MC2397

POOR DOCUMENT

The Dial.

The lichen gathers where the dial stands,
And ivy round the stone has clinging crept,
And age has stained the carven work of hands
That served some busy brain that long has slept;

The storms and changes of a hundred years
Have marred and blurred the pillar's greceful lines;
But spite of sins and sorrows, time and tears,
Still beautiful its ancient legend shines,

Where lovers lolled and lounged in tender talk,
Above the buried flowers rank grasses grow,
And trailing weeds efface the gravel-walk
Where stiff brocades have rustled long ag o;

Yet clear 'mid all this ruin and decay,
The letters gleaming in the golden light,
Defiant and triumphant ever say;
"I take no heed of hours that are not bright."

And bitter rains may beat, and tempest's rave,
Dark clouds withhold the sunshine from our sight,
Night plunge the starless werld as in a grave—
The dial notes no hours that are not bright.

Oh, happy dial, waiting for the sun
Through storm and gloom in one long, tender dream;
If dreary days might pass for every one
Like yours, how beautiful our lives would seem!

For who the fretful frowns of life would fear,
Or scorn that stings, or anguish that devours,
If hearts, like Time's serene recorder here,
Took heed of none but golden hours?

—WALTER CRANE.

A Beautiful Thought.

Chisel in hand stood a sculptor boy,
With his marble block before him.
And his face lit up with a smile of joy,
And an angel dream passed o'er him;
He carved the dream on that shapeless stone,
With many a sharp incision;
With heaven's own light the sculptor shone—
He had caught that angel vision.

Sculptors of life are we, as we stand
With our souls uncarved before us;
Waiting the hour, when at God's command,
Our life-dream passes o'er us,
If we carve it then on the yielding stone,
With many a sharp incision,
Its heavenly beauty shall be our own,
Our lives that angel vision.

—BISHOP DOANE.

Destiny.

Like a shadow that flies from the sun god, we slip
out of life and are gone.
The place where we were is vacant, for who wtll
remember till noon,
The drop of dew like a diamond which pleased at
the glimmer of dawn?
And when the singer has left us, who cares to
remember the tune?

In the leaves' deep drift in the forest what bird is
seeking the one
Beneath whose shelter she builded her tedious
love cradling nest?
It has lived, it was used, has perished; now lieth,
its use being done;
Forgotten of sunshine and songster in the dust
whence it came. It is best.

But we, we shrink from the leaf's fate, and we
murmur: "Soon they forget;
These friends whom we loved, who loved us and
shared in our pleasures and mirth.
Our names are lost in the silence death bringeth,
and no regret
Endureth for us, low lying in the green-gemmed
bosom of earth."

Oh, mortal, accept the omen; we live, we are used,
and we fall
As the leaf before us has fallen. We pass from
our place and are not.
The living have grief sufficient, content thee to
fold in thy pall
Remembrance and sorrowful grieving, and be of
the living forgot.

—CLARE ST. GEORGE.

SHIRLEY CARSTONE.

By ELIZA ARCHARD.

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Synopsis of Opening Chapters.

Shirley Carstone the heroine of the story is the eldest daughter of the leading family of Linwood, idolized by her father and mother and reverenced by her younger brothers and sisters. An ambitious girl, possessed of more than usual ability she was the leader of the village school and the friend and companion of the teacher, George Morrison, a young man who was educating himself for the ministry. The opening scene describes a picnic of the school children at which George Morrison reads to Shirley Carstone from a favorite author a touching poem which so aflects her that she decides to write a poem herself to read before Linwood debating club. She had written several poems all of which possessed more or less merit. She prepared her poem and read it. As a reward she was presented with a floral crown.

Here the story leaves Shirley to take up another character Philip Dumoray, a young man who became infatuated with a beautiful girl while visiting Hiedelberg, and married her to find out when too late that he had made a mistake. On discovering his wife's infidelity he struck her and threw her paramour out of the house. The beautiful, but erring wife became an opium eater and from the effects of the drug insane. They had two children to whom Philip devoted his life. One night their home caught fire and was destroyed. The insane wfe was taken to her mother's home and the children disappeared. The faithless wife's mother started the report that the husband had set fire to the house, and the scandal got abroad and was generally believed. Philip left his home in search of his children and spent all his fortune excepting what he had settled on his wife. It was then that he started out to earn a living for himself.

