




MONKSWOLD

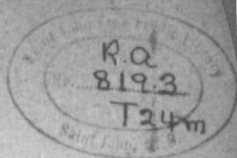
BY

JUDITH TEMPEST.



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MONKSWOLD

— BY —

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ST. JOHN, N. B.

1903.

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“MONKSWOLD.”

BY

JUDITH TEMPEST.

I.

Among the many grand and beautiful estates with which England abounds, Monkswold must rank among the finest and most beautiful; not only on account of its enchanting grounds, fine park and grand old forest, but also on account of the ruins of the old monastery, famed alike in history and in song. For many generations it had been in possession of the Fordyce family, fitting owners of such a noble inheritance.

At the time my story opens the family consisted of but three members,—Sir Richard Fordyce, his wife and their only son Harold, a worthy descendant of his distinguished ancestors. For many years the family had lived in comparative seclusion because of the delicate health of Lady Fordyce, but as she saw her son, a man in years, she determined that their seclusion should last no longer. As she had no daughter of her own and wished for a companion in her declining years she hoped to find both in the wife of her boy. Sir Richard agreed with her, and added, he “thought it high time he had some grandchildren climbing on his

knee." In speaking of the matter with Harold he said, "but remember, my boy, to fall in love before you marry. Don't do anything in haste."

"I have done that already, father," he replied.

"So, so, young man! Then these frequent journeys of yours of late meant something, eh?"

"Yes, father, they meant a good deal to me," replied the son.

"Well, who is the lady? Do your mother and I know her?" inquired Sir Richard.

Harold's only answer was to sing softly

"In the corner of my heart
Where nobody can see,
Two eyes of Irish blue
Are looking out at me."

"An Irish girl, is it? How do you know I will take an Irish daughter?" queried his father.

"I am sure that, when you have seen her, you will love her, and when you know who she is, you will receive her with open arms," confidently rejoined Harold.

"What is her name?"

"Kathleen O'Hara."

"What!" shouted Sir Richard, "the daughter of my old friend Maurice O'Hara?"

"The same, sir," answered his son.

"Why did you not tell me of your intentions before, Harold?"

"Well, to tell the truth, sir, I preferred waiting until I was sure of my position and was able to give you a pleasant surprise."

"And you are sure of your position now?"

"Yes, father. The dear girl has promised to be my wife whenever I wish."

"Wish it to be at once then, my boy, and make your father and mother happy," said Sir Richard, with a resounding slap on his son's shoulder, followed by a hearty shake of the hand, and then, turning to his wife, he said, "and he will make us happy, won't he, my lady?" Lady Fordyce answered, "Yes, indeed; for if he is happy himself, our happiness will equal his." Then she kissed and blessed her son and went quietly away to cry softly to herself at the thought that she was no longer first in her boy's heart.

In compliance with his parents' wishes and meeting no objection from his beloved—who was alone in the world, with the exception of an aunt with whom she lived—Harold hurried matters on, made himself and his people happy, and was off on his honeymoon trip before the fashionable world of London had the least suspicion of his intentions. It was all easily done, as Miss O'Hara and her aunt lived in Dublin. When the news did reach London it created a sensation, and many and varied were the comments it raised, and much disappointment was caused by it to the worldly, matchmaking mammas and marriageable daughters of Vanity fair.

In a certain house in May Fair, five o'clock tea and the quiet marriage of Harold Fordyce, the heir of Monkswold, were being discussed. Mrs. Lattimer, the hostess, took no part in the discussion but listened, laughingly, to it all.

"Who is she?" inquired one.

"Never heard of her before," was the reply.

"Got any people?" asked another.

"Must be somebody surely, or Fordyce would never have married her."

"I am not so sure of that," remarked a stout old dowager, "that gentleman had such an opinion of himself that he considered the world as nothing and thought he could shock it as he pleased."

"That's because he couldn't see anything in that fat dowdy Beatrice of hers," whispered a pretty girl behind her fan.

"But," said Mrs. Lattimer, "I'm sure he has done nothing to shock us; he must have married some time."

"Don't you think it shocking for a man in his position to go off and marry so quietly, not to say secretly? I think it is disgraceful," said the stout dowager, ruffling her plumage and looking for all the world like a fussy old hen. "And mark my words," she continued, "there must be something to hide or there would not be such profound secrecy. Who is the girl anyway?"

"There," answered Mrs. Lattimer, nodding to a gentleman who had just entered the room, "ask Colonel Ormond; he is a friend of her family, was at the wedding, in fact gave the bride away."

Hearing this, the cries were: "Do tell us all about it, Colonel? Who is she? Where did she come from? Is she anybody? What was her wedding dress made of, etc?" The poor man looked distracted and turned from one to another in a vain attempt to speak.

The pretty girl with the fan, however, came to his rescue saying, "Come and sit by me, Colonel. Here is a nice seat, and then you can answer all their questions comfortably."

As he sank back into the seat he mopped his bald head with his handkerchief, saying, "Thank you, my dear. I never thought I would live to see the day that I would run from under fire and take refuge beside a petticoat."

"Well," she laughingly answered, "since you feel in safe quarters here, in gratitude for that safety, be an old dear and tell us all about it."

"Bless my soul! All about what?"

"All about the quiet wedding in Dublin at which you gave the bride away," she explained.

"To be sure I will tell you. To begin then: when For-dyce brings his wife back and introduces her into London society, you, pretty girls and ladies generally, had better look to your laurels, for she's a beauty and as charming as she is beautiful."

"My! Is she such perfection? Who are her people?" asked the ruffled hen.

"Her people? Why she has no people," he answered, innocently, "she——"

"There! What did I tell you?" interrupted the hen, pluming herself again, "I knew there was something——"

"Something?" interrupted the Colonel, "something? What about, madam?"

"Why, about this marriage. You say she is a nobody, a low creature to be ashamed of, a mere little Irish bog-trotter."

"That will do, madam," said the fiery old soldier. "She is no low born creature, but a girl to be proud of. She has no people because they are all dead, with the exception of an aunt; and as for her being a 'bog-trotter,' just wait till you see her 'trot' or walk either, and, my word for it, you'll see such grace and ease that you'll begin at once to copy her, and cry your eyes out because you won't be able to do it successfully."

"Indeed, sir," answered the ruffled one, her face crimson with indignation, while the pretty girl and some few others laughed behind their fans at her discomfiture; "indeed I do not think we will so much admire your Irish paragon that we will desire to emulate her in anything."

"Oh, indeed; I'm sure you won't, madam," rejoined Colonel Ormond; "for, of course, no old woman like yourself could be so wanting in sense as to think of trying to imitate such a sweet young creature as she is."

This speech of the blunt old soldier and the face of indignant horror with which the dowager listened to it, was

too much for the pretty girl; she leaned back in her seat and was fairly convulsed with silent laughter. It was contagious and nearly every one joined her.

Sublime was the air of dignity with which the lady arose and said, "Beatrice, my sweet child, come. It is not fitting that you should remain and hear your mother insulted and ridiculed." Saying this she bowed silently to her hostess and left the room. Silence for a moment followed her departure, when Mrs. Lattimer said, "There, Colonel, you have made an enemy for life:" And, alas for poor Kathleen Fordyce, the happy bride, he had made a bitter enemy for her, too, by his loving but injudicious championship.

"Well, it can't be helped, Mrs. Lattimer. I meant no offence to the old lady, but I won't allow her nor anybody else to abuse my pet, Kathleen. She is my ward and the daughter of my dearest friend."

"Why was the wedding so quiet?" asked pretty Cicely Fordsham.

"Because," replied the Colonel, "she only just left off mourning for her father and on account of the delicate health of Lady Fordyce; but, don't fear, they are to have grand doings at Monkswold after the honeymoon—great rejoicings. All the south wing is being refurnished and prepared for the bride, and the old people are just as much in love with her as Haro'd himself."

"How delightful for her," said Cicely, "I hope they will invite us down for the festivities, don't you, Mrs. Lattimer?"

"I am invited, my dear," that lady answered. "I am one of Lady Fordyce's girlhood friends, you know; and what is more, I am asked to take a friend of mine down with me. I wonder if she will come. Her name is Cicely Fordsham."

"Oh, you dear Mrs. Lattimer! Of course I will be only too delighted," was the ready answer. "But how is it that we have never seen her?"

"Because, my dear, she lived all her life in India with her father, until the last eighteen months. She only came to England after his death, as the Colonel will tell you."

"Is she rich?" asked another.

"No, she is not rich. Soldiers' orphans are seldom that," said the Colonel; "but while her father lived that did not matter, as he fairly idolized her."

"How did he die?" asked a gentleman standing near.

"At his post, sir. There was a mutiny among the native troops. He was one of those sent out to suppress it, and met his death like a brave soldier and an honest Irish gentleman. His last words to me were: 'Ormond, care for my child.'"

There was dead silence as the old man, overcome by the sad recollection, paused and—manlike—ashamed of his emotion, blew his nose vigorously; then he continued: "The news flew like wild-fire that he was shot, for all his men loved him. Somehow it reached his daughter's ears and she came riding to the outposts like a crazy thing, and, as fate would have it, rode straight to the place where we had laid him covered with the Union Jack. There I found her on her knees beside him, fondling and kissing him; calling to him to speak to her—only one word—not to leave his poor little Kathleen without one kind word or kiss, for she would be all alone. I raised her up and said, 'My child, you are not alone while I live, for your father left you to me; you must come away now, this is no place for you.' She was well trained in obedience and after kissing him several times, she placed her hand in mine, saying, 'I am ready.' Then, with quivering lips she said, 'Colonel, you will not——?' I answered her unspoken wish, saying, 'No, my child, we will not bury him here.' I led her to her

horse and sent some of the men back with her. We buried the Major next morning at sunrise, in the little graveyard on the hillside. Since then I have loved his daughter as my own child."

There was not a dry eye in the room as the Colonel finished his sad little story, for nature and kindness of heart are found alike in the homes of the rich and fashionable as well as in those of the poor and humble, though there are some cynics who would have us think otherwise.

"And the mutiny?" asked another.

"Was suppressed before sundown, for the men fought like devils after the Major fell, and felt, as they shot down the black rascals, that they were avenging a brave and loved commander."

"Poor child," said a middle aged lady, the mother of three daughters, "I am sure we must all love her when she comes among us."

"Yes, indeed, I am sure you will, for her story is a sad one," said Mrs. Lattimer.

"Well, well!" said a matter-of-fact body, "those trials must come to all; but she ought to be happy now, for she has got a noble young fellow for a husband."

Then they made their adieus and with much chattering and gentle laughter they went their way, some to remember the Colonel's pathetic little story, others to forget it entirely.

After they had all gone, Cicely drew her chair close to Mrs. Lattimer and said, "Dear Mrs. Lattimer, I am so glad to know I am going to Monkswold with you."

"Are you, dear? Well, so am I. When Harold's mother wrote me and told me all about the approaching marriage she said that as the dear girl was a stranger here she wanted her to know all very nice people at first, and some nice, sweet young girls, and gave me *carte blanche* to

invite whom I pleased of the latter. As you, my dear, are one of my favorites, I naturally thought of you among the first."

"Oh, thank you! It was so nice and kind of you, but have you seen the bride?" asked Cicely.

"Yes, my dear, several times."

