best of us selfish in some degree. Margaret, absorbed in her own wild thoughts, forgot for a few moments the presence of the faithful domestic and the effort she had made to do that she deemed to be her duty; but it flashed on her suddenly, and she held out both hands to the weeping woman, and said softly:

"How can I thank you, my faithful friend? You, to whom no confidence was given, have kept what you knew, so well."

"Don't speak of it, miss. I'd do far more if it was in my power, and I'm only fearing that I spoke too late about Mr. Plowden. Perhaps he's worked harm already to Mr. Hubert."

"I don't know—I hope not," and Margaret's lips grew white with mental anguish.

"He seems to be Hubert's best friend now, and mine, so far as helping my cousin is concerned. Hubert gave himself up, publicly confessed his crime, and he intends to make the same confession when he is brought to trial."

"The poor boy; may the Lord help him!" ejaculated Hannah Moore.

Margaret continued: "It is due to your faithfulness to tell you this much. My cousin did not intend to commit murder; he was maddened to it, and there are circumstances connected with that murdered man, which, if made known, will do much to lessen my cousin's guilt. The whole dreadful case will be revived again I suppose. All of us may be examined over."

"Faith, they'll get nothing out of me but what they got before, if they examine me fifty times," interrupted the cook.

But Margaret, without heeding the interruption, continued: "And through all the trying time I shall have but one friend to turn to—Mr. Plowden. I must trust him still; I must lean on him, be he what he may, until this trial is over. If he be our enemy instead of our friend, then God help him and pity us!"

"Amen," ejaculated the cook. And then, with painful hesitation in her manner, she said:

"Maybe it'll be better not to tell Mr. Plowden that I've said anything to you. He knows how I am bound by oath never to speak of what I know, and it might make him fiercer like, if he knew I had been trying to put you on your guard."

Margaret faintly smiled.

"For Hubert's sake I shall be sure to conceal every suspicion from Mr. Plowden—I shall endeavor to treat him as I have already done—so have no fear."

"Thank you, miss! and now have you entirely forgiven my boldness in speaking as I did?"

"There is nothing to forgive," Margaret replied, "but there is cause for great gratitude on my part."

She wrung the cook's hand to reassure her, and said a kind good-night.

Hannah Moore, as she passed through the hall, still wiping her eyes, murmured to herself:

"Thanks be to God, there's a great load lifted from my mind."

A load lifted from her only to be added to the burden of doubt and fear and anguish, which her young mistress carried.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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HER TWO TRIALS.

BY THE REV. DENIS NAUGHTON, S. J.

It was midway between Great and Little Christmas, with snow on the ground and bright stars shining out of a clear sky. One of the countless clocks of Edinburgh Town had just struck 9, when a timid and faltering knock was heard at the door of Father Grosvenor's presbytery. Many a knock came to that door. Night after night the poor used to come to get comfort or to take the pledge, or to ask advice, or to complain. And it must be confessed that the chief delight of the saintly and—though still young—venerable looking priest was to hear that knocking going, much trouble as it brought on him from within as well as from without. His servants were continually leaving him on account of it, and even his old Aberdeenshire house-keeper, who had been with him since he began life, every three months regularly, and occasionally besides, gave him notice in her own vernacular, that she was "gawn to quit."

However, like Andrew Fairservice in "Bob Roy," who had been "flitting every term for four and twenty years," she never could make up her mind to go.

"Well, Bridget," said Father Grosvenor, "someone wants me. I think?"

"Yes," she answered, "they are come when I'm sitting down to my tea; and between the kitchen and the hall, it's na muckle rest they gie me. It's Breedge here, and Breedge there, and I only just fit for the Kingdom of Glory."

"I know you are overworked, Bridget," mildly replied the Father, whom experience had taught to quell the rising storm.

"Weel, it's na it I mind. My trouble is na that great to be complained of; it's naething to make a sang about. But ye dinna spare yerself. You gie a' these folks their ain way and are not that pleased wi' me when I tell them to gang away hame wi' them for a lot o' haversils."

"Bridget, thank you; you do spare me many a time. But who wants me now?"

"I dinna ken exactly," she said; "a' she'd tell me was that she wanted you. Yet I'd no be that surprised if the bairn had seen better days."

When he went into the hall he found awaiting him a young girl. Perhaps she had seen some twenty years or more. But as she wore a heavy shawl that completely hid her features, he could not tell. Only no disguise could hide that she was not such as usually sought him.

"Well, child," he said, "you wish to see me, I think; what may I do for you?"

