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MARCELLA GRACE.

By ROSA MULHOLLAND.

CHAPTER XXVI. THE CONVICT'S WIFE.

When Marcella's fit of prostration gave way and the vitality of youth lifted her up and set her on her feet again, she looked round in vain for the delusive hope that had carried her so far on her travel of pain. As one short dark winter's day after another dawned and set, and life went on monotonously in the silent house, the hours going and coming with as little variety as the waves that rose and fell with dreary thunder under the garden wall, and leaving as little trace behind them, she realized gradually that this separation was for life. There were no forces in nature, strong and rich in resources though nature might be, great enough to overturn the barriers set up by man against man; no subtleties of the brain of a loving woman sufficiently ingenious to reverse the decrees of a law making universe intent on securing itself against the encroachments of crime.

Bryan, snatched from the very step of a scaffold, was yet condemned to a kind of death. Shut in his tomb, bound by the cerements of a living grave, swathed in the oblivion his friends had consigned him to, an oblivion that blotted his name from the roll of men who could be suffered to live, there was no gentle Saviour to take away the stone from his sepulchre and bid this buried Lazarus arise and come forth. There he must remain, a living soul immured in a vault till the years should shrivel his face, and extinguish the light of his eyes, and dry up the sap in his veins. At each short visit paid him at long intervals she must expect to find him more worn, more weary, his mind more exhausted with the rebellion of the imprisoned body, or, if less impatient of his restraints, then also less strong to resist the slow blight gradually eating up his manhood.

When she began to resume the duties of her household, as much for the sake of others as to occupy herself, the effort was at first utterly vain, the tasks would drop out of her hands, the entire uselessness and futility of everything stared her out of countenance, and her eyes would suddenly grow blind again to her actual surroundings, and fix themselves with a fascinated gaze on one point in a universe of wrecks and follies, the single dim ray from heaven penetrating a dungeon and lighting up a solitary figure built round with intolerable stone.

Even long walks on the moors and rocks afforded her no relief, such weak yielding to an impulse to escape with her sorrow from all eyes bringing its own punishment. The result was too much time and space for that kind of thinking which attains to no solution of anything, but acts like the welling away of life-blood, leaving a drained heart, and a benumbed and bewildered intelligence.

There was too much time and space everywhere for such a small weak creature as herself, and all visible things seemed at pains to force this idea upon her, and fix it permanently in her mind.

The wide rolling Atlantic waves that came and went as if out of and into eternity, widening and lengthening with each fresh approach and retreat, the free wandering moors that stretched themselves out immeasurably under the rays of the wintry sun and made paths for their own travelling through the clouds to infinity, alike oppressed her with the invitingness and suggestiveness of their triumphant scope. While she walked swiftly she asked herself why she, and the land, and the water, and the clouds, and the fleet birds, and above all the wild breeze, had such limitless powers of going and coming, while the active feet of one who was always in her mind were cruelly tethered within a few square yards of masonry, restrained from even as much movement as the feeble and the aged and the maimed among living creatures may enjoy.

At last the sickening hatred of the liberty of motion which he could not share grew to a sort of madness in her, and she forsook the moors and all out-door life, and shut herself up with Mrs. Kilmartin in the room where the invalid chiefly lived, an apartment overlooking the sea to which the afflicted mother had taken a fancy.

As yet, that poor lady had shown no sign of recovery from her mental disorder, but neither had madness as assumed any unhappy form. It was still her mania that Bryan had escaped away from Ireland at a fortunate moment, and was enjoying to the utmost his travel round the world. Some times she fretted a little because he did not write word that he was coming home, but soon forgot this only cause for dissatisfaction. Formerly, Marcella had fled scared from before her smiling face, and the task of inventing pleasant answers to her ceaseless remarks and questions, but now that the girl's own heart-sickness had taken a new turn and she found a relief in chaining her young limbs within its limits as narrow as those that constrained the prisoner whose life in bonds she was trying to follow, she made fresh efforts to amuse the poor woman and to humor her happy imaginations.

