AN ORIGINAL GIRL.

By Christine Faber.

CHAPTER VI.—CONTINUED.

Sarah, however, responded in her funereal way, and thinking it an excellent opportunity for forcing her companion to speak—Rachel had not said a word beyond her disappointed, "Oh Sarah!" when she saw the woman waiting for her—she said:

"Them two young ladies is Miss Gedding and Miss Fairfax," and as it had been the fifth attempt since leaving the school that Sarah had made to draw the child into conversation, she was hardly disappointed when she received no answer. At the high, narrow gate which opened on the footpath that led to Miss Burram's house, Sarah imparted the only piece of information that Rachel cared to hear; it was that Miss Barram had gone to the city—the city meaning the nearest one, which was fifteen miles distant—gone in her carriage; that accounted to Rachel for Sarah's having been at the school instead of Jim, and Sarah added that she guessed Miss Barram's journey was all along of a letter—a letter which Jim brought down from the post-office after he drove Miss Burram home in the morning.

"Because," as Sarah asserted, "the carriage was put away, and Miss Burram had a sort of settled down for the day, like she always does when she ain't a-goin' out, when Jim comes back from the post-office with a letter for her. And when I takes it to her and she reads it, she just says for me to tell Jim to have the carriage ready, and she's gone now near an hour."

Her account was rewarded by one question from Rachel:

"When will they be back?" not that she cared about the time of Miss Burram's return, but she wanted to tell Hardman about her school experience.

"Couldn't say," replied Sarah; "neither of them left any word."

It was evening when they returned, and long after the dinner hour. Rachel had refused to dine, since Miss Burram had left no word for her to do so, and Sarah, who was prepared to serve the meal at the usual hour, was, as she told Mrs. McElvain, that dumbstruck she didn't know where she was standing, when the child said to her:

"Miss Burram didn't say I was to have dinner without her, so I won't have any till she comes back."

"And then, Mrs. McElvain," Sarah went on, "as soon as I got the use of my tongue I thought to meself I'd just try her a little, and I says, 'But, Miss, maybe Miss Burram'd have business that'd keep her in the city till morn,' and may I never be burned nor drowned alive, Mrs. McElvain, but what does she say to me at that—'Then, Sarah, I'll go to bed without any dinner.'

"And there she is, Mrs. McElvain, a-sitting up in the parlor, a-looking out at the water for all the world as if she was expectin' a ship comin' over the seas to her."

And looking out on the water from one of the parlor windows Rachel continued, till the daylight had quite faded and Sarah came in to light the lamps.

"Don't you think, Miss, you had better have a little dinner now?" the woman ventured.

Rachel answered without even turning her head:

"I told you I didn't want any dinner till Miss Barram came back."

At that very moment Miss Burram's carriage had entered the grounds; Sarah heard the sound of the wheels, and hastened to meet her mistress. Rachel, hearing it also, turned from the window and felt in her pocket for Miss Ashton's note.

Miss Burram seemed excited; unusual red spots burned on her cheeks, and there was a look of suppressed temper in her eyes. Without even waiting to remove her bonnet she entered the dining-room.

"Shall I call Miss Rachel?" asked Sarah, "because she wouldn't take no dinner as you hadn't left word for her to do so, and she said if you didn't come she'd go to bed without any, because, as I said before, you hadn't left no word for her."

Miss Burram stared, then she said:

"Yes, call her," and when the girl came, she said "Good evening!" shortly, motioned to her to take her place at the table, and said not another word till the latter handed her Miss Ashton's note; then she asked quickly and with something like suppressed alarm in her manner:

"Who is it from?"

"The Principal of the school."

"Ah!" Miss Barram said, and her lips compressed as she read it and the spots on her cheeks grew redder. "I shall give you the answer in the morning."

She folded the note and put it into her pocket and the meal was finished in silence.

Rachel said her customary low "Good night, Miss Burram!" and received the customary cold "Good night, Rachel!" in reply and went wearily up to bed.

