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The Broken Circle!

CHAPTER XXXIX.

She could only bend over him in loving pity, and murmur sweet words of comfort.

It was a terrible death-bed to Hettie. It would have been terrible to any girl, but it was more so to her, for she was so sensitive, so spiritual, and the man dying there so sadly the reverse. She never forgot those long night-watches. It was horrible to turn from the lines of light that lay upon the sea to the gray head tossing and turning on the pillow, to the pallid lips whose utterances were at times so terrible.

One night Martin called her to him.

"Send for Leah," he said; "I cursed her, and I cannot die."

He knew nothing of the beauty of patience, of the value of suffering; all that he knew was that his time was come, and yet he could not die.

The doctor had wondered at his prolonged life; and once—ah! would Hettie ever forget that terrible day?—the kind-hearted rector of Southwood had made his way to the sick man's room. Hettie never knew all that passed; but, when he was leaving the house, the good clergyman, with a shocked, horrified expression on his face, said,—

"Pray for your father. He wants all the mercy Heaven can give him. It is nothing but hatred that keeps him alive."

It was a lonely and terrible task, nursing that stern, cynical man. Hettie grew paler and thiner every day, deep in her heart lay the secret of her lost love. She had put it out of sight; there would be time enough to think of it, and mourn over it, when her father was gone. Her mind and thoughts were so much engrossed with this that she did not dwell, as she would otherwise have done, on the fact that Leah would soon be with her—Leah, whom she had seen last in all the splendor of her magnificence.

The bleak November evening wore on, the gray head and the white face turned restlessly to and fro.

"Hettie, is she come yet," was the hoarse cry from Martin's lips. "Your sister deserted me, and I cursed her, and I want to take the curse away from her."

The devoted daughter who had been so true and faithful to him, who had refused rank and wealth, and had clung to him—of her he had nothing to say. He did not thank her for the sacrifice of so much of her fair young life to him; he accepted all as his due. But in death, as in life, his heart was with this beautiful Leah, whom he had meant to succeed him.

The dull, latent hours passed on. He had no strength; for many hours he had taken no nourishment. He called Hettie to him.

"Does a righteous man's blessing ever do any good?" he asked, in a thick, hoarse whisper.

"Yes," she answered.

There was no time to stop and think, with those dying eyes fixed on her face.

"Then a bad man's curse must do harm!" he moaned, and Hettie had no answer for him.

The evening deepened, silence crept over the land, and the shadow of death grew darker over the cottage. The grim king had drawn one step nearer, and Martin Ray had gathered all his energies together to do battle with him. He spoke to himself, not to Hettie.

"I will not die until I have seen Leah. What is it I have laid upon her? Something heavy, and black, and bitter. I must take it off. I will not die until she comes."

In this the hour of her distress, friends and neighbors were good to Hettie. She was never left alone. But Martin Ray would have no strange women in his room—no nurses, no friendly helpers for him; and he gave no thought to the terror that his lonely child must feel.

As this world well from him and the light of another grew clearer to him, he saw more distinctly the face of his lost daughter.

"Leah," he cried, incessantly. "Leah, I want you Leah, come to me! Leah, I cannot die! O, Heaven, I canlot die!"

Hettie had borne so much that she did not even cry out when he turned his angry, despairing, dying face to hers, and said,—

"Why did you not go? Since one must leave me, why did you not go and leave her with me?"

They were cruel words that her tender heart did not resent even then. She excused him even to herself, saying that he did not know what he was uttering, he did not understand. The cold hand of Death pressed him more closely. There was something of dignity in the way in which Martin Ray threw out his arms in despair.

"I will not die until I have seen Leah!" he cried. "I know—I have read—what the curse of a father brings to a child. She did not merit it. I must take it away. If I do not, her life will be spoiled. Hettie, give me something that I may live until she comes. I can hear horses galloping up the hill—I hear carriage-wheels! I hear the rush of the wind, the roar of the sea; I can hear—oh, Leah, make haste!"

But Hettie knew that no carriage could drive up to their cottage, and she tried her best to tranquillize him. His cries grew feebler; the incessant beating of his hand on the pillow stopped; there was a curious look on his face, gray, livid, and startled.

She knelt down by his side and took one of the numbed hands in hers, and laid it upon her head.

"I have loved you and served you faithfully, father," she said; "have you no blessing for me?"

The hand lay there like lead; the dying eyes looked into hers, and in them she read a terrible craving.

"I want Leah!" he muttered.

Suddenly the gray shades changed into darkness; and Hettie, seeing a new and terribly strange expression on the worn face, rose from her knees with a startled cry. The women waiting below came running up; and as they did so the sound of some unusual stir below told that Sir Arthur and Leah had arrived. At the same moment something like a shudder passed over the dying man. The next instant a soul had gone forth to meet its Judge, and the Angel of Death sheathed his sword. Martin Ray was dead.

It was little wonder that Hettie, dazed and stunned, fell forward upon the quiet heart that was to love and to hate no more.

When she opened her eyes again, it was Leah who held her in her arms. One minute had passed, yet to Hettie it seemed many hours.

"Too late!" she heard some one say. Then Leah placed her gently in the chair, and went over to her father, she knelt down by his side, and a bitter cry came from her lips.

"I am too late," she said—"too late! Oh, Hettie, he has never taken that cruel curse from me! I am too late!"