Letting her mind go with the stream of her companion's delirium, she would pretend for a moment that the mother's delusions were reality, and reality only a nightmare, and would talk about Bryan's travels and Bryan's enjoyment, would even read fragments from Bryan's letters to which she added

passages of her own invention, such as he might have written during an absence under happier circumstances. She would divert herself and her listener with descriptions supplied by her own imagination, and with sketches of imaginary people he had met. When the mother talked of his home coming, which she said was to be expected soon, Marcella forgot the fancy, and, with what she felt to be a half-crazy glee, spoke of the preparations that must be made for him at Inisheen, the pleasure he would find in seeing certain improvements which he had wished to be made, and of the jubilee that would be held among the people to welcome him.

But when the pathetic play was played out, and the invalid, soothed and charmed, had relapsed into her cushions to sleep a little, Marcella had then to pay too dearly for the riot of her fancy by the reaction from imaginary happiness to intolerable woe.

With her face buried in the foot of the mother's couch she would kneel with covered face, taking blow after blow as it fell on her heart, afflicting her whole body with physical pain, and then, having borne the shock, she would pass a silent motionless hour, seeing with her closed eyes into the prison cell, watching Bryan as he paced about his few yards of pavement, trying to look over his shoulder on the page he was reading, scanning the pallor and the lines on his face, striving to speak to him without words, to make her presence known without touch or sound.

In the evening she would recover a little, would sing Mrs. Kilmartin her favorite songs, and help her with her needlework, and read, and talk, and feel a certain satisfaction in the thought that she had passed her day within limits almost as narrow as Kilmartin's own.

This unnatural way of living could not go on very long without leaving a trace upon her appearance, and when Father Daly came in one day he was startled at the look in her face.

"I am tired of walking out alone, Father Daly," she said. "I am trying to realize what it is to live within four close walls."

"I see," he answered. "You are anxious to take away Bryan's last comfort: when the time for your next visit comes round you will not be able to go to him."

"Oh, Father Daly, I am not ill. You don't think I am looking ill?"

"Put on your bonnet and come with me for a walk."

"She went obediently, her heart throbbing with a new fear. What if she were to be physically incapacitated by mental or bodily illness when paying him those rare visits which even the rigors of the prison law allowed? She owned her mistake to her friend, but pleaded her terror of that melancholy which the widths and lengths of air, water, and earth everywhere enforced upon her.

"Well, now, I have something to propose to you," said the priest. "My little schoolmistress over in Ballydown-valley is not very well, and a holiday for change of air would be a blessing to her. I have thought that if you would take her place for a few weeks two people might be benefited."

Marcella hesitated. Grief has its feverish active phases and its indolent phases. Kilmartin's wife felt herself at that moment inert and helpless.

"Of course, if you cannot think of it, I must try and incur the expense of a paid substitute for her, or, failing that, let the poor child take her chance of falling into confirmed bad health."

"No, no," said Marcella. "I will do it."

"I knew you would," said Father Daly, triumphantly. "You will find it irksome at first, but what you want is to be forced into something that will give you a little trouble quite outside of your own affairs. To be obliged to drive three or four miles in the winter mornings will be annoying but invigorating, and the effort to keep about fifty young ones in order for some hours will rouse you a bit, I can tell you. And besides, my dear, it will be a step towards closer intercourse between you and your people—and his—whom you have been rather neglecting, haven't you?"

"Yes, they have all got away from me into the distance. And when they do come near they seem like ghosts. Only one person is real to me in the world."

"And that one person you must forget for a while. I'll engage you won't get time to think of him during school hours. After I have seen how this works I shall have another little plan to propose to you; but one thing at a time."