Her lamp was there burning brightly, and from her window she could see the lights of a passing vessel; and this being a particularly clear night she could see with great distinctness the flash light of the lighthouse five miles distant. The wash of the waves on the beach was the only sound she heard, and as she listened to it with her face glued against the window pane, she fancied there were voices in the sound—voices of homesick, heart-sick children like herself calling for those they loved. Her miserable feelings were aggravated by the fact that not once all day did she have a word with Hardman—the only day since they had become such friends that they had not some conversation, and to-day of all others when she had so much to talk to him about.

And Miss Burram's manner seemed harder to bear than usual. Who was Miss Burram? Why did she take charge of her if she cared so little for her as she seemed to do? were questions which came into the child's mind with a strength and persistency that they never had before. Miss Ashton's questions about her father and mother aroused strange thoughts. While shielded and satisfied by "Tom's" love and care, Rachel had little thought or curiosity about her parents: but now she did wonder, and wonder a good deal about them—who were they? Did Miss Barram know them, and why should Miss Burram be willing to take care of her?

She turned in perplexity from the window, her eyes falling upon the different articles of comfort and luxury; certainly, she wanted for nothing, and her surroundings were very different from those she had in "Tom's" plain little home. But she would have given them all for that plain little home with "Tom" again; then she turned back to the window and drew from her bosom Tom's keepsake, the golden hearts. Again and again she kissed it with the same tenderness with which she would have kissed "Tom's" face, while her tears that she could no longer keep back rained upon it; then she sank upon her knees and said the prayer which "Tom" had taught her:

"Dear, good God, take care of 'Tom.'"

After that she left her head fall forward on the broad ledge of the window and in a few minutes she was soundly asleep. Thus Sarah found her when she came in to take away the lamp, and not being at heart either ill-natured or hard, she was touched almost to tears herself when she saw the traces of tears on the face of the little sleeper.

"Poor little creature!" she said to herself, "it's the queer life she has with Miss Barram anyway;" and then she ventured to take her up and undress her, half fearing, however, that Rachel would awake and make one of the speeches which made Sarah feel how absolutely she must maintain her distance from Miss Burram's Charge. But Rachel slept too profoundly to be disturbed, and beyond an occasional motion that made Sarah in alarm cease all operations for the moment, the child did not once open her eyes, and Sarah having put her into bed, felt so great a sense of satisfaction that, when having extinguished the light she left the room, she was obliged to have her usual fit of laughter behind her apron; then, going to the kitchen where she had left Hardman at his supper, she told him of her most unwonted experience with Rachel. He was interested at once, but when Sarah attempted, as she did directly after, to win some information from him of what his mistress had been doing in the city, Hardman, as he always did, turned it off with a laugh. Then Sarah resorted to the tea leaves, insisting that he should toss his cup before she replenished it; because as she said there was an unusual amount of leaves in his cup.

"All right," he said, "I don't mind so long as you're satisfied to do it; but it seems to me, Sarah, there can't be much use in telling a man's fortune every day."

"Jeem," replied Sarah, very slowly, "you don't understand things—every day is a different day ain't it?"

Jim nodded.

"Then it stands to reason that every day you can have a different fortune, don't it?"

"Yes," said Jim slowly, as if not quite convinced by a logic which asserted that every day's fortune would be a different one, and yet professed to tell from the toss of one cup the future events of a lifetime; but Sarah did not give him time to reason; for she took up the cup and began first holding it very close to her, and then putting it at arm's length from her.

"It's plain that you were in the city today, Jeem; there's the carriage, right in the midst of carts and wagons and lots of people." She stole a glance at him as she spoke, but his face bore nothing more than the good-natured look it had from the beginning.

"And you went into a house, Jeem—a house with lots of people, dirty people at that—" Hardman visibly started: Sarah saw the start but pretended she didn't and went on:

"It's strange business Miss Burram's on, Jeem."

Hardman was bolt upright now, looking at Sarah as if she were some supernatural being, but he did not speak.

"Here! you'll have to toss again—that's all I can tell out of that cup," said Sarah.

"I won't toss it any more," replied Hardman stoutly.

"Why, ain't I tellin' the truth?"

"I sha'n't say whether you are or not, but when it comes to talking of the mistress's private affairs out of a teacup, Jim Hardman ain't the man to stand by and see it done."

"May I never be burned nor drowned alive!" ejaculated Sarah, but Hardman said he had finished his supper and he was going to the stable.

