

A VICTIM TO THE SEAL OF CONFESSION

A TRUE STORY BY THE REV. JOSEPH SHILLMAN, S. J. CHAPTER IV. A SCHEME OF GUILT.

Loser reached the "Four Ways" inn soon after the children, and stood by while Charles, with frequent interruptions on Julia's part, gave his friend the baker the reasons why his grand-mother was remaining for the night in the convent, while he and his sister were to return to Aix. The account was not very clear, and at the story of the ghost the stout baker shook his head incredulously. One thing however was evident; the children were afraid of spending the night in the deserted convent and therefore wanted to return home; but why their grand-mother should not go with them remained a mystery.

"Why," Charles said, "Uncle has a whole lot of money in his desk." "You know you were to say nothing about that," interposed Julia sharply. "Why not?" her brother retorted. "Mr. Lenoir is not a thief."

"That I certainly am not," the baker interrupted. "But make haste and jump up, it is already late. You shall sit on each side of me how fast my front seat and we shall see how fast my good horse can run. Yes, I understand now why your grand-mother sends you off alone. Yes, this very morning she was saying her son, your Reverend Uncle—never mind, it is no business of mine. Can I do anything for you Sir?"

These latter words were addressed to Loser, who had been near enough to overhear the main part of the conversation, and who now stepped up to the cart just as the horse was in the act of starting, and asked if he could be driven to Aix for a trifling compensation?

"How came you by that scar all across your face?" inquired the baker, who did not much like the look of the man.

"I have to thank an accursed Prussian Hussar for that, in the course of the late war," was the answer. "Up with you then, Sir you must sit here by me and tell me the whole story. Make room for the gentleman, Charles all honor to the brave defenders of our country!"

So Loser seated himself in the place Mrs. Montouille had occupied a few hours previously, and romanced so freely about the exploits he had achieved in the Franco-German war, that he positively fascinated the worthy baker. In fact Mr. Lenoir went a good distance out of his way to set the hero of many battles down at the station, and far from taking anything from him he treated him to a glass of Bordeaux at the buffet, and shook hands heartily with him on parting. As he left the station he heard Loser asking at the booking office for a ticket to Marseilles and being informed that the train did not go for another hour. A few minutes later Lenoir put the children down at their mother's door, and went home at the station, and the wife the wonderful deeds of the brave veteran with the scar of the sabre cut.

Meanwhile Loser provided himself at the station with a flask of brandy and some sandwiches which he put into his pocket, and then pacing about as a waiting-room, he made himself as conspicuous as possible, asking one railway official after another about his ticket and the time of the train, until one of the porters told him that if he could not wait like other people, he had better have a special train put on for him. Loser laughed and said it he could have it at the expense of the Company he would only be too glad, as he was in a hurry to get to Marseilles. At length the train was signalled, and as it came into the station, Loser, together with a crowd of other passengers, pressed forward to find a place. The train was very full, and hearing the porters call out "plenty of room behind," he hastened to the lower part of the platform, less brilliantly lighted than the upper. "Room in here, be quick, there is no time to lose," said the guard, opening the door of one of the last compartments, and the face of the passenger, whose ticket he at the same time clipped, and the engine began to move. Before his fellow-passengers had settled themselves in their places, Loser contrived to slip out of the carriage, and make his way out of the station unobserved before the commotion caused by the out-going train had subsided.

"There," he said to himself as he emerged into the darkness, "all has turned out just as I wished! Now if any body should assert that I was in Ste. Victoire to-night, I could bring forward a couple of witnesses to prove that I left for Marseilles by the last train. Certainly neither guard nor porters will remember having seen me on the way, but when a train is so full one man is not noticed. At first and I shall escape the time to get off with the money. What I have to do now is to get back to Ste. Victoire without being seen. Nine o'clock," he mused after a glance at the illuminated face of the station clock; "I can easily get into the convent before midnight, and long before daybreak make off with my booty." So saying he chose the most ill-lighted street, and presently reached the open country.