"I shall take it as a favor," she answered, "if you give me the pledge."

Completely put out by the direct and slightly haughty reply, he could not see his way to continue the conversation, which was precisely what he wanted. Many a soul he had won that way.

"Child," he said, "you do not seem like one who needs it. But, of course, as you wish. You are one of my little flock, I think, though I don't remember you. Pray, child, where do you live—with what friends, I mean?"

"No, sir," she answered, still more coldly, "I am not one of your flock, and friends I have none, except one who is almost a sister to me, by whose advice I am here for the only favor you can do me. I have told it already."

Baffled once again, he gently opened the door of an oratory facing his parlor, with a pretty little tabernacle, before which a lamp was brightly burning.

"Child," he said, "I do not like your kneeling here. Just take that little prie-dieu, and I shall give you the pledge. The Blessed Sacrament is on the altar."

"No," she answered, "no, do not speak to me, Father. You could not guess who or what I am." The ring of unmistakable hopeless despair was in her voice as she moved towards the door, saying: "I suppose I may as well go."

But he gently beckoned her to kneel, and with a voice full of emotion spoke the words, which she solemnly repeated.

"Now, Father," said she, rising, "I have been rude to you. Please forgive me, for I am not used to be so."

"No, child," he answered, "you have not been rude, whatever I may have been. But we shall part friends, and I shall forgive myself if you just do one thing for me. You won't refuse, please," he said, as he drew from his purse a large silver piece.

The sight of it brought the impetuous blood to her cheek.

"Father, I do not want money. I have plenty of my own," she said.

"It is not money," said the Father. "I would not dream of offering you money. It is only a silver medal, whose real owner is—I know not where."

"If I accept it," she said, "you will forgive me."

"Yes, that readily and easily enough; but I cannot so readily promise, at that altar and at Holy Mass to forget you. We may meet again hereafter."

"Well," she said, taking the medal from his hand, "thank you, Father, and good night; I wish I dare say—God bless you!"

Out she went into the starlit, snow-covered street, muffled herself still more closely, and straightway made for home.

"Little fear," she said to herself,

"that he will meet me hereafter, and still less hope that I shall meet him. What I have done I have done, and what I have written I have written; and though my eyes became a fountain, they must ache in vain over a blighted existence. What I have lost can never come back, and all my sorrow must be idle as the wail of an orphan—"

"Though pour like a river My tears without number, The buried can never Awake from its slumber."

She reached home after a little time and went immediately to her room.

"Please," she said to the maid who opened the door, "please, Bertha, I have not been well. Would you let me have tea in my room, and I shall not have to trouble you more."

"Certainly, miss; you never trouble."

Her little repast soon served and sooner over, the poor girl, drawing an arm chair in front of a bright fire, sat down before it, somewhat less sad, but more than usually pensive.

"Well," she thought, "I feel happier now that I have done it at last. One link to hell is broken, but what is that to those that are chained by so many? It was good of the Father to tell me that I looked out of place amongst the miserable, and to force upon me the first holy thing I have had for many a day. What is it, I wonder?"

She took the medal from her pocket and looked at it earnestly a minute or two.

"Yes," she said, "I know well what it is. 'Tis a First Communion medal, and with a slight tremble of the hand she laid it down. "God help me, that's enough of it. 'Twas a strange present for me, and not a kind one," she said.

Yet there was some fascination about it she could not resist, and bending over but not touching it again, she fixed her eyes on it. At an altar-rail were four little girls with lighted candles in their hands; all were dressed in white, and wore long lace veils held close to the head by a wreath of flowers and flowing to the ground so as to cover their feet. A priest in chasuble was standing before them, administering the First Communion. Two little acolytes were kneeling at the altar in surplice and soutane, and six candles—three on either side of a large crucifix—were burning by the tabernacle.

Without any searching to remember, she was at once in a reverie of the past. Without the least effort of imagination her memory went back to a certain time and place, and the picture of herself as she was ten years gone by stood before her mind: a young and very beautiful child, in whose look there was something more than innocence, for it seemed to her as if her look was holy.

"Oh, how like me!" she said. "Did I ever think it would come to this?"

After a ten minutes' dream and another look at the medal, with a still more faltering hand she turned it on the obverse side, and in bright, clear-cut letters, read:

"EMILY MARY HARGREAVES."