Rachel's sleep having been much disturbed by dreams of "Tom," they brought her mind when she woke in the morning all the perplexing thoughts she had just before going to sleep, and she remembered she had not undressed herself. She wondered who had,—certainly not Miss Burram—Rachel felt Miss Burram would never do that—and somehow there was relief in the certainty that she hadn't done it, for "Tom" having sometimes performed that motherly office for her, it seemed to her as if it would have been, had Miss Burram done it, a painful usurpation of his rights; much more so than had Sarah done it. To be absolutely certain, she asked Sarah, and Sarah, fearing she was going to be reprimanded, answered with some trepidation:

"I done it, Miss, because I found you asleep and I thought it a pity to waken you."

"Then I'm much obliged to you, "Sarah," said Rachel, and she turned and went out of the kitchen as suddenly as she had entered it.

"May I never be burned nor drowned alive!" ejaculated Sarah. Later she said to Mrs. McElvain:

"She's the most onaccountablest child that ever I see—she flies at you when you ain't done nothin' only on the best of intentions, and when you've done somethin' on no intentions at all, she comes to you and thanks you."

But Mrs. McElvain had no remark to make, other than the one she had made a good many times before: that there was no understanding the rich people or their children. Sarah however, took her up:

"Rich people, Mrs. McElvain? who knows whether Miss Burram's Charge comes of rich people, or not—I just have my own idea about that."

"Oh, well! Sarah," replied Mrs. McElvain in her hoarse voice and her easy-going manner, "sure it makes no difference to us so long as we're paid for what we does."

But Sarah, though she said no more just then, resented in her own mind all the seeming mystery about Miss Burram's Charge.

To Rachel's great delight it was Jim who took her to school that morning, Miss Barram having ordered that when she did not require the coachman's attendance he should drive her Charge to school, but that it would be Sarah's duty to bring her home. The Charge herself longed to ask if she might not come home without Sarah; she knew the way, but, as she had not asked Miss Burram for a favor of any kind she did not dream of asking this. In the buggy with Jim she talked so fast, that before they had gone half the distance she had told him everything that had happened the day before, producing even the sealed note which Miss Burram had given her, thinking that Jim might be able to guess what could make the ladies write to each other. But Jim said if he was thinking forever, he "couldn't come to no sort of an indee about it.

"Of course it's about me," said Rachel, turning the note that she held into various positions, "and I guess it's because I don't know what my father and mother's names were—maybe Miss Burram knows, Jim."

"Maybe she does," he answered.

"Then why doesn't she tell me something about them?" burst out Rachel. Hardman pulled up the horse to a walk, and thed he turned to her with a more solemn air than he usually wore.

"If I were you, Miss, I wouldn't bother about it; Miss Burram is kind in her own fashion, and to take her all in all, she's a good deal better than folks gives her credit for; she's a providing for you, Miss—she don't let you want for nothing, and if she knows something about you that she wants to keep herself it ain't nobody else's business. If I was you, Miss, I'd just quit having all them kind of thoughts."

Rachel, child as she was, had sense enough to see the wisdom of Jim's reasoning, and to show him that she was even then taking his advice, she began to tell him how kind Sarah had been in the matter of putting her to bed the night before.

Beyond one conversation in the beginning of their acquaintance about Sarah, when Rachel very freely expressed her opinion of the woman's oddities, and her dislike of her, Sarah's name had been mentioned very rarely by either Rachel or Jim. On that solitary occasion he had defended Sarah, not denying she was odd, but insisting that she was good at bottom, with "no snags," as he expressed it; now, it gave him much satisfaction to find that he had not been wrong in his declaration of Sarah's hidden virtues; here was an instance of them.

"Couldn't you, Jim," prompted by a very sudden thought, "give Sarah a sail in the little new boat? I guess she'd like it."

"I never thought of anything like that," replied Jim, "I only thought of that boat as belonging to you, and it wouldn't seem kind of right to put anybody else in it."

They were at the school then, and there was no time for further discussion; Rachel sprang out of the buggy the moment it stopped, waved her hand to Jim, smiled and nodded to some of her classmates who were standing by, and took her way into the schoolyard with an erect, self-possessed carriage that filled Hardman with admiration.

