



## The Mysterious Way.

'Oh, Mary, can it be possible I have brought you to this?' and the strong man, bowed with agony, buried his face in his hands and wept bitterly.

The weak, sensitive woman, who had fainted when sentence had been pronounced, was all self-possession. With her two-year old in her arms, she walked across the jail cell to where her husband lay moaning.

'John, dear John, you must bear up bravely. For my sake, and for the sake of little Dan, you will, won't you? What matter what the world thinks? I believe, yes, I now, John, you are innocent of this crime.'

But the grief of the condemned man was too deep to be easily removed.

'Oh, my darling boy—must he grow up to the knowledge that his father is a convict?' Again he broke into sobs.

'John, my dearest, you must not think of it in that way. God's choicest blessings are often hidden in deep disguise. Something tells me that our son will grow up to the knowledge that his father has been a terribly wronged man. It is the curse of drink that has been the cause of all our trouble. When free from it you have ever been noble, and kind, and true. You have tried hard with your own manly strength to break off; still harder for my sake, and for the sake of our little Dan. I rejoiced for a time to think that you would succeed. John, you have surely learned that of yourself you are perfectly powerless against this mortal foe. His chains have long been tightening about you with unrelenting grasp. But there is a remedy; now you won't, will you? You must place yourself entirely in the hands of the All-Father, and every moment of your life trust in His keeping.'

There was a short prayer-meeting in the cell that afternoon—a few moments that were the turning point in a life that had hitherto been stamped with failure. Never did man more fully realize his own weakness, nor more intensely long for that help which was so sorely needed.

On his knees, in little Dan's loving embraces, he prayed—he yielded himself up fully—and he rose a new man, conscious of a new power that would bear him over all difficulties.

But the parting was hard, perhaps doubly so, because of little Dan's 'Papa, tum home! Papa, tum home wix mamma and 'ittle Dan!' These were the last words that John could hear.

John Wharton had started life with brighter prospects than most men. It was not generally known that before his marriage he was so fond of the social glass, or that among his companions were some whose habits were extremely questionable. He was a good deal of a favorite among the young people, and as such had been the leading spirit in many fashionable parties where wine and cards form so prominent a part. More than one girl in Donville looked on with envious eye when from the neighboring town he brought his young wife, beautiful and accomplished, but a little too devout to take well with the better classes of society.

For a time all had gone well, and John's devotion to his wife soon ceased to be the gossip of five-o'clock teas or club gatherings. But it must be said that his former companions did not easily relinquish the society of their former leader. Temptations were continually thrown in his way, and John was too self-confident and 'manly' to refuse the treats of an old comrade.

Much that follows is but a repetition of the old story. The chain of habit had, however, been unusually quick in tightening around him. He had awakened one morning to find himself in jail, accused of serious robbery.

It is true the evidence that was brought against him was mostly circumstantial. He had been drinking more or less for several days. He had been seen in company with the man who had been robbed. Several times he

had been seen in consultation with a couple of suspicious characters, but it was shown at the trial that these had left the town the day before the robbery. Money had been found on his person for which he could give no account. Lastly, a gold watch-chain, belonging to the robbed, was found in his possession. A very strong case was made out against him. The judge's charge had settled the whole matter. The jury brought in the verdict 'Guilty.'

A good deal of sympathy had been expressed for John, who, ever genial and kind-hearted, had made many so-called friends. 'His worst fault,' said a former companion, 'was that he would drink too much, and when he was half-drunk he was ready for anything.'

Perhaps the sympathy shown to the wife and child was more genuine—but such is the world, other thoughts, the rush and hurry of life soon make us forget the sorrows of the down-trodden.

That afternoon, as Mrs. Wharton passed slowly along the city street towards the station, she was conscious, that, bitter as was this latest sorrow, a new hope, bright and clear, was springing forth. Sorrow and joy seemed strangely intermingled. Her husband's conversion had become the intense longing of her life, but with all her gentleness, zeal and tact, until to-day every effort had failed.

Little Dan's pleadings for his father had become so strong that he had at last burst into a fit of crying, and she was forced to take him in her arms to soothe away his childish sorrow.

As she walked on she thought of the future. It would be a hard struggle to support herself and the little one, but face to face with the problem she simply planned, she did not worry.