At first her new task was distasteful to her. The very fact that she could not get leave to think of him for so many hours was a grievance. The noisy children were like a hive of bees led loose, that swarmed round her head and shut out her view of the sun. But by-and-by she had gained a sort of charmed sway over her tormentors which surprised and pleased her, and she began to individualize the thin, large-eyed faces with their various expressions, to notice that Mary's lips were redder than Nannie's, and Nora's bare feet were smaller and finer than the rest that hung from the benches, and that plain-looking Bridget always gave her a loving glance which more than any other went warm to her heart.

The welcome of the scholars grew to be a distinctly good thing in her day, when on going into the school house she found half-a-dozen young heads with wind-tossed locks bending together over the fire of turf, while one fanned the flame with her scant petticoat and another pulled the logs this way and that way with her brown

fingers to make them burn briskly that "Herself" might be warmed after her drive. And when in the twilight of a wintry afternoon she was met coming out of the school house door by a crude, shy deputation of fathers arrived to thank her for her devotion to their children, she felt an unaccustomed glow in her veins, and thought with pleasure that there was something worth telling to Bryan, something that would interest him and give him a moment's delight.

In this writing to Bryan about it all she began to find her reward. The little world of the school house, with its various characters and incidents, supplied her with many long a paragraph in her letters to the prison. The humorous scenes that occurred, the comical things that were said, found their way into the pages which occupied her evening after evening, and when Bryan's replies convinced her of the pleasure her pictures and anecdotes had given him, she looked about with eagerness for fresh varieties of everyday life with which to float a breath of fresh air into his solitude.

As each new attempt to put the life of her world—the little world he knew and loved so well—vividly before him, proved a success, she felt a latent power awake in her, and with an excitement that was almost joy went to work to exercise it for his amusement.

Now she had something to walk out for, a motive in making daily visits to the school even after the young schoolmistress had returned with improved health to her post, a distinct reason for seeking out the people in their homes, hearing the tales they had to tell, and witnessing the homely scenes of their lives, scenes in which they gratefully made her a sharer. It was something to rise for in the morning, this search after life-like figures and scenery for her evening sketching in the journal which she now kept regularly for her husband.

Bryan, also, at her request, kept a kind of record for her of the details of his prison life, all that could interest without too much afflicting her. Various characters of those with whom he had to associate were drawn for her with a power and skill which called forth her admiration. Sometimes in reading his letters her sorrow was almost forgotten in her delight in the vigor and noble temper of his mind, the manliness with which he accepted his misfortune and made the best of his circumstances. There were no complaints, scarcely even a reference to inconvenience and privation. When he failed of subject matter out of his present life he went back into his past, and gave her, bit by bit, a sort of his own thoughts, and experiences, and aspirations, from his earnest boyhood upward. Absorbed in this intercourse, Marcella wore through the winter months with a tolerable calmness. Winter seemed suited to such a life, and lent itself easily to its requirements. The morning light received, the short dark day spent abroad in the cold air, in the rough wind, among the poor and patient, then the evening fire and lamp, and the howling storm and sea outside, and the scrape, scrape, of the pen that was carrying her message, expressing the extravagant lovingness of her heart, shaping out the humorous or pathetic anecdote which was to make him laugh or thrill the next day, forgetful for a moment of his bonds.

But when the spring broke upon her and the first lark began to sing, then again her life fell in ruins around her. How shape summer with all its glories into any kind of harmony with the tragedy of their two lives?

It was just when winter had breathed its last sigh and that the lark had found a patch of blue from which to hurl down his delicious rhapsody about liberty and joy upon Marcella's heart, that a passage in a letter of Bryan's smote her with a new and sharp anguish.

"I have learned," he wrote, "that as I am looked upon as a well conducted prisoner, I may hope to be liberated at the end of twenty years—always provided my good conduct continues. Here is something to look forward to, my dearest love. If we both outlive the term we may yet be together."