Chapter VI. describes two scenes, introducing first Shirley Carstone and her teacher George Morrison as they met one day in the garden.

At the conclusion of chapter VI. Col. Carstone meets with an accident that costs him his life—the details of which are given in chapters VII. and VIII. In chapters IX. and X. an account is presented of Shirley's fallen fortunes and her struggles.

[CONTINUED.]

Shirley might have told her mother what she was about evenings. But she did not.

"I know where the boys go nights, mamma," said little 8-year-old Harry. "They're in Robber's Cave."

"What!" said Shirley.

"They are in Robber's Cave, that's where they are Shirley. They won't tell me, but I followed them one night. I glimpsed at them through the curtain. I'm not afraid of the dark."

Harry was a brave little man, and belligerent.

"They steal corn, and eggs, and chickens, and roast them in the ashes, and eat them," continued the child. "The smoke gets into their eyes, and they get cold and muddy, but they say the grub tastes ever so much better than the cooking at home. They call it grub."

"Where's Robbers' Cave?"

"Get the lantern, Shirley, and I'll take you there. The enemy 'll surprise 'em. Rip is the robber chief, though he's the littlest. They've all learned to smoke, and they've got whisky there. They've lots of other things, too, and when they get enough, they're going to run away, and Rip's going to sell them and they're going to start a robber band in the west, Rip says."

"Why did'nt you tell me this before, Harry?"

"I only heard 'em talk last night. I found their cave long ago. It's dug in the hillside, and covered with leaves and weeds and limbs of trees. Nobody would ever know 'twas Robbers' Cave. They crawl in underground, and they lay a flat rock over the hole. They've a curtain to shut out the light. When they hear a noise they say 'douse yer glim.' That means put out the light. They think it's the awfulest fun."

All this time Shirley and the child were walking rapidly over stones, undergrowth and mud to an out-of-the-road little ravine a quarter of a mile away. Harry stopped with mathematical exactness at a large flat rock. It looked extremely innocent. They moved it and made a little noise.

"Douse yer glim!" they heard a voice say.

"Stand here, sis, right by the curtain," whispered Harry. "Quick! fellers the enemy is upon you!" he shouted aloud.

There was a stumble and a push against the curtain. But in the blind darkness the amateur robbers could not get out.

"Now we've got you where Moses was when the light went out," said the tantalizing child. "Guess that conundrum. Say, boys, where was Moses when the light went out?"

No answer. Shirley lifted the curtain suddenly and let light into the proceedings. As she did so half a dozen boys dodged back into the recesses of an underground hole deep enough to stand upright in. Among them were Tom, Percy and Pet Carstone. The rest quickly made their escape. They slunk in silence before a glance of command which they knew too well to disobey. The cave looked like a junk shop.

Shirley picked up and threw down in rapid succession, respectively, a meat knife, a rusty pistol, a jewsharp and a coil of rope.

"And here, as I live, you've got father's sword in this dirt hole! Now tell me who did this? You, Pet—the boy father used to sing to sleep in his arms till you were 5 years old because you were afraid of the dark? Nice boy you are, aren't you?"

He hung his head.

The Carstone boys surrendered unconditionally to General Shirley. Three fallen heroes marched sullenly and silently in front of the enemy to the house. They vanished ignobly to their dungeon cells, otherwise their beds.

And Shirley—well, when Shirley had disposed of them, she went to the room mutually occupied by herself and the youngest Carstone, and sat down and laughed as she had not done in years. It was the youth in her that laughed—the daring, fun loving, eternal youth.

But there was no more Robbers' Cave.

The boys had a deep grudge at the Presbyterian minister. How they paid it off remains to be recorded. This devout and learned man was extremely dignified. He was also particular in his personal appearance. What could be more proper in a teacher of that gospel which proclaims that cleanliness is next to godliness? Nothing.