"Oh, do tell me what she looks like really?"

"Well, she is rather tall and slight, graceful in her movements. She has a beautifully shaped, dainty head, crowned by heavy coils of blue-black satiny hair. Her face is oval in shape, her complexion rather pale, a straight little nose, and her eyes are the most beautiful I have ever seen, they are a dark, deep melting blue."

"Ah-h, she is beautiful," sighed Cicely; "and her manner, is it pleasing?"

"Yes. At first you may think her rather cold, haughty in fact, but when you become acquainted with her she is most sweet and loveable; at least I found her so," answered Mrs. Lattimer.

"She will be a great contrast to all the English girls, won't she?"

"Yes, and I expect she will be a great favorite."

"Now," said Cicely, rising, "I must run off. I will have lots to do before we go,—heaps of new gowns to see after and all their etceteras; so goodbye for the present."

II.

At Monkswold all was hurry and bustle, excitement and delight. Great preparations were being made for a grand reception to be given to the heir and his bride on their return. All alike were eager and anxious, for Harold was beloved by both servants and tenants for his kindly nature and courteous manner to them all. At length all was completed, the last touch given to everything, and the blissful day that was appointed for their home-coming had arrived. A large house party was assembled at the "Wold" to do honor to the occasion. The little village of Monkstown, a few minutes drive from the "Wold" from which it took its name, had donned holiday attire and turned out *en masse* to greet the bridal party as they left the train. Soon the distant shriek of the locomotive was heard, then the thunderous race over the rails, the last few puff-puffs, and the breathless, life-like, iron monster drew up at the station. A willing guard ran forward, threw open the carriage door, and immediately Harold Fordyce jumped out and turned to assist his wife to alight; then, giving her his arm, led her out to where the carriage from the "Wold" stood waiting. As they appeared, cheer after cheer arose on the still air, until it seemed as if the clouds above were filled with ringing voices.

"This is all in your honor, my darling. I have returned alone many a time and never met with a like reception," said Harold, laughingly; "so be sure to acknowledge it graciously." Kathleen turned her blushing face towards the crowd of onlookers and bowed her thanks repeatedly.

She looked such a beautiful, charming creature, such a perfect picture of a radiant happy bride, in her sweet confusion, that she won all hearts, and cheer after cheer arose again and again.

"Oh, I am so glad and happy to know that they like me at first," responded Kathleen, "for you know first impressions are everything and at first I am generally considered proud and cold."

"There was nothing either proud or cold in your manner to them, my wife. You have won them all. Ah! here we are," he continued, as they turned in at the lodge gates. "A thousand welcomes home, my darling."

"Oh, Harold, stop him! tell him to stop the horses! See, that little sick-looking child—that little boy, in the doorway, tried to throw me a bunch of white roses. I would not lose them for anything."

"Nor shall you, dearest," he answered; as the carriage was stopped and the bouquet picked up and handed to her. She leaned from the carriage window, bowed and smiled her thanks sweetly to the child, making him happy and proud to know that the lovely bride had carried his flowers with her.

A short distance further and they drew up in front of their stately home, where more cheers of hearty welcome from both friends and servants greeted them. Warm embraces from father and mother, loud wishes on every side for long life happiness, congratulations and handshaking in bewildering repetition followed, until at length, breathless but radiantly happy, Kathleen found herself being conducted to her rooms by the stately old housekeeper, Hobson. The bride gave an exclamation of delighted surprise as the door was thrown open and the beautiful apartments were revealed.

"These, ma'am, are your own rooms which my lady always intended should be for Master Harold's bride. They

have been new prepared for you, and my lady is very anxious you should like them," said the housekeeper.

"How could I help but like them? They are lovely—too lovely for words to express."

"And with a southern outlook, too, ma'am," said Hobson, as she threw back the curtains.

Kathleen stood in speechless admiration of the magnificent scene and then said, "How superbly beautiful! How grand it all is! And those ruins I see in the distance, are those of the famous Abbey?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered the housekeeper, proudly, because of her long connection with the family; she was as proud of them as any Fordyce "to the manor born." "And now, ma'am," she continued, "here is your tea, which my lady thought you might like served up here, as you would need a rest before dressing for dinner."

While she was speaking, a trim young maid entered, bearing a dainty little tea service, which she set down; then dropped a demure courtesy and stood with folded hands and eyes downcast. "And this," added Hobson, "is to be your maid, if she pleases you, ma'am, or until you can better yourself, as my lady said you were without one."

"Yes, I did not take the trouble to hunt up another after mine got sick. I left her in comfortable quarters among friends, where she thought she would remain. What is your name, my good girl?"

"Nancy Perks, ma'am."

"Well, Nancy, I do not think you will find me a difficult mistress to please. Now you might see if my trunks have been brought up and take out the dresses. I will tell you later what dress I intend wearing at dinner."

Nancy dropped another demure courtesy and disappeared for the time, and Hobson, after saying she hoped "Mrs. Fordyce would try and rest a bit and feel quite fresh for the evening," left Kathleen to her own devices.

Instead of resting, however, she wandered, from room to room of the beautiful suite, her heart swelling with love and thankfulness for all the tender care that surrounded her. Thus her husband found her when he came in softly, expecting to find her, if not actually sleeping at least making the attempt.

"Well, madam," he said, "is this the way that you obey orders? To punish your disobedience I think I had better keep this from you." This was another boquet which he held under her nose an instant and then tantalizingly held beyond her reach, with the words, "Take them if you can." Without a word she threw her arms around his neck, gave him a loving kiss and a delicious little hug while she whispered, "Give them to me, Harry."

"What would I not give you, dearest, for such sweet toll," he answered, as he clasped her fondly in his arms. Then leaning lightly against her husband she admired the superb flowers.

"Did you bring me those?" she asked.

"Yes, madam," he answered. "I brought them, but they were given me to bring by old Gregg, the head gardener. Will you honor the old fellow by wearing them this evening?"

"No; I will carry his boquet, but I am going to wear my little boy's flowers," she said.

"Are you going to send me down for some more? As I am the only little boy you own, it must be so."

Kathleen drew back and laughingly surveyed his six feet of broad shouldered, stalwart manhood, and then grew grave as she answered: "No, I mean the flowers given me by the little sick boy at the Lodge. It seems to me," she continued, "that when he threw those flowers to me a blessing came with them, for if there is anything on earth near akin to the angels it is a little, sweet, suffering child.

I think it was a happy omen, just within the gates of my new home, don't you, dear?"

"Yes, love, I do," he answered, "so wear them if you wish. And now I suppose I must be off and leave you to dress in peace. How long will it take?"

"Oh, half an hour will suffice for me," she answered, "so come into the next room and tell me all about the Abbey ruins; and see this dear little turret room with steps leading down to the grounds! But how foolish of me," she laughed; "of course you have seen it hundreds of times before you ever saw me."

"Yes, of course I have; but, as I never saw it with you, we will go together and inspect it with its new furniture," replied her husband.

Could Kathleen have seen the malignant face with the pair of green-grey eyes that furtively watched them from the adjoining room she surely must have felt some uneasiness and dread, even amidst her great happiness; and she surely would have been amazed to hear her maid, Nancy Perks, hiss between her teeth:

"A—h, how I hate her! He never even saw me as I courtesied to him when I made the excuse into that room after the tea service. Any other time he would have had a kind word for me—now he sees no one but that white faced wife."

But Kathleen saw nothing, heard nothing, of her hidden enemy, and so went her way happy and rejoicing. When the first dinner bell rang she returned to her dressing room and said to her maid: "Now, Nancy, I will dress at once. I hope you will be able to do my hair becomingly."

Nancy answered with proper humility: "I hope so, ma'am. I'm sure I will try." And being a deft-handed and skilful maid she succeeded admirably in her task, and it was a picture of beauty and elegance that greeted Harold when he returned to lead his wife down to the drawing-room.

The satiny hair was coiled high on the top of her dainty head, giving a regal look to the tall, slight figure. In her hair nestled a half-blown rose and two or three buds. Her gown was composed of white satin, with trimmings of choice Limerick lace, which laid over the glistening folds like silver frost work, a train of white cut velvet lined with white satin, while encircling her throat and arms were a necklace and bracelets of priceless rubies which completed, and at the same time relieved, the dead whiteness of her attire.

Harold gazed at the charming picture she presented, with adoring eyes, and, as he stooped and kissed her brow, murmured: "Sweetheart, you are perfect."

She courtesied low in acknowledgment, then said, abruptly, "Oh! what a horrid little yellow rose you have there! Take it out, you dreadful boy, and let me give you one of mine."

Her willing husband plucked the flower from his button-hole and threw it aside, while Kathleen selected a half-blown rose and tiny bud to match those in her hair, and deftly fastened them in his coat, saying: "Now, that looks as it should look, and, remember, sir, that you are always to come to me for your button-holes."

"Very well, madam," he answered, "I am always your most obedient." Then giving her his arm he led her proudly from the room.

Scarcely had the last white glimmer of Kathleen's skirts disappeared from sight when Nancy darted out from the dressing room and snatched up the despised yellow rose, saying: "So! even my poor comfort of leaving his button-hole boquet ready is to be taken from me, now that madam wills it. Oh! I'll be even with her yet."

Now, dear reader, I think I had better explain who Nancy Perks was. She was the clever and pretty daughter of a poor widow, one of the tenants of Monkswold estate.

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MONKS' FOLD.

In her childhood much notice was taken of her by kind ladies on account of her pretty face and her cleverness. She had opportunities given her for study and improvement, not often given to English peasant girls. Though she acquired knowledge she did not acquire sense, and her vanity led her to misconstrue some kind attentions. When she had reached her eighteenth year she had her fortune told her by a strolling gypsy woman. For a silver half-crown she was informed "that she was born to be a lady," also "that she was beloved by a young and handsome gentleman, but there was a dark-haired woman who would cross her path. Before she could marry her handsome gentleman she would have to get rid of her dark-haired rival." The poor, silly girl believed the gypsy's jargon, and, as Harold Fordyce always spoke kindly to her when passing her on the road or elsewhere, she came to the conclusion that he was the "handsome gentleman" by whom she was beloved, and thus thinking, she lost no opportunity of crossing his path and obtruding herself on his notice. In time she grew to love him with a passion and intensity that destroyed all peace and happiness in her simple life. In order to be near her supposed lover she sought and obtained a situation in his father's household, and, being neat and rather refined in manner, she became a favorite with the housekeeper, Hobson.

When Nancy first heard of the intended marriage she was filled with rage and chagrin, but when she heard also that the intended bride was a dark-haired woman, she, in her ignorance and wilful blindness, decided that her fortune was only working itself out as predicted, and that it only remained for her to rid herself, by some means or other, of her daring rival. Just how it could be done she had not yet decided, but, poor little fool, she concluded that as she had right and fate on her side she could bide her time, and meanwhile think out her plans. Certainly fate seemed to aid her in her unholy schemes by placing her at once in such a trusty position as Kathleen's own personal attendant.

III.

Meanwhile all was mirth and festivity at Monkswold. Entertainment followed entertainment in quick succession both at home and abroad. The whole county seemed eager to do honor to the bride. In the midst of all the love bestowed upon her she seemed to thrive like a hothouse flower; her natural reserve of manner was thrown aside and she won all hearts by her sweetness and made all alike happy by her graciousness and kindness of heart.