This, with the first promise at her feet and new rose-tints on the sea, was too much for the woman who in one winter seemed to herself to have exhausted all the patience and endurance in her nature. Strange that the fixed term of twenty years seemed to her more intolerable than the vagueness of a lifetime. The idea of the lifetime had been hard to grasp, and all sorts of shapeless possibilities were felt to float through its measureless hours like unseen stars through space. But twenty years made a comprehensive period, sickeningly long, calculably ruinous in its workings, with a sharp, set limit that in its very assertion seemed to annihilate any shorter limitations which an extravagant imagination might conjure up.

She asked herself what kind of creature she should have grown to be during the slow, sad passing of those twenty years? Would not the wife to whom he must come forth in that distant day be a woman with faded cheeks, eyes whose lustre was gone, a worn woman with youth long wept away and no remnant left of the graces which ought to belong to the bride of such a man as Bryan Kilmartin. Oh, why had she in that mad moment of their tragedy stretched out her hand to take far future, bound him to herself for time and eternity, shut him off from the possibility of choice in that new day which was still to dawn for him so far ahead, and

which might, only for her, have possibly brought him new joys, a fresh beginning of life, happy hours unclouded by such memories and associations as must always hang around her? Ought not his wife to be found among the young glad girls of that future day? Oh, she would have tried not to be jealous of those girls, whose fresh faces would, in that far-off hour, put to shame her own grief worn, tear furrowed countenance. She would have withdrawn herself, turned her face to the wall, and left him to find his happiness in forgetting her.

Then it occurred to her with a strange thrill of mingled relief and anguish, that the Bryan of that day would not be one whom glad girls would be likely to smile upon. He would appear not as a man freed from unjust imprisonment with a still less name; he would be a convict, the brand of murderer would lie upon him, the long expiation of his supposed crime would arouse no pity, no sympathy among his fellow-creatures; the young, the gay, the glad would shrink from him in horror. Even if disease had not fastened upon him, and he did not come forth stricken, crippled and prematurely aged, yet there would be no one to welcome him back into the sunshine besides herself, no one but the faded wife to give him her faithful hand and lead him away to some happy solitude of nature where the mountains and trees would not gossip over his misfortunes, and the winds would not exorcise his name.

There was comfort even in this melancholy thought, and the certainty that the very misfortune which turned and must always turn the world away from him made him more entirely her own, filled her with an eager joy.

Having got over this point in her outlook to the future, she began to realize a little more hopefully that there would after all be a future, however far away it might now seem.

And then she began to gather up a few crumbs of comfort and confidence in herself. Perhaps even if she should have grown old and unlovely, he would still see her the same because of the undying love in her heart. But in the meantime she must not weep all the light out of her eyes; time would be busy enough trying to quench it. From this point of view, even if from no other, despair was her deadliest enemy. By a constant habit of patience and the encouragement of sweet thoughts she would baffle the attacks of this foe alike of her present and her future. She would parry its thrusts and escape its disfiguring scars.

With rare visits to the prison and long weeks spent as close to it as possible, during which she had the sorry comfort of feeling that she was at least near him; and with a trip to a little frequented part of Switzerland made for the purpose of getting some variety to put into her letters to him, she got through the dreary summer. Winter brought her back to her old ways at Crane's Castle, and she added some daily hours of study to her former pursuits. And then with the opening up of a new spring came changes.

Where Drink's Worst Results Are Seen.

The notion has sometimes prevailed that all the evils of intemperance are the result of the debasing influence of the saloon, says Rev. J. M. Cleary, president of the National Union C. T. A. The saloon, no doubt, is much to blame for the widespread extent of the evil of excessive drinking, but the saloon is not wholly to blame. The saloon exerts marvelous ingenuity in not only catering to an appetite already well developed, but also in cultivating new and insatiable appetites for intoxicants. The profits of the saloon from ministering to anything like a reasonable or legitimate demand for intoxicants would, indeed, be discouragingly small. Its greedy coffers must be filled by the contributions of those who demand drink to still the cravings of an appetite diseased and destructive, that has silenced conscience and trampled upon reason.