From much delving in lore and much profound thought, the good man had lost his hair prematurely. The sisters in the church had it that their pastor had studied the hair off his head. In truth, he was as bald as an onion.

He may be easily pardoned for seeking to remedy his misfortune as best he might. The good man wore a wig. But it was not vanity that led him to wear a wig. It was to keep him from taking cold. He himself said it. Getting an influenza in the head was bad for the effectiveness of religious oratory. He had to be particular on this point. Therefore, no living creature in Linwood had ever seen the minister without his wig, unless it was the cat. Being a widower may or may not have emphasized the liability to influenza. At any rate, though, nothing could be more dignified and decorous and spotless than the reverend gentleman's appearance, wig and all. The ladies of the church took pride in it.

'Twas prayer meeting night. In the back of the church was a door, long unused. It was directly in the rear of the platform whereon the minister sat.

The people were assembled for the beginning of the service. The minister was in his place. Near the platform, likewise in his proper place, sat Deacon Durham, most rigid and devout of all.

It was the impressive moment when the exercises were about beginning. The minister had already said "ahem" to clear his throat.

Suddenly there came three loud and hollow raps at the long unused door behind the minister. The congregation started. The like had never been known before.

The three hollow raps were repeated, like a greeting from the spirit world. Being next the door the preacher himself unfastened it. The minister was a man of action. He pulled the door open hastily. A terrible white figure stood there, ghastly and gigantic. It looked as tall as the meeting house steeple. An awful spirit arm waved in the air an instant, a ghostly hand swooped down and clutched the minister's sacred wig and bore it gently away to realms of air. The door was closed silently and suddenly by invisible spirits. The minister was left standing there in sight of all the folk, bald and shiny.

Consternation seized all. Deacon Durham recovered himself first. He made a dash for the door. The spirit hands held it closed on the outside. It was impossible to open it. The Deacon made a dash for the front door. He ran around the outside of the church. All was darkness and silence. Sinful hands had profaned the church back door, and affixed a bolt to the outside.

Over the scene inside the sanctuary meantime the curtain falls.

There was no preaching next Sabbath. The minister was not well, it was said. But it was said, again, by the godless that he had gone to the city to get a new wig.

Yet a fresh profanation of the sanctuary froze with horror the marrow of the devout in Linwood. The children assembled for Sabbath school as usual. The key of the sacred edifice could not be found. Suddenly, when the whole school was waiting, the key was produced, the door was opened, and the teacher and children were admitted. On the pulpit desk—yea, perched upon the very Bible itself—was a sheep's head. Upon the sheep's head, alas the day! was the identical wig clutched from the minister's head by the spirit hand, prayer meeting night.

But to this day the perpetrators of the scandalous outrage are unknown. Its origin remains a matter of mystery. That, too, is where Moses was when the light went out—in the dark.

CHAPTER XII.

A FACE IN THE GLASS.

Shirley was 22.

For six years she had been teacher of the Linwood school. That was something. But she had adopted other means to help on the fortunes of the Carstone family.

It may or may not be credit to a woman to write for newspapers. It depends on what she writes.

The poem in which Shirley's heart was bound up had to be put aside. At times she wrote brief bits of verse as of old, but not often. There was no money in poetry.

Money the Carstones must have. Shirley wrote short essays and sketches, and got paid for them. So thoroughly were the real and the ideal blended in her nature that her literary work was pointed especially with strong, practical sense. In truth, she caught the ideal and made it the real. That was her way in all things.

She had no extraordinary and romantic difficulties in getting modest newspaper employment. Her power was recognized there from the first. That much in her life at least was easy. But her existence had fallen into such a humdrum rut that she sighed for change day by day. She was the same strong, bright spirit as of old, ever ready for what her hand found to do. But her life seemed to her to be wearing itself out, like a mill wheel that turns around and around in one spot. She felt it sadly.