Cicely Fordsham and Kathleen were drawn, intuitively, towards each other and were becoming fast and dear friends. At times they strolled off together and in their long, girlish chats learned to know and appreciate each other much better than they could have done in spending long hours together over music or lawn tennis.

One bright morning Kathleen asked Cicely to walk down the oak avenue with her, as far as the Lodge. On her friend consenting she asked her to wait a few moments on the terrace, while she herself re-entered the house. Going to the housekeeper's room, she said:

"Hobson, I've come to ask a favor of you."

"Surely, ma'am," she answered, "any favor I could do you is granted before you ask it. But you'll honor me by sitting down a bit, please, ma'am," and the good soul fussed about and pulled up a fine fat armchair and a foot stool to match it.

Kathleen seated herself just to gratify the old body, and said: "I want to beg some goodies from you in a little bas-

ket—some jelly, some cake, a little fruit, or anything nice that you think would be good for a sick child."

"Surely, ma'am, you shall have it just as soon as I can get them ready," was the reply; but can't I send them for you, ma'am, wherever you bid me?"

"No, thank you, Hobson, I mean to take them myself. They are for the little child at the Lodge."

"Well then, ma'am, I'll go at once and prepare it, if you'll excuse me leaving you alone." So saying she hurried off, leaving her young mistress to her happy reflections. She soon returned and handed her a small wicker basket, saying: "I'm afraid you'll find it too heavy, ma'am; best let me send one of the grooms with it."

"No, indeed," she answered, weighing it lightly in her hand, "I am quite equal to carrying it. You know I am a soldier's daughter and always carry out any project I undertake, and besides I must see that child again; his little white face seems to be haunting me. I must see if I cannot do something to make him happy."

"Well! well! you'll be sure to do it, ma'am, for you carry happiness and goodness in your sweet face," said Hobson. As her mistress left the room she looked fondly after her, saying to herself: "She is a sweet creature surely. I don't wonder Master Harold loves the very ground she treads on, for she deserves it all."

Chatting gaily together the two friends soon reached the Lodge, where they found little Charlie seated in the doorway, his little white face looking still whiter and thinner than when Kathleen first saw it. She took his little frail hand in hers, saying: "Well, my little boy, I have come to thank you for those sweet flowers you threw to me the first day I came home. Do you remember?"

"Is it remember, ma'am?" said his mother, bustling forward and dropping many a courtesy while she spoke to

the young squire's wife, "sure he's talked of nothing else since, and he's lived happy every day since, thinking as how you stopped the carriage, ma'am, to pick them up."

Kathleen smiled upon the child as she said: "So you thought of me so much as that, my little friend; and I thought of you often and would have come sooner to see you had I been able." While speaking thus she uncovered the basket, and taking out a large bunch of grapes, placed them in one of his hands and put a fine, juicy orange in the other. "Now, my little man," she said, "try and eat some of those grapes. I have more goodies for you in this basket, which I will leave with your mother." So saying she entered the cottage and placed the basket on the table, and as she did so asked the mother "what caused her child's illness?"

"He's lame, ma'am," she answered, "he got a fall and never got over it."

"Can he walk at all?"

"Only a little, ma'am. He's weak like."

"Don't you have a doctor to see him?" asked Kathleen.

"Not now, ma'am," the mother answered. "I buried my man three months ago and I'm only six weeks here you see, ma'am, which I got the keeping of the Lodge from Sir Richard to help me on a bit."

"I understand," answered the kind lady, feeling full of pity for the bereaved wife and her suffering child. "I will see that he has a doctor to attend him. I have been told that the village doctor is a very clever man, he may be able to cure him. In the meantime he must have plenty of nourishing food; I shall speak to Mrs. Hobson and she will send him all that will strengthen him. How does he amuse himself?"

"Just a lookin' out, ma'am, watchin' o' the carriages drivin' in wi' the quality."

"Has he no picture books or toys?"

"He has a wee spellin' book, ma'am. His father were a bit o' a scholard an' he taught him a bit, and he do make pictures, he calls 'em, on a slate."

Kathleen nodded her head silently and turned to look again at the child, who was then watching Cicely peel the orange for him and, as she did so, he chattered with her artlessly but in an old-fashioned manner.

He was a sweet picture to look upon with his broad white brow, clear, earnest blue eyes and pale golden hair. Kathleen went and stood near them silently.

Suddenly he turned towards her, asking, "Did they tell you to come to me?"

"They! Who, child?" she asked.

"Why, the voices—the sweet voices."

"Well, perhaps they did," answered Kathleen, willing to humor his childish fancy.

"I thought so," he said, as he looked earnestly into her face; "do they often tell you things?" he continued.

"Not very often, dear, I think I am too busy to listen."

"Oh! I am never too busy to listen, and sometimes when I sit here they whisper, whisper through the trees, and I listen to them, for they make me feel glad."

"Yes, dear," she gently replied.

"And nights when I lie awake with the pain," he continued, "I hear them calling 'come away! come away!' Then again when the pain makes me tired they whisper so soft and sweet, 'sleep, sleep.'"

He turned his head as he concluded and gazed towards the trees with a far-away look in his blue eyes, as though he were again listening to the whispering voices.

His mother spoke sharply to him, saying, "You mustn't be tellin' the ladies them foolish notions you have," and then in an apologetic manner to Kathleen she said, "It's just a little foolishness he has, come o' the sickness, ma'am."

"Yes, yes; do not be cross with him on account of his childish fancies. Now, Charlie," she said to the child, "we are going home." Seeing the little face sadden as she spoke, she continued, quickly: "but I am coming back again often, and now, when I go home I am going to find some picture books and some toys to send down to you, and you will try to read the little books, won't you, dear?"

"Yes, ma'am. I will do anything you bid me, and to-night before I sleep I will tell the voices 'good night,' and they will whisper it to you for me."

"Yes, dear; and I will listen to them and bid them good night for you," she replied.

They kissed him then and went their way, leaving him with a happy smile upon his face and a happy heart in his little frail body.

They walked some distance in silence, when Kathleen said, "How true it is that we often entertain an angel unawares."

"Yes," answered Cicely, "that poor woman has no more idea of the sweetness of that child than she has of the beauty and poetry of his ideas. But how strange it seems to find such a woman the mother of such an angelic child!"

"Well, I fancy the husband must have been a man of some education, and naturally he would teach the child all he could while he lived. That, added to a natural refinement, makes the child what he is."

While the two friends were visiting little Charlie, Harold and his father were talking together. Some days after his return home Harold noticed that his father seemed unusually grave, at times depressed in spirit—a most unusual thing for Sir Richard, as he was of a happy, genial disposition. Harold was much too fond of his father to allow this depression to pass unnoticed by him, and seeing him enter the library, followed him, intending, if possible, to learn the cause of his low spirits. Sir Richard was seated

by the table with his face buried in his hands. So occupied was he with his reflections that he did not hear the door either open or shut. His son went close to his side without disturbing him, then placing his hand gently on his father's shoulder, said softly, "Father, what is troubling you?"

His father, startled, looked up at him, then a deep groan burst from his breast as he answered: "My boy! Have you come to reproach me?"

"Father!" exclaimed his son, "what did I ever have to reproach you with?"

"Ah! my poor boy, you do not know all."

"Yes, father, I do know," replied Harold, "that you are the best and dearest father that ever lived. What more do I need to know?"

"Much, much more, my poor boy. Harold, could you believe that I—your father, whom you have trusted and believed in since you were a smiling babe in your mother's arms, had wronged you deeply, cruelly?"

"Never, father. Though you told me so yourself I would not believe it."

"Then, my son, you must learn to believe it, for I have done so. I have wronged you deeply."

"Father! Look at me! Do not bow your head before me," said Harold, greatly distressed; "If at any time wrong has been done by you that can affect me, it has been done unconsciously—that I will swear—and being so done, I hold, can be no wrong to me."

"My noble boy! God bless you now and forever," said Sir Richard, "you give me comfort. It was unconsciously done; 'twas only within the last few weeks that I discovered it. Since then I have tried to atone or compensate to you in some small measure, as these papers will show." As he spoke he laid his hand on a packet of papers lying near

"What is bogs?"

Kathleen promptly answered, "Why, wet places, to be sure."

Then asked Dot, "Has you wet feet?"

"No," she was told, "I have not wet feet."

For a while longer little miss ate strawberries and then returned to the attack, asking:

"Does you trot very fast?"

Cicely, who was seated near, looked up startled at this question from young precocious, as she knew who the mother's friend was, and had no doubt but what she had been making slighting remarks about Kathleen, before the wide-awake child.

Kathleen replied that she "did not trot at all, but walked and sometimes ran."

"But," said the child, "you does too. Her said you was—was (hesitatingly) bog-trotter. Now," triumphantly nodding her head at Kathleen, "her did——"

"Dottie," broke in Cicely, "your mamma will be cross if you tell stories."

An admirer of Cicely seated by her side, murmured in her ear, "A sweet child that," while Dottie, indignantly retorted, "'Tisn't no stories—it isn't. Her said it, her did."

"Little wretch," murmured Cicely to her admirer.

"No," he replied, "her is the wretch, the little one is—ah! there she is at it again."

"I likes trotters," said the child.

"Oh, yes," broke in Cicely's companion, "sheep's trotters."

"No, that trotters," replied Dot, pointing with one small finger at Kathleen, as she stared gravely into her face.

This was too much for their gravity. The idea of the beautiful, proud-looking lady being called "trotters" was certainly mirth-provoking and, seeing that she herself was smiling, they gave full vent to their laughter.

"Now, little one," said Kathleen, lifting Dot upon her lap, "let me tell you a little story about trotters. You see," she continued, "there are many little girls who are not like you, living in a lovely home with all things comfortable and warm. They do not have nice, pretty frocks or good fires to sit near in cold weather to keep them warm. Sometimes they have no fire at all and they are glad to go out and pick up chips and wood to make a fire with. Even here, in your rich England, there are such poor little girls as those. But in my country, in poor Ireland, there are many, many such, and when they live near such places as bogs from which they cut peat—that is something to make fires with—they go there and pick up lots of nice pieces of peat or turf to make a good fire for themselves."

"Yes, yes, a nice fire," said Dottie.

"And," continued Kathleen, "there are big people who work there all the time, called turf-cutters, or as some people call them, and, I believe, all Irish people, when they wish to speak slightly of them, 'bog-trotters.'"

"You is 'bog-trotter' 'en?" said Dottie.

"No, dear," said Kathleen, "I never worked in the bogs, but if it had been my fate so to do, I would have taken off my shoes and stockings, tucked up my skirts and 'trotted' the bogs to the best of my ability, and would have felt that honest poverty was no disgrace."

"By Jove! I believe she would," said Frank Wyburn, Cicely's slave.

As Harold's wife finished her remarks she raised her eyes and encountered the gaze of our dowager, who had just returned from the conservatory with Mrs. Lattimer in time to hear her closing sentences. Seeing her confusion she concluded at once that Mrs. Benrose and no other was the "her" referred to by Dottie, and concluded also that she at least was no friend of herself. Being too refined a lady to

him on the table, "and this manuscript," he continued, "will explain all to you, should anything unforeseen occur to prevent a personal explanation."

The manuscript referred to was open before him and had evidently just been completed.