He said to himself as he drove off:

"Whoever she comes from there's good blood in her; she just carried herself like a little queen and this only her second day among them."

His soliloquy was interrupted by hearing just behind him in Herrick's bland voice:

'Good morning, Mr. Hardman!"

It was part of Herrick's policy to be as polite to domestics as to their employers; it cost him nothing and it brought him custom; to Miss Burram's coachman he was always particularly polite.

Hardman stopped his horse and in a moment Herrick was beside the buggy.

"Good morning!" repeated the storekeeper as blandly as before.

"Good morning!" responded Hardman, fixing Herrick's eyes with the steady, searching look of his own.

"Been leaving Miss Burram's Charge at school, I see; I am glad Miss Burram is so sensible as to send her Charge to school right here in Rentonville—it will help to make the town feel more kindly to her."

Hardman did not reply.

"Miss Burram is a fine woman, and it is a pity her admirable qualities are not better known by the residents of Rentonville; but, to my way of thinking, she has too much on her mind, as for instance the business she went to the city on yesterday."

Jim nearly dropped the reins in his amazement, which Herrick observing, he said in a lower and a very confidential tone:

"You needn't be afraid, Mr. Hardman; what I know I keep to myself; and I have so great a regard for Miss Burram, that anything which relates to her is sacred with me; but I honor you, Mr. Hardman, for the silence which you preserve on everything that pertains to your mistress's affairs."

By this time Jim was flushed from an honest sense of indignation.

"I ain't got no commission to answer you, Mr. Herrick, but it seems to me Miss Burram's affairs hadn't ought to trouble people so much."

The shopkeeper gave one of his little feminine laughs.

"You don't understand human nature, Mr. Hardman; and not understanding human nature, you cannot understand how a whole town will talk when it has such a mystery as Miss Burram is. But, passing all that over, Mr. Hardman, I should like Miss Burram to know that I am in possession of every fact relating to Khett's sale to Renton's agents, and I should like to communicate those facts to her; perhaps you might incidentally mention this to Miss Burram."

"I don't go on no incidentals," said Hardman bluntly, "I either give my message, or I don't give it."

"Never mind, then, Mr. Hardman; I shall communicate directly with your mistress; good morning!" And Herrick was as bland in his departing salutation as he had been in his greeting.

Hardman was mad; his temper betrayed itself in the vehemence with which he urged his horse—it kept pace with his desire to lay the whip on Herrick. His indignation would have been greater had he known that Herrick had gone purposely to school that morning to see for himself Miss Burram's Charge. His daughters had told him the afternoon before that Miss Burram had brought her Charge to school, for, though not in the same class with Rachel, they had heard of her coming, as indeed had nearly every pupil in the school, and when Herrick, somewhat to his little daughters' surprise, proposed walking to school with them that morning they did not guess his object; not even when seeing Rachel jump from the buggy he bade his daughters a hasty good-by and hurried after Hardman.

But Hardman speedily suspected the source of the shopkeeper's knowledge of Miss Burram's visit to the city, and as soon as he had put up the horse and buggy he went to Sarah. That peculiar woman was just finishing to Mrs. McElvain an account of her visit to Herrick's store the day before, and her gossip with Mr. Herrick himself.

"He's very polite as you know, Mrs. McElvain, and he always has something to say about Miss Burram"

"And I suppose you also have something to say to Mr. Herrick about Miss Burram," put in Hardman, who was just entering the kitchen and overheard her last remark. "You told him Miss Burram went to the city yesterday, didn't you?"

"Of course I did, why shouldn't I, when he asked me about her, and I told him she took the carriage just like she always does the first of every month when she always goes to the city."

"You're a fool, Sarah," said Hardman tartly.

"May I never be burned nor drowned alive!" ejaculated Sarah, aghast at such a speech from sober, even-going Jim Hardman.

"I say again you're a fool, Sarah; what business is it of yours to tell that sneak Herrick anything about Miss Burram?"

"And I say, Jim, you're a-losin' your senses; and it's all along o' Miss Burram's Charge; you ain't acted like yourself sense she come."

Mrs. McElvain, who was constitutionally opposed to discord, interposed:

"Don't mind, Jim; sure a woman has to talk, she can't help it; as my good man used to say, that's one of the things a woman was made for."