Walking at a brisk pace, and avoiding the most frequented roads, Loser made his way back to Ste. Victoire. He had nearly reached the village, when the rising mistral dashed the first drops of rain in his face. He took his way, tower, and the kitchen fast-falling rain. "My booty is well worth a few drops of rain," he said to himself, "and there is this advantage at least, in the bad weather, I shall not be liable to meet any one in the street."

Under cover of the darkness, he

actually did reach the long rambling building unperceived, and going round to the back, entered by a gate in the outer wall which was always unlocked. Passing through the garden, he came to the quadrangle of which the church and convent formed three sides, the other being shut in by a high wall; the door leading to the inner courtyard was bolted, but Loser knew where there was a broken window through which he could easily gain access to the old kitchen, now used sometimes for the manufacture of olive oil. Groping about between empty casks and presses he found his way to the flight of stairs leading to the second floor. Then he stopped, listened awhile, and then taking off his boots, crept up the stairs. Stillness reigned everywhere; only the wind howled dismally in the empty corridors.

And now the man's courage suddenly failed him. This was the first really criminal act of his life, for which perhaps he would incur imprisonment. Long years ago he had cast his belief in God and in a future life as a true Christian education, the fibres of faith deep down in the soul, are not lightly eradicated, and Loser had had a good mother. Now all at once, as he stood listening in the pitch dark passage, the remembrance of the mother whom he had lost but too soon, came back to his mind; he seemed to hear again the words she said to him on the eve of his First Communion, after his confession: "My boy, promise me now, and promise our Lord to-morrow, that you will try to be steady, or your headstrong ways will surely get you into trouble."

The promise he then gave with tears had alas! not been kept, and his mother's prophecy had indeed come true. On account of his wild pranks he had been expelled from the gymnasium, and only been forgiven through the intercession of a priest to whom the being taken before the magistrate; at the University he squandered the slender fortune his parents left him, lost his faith, and acquired a bad name through his vicious habits. Finally, to elude his creditors, he had hastily fled, and drawn him deeper into the abyss of social degradation and moral turpitude. And after the war, as he had seen, he had gone from one sin through another, losing each in turn through the unprincipled conduct, until, for the sake of a living, he had accepted the post of sacristan in a village church. Now he was on the eve of committing an actual crime, and the memory of his mother rose up before him like a warning angel to deter him from it.

Alas! in vain grief made this appeal to his heart. "Don't be a fool, don't be a fool," he said to himself. "How many men who are highly esteemed and rob their neighbors of hundreds of pounds through the struggle of existence, and one compels one to it. Besides I am taking it out of no man's pocket, one will be the poorer. If the hospital is not built by charitable contributions, the government will build a far better and larger one. Now for it!"

Loser felt his way along the wall until he reached the corner formed by the junction of two wings of the building. When he stood in the space between the little kitchen and the priest's apartments, he thought of the carving knife lying in the table drawer. Should he go in and fetch it? It might be useful in self defence. He found his way to the table with some difficulty; on putting his hand in the drawer he touched the carving knife directly. "I do not want to do any harm either to Montouille or his mother," he said, "besides I might stumble in the dark with the stupid thing in my hand, and cut myself. I will light the little lantern, though, which his Reverence carries with him to the church of a morning."

Striking a match, he found the lantern immediately, for he was thoroughly acquainted with all the priest's habits. Covering it with his coat, Loser cautiously stepped across the corridor, and after listening at the door took occasion of a violent gush of wind, to open it gently. By the light of the lantern he perceived that there was no one in the room. Noislessly he crept on tip-toe to the place where the desk stood, and taking the key from his waistcoat pocket, he unlocked the door. He turned it and found the treasure was gone!

The thief was furious in being outwitted. He had laid his plans so cleverly, as he thought, and now this stupid priest had seen through it all, and in the simplest way possible, he had completely baffled him. "Who would have thought," he mused, "that the canting fool would have taken his money-bags to bed with him like an old miser! I would sooner strangle him with my two hands than go out of this convent without his peif. I will have the money," and he stepped with an oath to the door of the bedroom. He turned the handle, but found it was bolted; at the same time a woman's voice called out, "Is that you, Francis?"

