

associated with recollections of his own youth. A line of Tom Moore's "Come, ye disconsolate," once a special favorite when sorrow seemed far from him, was borne to his ears:

Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.

He lay down and slept. At dusk the next evening, as he was heating a piece of iron in the blacksmith shop, a man stopped at the wide, open door.

"Will you give me a night's lodging? I have walked far to-day, and I'm a stranger in this part of the country."

Zeki! wheeled, the light from the forge shining across his face. He brought out the stranger's face and form in bold relief also.

"Why, it's Zeke Morgan," he cried, walking into the shop. "Yes! I thought I recognized your voice, Miller," said Zeki!, slowly, and without much pleasure at the recognition.

They had been in prison together, and Zeki! had left Miller there. He had never felt any liking for the man, and less now than ever, as he looked at his ragged clothing and dissipated face. He had evidently been steadily sinking in vice, and his repulsiveness was impressed upon his outward being. But a certain pity stirred Zeki!'s heart. He remembered his own friendlessness when he entered that settlement. Could he show less mercy than had been shown to him?

"Sit down, won't you?" he said kindly, blowing up the coals in the forge to a glowing heat.

"That I will, I'm footsore, and hungry as a bear. I'm in luck to meet with you, comrade," chuckling.

Zeki! winced. "The man's familiarity grated upon him.

"Where are you going?" he inquired.

"Oh, nowhere in particular. I'm just out."

"Why, I thought your time would be up in two years after I left."

Miller shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes; but I made so many attempts to escape that they kept adding extra time to my term."

He sat down while Zeki! finished his work.

"You seem to be getting on pretty well," he continued, his restless eyes scanning the surroundings.

"Only tolerable."

Two or three of the neighbors dropped in, one to have a broken plow, another to tell a bit of gossip. They stared curiously at Zeki!'s disreputable companion, who jocosely informed them that Morgan had once been his chum.

Zeki! felt annoyed, and, closing up the shop, invited his guest into the house. They had supper, then sat down and smoked. Miller talked a good deal, and asked many questions about the neighborhood and the store; but at last he fell asleep, huddled up on the bed, and Zeki! lay down on a bench, recollections of his prison life keeping him awake far into the night.

When he awoke the next morning his guest was gone. He was glad of it. The man's presence oppressed him, but brought a sense of degradation. But what were his feelings when he heard that Mr. Davy Tanner's store had been robbed, the mail-box rifled, letters torn open, and various articles of wearing apparel taken!

He grew so pale, seemed so agitated and confused, that the man who had come up to tell the news stared wonderingly, half-suspiciously at him. He had brought the plow to the shop the evening before, and he now looked around for the stranger.

"Where is your friend?" he inquired.

"He is no friend of mine."

"But he loved that he knew you."

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In prison," said Zeki!, quietly, though he flushed with shame.

"Aha! I loved so, I just loved so, last night."

Zeki! tingled all over. He had never felt the degradation of being a convict more heavily than at that moment. He suspected Miller of the theft, this man's tone implied that he suspected them both. It showed how slight a hold he had upon the trust of his neighbors if they could so readily believe that he would rob the best friend he had in the settlement. He went into the house and sat down by the hearth, his head leaned between his hands.

News of the robbery spread, and men left their work to go over to the store, stirred up, pleasantly excited. It was not often that Zion Hill settlement could boast of having anything so important as this robbery take place within its limits, and it must be made the most of.

Zeki! held aloof from the store, where he knew a large crowd had collected, but, later in the day, a small delegation came up to interview him. He read suspicion in every eye, indignation in every eye. His quiet, honest life among them had been forgotten; they remembered only that he had been a convict.

"Once a thief, always a thief, I say," one man cried loudly.