She took the cold, motionless hand in hers, and the silence in the room was broken only by her sobs. All the past, with its great dread, and her great horror of it, passed over her as she looked at his face—the face that would never smile or frown upon her again.

The general, watching the scene, assured himself that it was better father and daughter had not met. There could have been nothing pleasant in the words they would have exchanged; there would have been no real affection. Yet he had a lingering, half-superstitious wish that the terrible curse Martin Ray had hurled at Leah when they parted had been taken back.

"I am too late!" sobbed Leah. "Oh, Hettie, if I had but spoken to him once? I have often thought of him, often been sorry; and now I am too late! Tell me if he spoke about me, if he said anything, if he wished to see me? He was my own father, after all."

Sir Arthur withdrew, signing to the women to follow him. It was better to leave the sisters alone with their dead.

An hour afterward, when he went back, he found them locked in each other's arms, and he vowed to himself that they should not be parted again. Death had softened his heart, and had inclined it to the fair and devoted child of his dead sister. He resolved that, if she would, she should come away with him, and leave him no more.

(To be continued.)

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(From Harper's Magazine.)

Young Gibbs, of Smalltown, Kansas, decided to travel. Arriving in Chicago, he made up his mind to eat at least one meal in a fashionable hotel. He was getting on famously with the array of silverware, and appeared to be satisfied that he was passing for a man of the world, when Jackson, the colored waiter, became communicative.

"Been in town long, sah?"

"Just came in from New Orleans," said the young adventurer.

"Dat so? Ah used to live in New Orleans. "How's de Mardi Gras?"

"Fine. It's the best I've ever eaten."

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A NEW STYLE OF "LINGERIE."

3911. Fashion is ever busy evolving new ideas for pretty undergarments. This style speaks for comfort and simplicity, and provides a very convenient combination garment, that may serve as a "slip." Taffeta with embroidery or pongee finished with hemstitching would be the "newest" development for this model. It is good too, for batiste or crepe.

The Patter nis cut in 4 Sizes, Small, 34-36; Medium, 38-40; Large, 42-44; Extra Large, 46-48 inches bust measure. A Medium size requires 3 yards of 36 inch material.

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2768—Here is a style easy to adjust, comfortable to wear and easy to launder. It is fine for lawn, linen, batiste, crepe, crepe de chine, and washable satin.

The Pattern is cut in 4 sizes: Small, 32-34; Medium, 36-38; Large, 40-42; Extra large, 44146 inches bust measure. Size 38 requires 1 3-8 yards of 36 inch material.

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A PLEASING BIT OF LINGERIE.

3045—This comfortable model is lovely for crepe, silk, lawn, nainsook, dimity, or satin. For trimming one may have bands of embroidery and edging or lace with insertion to match.

The Pattern is cut in 4 Sizes: Small, 32-34; Medium, 36-38; Large, 40-42, and Extra Large, 44-46 inches bust measure. Size Medium requires 2 5-8 yards of 36 inch material.

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A DAINTY PARTY FROCK.

3918. Very girlish and pleasing is this charming frock. It will lend itself nicely to a development in crepe de chine with a finish of picot, or to taffeta, net, batiste or organdy, desired the skirt may be made with a single tier and the sleeve finished without the ruffles.

The Pattern is cut in 4 Sizes: 8, 10, 12 and 14 years. A 10 year size requires 4 3-8 yards of 36 inch material.

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A DAINTY FROCK.

3861. Just the right dress in which to dance or romp. It will bring joy to the heart of the wearer. In voile or crepe de chine it will make a fine "party" frock. In serviceable gingham or percale it will be nice for school or play time.

The Pattern is cut in 4 Sizes: 2, 4, 6 and 8 years. A 4 year size requires 2¼ yards of 36 inch material.

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A UNIQUE DESIGN.

3887. Fashion has given most graceful lines to this pretty dress, and made it simple too, so that its development will not cause confusion. The slender as well as the plump girl will look well in this frock. Pongee, taffeta, serge, velvet or jersey could be used. It is also nice for wash fabrics.

The Pattern is cut in 4 Sizes: 8, 10, 12 and 14 years. A 12 year size requires 4¼ yards of 32 inch material.

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Father's shirts which are a little worn around the neck will make jumper dresses for the little girl or work aprons for mother.

A short-handled, long, narrow brush with a point in excellent for dusting wicker and willow furniture, bed springs and banisters.

If you wish to keep greens, place in a large earthware vessel, sprinkle with cold water and spread a wetted cloth over the top.

Chinatown salad is a mixture of cold boiled rice, raisins, chopped almonds and chopped dates. Serve with mayonnaise dressing.

Late May is the best time to trim the shrubs. If you wait until Fall, you will perhaps cut of the buds for the following year's flowers.

Poor Mother.

Tommy (aged six) was deeply engrossed in a book of philosophical logic, and his brow was wrinkled in concentrated thought. Downstairs in the kitchen his mother was struggling with the copper fire, which somehow would not ignite.

"Tommy," said his mother, "fetch me a stick of wood."

"Ah, mother," replied Tommy, "the grammatical portion of your education has been sadly neglected. You should say, 'Thomas, my son, transport from that recumbent collection of combustible material on the threshold of this edifice one of those curtailed excrescences of defunct log.'"

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