One morning, at the beginning of her vacation, Percy brought her a letter from the postoffice. It was from the editor of The Morning Herald, for which she wrote. The letter was an answer to her silent thought. It read:

Dear Miss Carstone:

The Psycho-physikethicological association are to hold a three weeks' convention away off in Langham. They meet day after tomorrow. It is found advisable to print a report of their wisdom in The Morning Herald. Will you go to Langham and report the thing for us, and can you start at once!

ED. MORNING HERALD.

P. S.—The State Insane asylum is at Langham. If some of the inside lunatics escape and get mixed with the outside lunes and go to speechmaking, it will make the convention livelier, but the proceedings will not be any more difficult to understand.

To which she answered:

I will go, and I can start at once.

SHIRLEY CARSTONE.

That afternoon she sped away from Chesterton on the wings of steam. It was the first time she had been away from home since the death of her father, six years before. The frettings of her mother, the troublesome, though well beloved children, the wearing, petty cares indoors and out that harrowed her without ceasing at home, were all left behind. Shirley was happy.

Even the music mad young lady, who sat behind her and trilled to herself for sixty miles out, did not annoy her.

She felt like a bird out of a cage. The not being appealed to a hundred times a day, the not having to plan and decide everything for everybody, gave her an elasticity of spirit that she had not known for many a day. She likened herself to Christian in "Pilgrim's Progress" when the load slipped off his back.

She had a sense of freedom about her work, too, that was very grateful. Hitherto what she wrote had to be done in time snatched from her rest, and at odd minutes between other duties. It was what she had been about evenings, when her mother had complained that she did not look after the boys.

Now at Langham she had her time to herself. She had nothing to do but write, except to listen. For Shirley, listening was easy, though it is not so for everybody. She felicitated herself.

She made herself comfortable. She had a pleasant room on the ground floor of a cottage overlooking a little lake. All was clean and rural and sweet, as Shirley loved to have it.

Her work was not so difficult either, for brain and fingers had been trained to her task.

There was one place where she liked best to write. That was in a corner of the grounds, out under the trees. It was a half hidden nook, where a little table was, and a rustic seat. Hither Shirley hied every afternoon, and put the finishing touches on her manuscripts.

It was midsummer. Sometimes between the tremendous deliberations of the institute and the thermometer the day was very hot. The institute kindly accepted the aid of the thermometer in making things hot. It fell on such an afternoon as this that Shirley wore a pretty white dress out to her favorite corner under the trees. Shirley liked white dresses. As she went she stole a red rose from a bush beside the walk and fastened it in her hair. Our girl was very beautiful.

A gentleman who had strolled out alone in the grounds, and happened to see her sitting there thought so. He was a handsome, distinguished looking man, with brilliant, dark gray eyes. His face was a masterful one. It bore the stamp of thought, experience and intellect.

He saw the lady sitting there, with the white dress, the red rose fastened in her crown of light brown hair. She did not perceive him. She had finished her writing. She threw her arm, the pencil still in her fingers, carelessly along the twisted back of the rustic seat. Her head was raised and turned slightly to one side. The regal pose, the noble profile, the exquisite rose-tinted cheek were very striking.

The man who stood there spell bound, had he ever seen that face and figure, in just such a pose, the white dress, the red rose and the fair hair? Oh, heaven! There came a sudden physical movement about his heart, as if it would break from his breast. He placed his hand against a tree to steady himself. He needed something to hold fast by. And yet it had been six years!

Well, he would not startle her if he could help it. He crackled a dead branch to make some sound, and kept his face half hidden. The lady heard the noise, and looked about. She saw a man's figure and a half face. The man watched her in side glances. The face, the outlines took for her a look of something well known and loved long ago. He turned now and approached her slowly. Once more, as once in the past, the blood forsook her face and settled back around her heart. Then it came again in great waves and surges to her face. The grief, the care, the weariness of six years rolled away as in a cloud, and left her sitting under the trees with a white dress on and a red rose in her hair, and the master leaning over the rustic seat beside her.

A strong, shapely hand touched her extended arm, a pair of starlike eyes looked intensely down once more into hers. Oh! it was the same, that face with the sweet, half veiled smile she knew so well, the deep, mellow voice, calling her as of old, "Shirley!"