"Confound it all!" murmured the disappointed man. "What can I do now? If I burst open the door, the old wretch will set up shrieking so loud, that she will be heard in the village. Besides I cannot be sure that the priest will not come back at any moment. It will not do to use force at any rate not now. I must await some other opportunity." Acting on this conviction, he moved stealthily away, replacing the lantern in its former position in the kitchen, and withdrew to one of the empty cells, there to concoct fresh schemes for the accomplishment of his object.

After spending some time in thought, he went back to fetch his boots from the place where he left them; then he took the larger key out of the kitchen drawer, and proceeded, guiding himself by the wall and creeping along on tip-toe, to the tribune, where he descended the winding stairs to the little room adjoining the sacristy, where poor Charles had been so terrified at the

sight of the death's head. "I am safe here," he said to himself. "Nobody will come near this lumber room, and I shall be able to keep a look out over the church and the cloisters and watch for a favorable opportunity. It is very cold here, though. Ah, there is the pall!" He laid the knife down upon the ground, took a good draught from his flask of cognac, wrapped the pall round him and settled himself to sleep. "Bah, I am emancipated from all foolish superstitions," he muttered. "I believe that there is nothing more after death. Yet there is something very uncanny about this wretched pall. What a coward I must be, to fancy the dead can come back." And yet for all his brag, he was unable to sleep, until he had nearly emptied his flask, then he lay in a half dozed state until daylight recalled him to himself.

TO BE CONTINUED.

A TIGHT FIT.

Mr. Halliday Manners, banker and public personage, stopped dead on the pavement and spoke with determination to the good-looking young fellow who was walking with him. "No," he said firmly; "you have had your answer, and I don't change my mind."

"But Ella has promised to—"

"Then Ella has no right to promise without my consent. I am her father, and I will not have for a son-in-law a man who cannot earn his own living."

"But, sir, I do! You very kindly pay me \$3,000 a year for acting as your private secretary."

"All of which you spend on clothes and fancy waistcoats. No, Percy, my lad, your prospects are well enough for a secretary, but not well enough for a son-in-law. There, give me a paper, boy."

Mr. Manners took a paper from the newsboy and waited for the half penny change. "I suppose you'd have given the boy sixpence, wouldn't you?" he added as he took the coin.

"Very likely," answered St. John. "But, seriously, sir, mayn't I have some hope? I shall be better off directly."

"When your uncle dies—and he will probably live till eighty. No, Percy; there are two things you can do. One is, stop with me and give up Ella, and the other is, leave me and when you're earning—mind, I say earning—a substantial income come back and ask again."

"Then I'll resign at once," said St. John, buttoning up his coat. "This is rather a public place, so I'll say good-bye with my own luss. Good-by, sir. I shall hope to come for Ella very soon."

He held out his hand, and Mr. Manners, rather astonished at being taken at his word, inadvertently dropped the half penny which he had been holding. It tinkled on the pavement, and then rolled between the railings that fronted the office of the Board of Locomotion, outside which they were standing.

The half penny lay within easy reach, as it seemed, and Mr. Manners pointed it out to St. John. "Now," he said, "I don't particularly want that half penny, but I'm going to have it because it belongs to me, and I don't like wasting anything. Remember that, St. John, when you're making that fortune for Ella."

St. John thought the pleasantries rather ill timed, and rejected to see that Mr. Manners could not quite reach the coin with his stick. "Good-by, sir. I'm going now. I've resigned," he said.

"Wait a minute," panted Manners. "I'll give you a lesson in perseverance. I'm going to have that half penny."

He stretched his arm through the railings, but still the half penny was out of reach. But this time a few people were interested, and stood wondering what an elderly gentleman was scooping around in that eccentric manner for.

"It's no good, sir," whispered St. John; "you can't reach it, and there's a crowd collecting."

"I don't care if there's half London," replied the old gentleman, rather irritably. "I'm going to show you what a penny it is, only by trying."