Hardman, feeling unequal to an argument with two of the sex, left the kitchen without answering.

"There's for you, Mrs. McElvain," burst out Sarah, "he calls me a fool for not doing things on the bias the way he does them himself; but I'll make him take back them words," and as an outlet for her feelings Sarah rattled about the kitchen range till the noise was deafening.

Rachel presented Miss Burram's note to Miss Ashton, and as that lady read it her cheeks reddened. The note said:

"In introducing Rachel Minturn as my Charge I deemed that sufficient credentials had been presented with her to satisfy the requirements of even so elect an establishment as the Public School of Rentonville. The Christian names of her parents being not of concern to the school authorities and still less of concern to you, Madam, nor of moment as an indorsement to any certificate of the character of my Charge, I exercise my right of citizenship in a free country to withhold those names. In inscribing 'Rachel Minturn' upon your books as my Charge, the rule which governs your school in that respect will be entirely kept.

"BRIDILLA BURRAM."

As Miss Ashton had told Rachel she need not wait, when the latter presented the note, Rachel was not there to see its effect. It made the Principal indignant for a moment, then it amused her, and when Mr. Hubrey, one of the trustees, came in, she showed it to him.

Hubrey had been a school trustee just six months, having been elected to office through his wife's efforts. He had been a grocer in an adjoining city until five years before, when his wife's rich bachelor uncle died and left to the Hubreys two hundred thousand dollars. Mrs. Hubrey had no children, but she had several ambitious desires, the chief or which, when she came into possession of her fortune, was to shine in society. This she thought she could best do in a foreign country where her grocery antecedents would be entirely unknown, but to that proposition her husband, with the only determination his wife had ever known him to have outside of his business, stubbornly objected, and silenced, but by no means conquered, she turned her efforts to achieving what social success she might in her own country.

She made her husband give up his business—his tastes and inclinations would have led him to keep it on a large scale—and purchase a fine house in New Utterton. Then she used all her wits to win political influence for him, feeling that with such influence, backed by their money, both he and she must become a kind of power in the township. While Hubrey's vanity was great enough to make him as desirous as his wife of the glowing future which she painted, his stupidity and ignorance of everything save his own long-followed line of business frequently came near spoiling all her plans. When he was finally elected she made certain laws for him—the primary one, that he must make no speech in the school unless she prepared it, and that he must give no vote in the School Board that was not subject to her approval. Hubrey consented, deeming such matters of little moment so long as he was actually a member of the School Board, but when he became familiar with the Board meetings, and listened from the school platform to speeches made by his fellow trustees, his vanity caused him to feel that he could and should do likewise, independently of his wife's dictation. So far, she had not permitted him to make more than the one brief address which he delivered on the day of his introduction to the scholars, but she had told him frequently that she was preparing a speech which she confidently asserted would be better than anything ever delivered in the Rentonville schoolhouse.

Now, as he read Miss Burram's note, it occurred to him that here was an opportunity to act for once without his wife's dictation, and successfully to do that, he must act without her knowledge. He wondered why Miss Ashton laughed; he saw no humor in Miss Burram's communication and he looked very gravely at the Principal. Then he put his plump hands grimly on his knees and pushed himself forward till his short round figure seemed to poise itself on the extreme end of the chair, and his round clean-shaven face was brought almost within touching distance of Miss Ashton's.

"Miss Ashton, a proceeding ought to be entered into against Miss Burram."

The Principal did not reply; surprise at such a ludicrous proposition, and amusement at the earnestness with which it was uttered, leaving her nothing to say.

"Miss Burram ought to be brought up before a Committee," resumed Hubrey "to show cause why she refuses to abide by the regulations of the school, and I'm going to propose that step to-night at the meeting. Just let me have that note, Miss Ashton, please."

Miss Ashton gave up the note, a slight smile the only evidence of her inward convulsion of mirth at the idea of summoning Miss Burram.

Hubrey had never felt so important; he stepped along the Rentonville streets with an unusual authoritative energy in his manner, and when he reached home his wife saw at once that he had something on his mind.