"Are you going on a journey, father?" asked Harold.

"I cannot tell at present. My movements all depend upon the contents of letters that I am daily expecting. Should I be called away suddenly I will leave this paper for you. Read it carefully and, if possible, with calmness. And now, Harold, let me hear you say 'Father, I forgive you.'"

"Father," said Harold, moved unspeakably and placing a hand upon each of his father's shoulders, "if it will add to your comfort in the slightest degree I say 'father, I forgive you, fully, freely.' But there can be no such question between us; all that you have done has been well done."

"It was done, at the time, with the best of intentions, Harold, many, many years ago. It has been the one secret of my life and I supposed would always remain a secret; but it is not to be so. Understand me, my boy, it is no shameful secret, nothing that will cause you to blush for your father or your father's memory; but it will cause both you and your mother pain. Yes, it will be the cause of disappointment and pain to you both."

"Well, whatever it may be, father, I will promise to make the best of it, and I am sure my mother will do the same, for we both love you too fondly to find fault with any of your works."

"Yes, I am sure that you do. But this—oh, Harold! Harold——"

"Now, dear father, do not fret this way, it will make you ill. You are ill now and cannot stand this worry. Come out into the sunshine with me, it will do you good."

"Not just at present, Harold. I have more work to do here. Leave me now and just tell Simes when the post-bag comes to bring it here to me at once. To-day's post will either confirm my fears or tell me that they are groundless."

With a loving hand clasp Harold left his father. He felt chilled and unhappy, not so much the result of their conversation, but because of his father's ill and worn looks. In other words he felt, as we all feel at times, a dread presentiment of some impending ill. He went first and gave his father's orders about the immediate delivery of the post-bag, then, hearing cheerful voices in one of the morning rooms, he went there, hoping that cheerful company would be beneficial to himself and help to remove the unusual weight from his own heart. It would never do, he thought, for either his father or himself to let their guests perceive that they were low-spirited or unhappy, at such a time, especially in his own case, which for him was the commencement of a happy married life. Surely the bright, sweet picture which his fair young wife presented was enough to cheer and brighten him. She was seated in a low chair, as he entered, and he thought

"Oh! she was very fair to see
And not more lovely than beloved."

Others were seated around the room engaged in conversation or in some of the many and various dainty occupations suited to fair and dainty hands. Kathleen was amusing herself with a tiny tot, daughter of a neighboring lady, who was making a friendly call. She came, too, accompanied by an old acquaintance of ours, the red-faced, ruffled dowager and her daughter Beatrice. They were all engaged in lively talk of one kind and another, and Kathleen was feeding the little lady beside her with strawberries dipped in sugar, and listening to her childish prattle, while the child regarded her with open-eyed curiosity. Suddenly the child asked:

delight in the confusion of another, no matter how well deserved, she said gently: "I hope you enjoyed seeing the conservatories, Mrs. Benrose. They are the delight and pride of Lady Fordyce."

For her kindness she received the abrupt and rude reply, "I am well aware of the fact; I've been through them before."

Kathleen bowed a slight acknowledgment to this reply and turned to speak to her husband with the usual deep look of love in her beautiful eyes that always marked her recognition of his presence, while Cicely, addressing herself to Frank, said, "What a dreadfully ill-bred person that Mrs. Benrose is!"

"Yes," replied Frank, "I really can't understand how people tolerate her."

"Ah!" said wicked Cicely, sweetly, "perhaps 'my sweet Beatrice' is the cause of their toleration, at least in some cases."

Her companion began an emphatic denial when suddenly the words seemed to freeze upon his lips and he gazed as if fascinated at old Simes, the butler, who had come without ceremony into the room, with wild eyes and a face of fixed horror, and whispered something to Harold, who listened with blanched face, and then with a horrified exclamation, hurried from the room. He was followed by his wife, who returned almost instantly to whisper to Cicely and Frank, "Do not, if possible, allow Lady Fordyce to leave the room at present. Sir Richard is very ill; please tell Mrs. Lattimer." Then she went softly out, closing the door behind her.

For a time they heard subdued voices and hurrying footsteps, then the measured tread of heavy feet, which they knew were the steps of the bearers who carried the stricken knight to his chamber; then a mad gallop of horses' hoofs as a groom rode swiftly down the avenue in quest of medical aid.

IV.

Cicely told Mrs. Lattimer as soon as possible and then stationed herself at the window. It was not a very great while before she saw the doctor ride swiftly up and disappear at once within the house.

In a few moments Harold re-entered the room and advanced towards his mother. She, looking up suddenly, noticed his white, mournful face and, startled, sprang to her feet, saying, "Harold! What is it?"

He put his arm fondly around her, saying, "Mother, darling, I have come to bring you to my father; he is very ill; Simes found him lying senseless on the library floor. I sent at once for the doctor, who is with him now."

"But—ah!" gasped the poor lady, "it will—it cannot be much. Oh! let me go to him at once."

Her son gently drew her hand within his arm to aid her faltering steps, and, as they went out, he turned and shook his head sorrowfully towards them all. A pall seemed to lower over the gay little party. Mrs. Benrose and her friend at once made their adieus, while those remaining talked in lowered tones and feared the worst.

Soon Kathleen returned and her white face confirmed their fears. She said "the doctor gave no hope and they had telegraphed to London for others. Sir Richard was still unconscious and they feared if reason returned at all it would only be at the last."

They were all "So sorry," "It was dreadfully sad," "So terribly sudden," "Felt so deeply for poor Lady Fordyce," "Hoped it would be nothing, and that dear

Sir Richard would rally shortly," etc., etc. All the polite phrases with which the world expresses its sorrow for the grief that is not its own. But an unbidden guest had come to the wedding feast, at whose side they did not care to sit. They sought amusement, not sorrow; and like the southern birds who summer in a northern clime, they had no wish to feel a chilling blast. Thus, at the first approach of the chill, dark messenger who hovered near, they spread their fashionable wings and floated away into the gay outer world of mirth and sunshine. Ere the darkness closed over Monkswold they were all gone with the exception of Cicely, Mrs. Lattimer and Frank Wyburn, who would not forsake their friends in their sorrow.

Cicely came down stairs about twilight. She had been sitting with Kathleen for a long while talking quietly and sadly with her. Kathleen had now gone to Lady Fordyce to try and coax her to eat a little, even at her husband's bedside in order to support her strength, and so Cicely wandered through the deserted rooms alone, wondering why all the world was so selfish and felt so little for each other. While so thinking she entered a softly lighted room and saw a quiet figure seated reading, who rose at her approach when she said, quickly, "Oh! You! you did not go?"

"No," replied Mr. Wyburn, for it was he, "I did not go. I came to share my friend Harold's joy, why should I not remain to share his sorrow?"

"Oh, Frank!" she exclaimed, extending her hands to him, "I am so pleased to find you here."

And Frank, nothing loth, imprisoned the little hands, as he asked, "So pleased! At what?"

"Pleased to know you are not, like all the rest, cold and selfish," she replied.

Then she strove to withdraw her hands, but he, willing to take advantage of her gentle sweetness, only clasped them.

closer and whispered: "Nay, do not take them from me, let me keep them always, for my very own. Shall it be so, my love? Darling, tell me yes."

Her overstrained feelings then gave way and she burst into sobs and tears which she vainly tried to suppress.

"Do not cry so, darling," he said, "or if you must do so, let it be here upon my heart," and he clasped her closely to his breast. Thus out of the sorrow of others came their great joy.

Life looked at its best and brightest for them, for they hoped to pass it together. In a room above, a heart-broken woman sat beside a couch on which her husband lay unconscious—the lover of her youth, the one love of her life, her dearest and best, her own, own, darling husband. Nothing could keep him here. The dear hand clasped in hers was growing colder, still colder * * * *

Some one moved that cold still hand from her warm clasp and folded it gently with its fellow over the pulseless breast; then she realized the awful fact that she was that desolate creature—a widow. Where so lately had been mirth and gladness now were wails and tears; gentle laughter and sweet music had given place to moans and sobs, and above all there arose the sound of "the passing bell," which made known to the villagers the fact that Sir Richard, the sixteenth Baronet of Monkswold, had passed away.

V.

It was all over. The last few weary days were passed. While they still had all that was earthly of their loved one to gaze upon, they did not feel quite so desolate; but now, that too, was taken from them, and only the awful blank remained, that was once filled by his dear presence.

Sir Richard rested with his fathers, and Sir Harold, the seventeenth Baronet of Monkswold, reigned in his stead. "The king is dead! Long live the king." The world, true to itself, turned to worship and pay court to the new made knight and that "dear, sweet, charming Lady Kathleen, his wife." Even those who had so lately despised her on account of her Irish nationality were now constrained to bow before her shrine. Mrs. Benrose was among the first to pay her court.

Kathleen received it all quietly. She knew fairly well who were her true friends and who were merely the friends of her wealth and position.

Weeks passed. The long mid-summer days were over. The cool mornings and the bright, clear days had come, followed by long, restful evenings. Monkswold had regained its wonted manner and appearance. The dowager Lady Fordyce had settled into the still calmness and resignation usual to those nearing old age, and who think often of

"The Bright Beyond."

Harold alone remained gloomy and depressed; stern of brow and grave in manner. He spent long hours of the bright, pleasant days, shut within the library, poring over

and hunting through musty old papers. Even his sweet young wife could not coax him from among them.

One evening he entered the little turret room, which Kathleen made her boudoir, and where lately she had spent many lonely hours. Cicely had ended her visit some weeks since, and consequently Kathleen had no young companion. She watched her husband in silence for a while and thought how changed was this stern, grave man from the bright, happy, almost boyish husband of their sweet, brief honeymoon. How changed! but how much dearer, as every young true-hearted wife knows who has gone through the fiery furnace of affliction side by side with the loved one. She went to him where he was seated, and putting her arms around his neck, drew his dear head upon her breast, while she whispered, "Harold, husband, darling, speak to me, for it is best to

"Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break."

He drew her closely to his side and then asked, "Could anything or anyone cause your feelings to change towards me?"

She pressed a long fervent kiss upon his lips before she replied, "Nothing, my husband. You have my fervent, unchangeable love, now and forever."

"Then if," he asked, "it were possible that, in order to do right, I asked you to leave this grand old place and live with me in some far-away spot, poor and unknown, you would do it willingly?"

"Yes, my husband, if right required it. And I would love you more, if possible, than at present; and respect you, as one who gave up wealth and position for honor and conscience sake."

"Then, my own true wife, you have decided for me. Now, my own, let me ask you to trust me for a time, blindly, fully, and know through it all that I am working for the best and doing right."

"Most willingly I promise, dear. I trust you entirely."

A fervent kiss was his thanks and then placing her on the couch beside him, he said: "I cannot yet, even to you, sweetheart, explain myself fully, as the secret is not my own; but to begin my work in the right direction, I must take a long journey. You will not like that, darling?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered, "if you take me with you."

He shook his head and smiled faintly as he said, "I thought you would want to come, but it cannot be, my own love. I expect to be hard at work all the time, and may possibly visit places where you could never go."

"But, Harold," she asked, "you will not go into any danger?"

"None, my wife, that I can possibly avoid. My absence may be long and it may be short, but I will remember, at all times, that my life is yours and care for it accordingly."