The universe seemed whirling around, with her, Shirley Carstone, for its pivotal point. She answered, faintly:

"Mr. Morrison!"

He came and sat down beside her.

She tried to think of something to say. She did say:

"I didn't think you would have known me, Mr. Morrison.

For answer he quoted softly:

"I count myself in nothing else so happy,
As in a soul remembering my good friends."

Then he spoke easily and lightly:

"What in the world are you doing here, Shirley?"

She smiled, with the old gleam of fun in her eyes.

"I am reporting the Psycho-physikethicological institute for The Morning Herald."

"Don't you think you are a little bit crazy?"

"I'm not sure. But if I be I, which I think I be, then I'm sure some of the members of that institution are."

"What do they do?"

"Oh, they go mooning about over the universal everywhere, and grabble after the infinite."

He smiled with amusement. "Can you understand them," he said.

"Well, sometimes I get tangled up between the actuality of the present and the reality of the possible. But that's all a joke compared to the fundamental archetypes of sociology. That's what really floors me, you know. They just pour out their souls upon the fundamental archetypes of sociology."

"Well, don't stop 'em!"

"I don't intend to. But I would like to choke off their blessed bosh, now and then, if I could. The fun of it is, they fancy they understand one another. If you outside, vox populi, don't understand, then so much the worse for you!"

He laughed again, but said nothing. It was joy and perfect peace only to be near her, to hear her voice. It seemed to be a relief from embarrassment for her to run on. She asked him:

"Do you mean to say you are not here to attend the Psycho-physikethicological institute?"

He seemed a little confused.

"No, no," he said; "I am only here for two days, on private business. Let me see the report you make, Shirley; how long is it?"

She smiled merrily and held up the bundle of paper she had covered. "How long is it! All day long."

He would not talk of himself. He only said he had been in the west, and had been busy all these years.

"Tell me what has happened in Linwood," he said. "I have not a heard a word from it since I left. I thought you would have been married long ago, Shirley."

She looked at him a little reproachfully; then suddenly, as the thought of all she had lost since he left her came back, a shadow of grief and pain came over her bright, sweet face. She told him of her father's terrible death, of the loss of her fortune, of how she was in his old place as teacher.

I write for newspapers, too," she said, brightening again. "I condense solemn information from agricultural reports for the readers of The Morning Herald. I can tell you to a dot, too, what effect the new dog tax law is going to have on the politics of the state."

"But why do you not write your poem?"

She flushed slightly. "Mother is an invalid," she said. "We need so many things. I must do all I can to get money. I—I have so much to look after. It seems as though I never get time to commence my poem. But I have not given it up, Mr. Morrison. Don't think that."

Her voice quivered a little.

The master read and perceived.

"I see it all," he said sadly. "You are father and mother and bread winner to them all. I never looked for this for you. My dear girl, my poor Shirley."

He stroked her hair softly, and with infinite tenderness.

Mr. Morrison lingered on from day to day. He seemed not to be able to break the light chains that held him there. Yet he appeared restless and ill at ease. He spoke of going from day to day, though he did not go. He was reserved, and kept apart from the rest.

But he hovered about Shirley always, not oppressively, but just enough. He wrote half her reports for her. He had the fine graceful tact, the polished ease of manner of one who knows just what to do in the right place. He knew and met her every little wish, almost before it was formed. He never seemed to be looking for her, but ever his eyes sought hers with messages of courage and sympathy.

Shirley was in a paradise. It was so strangely sweet to her, the lonely girl, to find somebody who thought she needed help and sympathy. It is the doom of those who spend their lives caring for others, that none ever fancy they themselves need to be taken care of.

Little things are much to a woman, very much.

It was the first time since her father died that anybody had taken a thought of Shirley's happiness and comfort. In six years it had occurred to nobody that she had any little wants or wishes of her own. Therefore was this human sympathy unspeakably sweet to her.