With that he took off his hat and holding it in his left hand, inserted his head through the railings. It was rather a tight fit at the sides of the skull, and his ears seemed to be scraped as they went through; but it was with a feeling of triumph that he brought his hand and stick through and scraped the half penny to him. "There," he said, "I've got it, St. John."

In his pride he tried to twist his head, and was speedily reminded of his position by the railing catching on the point of his jaw.

He quickly turned his head again, with the intention of slipping it through the railings. To his horror, he found it wouldn't go through. He gave a frenzied backward pull, and found that if he persisted he would choke himself, and most certainly cut his ears off.

"St. John!" he called, with a husky voice, his eyes fixed upon the ground, where lay the fateful half penny.

By the shoulders, the policeman pulled vigorously. "Nobodies," the policeman pulled vigorously. A loud and anguished shriek went up to the sky as the railings gripped the banker's jaws.

"You'll have my ears off!" he yelled. "Then we'll try the other way," said the policeman, who was getting angry at the remarks of the crowd. This time he pushed from behind, and Manners yelled again till the policeman took a rest and wondered whether he should send to Scotland Yard for assistance.

"Cut his head off!" shouted a wag in the crowd. "Fetch some dynamite!" advised another. "Tackle him and see if he'll move!" was a third suggestion.

Manners heard all these remarks, and in his agony wished for an earthquake or anything that would remove him—even if it was only in bits. "E's one of the old cabinet," cried the wag of the crowd, "and don't want to give up 'is office!"

One humorist, bolder than the rest, reached over and tickled Manners under the left arm. "Goad to desperation, the banker kicked out backward and caught the policeman on the kneecap. The policeman took off his helmet and wiped his forehead and tried to think of a regulation that fitted the occasion.

The crowd was fast becoming unmanageable, and a costermonger with a barrow of fruit pulled up in the hope of trade. Leaving a small boy to guard the barrow, he edged his way to the railings.

"Lumme!" he said. "The old cove's got 'is head stuck in the same way as wot my little boy did. Soap 'is head—that's wot he did."

In a few minutes Manners felt a liberal dose of cold water poured over his head, while what seemed to be fifty pairs of rough hands soaped him vigorously.

In vain he yelled, or rather croaked that it would be useless. The policeman, with his ideas of unnecessary revenge, went to work with a will.

He soaped Manners thoroughly. Even the top of his head was liberally treated, and, as the soapuds trickled into his eyes and mouth, the crowd almost fought for the privilege of trying to pull him through the railings.

But the policeman and the coster claimed the honor, and nearly pulled Manners's head off without affecting the position. "I shall chuck it!" at length said the policeman, regretting that he hadn't club the unfortunate Manners to death. "Just pop off to Scotland Yard and tell them how it stands."

Shortly after a dozen policemen, under the command of a sergeant, made their way through the crowd. The pavement was cleared; as much of the crowd as possible was moved on, and the sergeant examined the railings to see what could be done.

"Better go and find a smith, Jackson," he said, "and we'll have the railings wrenched open."

"Not one in the neighborhood," replied Jackson. "Well, take a cab and find one!"

By a series of wriggles that would have done credit to a professional acrobat, Manners supported part of his wearied body against the railings. Freed from the attention of the crowd, he was now able to think, and a bitter hatred seized him for St. John, who had deserted him in his hour of need.

He had already forbidden him to think of Ella—that was one consolation, and when freedom arrived, if ever it did, some other punishment would be thought of.

He was in the midst of these charitable reflections when he became aware of a voice speaking behind the railings. "May I go round, sergeant?" he heard.

"Certainly, Mr. Everett."

In a few seconds a young man stood in front of him. "Do you mind holding your head up in the police request."

Manners dropped his head, and the young man promptly dropped on one knee and looked up in his face. "Ah, yes," he said. "Mr. Halliday Manners, the banker. I represent the Evening Wire, and should like for a few facts. A much obliged to you, and I hope you won't let the other newspapers follow interview you. I want this exclusively."

The sergeant, attracted by his groans, kindly fed him like a caged animal with brandy and biscuits, and so prevented a collapse.