True to her promise to trust him fully, Kathleen asked no questions, feeling sure that when the time came she would know all.

"When must you start?"

"As soon as possible. I will tell my mother this evening and simply state that business calls me away."

"How long do you think it will take?"

"I cannot tell, my darling, but rest assured that the time will be as short as I can make it. Why, sweetheart," he continued, clasping her to his breast, "I will only live half a life when away from your side."

"And I——" but here she burst into tears, which showed that the many lonely hours she had lately spent had weakened her. He soothed her fondly and, as she became calmer

said, "I have been selfish lately, my darling, and neglected you, but while I am away you must have some young companion with you. Who would you like best?"

"Oh! only Cicely, for she is honest and true."

"And what about Frank?" he asked.

"Oh! Frank, of course, will ride over as often as he thinks necessary for his happiness. I will write to Cicely in the morning. You can see Frank and tell him to come just when he pleases."

"Well, then," said Harold, "I will ride over to Eagle's Nest tomorrow, and see Frank. I think you might come along, for I want all of my wife's company that I can get, to keep me strong during my enforced absence."

Nothing loth Kathleen promised to go. Just then the dinner bell rang and she left her husband in order to dress for dinner. She thought much of their conversation and pondered deeply on his words, which seemed so full of a strange doubt and fear, almost of his own right to his father's possessions.

The next day dawned clear and cool with a crispness in the air and a suspicion of frost in the freshness of the breeze that foretold the coming autumn. Immediately after breakfast the horses were ordered round and soon they were in the saddle. It was a good fifteen miles to Eagle's Nest, the home of Frank Wyburn's people, but a fifteen miles ride was nothing to Kathleen, as her father's teaching had made her an accomplished and hardy horsewoman. They cantered quickly down the avenue, but Kathleen did not forget her little protege Charlie, and reined in her horse to speak a few pleasant words to him and ask his mother if he was gaining much strength.

"Indeed but he is, my lady," was the answer, "and that smart he is too, me lady, getting around on them sweet little crutches your ladyship was so good to send. He rambles about a bit most every day."

"I am happy and pleased to hear it," was the kind reply. "You must make him eat all the good things Mrs. Hobson sends him, but don't let him ramble too far and overtax his strength." Then with a cheerful good morning to both mother and child they went on, while little Charlie stood leaning on his crutches and watched Kathleen with adoring eyes till they disappeared.

"You have certainly worked wonders there, my darling," said Harold, as they rode along. "How did you manage it?"

"Oh! I've been feeding him well, that is all; the doctor has done the rest."

"Yes, but the doctor might never have seen him had it not been for you, dear."

"No, I do not think he would have." Then she asked quickly, "You do not mind my spending your money to pay doctors, do you, Harold?"

"Surely not, my wife, that is while I have it for you to spend."

Kathleen was quick to see that she had started a sad train of thought for her husband, so she said brightly and quickly, "Now for a race down this level stretch. Odds upon it that I win." And she was off.

The exhilarating race acted like a charm and at the end of it, when they slackened speed, with Kathleen's horse half a neck ahead, she was delighted to see that dull care was gone and her husband was looking once more like himself. They rode the rest of the distance happily. At length the towers of Eagle's Nest were in sight.

"What a fine old place it is!" said Lady Fordyce, "but I like Monkswold best."

Then they entered the gates, rode swiftly up the avenue and found themselves before a gay party, scattered over the lawn and terrace. Frank came eagerly forward to welcome

them and help Kathleen to dismount. While doing so she whispered, "We will remain out here with the rest; Harold needs cheering up."

"You will stop and lunch with us?" Frank asked.

"Thank you, yes, with pleasure," she replied, and then settled herself comfortably in a garden chair and entered gaily into conversation with those about her.

Presently a pair of hands were placed over her eyes and some one asked, "Guess who I am?" It was needless to guess.

With a girlish impulse Kathleen jumped to her feet, exclaiming, "Cicely! you dear! I am delighted to see you again. When did you come?"

"Yesterday," replied Cicely. "Frank's sister has been stopping with me. I came home with her for one week. As they were all very anxious to have me here, mamma gave her consent to a short visit."

"Then," asked her friend, "it is all settled?"

"Yes," replied Cicely, blushing brightly, "but it will not be for some time yet."

"That is all the better for me," she was told, "as I want you to come and make me a long visit while Harold goes abroad for an uncertain time. Will you come and keep me from being lonely while he is away?"

"Certainly I will come. I am sure that mamma will not refuse her consent, so I shall write her to-night."

The luncheon bell rang just then and they all went in together, and Kathleen saw for the first time that her friend (?) Mrs. Benrose, was of the party. She asked Cicely if she was staying in the house. "Oh! no," was the reply, "they only drove over this morning."

"And little Dot?" asked Kathleen, laughing.

"Is not with them. You bear no malice then?" said Cicely.

"No, my dear girl. How little you know me if you think I could bear malice for that trifle. I only think with contempt of the one who made the remark in the hearing of the child, and after all, you see, the little innocent loved her 'trotters.'"

"Yes, I am sure she does. I met her once since and she prattled away about you all the time."

During luncheon the conversation turned upon a murder trial then occupying the attention of the London courts. It was the oft told story of a wife, neglected and treated with chilling indifference, while her husband lived in the smiles and love of a beautiful rival. At length the poor wife, driven nearly insane by her wrongs and wounded love, took the life of the woman who had so injured her. Her arrest, of course, followed, then her trial and conviction for murder in the first degree. No plea for mercy was offered, and she was only waiting in her cell for the final, cruel death that had been her sentence, and her husband—the man who had been the cause of all this wrong and sin, lived the life of the just (?) man, and had the pity and sympathy of all. So goes the world.

Kathleen listened to the conversation in silence for some time, then she exclaimed, quickly, "How foolish of her!"

"Foolish of the murderess of course. She might have known that she could not have escaped detection," said Mr. Wyburn, the father of Frank.

"Oh! I do not mean that. I mean that she was foolish not to have killed him. He was the one that deserved death," explained Kathleen.

"How do you make that out?" she was asked.

"He was her husband," was the reply; "she gave up all for him. She loved him devotedly, and he treated both her and her love with contempt and insult when she should

have had every throb of his heart, every thought of his life, and the best and highest respect that man could pay to woman."

"Lady Fordyce, you would exact a great deal," said Mrs. Benrose.

"No, madam," she replied, "I would not exact, because I already possess. What I claim is the just right of every true wife."

"Then," continued her questioner, "We are to suppose that you consider yourself a most fortunate and much valued woman?"

"Certainly you may, madam, for I have had given to me all that makes life worth the living."

"How does your happiness affect the lives of other women, may I ask, for example, that of the condemned woman we were speaking of?"

"Not at all, I am sorry to say; but I would help her if I could, for she needs help and woman's kindest pity." Oh! she continued, "I have no patience with some of those weak, contemptible creatures, called men, who, for the idle amusement of the hour, forget all that is great and good in life, and yield themselves, without a struggle for the right, to the base wiles of a so called siren! The world would be better without them."

"Then, Lady Fordyce, should the day ever come for you to consider yourself a neglected wife, you would have no hesitation in ridding the world of your recreant husband, I suppose?"

Kathleen laughingly answered: "I do not fear that such a day will come for me. But—were such a thing possible, I do not think I would or could hesitate, for I would think, living I had lost him, but dead, he would still be mine to love and mourn for." Then she turned to her husband, say-

ing, "Now, Harold, see what a little clever questioning has done. Mrs. Benrose has discovered, for you, that your wife has the impulses and blood-thirsty feelings of a Borgia."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Wyburn before Harold could reply, "other women feel and think the same, but are not so fearless in expressing their hidden impulses, as Lady Fordyce."

As luncheon was now over they all left the table. Some returned to the terrace and lawn, others to the drawing-room. Among the latter were Kathleen and Cicely with Mr. and Mrs. Wyburn and Sir Harold. They all talked pleasantly for a while, when Harold requested that their horses be ordered around. With many warm handshakings, they took their leave and were soon trotting smartly towards home. All too swiftly passed the days.

At length came the day fixed for Harold's departure. It dawned dark and sombre as is not infrequent in October. The last good-bye was spoken, the last embrace and kiss given and he was gone, with those whispered words to Kathleen, "God guard you, my wife, till I return. Believe and trust me through everything." With a warm clinging embrace she promised.

For a while she indulged her loneliness and gave way to her sorrow. Then the spirit of her soldier father arose within her and she blamed herself for her selfish indulgence when his mother was there to comfort and cheer, for surely she, who was doubly bereft, needed some one to offer words of consolation. Going to the quiet, sad, old lady, she exerted herself to charm and entertain, and in so doing she forgot herself entirely and gained, if possible, more love from her husband's mother than she had gained before.

When Cicely came to pay her promised visit she found them both well content and eagerly looking forward to the loved one's return. One day after Kathleen left the room, the old lady turned to Cicely saying, "What would I do without that dear child? What a brave noble girl she is!

My boy has a treasure in her. She is one in a thousand. Surely her life will be a happy one if a mother's prayers to heaven can gain happiness for her."

"Yes," Lady Fordyce," rejoined Cicely, "she is indeed a noble girl; she seems so strong and self-reliant but with it all so gentle and womanly, so full of love and ready sympathy for all that need it."

"I know it, Cicely, for I know how she puts her own feelings aside to cheer and comfort me. Selfishness has no part in her. Now run, child, and take her with you for a walk. She is looking pale today; tell her that I insist upon her going."

VI.

Cicely found her friend in the turret room. She was standing, with the long glass doors at the head of the stairs open, gazing at the great stretch of wood and sky, with sad, wide open eyes, like those of a wistful child.

"Oh!" she exclaimed as her friend entered the room, "What weary work this watching and waiting is!"

"Yes, it is, dear," replied Cicely, "but your waiting will soon be over. I am sure I need not be the one to say your husband will come back as speedily as possible."

"Of course, dear, I know that well. But there is a sadness, a terror hanging over me. I fight against it, and sometimes shake it off, but it is useless. As I stood here I could only think of that dreary song of Tennyson's, where he says:

'The air is damp and hushed and close
As a sick man's room when he taketh repose
An hour before death;
My very heart faints and my whole soul grieves
At the moist rich smell of the rotting leaves.'

Why do I feel so?" she continued; "I am not given to morbid fancies such as these."

"You are only nervous and tired now. Come," said Cicely, cheerfully, "we will take a brisk walk down to the Lodge and see little Charlie. Perhaps he would come for a walk with us to the old Abbey. I am anxious to explore it."

"If you wish we will go. I would like to see the little fellow too."

Their walk to the Lodge was taken almost in silence. Cicely tried to keep up a conversation, but as she received only monosyllabic answers when she made a remark, she also became silent.

As usual little Charlie was in the doorway and greeted them with a smiling face.

"Well! What a brave, little man you are growing!" said Cicely.

"Yes," said Lady Fordyce, "and such a good little man to take his medicine. The doctor tells me he has no trouble at all with him. I am sure you must be proud of him, Mrs. Dinn," turning to Charlie's mother as she spoke.

"That I am, me lady, an' he's gettin' that smart at the book larnin' an' the picter makin'. An' he walked to the old Abbey yesterday an' was just agoin' now as your ladyship an' miss came along." This was told with many bobs and bows to the ladies. She was listened to with patience, and Kathleen said: "We are going to the Abbey; let him come with us."