"What is it, William?" she asked: in the old grocery days she always called him Bill. To her amazement he answered:

"I'm preparing, Mrs. Hubrey, for a duty I have to perform to-night at the meeting of the trustees of the School Board."

"What duty?"

"Mrs. Hubrey, there are times when a man has to make his preparations without his wife's knowledge—this is one of them, Mrs. Hubrey, this is one of them."

"William!" Mrs. Hubrey found voice enough to say, "have you forgotten your compact with me when I got you elected to that School Board?"

"No, Mrs. Hubrey, I have not forgotten; but this is a time when compacts don't count, Mrs. Hubrey—don't count"

"Don't count?' she repeated, her voice now shrill with anger; "I think, Mr. Hubrey, you are reckoning without your wife;" and she went out of the room with a toss of her head, and a slam of the door that seemed to make the house shake, and that certainly made the little man quiver.

Mrs. Hubrey was troubled; this surprising conduct of her husband was exactly like his stubborn determination not to go to Europe, and knowing how little capable he was of any ideas outside of groceries, she feared he was about to make some blunder that might cause them both to appear ridiculous. In the evening when he was about to depart, she made another effort:

"William, if you make a fool of yourself, it will be all over Rentonville tomorrow."

For answer, he waved his little fat hand and went his way.

CHAPTER VII.

The trustees' meeting was held in an upper room of the Town Hall, and Hubrey was the first one to arrive; ten minutes later, the President of the Board, Amos Dickel, the Secretary, Jeremiah Roundright, and two others had arrived.

The fifth and last to enter was Simon Russell, a small slim man with the voice of a woman and the tongue of a wag. All but Russell were solemn-looking and ponderous, as befitted men who felt in a wooden-headed way the responsibility of their position. Whenever Russell arose to debate a motion it was difficult for his associates to tell whether he were in earnest or only facetious, and most frequently they mistook his facetiousness for eloquent earnestness.

When, after the preliminaries of the meeting, Hubrey, who had never done more than second a motion or vote "aye," or "nay," rose, and demanded the floor, Russell's little black eyes twinkled.

Mr. Hubrey began:

"Mr. President, and Chairman, and Gentlemen," and Russell had an inward spasm.

"I have here a note," Hubrey continued, the perspiration starting upon his face, and his voice guttural from the combined effects of natural throatiness and excitement, "an epistle from a lady in this community, an epistle which is a reflection upon the spirit of public justice in this community—"

Here Russell, despite a succession of inward spasms, managed to cry: "Hear, hear!" but the other trustees sat like wooden images.

"An epistle," Hubrey went on, "which calls for us in our manhood and our spirit, as citizens of this community, to answer, by calling the writer of it before a committee of these gentlemen"—waving his hand to the wooden images—"to answer to the charges herein contained." He sat down, the perspiration now rolling from his face. One of the images roused himself.

"Will Mr. Hubrey inform us of the nature of the charges he speaks of?"

Russell sprang to his feet with a motion to have the note read, and that seconded, and carried, Hubrey read the note.

"Why it's about Miss Burram," said one of the trustees involuntarily, and as if he were trying to hold his breath, while the President and the Chairman looked more solemn than ever. Russell again asked for the floor.

TO BE CONTINUED.

A CAUTION.

Very many of our young women are affecting a prevailing fashion in their outward garb that is simply suggestive of indecency. We do not need to be more explicit, for the attire has become the subject of common talk. It would hardly seem necessary in these pages to mention the matter for we would fain believe that no Catholic maid or matron would give cause in her dress for the offensive leer or the loathsome comment of the street. Fashion is not to be condemned, nay, it deserves praise, but that is not fashion which is the immediate cause of dissoluteness and an incentive to sin. Then it becomes a scandal, and it is in this day and generation what the serpent was to Eve in the garden, the tempter to evil, and its fruits are the natural results of that evil. Through all the ramifications of society does this scion of the bane of paradise draw its slimy form.—Pittsburg Catholic.

THE SCULPTOR'S STORY.

Marie Donnan Walsh in Catholic World for August.

CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK.

It must have been long that I knelt there, calling him by name, chafing the marble-cold hands fast stiffening in death—whose icy touch brought a cold thrill of horror through every nerve of my body—and striving by every means in my power to restore life to the inanimate frame from which it had fled.