The world shaking deliberations of the Psycho-physikethicologians drew to a close. The last afternoon these phosphoric intellects so far forgot their mission as to have a picnic. One blushes to record it. They amused themselves. Many went on boat excursions over the lake.

"Shirley," said Mr. Morrison, "I want you to come with me this evening. This is the last. Wear your white dress, too, and put a rose in your hair. That is how I wish to remember you. I am to have you all to myself this evening, mind."

He led her to the beach and seated her in a little skiff. He took the oars himself. With a few powerful strokes they shot out into the moonlit lake.

"I have found a place along the lake that I want to show you," he said. "I think it will please you."

In half an hour he tied the boat at the shore in the deep hollow of a tiny crescent bay. A cluster of beautiful trees grew there. Near by a brook tumbled over a cliff, and then gathered itself up and went on again into the lake. The summer wind murmured low among the trees. The miniature waterfall murmured back in music. The drops of water made a million white lights in the moonbeams. All was cool and restful.

Shirley clasped her hands with delight. "How lovely! How lovely this is!"

"I thought you would like it," said the master, quietly.

All that afternoon they had been near each other. In company with two or three of the learned lights, they had gone botanizing, picnicking, naturalisting, and the Lord knows what. It had been, in a way, like the vanished days of Linwood, yet different. Yes, there was a difference now.

Little matter was it that they had not been alone. They were happier, perhaps, on that account. The sweet, subtle sympathy that joined them could well be left unspoken. The silver line stretched between them, invisible to all but themselves.

They found a seat beneath the beautiful trees.

Shirley sat in silence, with her hands softly clasped in her lap, and looked out at the water and moonlight.

"This has been the happiest day of my life," said Mr. Morrison, at length.

"And mine, too," replied Shirley, hardly knowing what she said.

He leaned toward her till his head touched the rose in her hair. Was it the wind, or the brook, or what was it that whispered in tones broken and sweet.

"I fight no more against the tide! Shirley, my star, my lily! Oh, how I love you!"

But they were a kingly pair, these two strong, beautiful ones!

Lower and lower the southern moon dipped; its rays shimmered across the waterfall, but they did not heed it. At last he arose with a start.

"Do you know how late it is, Shirley?"

"No," says Shirley, "and I'm afraid to ask."

They entered the tiny boat hastily. The last rays of the southern moon glinted across the whispering waterfall.

In the cool night silence they went to Shirley's cottage, they two. The swinging lamp yet burned in the porch. They passed in through the hallway.

SHIRLEY AND THE MASTER.

The room inside was quite deserted. At the threshold Mr. Morrison said good night, with a grave, stately bow. He had taken a step away when Shirley clutched his arm suddenly.

"Look there!" she said.

A face was pressed against the glass outside, staring at them with wild, demoniac eyes. It was waxy white and emaciated. In all her life Shirley never again saw a countenance so frightful, so full of devilish malice as that. She shuddered from head to foot in spite of herself.

An awful look came into George Morrison's face. It was as if the frost of a thousand years had suddenly entered his heart.

"I will see what it is at once," he said. "It is nothing, don't mind it, Shirley."

He turned and left her with a bound.

CHAPTER XIII.

"SHE IS MY WIFE."

What did it mean?

The face vanished in an instant. As quickly as she could collect her senses, Shirley followed Mr. Morrison out the hallway. She went around in the porch to the window where the face had been. The master was nowhere about. No living creature was there. She stepped out upon the lawn beyond, and peered about under the starlight. She saw nothing, heard nothing.

All was night and silence.

So still it was out there, so entirely all nature seemed unconscious of anything unusual, that Shirley could almost have believed nothing unusual had happened, and that she had imagined the face in the glass. There was a dim light inside the room, a brighter light outside in the porch. Might not the optical laws of refraction and reflection, aided by a crooked pane of glass, have twisted the image of some very commonplace object into that distorted, demoniac shape? She had read of such things.

At any rate, Shirley was not one to fret herself unnecessarily. She had had so many real worries in her life that she never went out of her way to hunt up unreal ones. Above all and before all, too, there was the supreme comforting thought, if anything was wrong, he, the master, would set it right. He would see that no harm came to her.