To Charlie's great delight his mother made no objection, and being given his crutches, they went slowly on together.

Once Charlie stopped and listened to the sighing wind and said, "Do you hear them? Now they are always calling out 'Sorrow, sorrow.' They never whisper soft and low now. It is always that wild, shrill cry of sorrow."

"That is only the autumn wind, Charlie dear, telling us that winter is coming," said Cicely, for she dreaded the effect of his words on her friend, in her nervous condition. Charlie only shook his head in reply and did not speak again till they reached the ruins.

How beautiful they looked in the gleam of the pale autumn sunshine! One end of the Abbey was fairly well preserved, the other parts were moss-grown and ivy covered,

as though nature herself mourned over their decay, and strove, with tender fingers, to veil their changed and crumbling walls, from the too curious gaze.

Cicely uttered a low cry of admiration, as she gazed upon the picture, and after a few moments said, "How sublime! How grand they are even in their fall!"

"Yes," replied Kathleen, "and what a lesson they teach us? It soothes and rests me to look upon them, for even they, senseless stones as they are, are not forgotten by the All-seeing One, for He sends His beautiful moss to cover them and his tender ivy to enfold them and teach rebellious man that He watches over all. Now," she continued, "Come into the chapel and see how grand it is. I would like to see it restored, if possible, and put to use."

"To use?" said Cicely amazed.

"Yes," returned Kathleen, "as a chapel, of course. And like the dames of 'ye olden time' I would have mass sung here each morning for the repose of the souls of those who slumber in the vaults beneath."

Cicely was of another faith than her friend and did not, of course, agree with her ideas, but all the same she thought it would be a fine thing if it could be perfectly restored.

"All the knights of Monkswold," continued Kathleen, have spent great sums on this part of it. Just look up at the vaulted roof—it is perfect. How the music of a choir would ring against it! Just listen to one voice alone." Then she raised her own voice, which was clear and sweet and full, in the soul-stirring anthem

"Gloria in Excelsis Deo."

As the last sweet tones died away, Cicely, who had listened entranced, said, "Oh, I had no idea that you could sing so beautifully!"

"No?" replied her friend. "It is my one accomplishment. I do not often obtrude it."

Little Charlie whispered, "Sing some more." Kathleen looked at him a moment with gentle eyes, and then said to Cicely: "This will do for you both," and she sang sweet and low, that beautiful hymn "Abide with me."

Charlie gazed at her with eyes full of love while she sang, and as the last pure tones of her sweet voice died softly away, he murmured, "It is like the angels, isn't it?"

Kathleen heard him and laughingly shook her head, as she said, "No, dear child, that is far, far beneath the angels. But come," she continued quickly, "You are looking cold, and that will never do. I shall have the doctor scolding me for my carelessness and telling me that I am undoing all his good work." As she was speaking she lifted the child lightly over the stone door step and set him down outside.

He drew back to her and said "'Sh! Look over there, Lady Fordyce, and you will see the woman with the green eyes."

Kathleen glanced up quickly and saw Nancy Perks walking slowly along a bye-path near the ruins. By her side walked a young man, a huge framed young giant. 'Twas plain to be seen they were lovers. She smiled as she watched them a moment, then, turning to Charlie, she said:

"That woman with the green eyes, as you call them, is my maid, Nancy."

"I am sorry," he replied.

"Well! what a strange child you are to be sure! She is a very good maid, I assure you, very smart and skillful. I am learning to take quite an interest in her and to like her."

"Well," said the child, "she comes to see mammy and I don't like her. I don't like her nasty eyes."

"Nor do I," said Cicely solemnly.

Her friend stared at her in amazement an instant, then burst into a clear ringing laugh as she said, "a pair of foolish children, indeed. Because poor Nancy's eyes do not please

you, you do not like herself either! I think her quite a pretty girl, and rather like her eyes, they are so uncommon."

"I must say that I do not like them. I think she is a deep, cunning girl. One that could be a dangerous enemy on occasion," said Cicely.

Just then they reached the Lodge, and after seeing their little charge safely in, they walked quickly home, where on their arrival the heart of the loving wife was made glad by receiving a letter from her husband, telling her that he would be home again about the middle of December. This was indeed joyful news. There were several other letters for her, among them, one in a strange, rude hand which read as follows:

"Does you leedship kno what tuck the master to furrin parts. Cos I dose and kno as 'ow he's agoin' to bring 'ome another for which he's a 'avin the manor 'ouse fixed."

As she read, the hot blood flamed up through Kathleen's veins. She felt for one moment as though she would suffocate, then making a violent effort, she controlled her indignation and turning to her mother-in-law, asked calmly, "Mother, where is the manor house?"

"In the small park behind the old Abbey, dear," replied the dowager Lady Fordyce.

"Strange," said Kathleen, "I never observed it."

"Not so strange," said the old lady, "You do not see it until you are directly upon it. It is a low Queen Anne cottage, and the trees grow very thick and high about it."

"What is it used for?" asked the younger lady.

"Why for the home of the dowager Lady Fordyce, which I am at present. As soon as Harold returns, my child, I mean to move there."

This then explained all. This then was the reason why her husband was making improvements there. But surely he could not be so unkind as to wish that his own dear

mother should go there and live alone, leave the old home, where she had spent so many happy years!

"You do not mean it, mother! Why what should we do without you here?"

"I do mean it, my child; It is the custom. You will have each other; you must rule alone."

"No! No!" said Kathleen, kneeling down beside her, "You shall not go. Just think of it, why I feel as though I were about to turn you out of doors. Now promise me," she continued, putting her arms about her mother's waist, "That you will stay here and be Lady of the Wold, still."

"Well, my child, it was only out of consideration for you, that I wished to make my home there. But since you so earnestly wish me to remain here, I shall do so, but only as your guest."

"That settles it then," Kathleen said, with a loving little hug, "as our most honored guest you remain with us." Then she left the room quietly and soon there came to them the sound of sweet music, but uncertain in its chords, as though the player were faint and weary; then a few firm, unfaltering chords were struck and, swelling grandly through the silent rooms, came the glorious strains of Gottschalk's "Marche de Nuit," and the last triumphant chords were played by a master hand, as though telling of victory gained.

Cicely said to Lady Fordyce, "What a musician she is! You can almost hear her thoughts as she plays."

"Yes," replied that lady, "And what a power it shows within her to love and to suffer."

"Again some chords were struck, and the voice of the player joined in, and for the second time that day, Cicely heard the beseeching prayer:

"Abide with me, fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide!
When other helpers fail and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

When the last sweet strains died away, Kathleen came back looking happy and sweet, as she said, "Just think of it mother! Cicely! This is the third week of November. In three weeks more we may expect to have Harold with us."

"Yes," agreed the mother, "it is happiness to think of it, and I hope you will feel happy accordingly, for I do not want Harold to come home and find a shadow instead of a wife."

"Am I really looking so thin as that?" she asked, aghast, "I had nothing to spare before he went—oh! dear, I will be hideous."

"No," said Cicely, "You could not look hideous, even if you were as thin as Sarah Bernhardt."

"Oh! yes I could, in Harold's eyes. He told me once he could never admire her as she was so terribly thin."

"He is not wanted to admire her, my dear, whether she is fat or lean," said the dowager lady. "But have no fear, child, he will admire and love you at all times."

Kathleen's only answer to this consoling speech was a profound sigh.

That night when preparing for bed, she said to her maid, "Nancy, what makes all the English ladies and young girls so sweetly plump and pretty?"

"Well, my lady," answered Nancy, "it is natural to some of them, especially to the young ladies; and many of the older ones, when they find themselves growing thin, take a little arsenic."

"Yes, I have heard of their taking such a thing, but I have doubted the truth of it."

"Indeed, my lady, you need not doubt it, for I lived with a lady that took it constant, and she seemed to grow younger and handsomer each day."

"Do you know how she used it?"

"Yes, my lady, I often prepared it for her."

"Did its use affect her health any?"

"Not a bit, my lady. She told me she felt all the better for it."

"Well, Nancy, I think I shall try some of it and see what effect it will have in making me plump, for I am becoming actually scraggy and withered. I must plump up a little before Sir Harold's return. Can I procure any of it in the village, Nancy?"

"Yes, my lady, at the apothecary's."

"Very well, Nancy, that will do for to-night. If I decide to try the arsenic I will get you to show me how to mix it."

When Nancy left the room she did so quietly and demurely as usual, but as she stood alone in the corridor, without the closed door, she clinched her hands and hissed: "Light is coming. I begin to see a way to my revenge. Patience, Nancy, patience; it will all come in time; you will be a lady yet."

VII.

It was the beginning of the third week in December, yet here was no sign of Sir Harold, but his wife and mother lived in daily, indeed hourly, expectation of his coming.

One morning, after the arrival of the post bag, Kathleen was distributing the letters and among the pile of notes, circulars, begging letters, and so on, which it is the usual lot of a lady occupying such a high position, as Lady of Monks-wold, to receive, she saw one addressed in the same large, coarse hand she remembered having seen before. Her first impulse was to destroy it unread; but no—she would keep it and read it later—not that she could care for or believe anything it might contain, oh! no—but, she was a woman and—well—as we all do at times, she refused to listen to the wise voice of reason, and she kept the letter to read again,—just to see what her anonymous correspondent had to say for herself or himself, as the case might be. All day long she carried it about with her in the pocket of her dress, changing it from one pocket to the other as she changed her gowns. Sometimes she was strongly tempted to destroy it, then again she wished to read it. After dressing for dinner and finding she was much too early, she took the letter out once more and looked at it. The temptation was too much for her, she tore it open quickly and read:

“Yeer leedship I am main sorry fur ye as I know ye be mortal fond o’ Sir Harold do ye know as ’ow he be ’ome at the manor house these three days past an’ gone. But doant ye fret as yer a spilin’ o’ your good looks a worritin’ now.

A FRIEND.”

She sat chilled and trembling, staring with dim eyes at the hateful writing. Then she gaspingly said: "Can—it—be—possible?" Again came back to her all her husband's words of love, his kindly care and thought for her and would she—could she, for the sake of that basest and most contemptible of all things earthly, an anonymous letter, doubt and mistrust him? "No," she said aloud, "a thousand times, no. I promised to believe in him through everything, and I will." She crumpled the letter in her hand and threw it from her.

For some time longer she sat thinking, then rising quickly to her feet she said half aloud, "I was foolish to throw that away. It may be picked up by some curious servant. I will find it and keep it to show Harold by and by." As she was searching for it she noticed an unusual commotion below stairs. She listened a moment but as it soon died away she continued her search.

Presently she heard a bounding step on the stairs, then a quick, firm step along the corridor. She stood listening intent, almost breathless. The step paused, her door was opened and, with a glad cry, she sprang forward and was clasped fondly to her husband's breast.

"Oh! Harold," she murmured between her kisses, "What joy! What rapture! to have you home again!"

"And what a joy it is to me, my wife, to be with you again. Each day has seemed a year in length since I left you."

"Why did you not send us word of your coming?"

"Am I not more welcome than either letter or telegram?" was the answer. "I flattered myself that I would be."

"Surely you are, my darling husband; but have you seen your mother yet?"

"Yes, for a moment, in the morning room. What good care you have taken of her, you dear girl. She found time to tell me even in that little while."