The moonlight had faded into the black darkness which precedes the dawning; and presently morning would break in cheerful sunshine, when they would find me here keeping a vigil by the dead; the murderer and the victim, with the hammer and the mutilated statue to act as witnesses of my crime. Then they would take me and lead me to the prisons by the river, stigmatized as a base, foul murderer, a monster of villany and blackest ingratitude. And for ever, between me and the eternity of misery awaiting me, would arise that pale, horror-stricken face in the moonlight, and the bitter cry of mortal anguish ring unendingly in my ears! Again the instinct of self preservation asserted itself, too strong to be resisted; and without one look backward I rose and fled swiftly like one already pursued.

No one detained me, no one witnessed my rapid flight, as I scaled the wall, dropping into the street again. But cold drops of sweat stood on my forehead, and my heart beat wildly and tumultously, loud as if it its hammer-beats would rouse the echoes of the stony street. Strange, jeering voices sounded in my ears, and pursuing footsteps rushed along beside me in the shadows. But never pausing till I reached my humble lodging, I locked myself safely in; to pass through long days and sleepless nights of mental torture, to which death would have come as a welcome relief. Nor could the old reckless unbelief, the scepticism of all things in heaven and earth, be called in to aid me in this refined torment of remorse. It, too, had failed me. My unwilling "Credo" had been said the instant after the consummation of my crime; for as I knelt by my friend's murdered body I knew once and for ever that there was a God whose infallible justice would pursue me beyond the grave.

Weeks elapsed before I ventured abroad again, pleading illness as an excuse for absence from the studio; and indeed my appearance substantiated the statement to the comrades who forced their way into my retirement, anxious to be the first to tell of the tragedy with which the art-quarters of Rome were ringing. And for fear of their suspicions I dared not deny them admittance. No exaggeration is it to say that mine was the torture of the rack—the inward guilt and the endeavor to keep an outward calm so strangely at variance with my passionate, impetuous nature, as one after another came to relate with morbid avidity and interest every detail of the mysterious story; which alas! I—the only witness—knew too well: how Francesco Lorenzi (who had stayed late at the Palace Morosini on the night of the murder) had been found lying dead in the studio, by the fragments of his ruined statue, a hammer by his side. Then they would argue and discuss the subject from every point of view, till I felt my brain reeling with the strain. Some opined that the sculptor destroyed the statue himself in a fit of morbid discouragement; others died with grief at the result. Others asserted it was a deed of vengeance—a deliberate murder; though no signs of violence (beyond a blow on the head which might have been caused by the fall) had been found on the body. But one and all agreed in wondering what hidden enemy a man like Francesco Lorenzi could have had. Afterwards followed unending speculation as to the possible capture of the murderer and his identity. Strange to say, suspicion never for one instant fell on me; even though they knew of my erstwhile friendship with Lorenzi and its subsequent rupture, for fortunately my brooding jealously about his statue had been kept to myself. Indeed, they wondered that I took the thing so hardly, when I could not keep the horror out of my face; for sometimes they looked at me curiously, till I wondered if the deep furrowed lines in my face, and the white threads that came into my hair after that night of horror, had not betrayed my secret to the world.

But no: thoughtless and unseeing, the crew of reckless youths never guessed that each careless word on the subject cut like a stab; each conjecture and repetition smarted like a touch on the raw wound of my quivering sensibilities. But with the first resolution and endurance of my life I forced myself to go through it all—the torture of the day in public, and the unspeakable solitary nights, till, in sheer desperation, I would rush into the streets and pace them incessantly till morning—anything, everything, to save me from the one torment of the lost—thought. As I passed old Tiber in these midnight vigils, its dark turbid depths appealed to me to end the struggle; but like all murderers I was a coward. Each time I essayed it Lorenzi's white face seemed to rise from the river's misty surface to warn me back, till I fled in cold horror from that vision which so haunted my waking and sleeping hours; but most of all, mark you, when I contemplated any desperate deed, or gave myself over to darkest despair.

One day I heard a man saying, "Francesco Lorenzi's death was going to make a man of that ne'er-do-well Guildi; it made such an impression on him that he sowed the last of his wild oats the day he heard of this terrible deed" (which, little though they knew it, was indeed the truth). But it would have taken keener minds and more observing than those of the artist fraternity to penetrate the mask of iron I learned to wear.