"Great God!" she cried, "it is my own medal! That, or my poor, troubled brain is not working right. Am I walking or dreaming? Well, let me try." And she took up from the ground the medal that had fallen from her hands. "Tis a dream," she said; "tis light as a feather—it has no substance. It would not ring on that glass if I struck it." And she struck three times slowly but weakly. "Tis a dream," she said again. "I knew it was. That's the Sanctus bell at Mass in the old chapel of Ancely; and I am here, am I not?"

In a moment all the room seemed to go round and round. She swooned away and softly fell to the hearth rug, upsetting the little table on which the tea things were set.

When the maid rushed into the room she saw her lying perfectly motionless and pale.

Tincture or lustre in her lip, her eye, heat outwardly or breath within, was none.

"She is dead!" cried the maid. "God bless us! that makes the third I have seen. O God of mercy! mercy!" she added, as she hastily undid the dress, and with the true sense of womanhood, devoted herself to the care of the poor girl.

"No, no, she's not dead! I feel her heart beat," she said, after five or six minutes. "God be blessed, and His Holy Mother, to whom I often prayed for her, she is not dead!"

In a short time the panic was over, and before half an hour she was herself again.

"I am going to stay with you to-night, miss," said Bertha.

"Thank you a thousand times for all your kindness, but there is no need. It was nothing. Please help me to undress, and you will be quite safe in leaving me alone."

In less than a quarter of an hour the poor girl was in bed, and in still less than that, asleep; for she had scarce laid her head upon her pillow when she was in a deep and tranquil slumber.

It was far into the morning when she awoke with her mind perfectly clear as to the events of yesterday. They were distinctly before her, and what was stranger, she could ponder them over and over again within one trace of emotion. Not that she was uninterested by them, but that a cold determination to solve the mystery entirely absorbed her.

"Surely," she said, "the medal is mine. I know every line of it and remember it well. It hung over my head in my room at home, on a little background I made for it of red plush velvet, between an image of the crucifix and a holy-water font. This day

shan't pass nor another night come on till I make out how it came into the priest's hands, and what puzzles me more, how it came that he gave it to me. He knew me somehow, but, she added, smiling, "he'll not know me to-day, I promise. He may be at home by 1 o'clock."

She then put her hand under her pillow, and taking out the innocent cause of her trouble, pressed it to her lips.

"There," she said, "there's for the day that can never return. And there's for one whose heart I have broken."

And all her mother came into her eyes, and gave her up to tears.

"And there, for my dear Uncle Richard, who gave me my first Communion and hung you round my neck in the old chapel on the hill. And after a long, long pause, as if she feared to say it: "There's for the feet of my Lord, Whose face I shall never see. Oh," she added, "I once heard that the lost hate God whilst they long to see Him; but I know one who is lost and loves Him, though she never hopes to behold Him. But this won't do. I have no power to spare from this day's work, and 'tis getting late."

At 12 o'clock she left her house, beautifully dressed, but with an eye to whatever might give her a matronly air. A quick and very decisive knock soon brought Bridget to the door.

"May I ask," she said, "is Father Grosvenor at home?"

"Yes, madam."

"And disengaged?"

"Weel, he's rarely that," said Bridget, "but an' you'll tude a wee in the parlor, I dinna doubt but he'll see you."

"Please, then," she said, giving her card, "a lady wishes to see him on business and will not detain him long."

When Father Grosvenor entered she rose and, making a quiet bow, apologized for calling at so unreasonable a time, but she came on business which would be best done if done soonest."

"Father, I came about a young girl," she said, "who called on you last evening to take the pledge."

"How strange," said the Father; "my dream is out. I thought she came to see me again, and that I did not know her till she was gone."

With one quick glance of surprise she looked at him, but that glance sufficed to reassure her all was right.

"It is not at all likely," she said, "that she will come after me."

"Oh, I don't believe she will," he answered. "I pay but little heed to dreams. I only meant how strange the coincidence that her name should turn up so soon. I was greatly interested in her."

"Well," she said, "so, I confess, am I. I am the only one on earth, I think, that really cares for her or has any influence over her."

"Doubtless," said Father Grosvenor, "you are the friend she spoke to me about, almost in the same terms."

"Likely enough," she answered. "I have known her from her childhood. She is a proud, petulant, self-willed girl, passionate to a degree, and withal so cold and distant that nothing seems to affect her. In fact, for years I have not seen her show signs of emotion till last evening, looking at the lovely and valuable medal you so kindly gave her."

"Thank God!" said Father Grosvenor very earnestly, "thank God! I am so glad I gave it to the poor child; though," he added, with a smile, "I scarcely should have. You

CONTINUED ON SIXTH PAGE.

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