Zeki! clenched his hands, but what could he say in self-defence? He made a clear, straightforward statement of all he knew about Miller, earnestly denying all knowledge of the robbery, but he felt the slight impression made on their doubting minds. They did not openly accuse him, but they asked many questions, they exchanged knowing glances, and when they went away he felt that he had been tried and condemned. The sheriff had gone in pursuit of Miller, and all day groups of men sat or stood about the store whittling sticks, chewing tobacco, and talking. It was a

most enjoyable day to them. It afforded excitement, and gave an opportunity to air opinions, to bring forth old prejudices. There was almost universal condemnation of Zeki!. He had entertained the thief, had given him all the information necessary, and the more bitter ones wagged their heads and said that no doubt he had shared in the spoils. Even Mr. Davy Tanner looked sad and doubtful, though he defended the unfortunate man.

"We've no right ever to accuse a person without evidence o' guilt. We don't know even that this other man had anything to do with it—though circumstances do all p'int that way—let alone Zeki! Morgan. It's best to hold our peace till we find out the truth."

"But it looks mighty suspicious ag'in Zeki!."

"Because he's been in the penitentiary, an' we think he's got a bad name by it."

"Well, ain't that enough to set honest men ag'in him?"

"Yes; but it ain't best to always judge a man by his misdeeds in the past, but rather by his good deeds in the present, an' what they promise for the future."

"Why not, when it's accordin' to scriptur'?"

So the talk went on, while Zeki! sat by his fireless hearth or walked aimlessly up and down the yard. At dusk his brother called, looking almost as haggard as he did.

"It's a bad thing, Zeki!."

"Yes," said Zeki!, listlessly.

"They are fools to think you had anything to do with it, plumb-fools."

"It's natural they should, Lijy."

"I can't stand it, Zeki!. Lord! I can't stand it."

He fell into a chair and covered his face with his hands.

"Chut, man! what does it matter?" said Zeki!, bracing himself up and forcing a smile. "Don't let Lizbeth believe it, that's all I ask."

"She'll never believe it."

"It's all right then; I'll not care what the rest o' the world thinks."

"But I do," cried Lijy, starting up.

"An' I'll put an end to it by—"

"You'll not do anything rash, Lijy," said Zeki!, firmly, quietly, and laid his hand on the other's shoulder.

"Recollect your family."

He looked slight and insignificant by the side of his brother, but his face had a strength and calmness which seemed to give it a power the other lacked. Lijy groaned, and turned tremblingly away.

A week passed, but Zion Hill settlement could not go back to its everyday vocations until somebody had been arrested for the robbery. The man Miller seemed to be wary prey, eluding his pursuers with the crafty skill of an old offender. It was a solitary week to Zeki!. He had been completely ostracized by his neighbors. They openly shunned him, and no more work came to his forge. He stood in the empty shop one day wondering what he should do next, where he should go, when Lizbeth walked slowly, quietly in.

He flushed painfully.

"You see I'm idle," he said, pointing to the dead coals in the forge.

"They don't think I'm worthy o' doin' their work any longer."

"I wouldn't mind," she said, tenderly, laying her hand on his arm.

"They'll see they are mistaken after a while, and be glad enough to come back to you."

"I don't know," with a heavy sigh. "It's the injustice that hurts me, an' the lack o' faith in my honesty. The years I've lived here count for nothin' with them."

"I have faith in you, Zeki!."

He laid his hand over hers.

"If I had you, Lizbeth, if I only had you to help me bear it."

"That's what I've come for, Zeki!. I'm crippled. It may be that I'll turn out to be more of a burden than a comfort to you, but I can't sit down there any longer knowin' you are here slighted and sufferin' all alone. Zeki!, have pity on me, if you've none on yourself, and let me bear this trouble with you."

He trembled before the future her words conjured up.

"Could you, would you, be willin' to bear my disgrace, share it, be shunned like a plague, have no company, no friend, but me?"

"What are friends to the one we love, or company? I'd give up all the world, Zeki!, willinly, willinly, for you."

He looked into her deep, earnest eyes, realized the full truth of her words, and drew her closer to him.

"It's a great sacrifice, Lizbeth, an' I'm wrong to let you make it; but—"

"The Lord forgive me!—I can't hold out alone any longer. My will an' my courage are all broke down. I need help, I need you."

After a momentary silence he dusted a bench, and they sat down to talk over their plans for the future. The shop, black with charcoal and iron dust, was a queer place for such a conversation; but they paid little heed to their surroundings.