Habitual drinking in the home, with the usual bad example, is a sad and prolific cause of the sin of drunkenness. Many an uncontrollable appetite for strong drink has been created in the home into which intoxicants freely and frequently enter. Many heart-broken mothers have only themselves to blame for the dissipation of their wayward sons, because they did not protect them in time by sufficient safeguards against the insidious danger of drink. Some women, alas! are not wholly free from the frightful curse of this most destructive appetite. It is in the home, or in the social circle, that this fatal fondness found its first encouragement. The saloon will not entertain any scruples at enriching itself from the reckless contributions of unfortunate and degraded women. But the saloon does not make women drunkards. With all its foul sins to account for, this, at least, cannot be laid to its door.

The vilest result of drink's terrible work must be traced to the homes invaded by the evil. How important it is, therefore, that the homes of the people should be freed from this poisonous danger. Our good, noble-hearted women must be the refining influence to cleanse the home and society from the foulness of habitual drinking. Woman's power for good or evil is greater than we are able to estimate.

Build Up.

When the system is run down a person becomes an easy prey to Consumption or Scrofula. Many valuable lives are saved by using Scott's Emulsion as soon as a decline in health is observed.

COLORED NUNS.

A sight which invariably attracts the attention of strangers in New Orleans is the colored Sisters. One so seldom hears of negroes professing the Roman Catholic faith that when he meets a colored nun for the first time he can but gaze after her in open-mouthed wonder. Accustomed as we are, moreover, to associate the black robes of the nun with white, pale faces, the effect is a little startling when a nearer view of a Sister of Charity discloses a meek, brown face of a mulatto. This little band in New Orleans is known as the Holy Family of Sisters. It was founded as far back as 1812 by four free colored women, who, educated and wealthy, resolved to devote their time and money to those of their race so much less fortunate. The eldest of the four became Mother Juliette, who continued at the head of the sisterhood till her death, eight years ago.

The convent is what was once the famous Orleans street ballroom, and many are the tales which are told of the dancing and revelry which for years held sway within its walls. The building is an immense brown structure, fronting directly on the narrow French street. The great windows have shutters, always closed, and there was such an air of quietude when I visited the place that I quite started when the bell gave a loud clang, clang, as I pulled it. I felt that I had aroused unwilling echoes—perhaps awakened the ghosts of long ago—and was almost tempted to run away when I heard footsteps within coming toward the door. But, instead of meeting a frown of disapproval, as I half expected, I was admitted by a dark faced nun, who appeared to consider it no unusual occurrence that a stranger desired permission to enter.

The hall was dim and wide, with a gray stone floor, and white pillars at the farther end. While I was inwardly commenting upon its severity and scrupulous neatness, Sister Francis came to show me about. She was rather a small mulatto, with a slender, interesting face, black eyes demurely lowered, and long brown hands meekly folded. Her uniform was of black serge with a wide, white linen gump, a white linen bonnet, the customary black veil, and the inevitable black beads and cross. We ascended the wide, easy staircase, and on the first landing I was confronted with the words: "I have chosen rather to be an abject in the house of my God than to dwell in the tabernacle of sinners."

In this convent of the Holy Family there are at present thirty-six Sisters, twenty-six novices and six candidates. The candidates remain for six months, and if at the end of that period they still wish to continue, they become novices. The novitiate lasts two years, after which the novice takes the black veil. Even then, however, the vows only become permanent when they have been renewed ten years in succession. One must thoroughly understand the character of the colored race to fully appreciate the sacrifice entailed by these vows of renunciation. The colored people as a class are always so light-hearted and laughter-loving, so fond of gayety and amusement, that such rigid self-denial must necessarily require even greater strength of purpose than that displayed by the white Sisters who devote their lives to religion and charity. And yet in all these years there has been only one who has left the sisterhood after taking the final vows!—Boston Transcript.