In a dazed state Manners leaned against the railings and wondered what suddenly his heart leaped. Over his shoulder he heard the familiar voice of St. John.

"I'm awfully sorry," said the young man; "I've been trying to get help everywhere, and the nearest I can get is a blacksmith, who will be here in an hour's time. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Nothing," snapped Manners. "I don't even want to see you again! It's all your fault!"

St. John gallantly forebore to retort, and stooped and examined the railway. As he looked his eyes glittered, and he knelt and with his eye measured the space between the two railings at the bottom.

"Quick!" he whispered. "Slide your head down!"

Manners promptly slid his head up, and met the bar at the top. "No, down—down!" cried St. John excitedly, when Manners had finished his remarks. "Get on your knees!"

Manners dropped in a dazed sort of way. St. John seized him by the neck, pulled toward the pavement, and the banker's head slipped easily through the railings. They were wider at the bottom than at the top, and Manners was free.

Before he could realize his freedom, St. John pulled him to his feet and had him in a cab, to the intense disappointment of the crowd and the joy of the sergeant, who was beginning to think seriously about the matter.

The cab stopped for a moment in a block of the traffic, and a new boy jumped on the step and flourished a paper.

"Unlucky plight of the banker! He uses 'orrible language! Shocking details!" he cried.

St. John bought a paper, and Manners preserved an awful silence till the house was reached. "Come into the study," he said grimly.

"Do you mean to tell me," he went on, "that you were the only one out of about twenty thousand people who found that out about the railings?"

"I'm afraid it looks like it," laughed St. John.

"Very well," sighed Manners; "you'll find I'm not ungrateful. I shall have put up with the scandal, I suppose. Better go and see Ella and leave me to myself. And, here you can have the half penny as a remembrance if you like."

Mrs. Percy St. John sometimes wears a half penny set with brilliants but never when her father comes to dinner.

MARGARET.

REMARKABLE STORY BEHIND THE SIMPLE INSCRIPTION ON A MONUMENT IN THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS.

In one of the fairest parts of the city of New Orleans, at the beginning of one of its finest streets, is a unique monument. But one word is inscribed on it. That word is "Margaret."

The monument is on a triangular-shaped grassy plot named by order of the City Council "Margaret Place." It is noted also as being the first monument to a woman erected in the United States.

The monument is an interesting one. A short, plump woman is seated upon an old splint bottomed chair, its legs wrapped about with a cloth reaching to the floor, as you may have seen a kitchen chair in some old fashioned day calico dress. A crocheted sack, faithfully represented by the sculptor's chisel, covers her ample shoulders. Her hair is combed back tight from her hair in a close coil at the back. Her face is strong and kindly. By her side and leaning confidently against the woman, is a child, an orphan, who looks gratefully up at the face of the woman, a face that one looks at with admiration.

And what did Margaret Haughey do to deserve so fine a monument and to have the honor of the first monument ever erected to a woman in this country?

"There is 'not much to tell," says Grace King in her "New Orleans, the Place and the People," and yet the story is as sweet and simple as love itself. "A husband and wife, fresh Irish immigrants, died in Baldwin, New York, leaving by their infant, a young orphan and cared for her as if she were their own child. They were Baptists, but they reared her in the faith of her parents, and kept her with them until she married a young Irishman in her own rank in life."

"Pat of the light health forced the husband to resign to the sea voyage, and the wife, named Margaret, upon the charity of the community. A strong, young widow with the Irish immigrants took this little orphan and cared for her as if she were their own child. They were Baptists, but they reared her in the faith of her parents, and kept her with them until she married a young Irishman in her own rank in life."

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that it is surprising that she made any money at all; but every year brought an increase in business, and an enlargement of her original establishment, which grew in time into a factory, worked by steam. It was situated in the business centre of the city, and Margaret, always sitting in the open doorway of her office and always good humored and talkative, became an integral part of the business world about her. No one could pass without a word with her, and, as it was said no enterprise that she endorsed ever failed, she was consulted as an infallible oracle by all; ragamuffins, paper boys, porters, clerks, even by her neighbors, the great merchants, and bankers, all called her "Margaret," and nothing more.