"Marthy Ann will never get over your marryin' me," said Zeki!.

"Then she can make the best of it."

The next day was Saturday, and regular "meetin'" day at Zion Hill church. Everybody in the settlement who could attend services that day. The Morgans were all there, even Lizbeth, and Zeki! sat in his accustomed place, apparently unmindful of the cold, hostile glances and whispers around him. Through open doors and windows shone golden sunlight, floated spicy odors from the woods surrounding all but the front of the church, which faced the public road; and vagrant bees mingled their lazy

hum with the clamping of bits and the stamping of iron-shod hoofs in the thickets, where the mules and the horses were tied.

It was a quiet but alert congregation. A kind of expectancy, of suspense, filled the air. No telling what might happen before the day was over. The preacher made the robbery the theme of his discourse, and there were nods and approving looks when he referred to the punishment laid up for those who persisted in doing evil. It was fitting finale that just before the benediction was pronounced a small cavalcade rode up to the church door—the sheriff, two deputies, and Miller. A thrill ran through the church, a rustle, a whisper, and the preacher cried aloud to the sheriff:

"What do you want, Brother Mangum?"

"Zeki! Morgan."

"Here he is, here he is," cried more than one voice, and men rose to their feet and laid eager hands on the unresisting Zeki!.

"What do you want him for?" cried Lijy Morgan, rising from his seat in the deacons' corner. "What's he done?"

"Helped to rob the store."

"We've said so, we've said so, ever since it happened," a chorus of stern but triumphant voices exclaimed.

"Bring up the witness ag'in him, the man that says he did it," said Lijy, advancing to the open space before the pulpit.

"No man has said out an' out that he helped to do it, but Miller—"

"It's a lie," cried Lijy, loud enough to be heard beyond the church door.

Zeki!'s eyes were fixed anxiously, warningly, on his brother, and once he tried to throw off the hands holding him.

"Prove it then," a taunting voice cried out.

"I will," said Lijy, though he grew pale, and trembled strangely. "A more honest man than Zeki! Morgan never lived."

"What do you know of him?"

Again Zeki! strove to free himself, but failed.

"Lijy," he called imploringly.

"Lijy, Lijy, mind what you say!"

Lijy looked across at him.

"I will mind the truth, Zeki!. He turned to the congregation.

"I came here with good recommendations, brethren; I am a deacon of the church; you have faith in my integrity, my honor." An approving murmur went up. "If a dozen thieves were to stop at my house there'd be no suspicion against me."

He paused, passed his hand over his face, then looked up again. "Years ago there were two brothers in this State who grew up together happy and contented. The elder one was always a little wild, and would get drunk sometimes, even after he'd married and had a family to look after, but the younger was the steadiest, best boy in the settlement. One night the elder brother, in a fit of drunken recklessness, stole a horse from the camp of a Kentucky drover, an' nobody found out but his brother, who undertook to return the horse, an' was arrested. He took the guilt, he stood the trial, an' went to the penitentiary. He lost his good name, the girl he loved, his home, everything in the world an' honest man values. He served his time, an' instead o' comin' home to be a reproach to his cowardly brother when free, he went away into a strange settlement to live. An' by an' by his brother moved there too, an' his conscience hurt him more an' more as he saw what a sad, lonesome life the convict lived. He was prosperous, he enjoyed the confidence of his fellow-men, while the other was shunned, and regarded with distrust." Emotion checked his utterance for a moment; then he turned and pointed to Zeki!.

"Brethren, look at that man; look without prejudice or suspicion, an' you'll not see guilt in his face nor in his conscience. There never lived a truer hero than Zeki! Morgan. Nobody should know it better than I, for I am the brother whose crime he suffered for."

Then he walked across the floor to Zeki!'s side in the midst of the deepest silence which had ever fallen upon a congregation in Zion Hill church.

It was Ben Johnson, we believe, who, when asked Mallock's question, "Is life worth livin'?" replied, "That depends on the liver." An' Ben Johnson doubtless saw the double point of the proverb. The liver active—quick—life rosy, everything bright, mountains of trouble melt like mountains of snow. The liver sluggish—life dull, everything blue, molehills of worry rise into mountains of anxiety, and as a result—sick headache, dizziness, constipation. Two ways are open. Cure permanently, or relieve temporarily. Take a pill and suffer, or take a pill and get well. Shock the system by an overdose, or coax it by a mild, pleasant way.