Practising Religion Under Difficulty

How some Catholics grow if they have to walk a half a mile to church! They don't appreciate their privileges. Other Catholics have no daily or weekly Mass, no resident priest, no religious school, etc., and still try to practice their religion and keep glowing faith. One of these, Mrs. C. W. Shepard, writes to *The Missionary* from St. Andrew's Bay, Florida:

"We are a small and widely-scattered band here. Our friend and pastor, the Rev. J. B. Bassen, of Pensacola, comes on a missionary visit once a year after Easter time. His visit has just ended. When we came here, eight years ago, there was no church, and there had never been a priest on the bay. Then there were about forty souls who had not been to their duty for twenty-eight years. Father Bassen said he would come if we could collect the Catholics. We went in our boat up the different arms of the bay and carried the news. Our house was the only place for two years in which to hold Mass. They all came—some in row boats, some in ox carts, and some on foot. One old couple had been in the habit of walking fifty-seven miles to Appalachicola to their yearly duty. Now we have a little chapel in the pines which my husband built himself."

Some Catholics living within sound of the church bells, have to be coaxed and urged and scolded to their Easter duty. That aged Florida couple walked 114 miles every year to make theirs! They will have their reward.

Not what we say, but what Hood's Sarsaparilla does, that tells the story of its merit and success. Remember Hood's cures.

Can Recommend It. Mr. Eos Bornberry, Tuscarora, writes: "I am pleased to say that Dr. THOMAS' ELECTRIC OIL is all that you claim it to be, as we have been using it for years, both internally and externally, and have always received benefit from its use. It is our family medicine, and I take great pleasure in recommending it."

Are your corns harder to remove than those that others have had? Have they not had the same kind? Have they not been cured by using Holloway's Corn Cure? Try a bottle.

MARRIAGE

A very large and audience greeted Rev. at St. Peter and Paul last Sunday evening, Catholic Witness, an introductory lecture Marriage," which he subject for the autumn a brief introduction by explaining the in theme, prominent at the general desecration outside of the Church to which Catholics were forget the sacred nature and not to be pressed with the duties bilities attached to the He contrasted the and devotion exhibition of the other sacred worldliness and lack cornea too often visible tion of marriage. are funerals attend solemnities than nupt flowers would look small more sweet ar than on a day of is still observed in marriage outside of tively owing to the teaching, yet were to wed with the full monies of Holy Ch greatly help to inc and reverence due t among our non Cath "May God grant t facts of these retur vival of Catholic mar in the Church, whe ments, save those administered, and t pomp and religio much encouraged by The lecturer the definition of matrim from two Latin w manus, meaning the er, because the w in order to becom bring up children. of woman from the of virginity to that honorable, is effect marriage contract, v fine as: "A cont man and one woman naturally bind them to live in common fr bringing forth and a and for mutual ass has all the (esential tracts of different s ends, it is over an from other human undoubtedly the co- plete example of a c "Is Divine instit of Eden as a monog sacred union, for the first, the procrea second, mutual love, ship; third, a reu- cence, was then pro monies of Holy W ferred to its subse the old dispensatio coeded to explain at tion to primitive a our Lord and Saviou He who came not but to perfect it, and nal people a holy r its nature and subst instituted in Paradi it an image of Hi Church, attached to graces, so that nov ians, i. e., all val sons, there exist mental marriages. tized, marriage ren before the coming and divine contract indissoluble, true but without sacram- timonies of Holy broken tradition of cils of the Church, ancient sects who communion in the were adduced in pr marriage was alwa of the seven sacra Christ.

After a brief reser winkled concluded: the sixteenth centu mony, by example a low level, as to m an ignoble contra- now, the Church, t things sacred, the protector of ho anathemas against trines, and the mo bold have become the enemies, t more distinct is rion tones the of Holy Church: "T ment, in Christ and which she adds the Apostle: "Be sacrament, because and sacred, theref seech you, let us t holy manner."

There is only never falls, and y -Duty. Duty pu every man - up into which the always goes singin

Real merit is the Hood's Sarsaparilla. It c illustrations fall. Hood's

Do not deny in ge folks. Mother Grav is a pleasant and sure child why do you let is so near at hand?