She never dressed otherwise than as her stature represented her, in a calico dress, with a small shawl, and never wore any other head covering than a sunbonnet, and she was never known to sit any other way than as she sits in marble. She never learned to read or write, and never could distinguish one figure from another. She signed with a mark that will that distributed her thousands of dollars among the orphan asylums of the city. She did not forget one of them, white or colored; Protestant and Jews were remembered, as well as Catholics, for she never forgot that it was a Protestant couple that cared for her when she was an orphan. "They are all orphans alike, was her oft-repeated comment.

"When she died it seemed as if the people could not believe it. 'Margaret dead?' Why, each one had just seen her, talked to her, consulted her, asked her for some trifle of delight, or something from her. The news of the death of any one else in the city would have been received with more credulity. But the journals all appeared in mourning, and the obituaries were there and there, would have struck Margaret as the most incredible thing in the world to have happened to her. The statue was a spontaneous action. While her people were still talking about her death, the fund for it was collected; it was ordered and executed, and almost before she was gone she was there again before the asylum she had built, sitting on her same old chair that every one knew so well, dressed in the familiar calico gown, with her little shawl over her shoulders, not the old shawl she wore every day, but the pretty one of which she was so proud, and the orphans crocheted for her.

"All the dignitaries of the State and city were at the unveiling of the statue. A thousand orphans representing every asylum in the city, occupied the seats of honor; a delegation of them pulled the cords that held the canvas covering over the marble, and as it fell and 'Margaret' appeared, their hands led to loud shouts of joy and hand-clapping. The streets were crowded as far as the eye could see, and it was said—with no doubt, an exaggeration of sentiment, but a pardonable one—that not a man, woman or child in the crowd but knew Margaret and loved her."

Such is the story of Margaret, as told by New Orleans' historian. The orator at the dedication of her monument said: "The substance of it, truth is, the strength of it, religion; the end, peace—then fame and immortality."

A DAY AT A TIME.

THIS IS THE BEST WAY TO LIVE. Worry is one of the worst curses of modern life. I say of modern life, not because people a thousand years ago did not worry, because as civilization advances men become more highly strung, more sensitive and less capable of detachment. Thus we often say in a very expressive phrase that a thing "grates upon our nerves." Something distressing happens to us, and we cannot shake it off. Some one treats us rudely, harshly, or unkindly, and the word of deed rankles in our substance. We think it over until we are magnified into a grievous and intentional insult. We take it to bed with us and no sooner is the light put out than we begin to recall it, and turn over in our minds all the circumstances that occasioned it. We sleep feverishly, haunted all the time with the sense of something disagreeable. We wake, and the acerbic thing is still rankling in our minds. This is one form of worry, which is very common among people of sensitive minds.

Another form of worry is the tendency to brood over past errors. The business man or the public man is suddenly overwhelmed with the conviction that he has made an awful mess of things. The worst of all calamities is the lack of energy to grapple with calamity and in most cases worry that breaks down a man's energy. A third, and perhaps a more common form of worry, is the gloomy anticipation of future calamities. There are some men who however happy they may be to-day, are perpetually frightening themselves with the possibilities of a disastrous to-morrow. They live in terror. When actual sorrow comes upon us most of us discover unexpected resources of fortitude in ourselves. But nothing sickens the heart so much as imagined sorrow. Of this form of worry we may well say "It's wicked!"

I have no doubt that most people know by experience what some of these things mean. No doubt also many of them have many real causes for anxiety. They will ask me how I propose to deal with it. One of the best ways is to be content to live a day at a time. Sydney Smith once counsels us with rich wisdom to an entity in itself. It is rounded off by the gulf of sleep; it has its own hours which will never return; it stands separate, with its own opportunities and pleasures. Make the most of them.—W. J. Dawson.

The religious orders are ornaments of the Church. Their wonderful diversity of vocations, the virtue of their numbers, their service, the erudition of so many of their students, etc., endear them to it. And their good works speak their praise.