"I tried to," was the answer, "but I had Cicely to help me."

"Is Cicely with you still?"

"Yes; but she will soon go home now, as her mother wishes to have her home for Christmas."

"Ah, well," was the reply, "you will have me to keep you from being lonely now. By Jove! I must be off and make myself presentable," he said, as the second dinner bell rang through the house.

"Yes, hurry dear," said his wife, "I will wait here for you, so that we may go down together."

Dinner passed off pleasantly but it was noticeable that, at times, Harold's gaiety was rather forced. He spent no time over his wine after dinner, but when the ladies returned to the drawing-room he accompanied them, and soon asked his wife to sing. For a while he listened with much delight. After singing that sweet little song "In the Gloaming," she turned to him and asked how he liked it but received no answer, as he was sitting, deep in thought, with bent head and moody brow.

His wife watched him a moment then crossed over to Cicely and challenged her to a game of chess in which she soon seem to be absorbed, so much so, indeed, that when her husband left the room saying he would smoke a cigar outside, she did not raise her eyes from the board, or notice him in any way. The dowager Lady Fordyce was sleeping quietly by the fire.

As the marble clock on the mantel chimed twelve, Cicely looked up startled, exclaiming "My! Is it so late? I think I will go to my room, but I will get no beauty sleep this night."

The others went to their rest, but Kathleen remained in the drawing room. She walked its stately length many, many times, still her husband came not. One o'clock chimed, the quarter, then half past—still he was absent. During that time the words of that odious letter forced themselves upon her mind. But she would not listen to nor give heed to the jealous thoughts that would arise. At length she heard him stamping his feet outside and hurried to the door to meet him. She would ask no explanation. She would trust him still.

"Why, my darling!" he exclaimed at sight of her, "are you up yet? Not waiting alone for me I trust."

That was all. Well she must be satisfied. Before undressing she searched again for the crumpled letter, found it and put it with its fellow, carefully within her davenport.

As the damp, muggy weather continued and the road and fields were in fine condition, all those who were keen for sport were making the most of the hunting season. To the surprise of all the household, Sir Harold asked no questions about his hunters nor appeared to take any interest whatever in the stables.

Frank Wyburn rode over almost at 'peep-o'-day' on two occasions and took his lady-love for a long day's chase across country. They begged Kathleen to accompany them on both occasions, but, as her husband made no offer to accompany her she refused, and laughingly added "two is company, three is none."

The time of Cicely's departure was three days before Christmas. Kathleen herself drove her to the station in her natty little pony carriage and waited to wave her a last good bye. She drove home slowly, thinking deeply. Looking up suddenly, at some restive movement on the part of her pets, she was sure she saw her husband disappearing within a small gate that served as a side entrance to the park. When she reached the gate she drew up her ponies, jumped

out, walked across the narrow strip of grass that intervened, opened the gate and deliberately followed the path, determined, if possible, to find out where her husband had gone. The path led directly through the trees some distance, then it was crossed by a still narrower path which led directly behind the ruins of the monastery, straight on, until it was crossed by a low rustic fence. Opening the little wicket in this fence she still followed the path till it led her almost upon a beautiful house, built in Queen Anne style of architecture. She stood and took a survey of what she concluded was the manor house, as described to her by Harold's mother. She saw that it had fresh curtains at the windows and—yes, that was smoke coming from the chimneys. It was inhabited then. By whom? How could she ascertain? All at once the fact of what she was doing flashed upon her and she murmured: "Have I sunk so low as to stoop to play the spy?"

Turning quickly she went with rapid footsteps, almost running at times, till she regained her carriage. She jumped in, and turning the horses' heads, drove back to the town to the shop of the apothecary, entered and told the young man in charge she wished to purchase some arsenic. He stared at her an instant without moving, seeing which she said, imperiously, "I wish to purchase a small quantity of arsenic; put it up carefully and be sure to label it 'poison,' as I wish no accident to happen through it.

The young fellow was doubtful as to his right to sell the poison in the absence of his master, but did not see how he could refuse Lady Fordyce; so, telling himself it could not be likely that her ladyship would use it for any bad end, he put up an ounce of it, labelled and handed it to her. She paid for it without speaking and left the shop. When she arrived home she hurried to her dressing-room, and at once opening her dressing-case, she placed the bottle of arsenic in a small empty compartment.

Just then Nancy entered the room to see if she was needed, and her mistress said: "I purchased some arsenic this morning, Nancy. I have not decided to use it just at present, but it will be handy here and can do no harm."

An evil gleam lit up Nancy's eyes, but she answered softly: "No, your ladyship, it can do no harm there."



VIII.

It was Christmas eve. A dull and dreary day, damp and muggy outside, while within the Wold all was seeming brightness and warmth. Quiet but lavish preparations were made to celebrate the happy season. All the servants were remembered but no festivities would be held on account of the recent death of Sir Richard.

Between Kathleen and her husband a coolness and constraint had grown up, not perceptible to outsiders but keenly felt by each. It grew day by day, till it seemed as though a wall of ice divided them. The wife thought at times that she must speak or her heart would break. Then would come to her mind the promise she had made to trust him through everything.

"Surely," she would think again, "it is his place to speak and explain to me what his strange neglect and many mysterious absences mean." But her husband made no sign and daily the breach widened; and his absence from home became so very frequent that his mother noticed it, at length saying, "Harold, can it be possible, my son, that you wilfully neglect your wife?"

"No, mother," he answered, "not wilfully, but of necessity; for a short time I must appear to do so."

"Well," the mother replied, "you know your business best, my son. But the dear girl is looking strangely pale and sad these days."

Christmas and the First of the New Year had passed. On the third of January, shortly after the luncheon hour, Kathleen went into one of the conservatories, and seeing her husband busy picking some of Greigs' most beautiful

and choicest blooms, which he was adding to the already fine bunch he held in his hand, she paused and watched him, thinking, "He is gathering those for me, the dear boy. I will run away upstairs and when he brings them I will not be cross any longer. I will try to forget all." She waited hour after hour, but no flowers were given her by her husband nor sent to her by him. She went again to the conservatory on the pretext of gathering some of her favorite white roses. Seeing Greigs there she said, "I want a few flowers to wear this evening, Greigs. I suppose you have plenty of my favorites."

"Well, now, my lady," said Greigs, "I be main sorry, but Sir Harold, he coomed this afternoon an' picked all the finest blooms I had. I telled him as how I were a carin' of them for your ladyship, an' he said as how it didn't matter, he maught pick them as well as me."

"Oh! its no difference who picked them, Greigs," she forced herself to answer, "Give me some now; the nicest you have left."

Reaching her room she threw the handful of flowers upon the table. "So it has come to this," she exclaimed. "Open neglect was not enough but my wishes, my likes and dislikes are treated as of no account and that too before a servant. I will bear no more in silence. This night I will demand an explanation."

As she ceased speaking, she turned to a little table in the corner; where she had instructed Nancy to place all letters she laid aside unopened. She saw again, as she turned them over listlessly, the coarse writing she knew now so well. Without hesitation she seized the letter and tearing it open read as follows:

"InJeed but me hart bleeds fur yeer leddysheep, yeer of no count now. Sir H— spends most o' his days and best part o' his nites at the manor house. I'de leeve him to his own devise if I weer yeer-self an' go hom, if I weer you i wood."

YOURS TO COMMAND.

"Those shall all confront him together," she said, as she laid it away with the others. "Now I shall dress for dinner and without flowers tonight."

She went to her dressing-room and found Nancy quite prepared for her. Seeing that she had laid out a black corded silk gown, cut low, Lady Fordyce ordered her to replace it with a black velvet gown with a square cut corsage, that was much more becoming to her than the other style. When her hair was arranged she took from her jewel casket a small diamond star and placed it on the top of her head among the dark coils of her hair; another star nestled among the lace that partly veiled her white neck. Her eyes shone with a light that rivalled her diamonds. A soft pink tinted her cheeks, the result of her subdued excitement, and taking a survey of herself as she stood in her trailing velvet gown, reflected in the mirror, she was well satisfied with her appearance.

As she left the room Nancy gazed after her and thought "How handsome and grand she is! What am I beside her?" Going to the large mirror she turned around and around before it, craned her neck on each side, and viewed herself in every direction possible. Then, tossing her head said aloud, "Oh! It's the clothes that does it. If I could wear as fine clothes as she does I'd be just as handsome and handsomer, for I aint scraggy. Fine feathers make fine birds. That's true, Nancy; so don't get faint-hearted now of all times, when everything's ready for you to work on."

If Nancy thought her mistress handsome, surely Harold thought her infinitely beautiful, as she sat through the dinner hour strangely cold and silent, in her place opposite to him. Once, after dessert was placed upon the table and the servants had left the room, he said:

"You are not wearing your favorite flowers to-night, Kathleen."

"No," she answered, with a haughty uplifting of her head and a strange flash in her eyes, as she gazed directly at him, "I have lost my taste for white roses."

"I am sorry to hear it," he replied gravely, "I gathered a lot of them to-day under the impression that you loved them."

In cold, haughty amazement she stared at him, too much surprised to speak. Then she said, coldly:

"Might I ask if you intend going out to-night?"

"Yes. I am obliged to go," was the answer.

"Could you spare time for a little conversation with me before you go?"

"Yes," he answered, "if you cannot wait till to-morrow."

"No, I cannot wait," she said. "What I have to say must be said to-night. Will you come to my boudoir when you leave the dining room?"

"Certainly, if you wish it," he replied gravely.

Then the ladies left the room, and as he held the door open for them to pass out, Harold looked intently at his wife, but she walked past without glancing toward him.

As he returned to his wine he thought "What can ail Kathleen? She is so strangely cold and proud all at once; not one bit like the sweet, loving girl she was." Manlike, he did not consider that tender loving words and kind attentions were as much needed by the wife from the husband, as in the early days, in order to keep the "sweet, loving girl" ever with him.

Kathleen did not return to the drawing room but went at once to her own apartments. When her husband went in search of her a short time after, he found her in the turret room, where she stood looking idly from the window. As he entered he looked intently at her and for the first time noticed how thin she had grown. Going to her side he placed his arm fondly around her, drew her closely to him and tenderly said:

"My wife, what is it that is troubling you? Tell me, darling."

This was so unexpected by her that the hot angry words that before seemed so ready to rush forth, died away upon her lips and she could only stand trembling within his arm.

Again he asked, "What is it? Tell me, dear?"

"It is everything," she burst forth, "I am wretched, miserable. This life is killing me."

"What causes your wretchedness?" he asked gently.

"You do, and you well know it. You neglect me, treat me with indifference, and my wishes with open contempt, before all. Even the servants and the lowest of the low can see it—make their comments and offer me their insolent pity."

"I do not understand you, Kathleen. I never willfully——"

"Wait," she interrupted, "perhaps these will enlighten you and help you to understand."

She opened her davenport with trembling fingers, as she spoke, took out and handed to him the three letters she had received. He read them in silence, then said:

"Kathleen, did you not promise to trust me in all things and at all times?"

"I did," she answered, "because I believed in you, trusted—respected you and thought you a king among men; one of the few who stand apart from their fellow man—a Bayard—without stain, without reproach."

"Do you not think so still?"

"No," she answered, "Heaven help me! How can I?"