That was the thought in her mind as she went back inside the cottage, and to her own room.

The room, it will be remembered, was upon the ground floor.

The girl sat down beside the low, broad window. She was too restless, too happy to sleep. She said over and again to herself: "Fate has been very good to me, after all. I never believed such joy was to be for me, Shirley Carstone."

The master loved her. He had told her so. That was enough. No vision of guile, of treachery or of trouble crossed her thought. Her noble, innocent nature saw no falseness, no weakness in those she loved. She trusted them wholly. Yea, to the world's end.

Looking down the valley into the years that were to come, Shirley saw only brightness. Perplexities would come perhaps. Her hands would still be full of work, that she knew. Nay, as the world went, it might be long before he could come and claim her. She even thought of that. What then? The master loved her. That knowledge would be a strange, sweet presence that walked beside her day by day to the end, turning her heavy load into lightness. She laughed in the face of storm, of darkness, of the deadly lightning. The sweet, magic presence that walked evermore beside her would touch them and turn all her life into blue sky and rose cloud.

And her poem? The intense girl heart gave a glad bound. Half her inspiration had seemed gone when the master left her under the willows that day long ago. Now it came back. Now she would indeed write her poem. She would prove herself worthy of such a lover. He should be so proud of her, in the blessed years to come!

Rapt in her sweet visions Shirley sat there hour after hour. Morning was at hand. The mysterious thrill of the coming day quivered in the dark air. A timid bird chirped faintly. The breath of lilies swept in at the open window.

Shirley started up, smiled and threw herself upon her bed, dressed as she was. She had spun her web of thought out for the time. In five minutes she was in the land of dreams.

Shirley was a sound sleeper. The fashion of "nervous" young lady was just coming in. Shirley was not of that kind. She had a clear conscience and a good digestion, heaven be praised!

Therefore when a human shape trod catlike over the low window sill and into the room, she did not waken.

The first knowledge Shirley had was an awful consciousness that she was dying of suffocation. A great weight was upon her chest. Something was pressed over her mouth and nostrils, stifling her, swift and deadly. She tried to breathe, she tried to cry out. In vain. She struggled. She was lapped from head to foot in some heavy covering that made it impossible for her to use her hands or arms. She fought blindly a moment or two, and then gave over.

Death was almost there, she knew. The master, would he ever know how she died? In the last gleam of consciousness, a foolish tale of her childhood flashed through her memory. A cat had sat upon a child's breast, it was said, and drawn the breath from its nostrils, and so suffocated it. Was it a cat upon her breast?

Then she remembered no more.

But just in the nick of time, the instant before it would have been too late forever, a man sprang in at the window. The man was Mr. Morrison. With giant strength he seized the creature upon the bed and flung her off. It was a woman, with waxy white face and wild, demoniac eyes. He snatched the pillow and a heavy covering from Shirley's senseless form. He lifted her, he fanned her with his hand, called her his Shirley, his darling, he implored her to speak to him.

The wild woman flew at him like a panther. She tore his face with her nails. She buried her teeth in his hand to the bone.

Once more he mastered her by main strength and dragged her away from the bed. Two strong men had followed hm in through the window. One of them carried a straitjacket. He gave her into their hands. It was with difficulty that even they could hold her.

Shirley opened her eyes. The wild woman saw it, and made as if she would spring at her again. But the two keepers had got her into the straitjacket.

Mr. Morrison motioned them to be gone.

"Take that devil away," he said, "before I crush the life out of her!"

The wild woman snarled at him like a savage beast. The keepers forced her out through the doorway. As she went she gave George Morrison a last look of helpless rage, and muttered:

"I hate you! And you would marry me!"

Shirley heard her say it. She lived over the horror of those few moments in her dreams, sometimes in after years, and would waken to find herself standing upright, shrieking frightfully, her brow wet with drops of cold perspiration.

She had heard the wild woman mutter:

"I hate you! And you could marry me!"

The master stood still by the door with a deathly pale face, and blood dripping from his hand. A streak of blood coursed down his cheeks. Shirley turned her eyes on him. She was quite in her senses now.