And with that strange human capacity for forgetfulness, the nine days wonder over the tragedy passed. Be it saint or emperor or best beloved—those whom we deemed most necessary and powerful are alike forgotten. Before the summer heats poured blindingly on the streets, driving Rome panting to the shadowed byways, the world had ceased to comment on Lorenzi's fate. He had passed into the dim region of immortal shadows, whose work only lives after their personality is forgotten.

And I? . . . After a long summer spent in the mountains, where I carried my dark burden with me into the solitudes, alone with God and nature, fighting the battle with despair, I returned to the city, and did what I thought never to have done again—plunged into genuine hard work. My old haunts knew me no more. Between them and me there was an impassible gulf of distance like that of years—my crime and my newly-awakened conscience.

This new attitude caused much amusement to my cynical friends of the past, who nicknamed me "Simon Stylites" and the "Sculptor-Saint;" taunting me that the "clericals" had got hold of me and made me a coward. In the old days ridicule instantly aroused me to shamefacedness or resentment, but now I pursued my way heedless alike of sneers or laughter; for neither seemed to touch me. Occasionally I felt as if I illustrated one of those strange psychological problems one hears of, in which a man's whole personality has been changed into that of another! The reckless, passionate youth, so full of the pride of life, had gone for ever, as well as the boyish scapegrace Lorenzi had once loved; and in their place was a sombre, silent man whom I myself scarcely recognized, with a grim secret darkening his life with an ever-present shadow. Oh, it was strange, strange! I the uncontrolled, the passionate, to become impassive to sternness, possessing a self control seldom to be met with in our southern land, where storm and laughter are ever near the surface. Sometimes, but seldom, the old fits of sudden anger welled up and would almost overflow, over some wilful carelessness of the scarpellini or a more than usually bitter taunt of my comrades; but I had but to glance at the gesso model of the renegade monk, kept as a "memento homo" in a corner of the studio. Then my hand would fall at my side and the fierce words die away unuttered on my lips, to be instantly replaced by the stony calm which had become second nature; the habitual feeling that I had done with life's petty vexations and troubles on my own account.

Only one touch of human comfort came to me during that period of poignant remorse. I was talking to Francesco Lorenzi's old friend and doctor with the brave face I showed the world in discussing the event, though even yet the mere mention of it sufficed to drive the very life-blood from my guilty heart. After many lamentations over his friend's untimely fate the old man ended: "Well, poor fellow, they may say what they will; for my own part I hold it was no murder but disease that brought him to his death. Aye, disease! I stare as you will, Guido, with those great sombre eyes of yours. Some one may have ruined his statue out of jealousy or pure wickedness (for that galantuome had no enemies) or even he himself may have destroyed it in a fit of discouragement such as you artistic geniuses are capable of; but. Dio lo sa! it wasn't like the man." . . . I, the silent listener, winced as if he had pierced my armor with a sword thrust, and my lips and hands clinched in a supreme effort for self-control. But the good old man noticed nothing. He was full of his subject and went on, meditatively: "Yes, his death was bound to come suddenly sooner or later; so the loss of his statue was not altogether to blame, though the shock may have hastened it. For years he suffered from heart disease, and suspected it himself too, even before I told him. Quel povero Francesco! ever thoughtful for others even in his own trouble. Methinks I can bear him now, when I tried to break the fact to him gently, saying in that cheery way of his: 'Thank you, old friend, for wishing to spare me; I have guessed as much for years. God has been very good to me in this as always; for it is a death I would have chosen. The lingering agonies of a mortal sickness, a helpless old age are things to be dreaded; and besides this, men with heart-disease often outlive their friends. Anyhow, He knows best for us all.

"But the agony, the sorrow, for his beautiful creation ruined! Spare him?" I queried. "Surely to God it was the agony and pangs of death!"

"Figlio mio, it was but momentary," said the old physician, laying his hand on my shoulder and speaking gently and reverentially, "that sharp shock of horror; then the instantaneous realization of the 'One perfect Peace' opening before the eyes of those who so loved the pure and beautiful on earth! Nay, Guidi, do not think