Passing a bookstore just then, the thought occurred to her that John had no Bible. She at once went in, made the purchase, and was soon hurrying back towards the jail. She still hoped to reach the station in time for the train.

'Will papa tum home wix us, mamma? Will papa tum home wix up dis time?' This new hope in going back taxed his childish eloquence to the utmost.

A couple of ragged newsboys stood near as she hurried past. But ragged though they were, little Dan's pleadings touched their boyish hearts.

'D'yer know who that woman is, Bill?' said the smaller of the two.

'No; do you? The youngster's in a bad way fer his dad, ain't he?'

'She's the wife o' that feller't robbed the man three weeks ago. He was sent down fer six years this afternoon. I heerd most o' the trial myself.'

'What! Six years? Why, the feller never—I—I—was sure he'd git clear.'

The younger noticed the hesitation as well as the unusual earnestness, and at once asked:

'Why, how'd you know anything about it, Bill? I tell yer the jedge was more'n hard on 'im. But it was kinder tough to hear his wife and young 'un cry.'

Bill's sympathy had been aroused. His secret had troubled him greatly, but he had kept clear of the trial, for he did not want to speak out—he was afraid. Now his heart had been touched by the sad-faced woman and her crying child. A homeless, friendless orphan, he

remembered all too many of his own childish sorrows. His heart ached for the child.

'Let's walk down this way, Bob, and I'll tell you somethin' if ye'll promise never to tell.'

The promise was made, and the two walked slowly down a quiet street engaged in very earnest conversation.

The Bible was handed to the jailor, and it was rather late when mother and child were home in their little cottage in Donville. The greatest effort was required in getting Dan to forget his troubles. The day had been a heavy strain, but the mother's strong faith in God had helped to bear her up bravely. No wonder, though, when Dan was laid to sleep, that she broke down and sobbed bitterly. With her music and some sewing she could keep the wolf from the door, but Dan was not a strong child, and much of the care and attention that he so much needed would have to be sacrificed in the daily struggle for bread.

The thought came to her that the cloud which hung so heavily over their home had but one cause—the evil of strong drink. With the thought her courage came back. She was only a weak woman but God would give her great power against this cruel destroyer of the home. Earnestly she prayed that herself, her child, her husband, might become a mighty force in helping to vanish this terrible evil.

The days came and went, but Dan's grief did not seem to lessen. He talked much about his father, and asked many questions that were hard to answer.

'What made papa cwy, mamma? Is he sick, mamma? Why doesn't he tum home? Dod will make him better soon, won't he?' Such was his almost constant childish prattle.

'Mamma,' said Dan, one night about a week after the trial, 'does Dod take care of papa?'

'Yes, my child.'

'Well, den, why doesn't he send him home to mamma and Dan?'

'Some day he will, my darling. God will take good care of papa, and after awhile send him to us again.'

'But I want him to tum back now, to-night, mamma,' Dan spoke very emphatically on this point.

'Mamma, if 'ittle Dan tells Dod we want papa to-night, an' toaxes weal hard, won't He send him?'

Mrs. Wharton was about to put him off in some way, but the childish faith was so strong she could not resist saying, 'Perhaps He will.'

At his mother's knee, that night before going to bed, Dan fully exhausted his childish vocabulary in pleading for his father's return. Having done this he did not want to go to bed but wait, as he said, for his father to come.

It was not strange that he was the first to hear footsteps at the door, nor was it strange that he jumped up, all excitement, and said:

'Mamma, papa's tum. Hurry and let him in!'

She hurried to unfasten the door. The child-like faith had not erred. She almost sank in her husband's arms.

John's story was soon told. New evidence had been placed in the lawyer's hands by a newsboy, who had been a partial witness to the robbery. The boy's story was fully confirmed by other happenings, and so much new evidence was obtained that the motion for a new trial was readily granted. John was at once set at liberty.

## NEW 'MESSENGER' STORY COUPON.

We have been most fortunate in securing 'Saint Cecilia of the Court,' the new Serial Story that has just finished running in the S.S. Times and was so much appreciated and talked about. The Sunday School teachers who have read it will agree with us that it is just the best possible kind of story for the 'Messenger', and one that will be long remembered. It will run for about three months during which such of your friends who have never taken the 'Messenger' may unite to form a club of three or more at TEN cents each.

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