"Who is that woman?" she said.

The concentrated gall and wormwood of all humanity was in his voice as he answered:

"She is my wife!"

Then a fearful silence followed. He broke it.

"Well, Shirley, you don't congratulate me on my wedded bliss?"

She gave him a terrible look.

"You have deceived me," she said.

"I have. It is true I saved your life a moment ago, but that is nothing. I have let you believe a falsehood. And my name is not George Morrison. It is Philip Dumoray. Perhaps you will be interested to know it."

The dare devil of his reckless youth was uppermost in him again now. He strode across and stopped beside her with his white, blood streaked face and wounded hand. He stood so close to her that the blood from his hand dropped and stained the sleeve of her white dress. She shrank from him with horror. He went on.

"I have deceived you all along. I am a married man—husband of the angelic creature who so nearly murdered you awhile ago."

The master was the master no longer, not even of himself. A savage oath broke from his lips. Shirley could not speak. She beckoned him feebly to go. He did not heed it, but talked on:

"She almost killed me once, in the same way. They have had her in the mad house, on the hill, for nine years. I come here once a year to see that she is well treated and wants for nothing. That is what I came here for now. Last night she got away. Nobody knew it till you saw her at the window. I gave the alarm and searched for her with two attendants all night after I left you. I was afraid she would do some devilry. I never thought of harm to you, though, good God!"

Then he broke into wild anger again.

"Go, only go!" said Shirley, faintly.

"Well, I will. But I will come back again."

The rose she had worn in her hair lay upon the floor, crushed and trampled. He stooped and picked it up and carried it away with him.

Was not that a morning for them both, after such an evening?

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Shirley had only one thought—to get away. and that quickly and forever. A mad desire to fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, where she would see nobody she ever knew; above all, where Philip Dumoray would never find her again. That was the only wish she was conscious of.

The work which she had come to do was done. The stir and bustle of the morning was on now. All about her she heard it. A train left early which would take her homeward. She was weak and trembling, so that she could scarcely rise, yet she hurried her preparations. She was in feverish haste to be gone. She had been so happy in that cottage, happier than ever in her life before. But now it was hateful to her. Only let her go away, away.

It wanted yet an hour till train time when Shirley was ready for her departure, yet she made haste to be gone. In the cheerless, foggy dawn she had herself taken to the station. How utterly cheerless, how dreary it was! It was a morning to take the stiffening out of a human being.

"SHE'S MY WIFE."

Shirley waited for the train. She could not restrain her impatience. She walked up and down the platform in the fog. She shivered with cold, she, the warm blooded, merry Shirley. Her knees trembled beneath her with weakness, but her will kept her up. There is nothing so good as a strong will.

Well, at last, in fifteen minutes it would be train time. She looked at her watch. It was very chilly. She disliked to go back into the little waiting room. It was full of giggling girls, smirking youths and stupid women. In the unhappy, unreasonable mind in which she was, how she hated them!

Nevertheless, she was chilled to the bone. She turned to go inside, and came face to face with Philip Dumoray!

He had been to the cottage and had followed on after her. His injured hand was bound up and carried in a sling. His torn, disordered clothing had been replaced by a well made toilet. He would have been neatly attired if he had dressed himself for the scaffold. There was dandy enough about Philip Dumoray for that. His face was still very pale, but firm and composed. He looked reproachfully at Shirley.

"Why did you go away when you knew I wished to see you again?"

"Why did you come here after me when you knew I did not wish to see you?"

"I did not know it," he replied, simply.

"Then you ought to have known it. You saved my life. I ought to thank you for that, I suppose. But I don't. Life will not be so sweet or pleasant to me hereafter that I should cherish a desperate desire to hang to it through thick and thin."

"Shirley," said he, "there is something I have to tell you. It is a wretched story. I ask you to bear with me and listen to it."

"I don't wish to hear it," she answered, coldly.

"But I must tell you," he said.

"My train is coming," said Shirley. "There it is at the curve. Good morning, Mr. Dumoray."