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The "Sunlight" Soap Co., Toronto, offer the following prizes every month till further notice to boys and girls under 18, residing in the Province of Ontario, who send the greatest number of "Sunlight" wrappers: 1st, \$10; 2nd, \$5; 3rd, \$2.50; 4th, \$1.50; 5th to 15th, a handsome Book; and a pretty picture to those who send less than 12 wrappers. Send wrappers to "Sunlight" Soap Office, 43 Scott St., Toronto not later than 25th of each month, and marked "Competition." Also give full name, address, age, and number of wrappers. Winners names will be published in *The Toronto Mail* on first Saturday in each month.

Mina's Liniment cures Burns, etc.

A CURIOUS CUSTOM.

Choosing Orphan Girls for Wives in a Church in Naples.

At the far end of Naples lies the church of Santa Maria Annunziata, which once a year, on the day of our Lady, wakes up into a brief life and excitement. In a silent row, all in black garments, with folded hands and eyes fixed on the picture of the Madonna before them. These are orphans from the neighboring foundling asylum, and once a year all those who have reached the age of eighteen are brought here to the church, and may be chosen in marriage by any honest man whose papers are in order and whose character is good. At the door leading to the sacristy, the head of the asylum, by and by a man makes his way from the back of the church and hands him a little packet of papers. These the priest reads carefully, and being evidently satisfied he gives back the papers and leads the candidate toward a row of girls. All their eyes are fixed more steadfastly than ever on the altar, all their hands are clasped tightly together, their faces turn a shade paler, their hearts beat quicker as the young man walks slowly along the row. At last he stops. His choice is made. He stretches out his hand with a little smile. The girl rises, puts her hand into that of the stranger, and together they disappear into the sacristy. The priest being thus broken, other suitors come forward.

Do not Minimize What You Believe.

In their effort to appear free from bigotry and intolerance, many Catholics actually retard, by their language and conduct, the labor of conversion of souls. Such persons are well meaning, and act from the best of intentions but through a defective knowledge of our holy religion, and what it commands, they entertain erroneous notions concerning their relations with non-Catholics.

How often do we not hear, for instance, Catholics speak of certain Protestant friends or acquaintances as being very good Christians, and as being in the way of salvation, and hence, that nothing need be done towards their conversion.

The loose manner of speech creates a double wrong. In the first place, it tends to inculcate among Catholics, even the pernicious doctrine that no matter what a person believes he will be saved, and it is calculated to lull our separated brethren into a sense of perfect security in their "mutilated Christianity."

It is the duty of Catholics to proclaim clearly and unequivocally the truth that our Lord founded but one Church, and that is the one resting upon the rock, and that all men must hear the Church, or be like the heathen and the publicans.

We should not minimize the faith that we profess, but cling to it as our proudest heritage. If we do ought to induce our separated brethren to believe that their form of worship is as good as ours, our responsibility will be great indeed. Let us beware of giving false impressions as to what we believe.

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The Whispering Madonna.

There is another picture by Raphael, now to be found in Munich, called "The Whispering Madonna." The mother is standing as gracefully as a rose bending backward on its stalk, to support her child, pressing his face close to her own. There is a sweet smile on her lips, and the Child?—Have you never seen a mother holding her lips to her child's ear and whispering—whispering, oh, how softly and sweetly? And have you not seen the infant's face change, smile, look grave, smile again, all as if it understood every word said in its ears? You realize, as perhaps never before, unless in reading some page from Father Faber, the blissful familiarity in which Our Lady lived with her Divine Babe. There was a veneration, oh, how tender, for the least fold of linen touching His sacred body; there was an adoration, oh, how absolute, for His Divinely Person; at the same time Mary, divine, crossed, soothed the charming Humanity of the little incarnate one with all a mother's fondness, all a mother's caresses.—*Christmas-Tide.*

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