"And is it these vile scrawls," he asked, "that make you doubt me, you, my wife? I thought you too noble, too proud a woman to read, much less to believe and condemn anyone upon such vile and contemptible evidence as those things." He threw them contemptuously on the floor as he finished speaking.

"I did not judge from these. Your own actions have condemned you. Can you deny it? This very day did you not take my flowers—mine—that Greigs raised and took pride in having perfect for me, in spite of his protest? You took them and gave them—into whose hands?"

"Hush," he said "do not say any more or—you may repent."

"Do you dare to threaten me?" she asked.

"No," he replied, "but I took those flowers because I knew that they were yours. I knew you loved them, I thought that you yourself would be the first to offer them to me if you knew all, and I placed them ——"

"Where?" she asked, as he paused.

"In the hands and upon the pillow of the dead."

Kathleen started back horrified, then she said chokingly, "Oh! Harold, you know I would not, I could not refuse them there, for in my eyes all the dead are sacred."

"No, my own sweet wife, I knew you would not and therefore I took them. I loved the one to whom I gave those flowers, but it was with no such love as I give to you. Tomorrow, if all is well, I will tell you a sad story of a bright young life that should have been surrounded with just such care and love as mine has been, but who through the vileness and slanders of evil tongues, was defrauded of it all, until too late."

"I do not wish to hear it," she said, "that is, unless you really wish to tell me."

"I do wish to tell you, dear, and would have told you at first, only the secret was not my own to tell. Now, kiss me, and let me go, sweetheart,—it is growing late."

With her mind filled with conflicting emotions she stood and watched him as he drew on a light overcoat and took his hat from the chair where he had laid them as he entered the room,

"I will go out this way," he said, "as it will save me walking some distance." As he spoke he opened the glass door, then drew back hurriedly saying, "Why, it is raining hard. I must get my mackintosh," He left the room and soon returned with the mackintosh on.

She found her voice then and said, "Will you be very late tonight, Harold?"

"It will be all of one o'clock before I return—perhaps later, dear. But it will be for the last time that I will leave you so. Now, one more kiss."

Without speaking she threw her arms about his neck and kissed him fondly. She fastened the glass door securely after him, and was standing with her face pressed against the glass, trying to pierce through the darkness, and distinguish his form from the waving trees, as the branches were tossed wildly about by heavy gusts of wind, when Nancy entered the room and said:

"My lady, please."

"Well, what is it?" she asked.

"Please, my lady, I've got word of my mother being very sick. Could you let me go and stop with her to-night if I lay out all your things beforehand?"

"Why, certainly, my poor girl, you can go; but it is a dreadful night for you to go to the town alone."

"Oh! I'll not have to go alone, my lady. John Bolton, the young man I'm keepin' company with, came and told me and will walk back with me."

This did Nancy tell with much apparent confusion and with many pickings and pinchings of her apron corner.

"Ah," said Lady Fordyce, "John Bolton is that big giant of a game-keeper. Well, he will make a good protector, I'm sure, for he looks big enough and strong enough to fell an ox. Well you can go at once, Nancy. Never mind laying out my things. I will wait on myself for to-night."

"Thank you kindly, my lady. I will be back first thing in the morning."

Kathleen then descended to the drawing-room where she chatted with Harold's mother till eleven o'clock, when the old lady retired to her room, after bidding Kathleen a kind good-night. Left thus alone the young wife wandered aimlessly about the rooms for some time longer, when a happy thought struck her, and she went herself to find Simes, the butler.

"Simes," she said, "Sir Harold will be out late to-night. You will most likely be in bed when he returns. Can't you leave something ready for him to eat when he comes in?"

"Surely, your ladyship. I'll set something out in the library."

"Oh! no, no! Not there," she said, quickly. "Send a tray up to my boudoir, can't you?"

"Yes, my lady. A cold chicken, or game or tongue, and as it is a wettish night and bids fair to turn cold before morning, I'll just put on the tray some brandy and soda."

"Very well, Simes, thank you; that will do nicely. Good-night."

"Good-night, your ladyship," said the old fellow, with his most elaborate bow. "Well, she is the sweet and handsome creature!" he said to himself, as he went to prepare the promised tray. He kept talking to himself as he worked: "I'll just add a bit o' jelly for her ladyship,—I'd like to know what that pert minx, Nancy, means,—yes, an' some sherry and a few biscuits—do her good to take a bite if she's agoin' to sit up late—jealous, indeed! no sign of her bein' jealous, a lookin' after Sir Harold like this. Now, there's them preserved apricots—I hate to open them pots, but most of the wimen folks has a sweet tooth an' I guess her ladyship's is as sweet as most—so don't be stingy, Simes. Bless her pretty face, here goes."

At length it was arranged to his satisfaction and he carried it up himself, puffing and blowing as he reached the door of the boudoir. It was partly open, and seeing Kathleen within he said: "Excuse me, your ladyship, but here is the tray you ordered."

"Come in, Simes," she called, and hastily prepared a place for it on the table, moving aside some small ornaments as she spoke.

"I added a few trifles that I thought might tempt your ladyship's appetite," said the old man, carefully removing the napkin that covered the dainty repast.

"Oh! thank you, Simes. You are most thoughtful. And you have brought me some of those delicious apricots that you treasure so carefully! You are indeed kind. Thank you, Simes."

"Your ladyship is heartily welcome. There is nothing in this house, I take it, too good or nice for your beautiful ladyship."

"Thank you again, Simes," said Kathleen, smiling at the old man's attempt to flatter her. "I am sure Sir Harold will appreciate your kindness as much as I do. Now, good-night."

Simes went off feeling well satisfied with himself and glad that he had opened his treasured preserves. He muttered as he went along: "Jealous—um—don't believe a word of it—a beautiful woman like that! I'll be durned—um—saucy jade—um—better keep her talk to herself."

To a listener it seemed uncertain, hearing those mixed remarks, as to who was the beautiful woman and who the saucy jade. But Simes knew who was who, as he would say, and as the remarks were addressed to Simes and to Simes only they were well understood.

IX.

All through the weary night Kathleen waited and her husband came not. Once, unable to control her impatience, she put a long fur-lined cloak about her, drew the hood over her head and, descending the turret steps unmindful of the wet and muddy walks, she went as far as the southern avenue. Thinking she heard voices she paused there and called "Harold, are you there?" Only the sougling of the wind and the shaking together of the rain laden branches, answered. Unconsciously she shivered in the cold damp air and she realized, all at once, that it was growing much colder. Shivering under her heavy wrap she hastened back to her room.

The ghostly light of the cold gray dawn came creeping in, still she was alone. What could be keeping her husband from her side? Could he be out all this cold bitter night? It had frozen hard and ice was formed in all the little pools made by the recent rain. Oh! how cold he would be when he returned! How she would pet him and love him and try to console him for his recent sorrow, whatever it was. With her heart throbbing with love and tenderness, the lonely wife waited—unmindful of her own weariness—she watched and waited in vain.

The household must be astir, as the sounds of distant life began to re-echo through the rooms. Then for the first she realized that she was still in her velvet dinner gown, and the fact that it was woefully soiled and dragged around the skirt, where she had trailed it over the walk during the night. Going to her dressing room she took off the gown, bathed her face and replaced the velvet gown with a warm

cloth wrapper. Soon the breakfast bell rang and going down stairs she breakfasted alone, as it was not usual for the elder lady to come down so early in the day. She ate but little though Simes pressed each dainty dish upon her in turn. When she rose from the table she stood silently thinking a moment, then said :

"Simes, you have been many years in Sir Harold's family?"

"Oh! yes, my lady. I was here before Sir Harold was born."

"Then it will not be amiss if I tell an old and valued servant like yourself that I am dreadfully uneasy because Sir Harold did not return last night."

"Why! I—I—am surprised too, your ladyship. You can't think—?"

"No, I can't think; I'm afraid to think. Some harm has befallen him I fear."

"Oh! no, not at all, your ladyship. No harm could come to him about here. He's just been detained, that's all," said the old man pleasantly.

"I hope that is all, Simes, but still I am uneasy." So speaking she left the room.

"An' so am I uneasy," said Simes to himself, "I'll just tell John Bolton to take a look around as soon as I can get to him; he seems a nice civil chap; pity he's set on that Nancy, but she's not about this morning, thank goodness."

As soon as Simes finished his morning work, he hunted up John Bolton and commenced the conversation by asking:

"Any sign of poachers about last night, John?"

"No, Mr. Simes, not a sign. I was in and about all night and never set eyes on one."

"Well, I'm a bit puzzled," said Simes, "for Sir Harold did not get back last night as he told her ladyship he would, and she's mortal uneasy I can see. I thought maybe he

might have come across some o' them chaps, and as he's a bit quick he might have had trouble wi' them and got hurt a bit."

"Well, he might, but I saw none o' it. If you like I'll go now an' take a walk through the wood and see," said John, moving off as if he were anxious to end the conversation.

"Yes do, there's a good chap; an' come an' tell me if you see anything out o' the way, for I'd like to make her ladyship feel easier if I could."

"Yes, yes; I'll come back, don't fear."

John went hurriedly off mopping, with his large red handkerchief, his head and face, which, despite the bitter cold of the day, was covered with great drops of perspiration.

When Kathleen left the breakfast table she went again to the little turret room, thinking that perhaps her husband had returned and was there. She was disappointed and proceeded to her dressing room. There she found Nancy standing looking at her much bedraggled velvet gown. Her face looked white and drawn, great dark circles were under her eyes. She started guiltily as her mistress entered and said, "Oh! your—your—ah—beautiful gown, my lady!"

"Yes," returned her mistress, "I am afraid it is hopelessly spoiled. How did you leave your mother, Nancy? I hope she is better?"

"Oh! yes, she is better, thank you, ma'am; and your gown, my lady, shall I——"

"Oh! take it away," said Kathleen, impetuously, "do not bother me about it now."

Returning to her favorite room again, she commenced a restless walk up and down its length, moving chairs and small tables aside as she walked, as though impatient and hating to feel her skirts brush against them. Once, in her restless walk; passing the small table on which rested the

tray containing the lunch Simes had so carefully prepared, she paused and said: "Poor old fellow! I must eat some of those apricots he brought me up last night or his kind old heart will be wounded." She forced herself to eat a few of the delicious preserves and found them most cooling and grateful to her parched lips. Then calling Nancy she said, "When you have finished there, take this tray down to Simes. Do not forget it."

"Yes, my lady, I'll attend to it."

As her mistress then left the room Nancy stood silently, listening till she heard a door close in the lower hall where she knew well both ladies generally spent the morning hours. Then she shut and locked the door and darted quickly back to the dressing-room, opened Kathleen's dressing-case and took out the small bottle of arsenic which her mistress had placed there. She took it to the other room, emptied a goodly part of it into the glass on the tray and then taking the decanter of brandy, poured out a half tumbler full. She left it standing so till she returned to the dressing-room, and carefully replaced the arsenic just where she had taken it from. She then hurriedly entered the turret room, stirred up the tumbler of brandy, and carrying it to the dressing room, poured the greater portion of it into the bath tub, which stood there partly filled.

Hearing footsteps in the hall she quickly opened the door and seeing the housekeeper, said: "Mrs. Hobson, just look here. Now if it was common people that lived here, I would say from the way the furniture is pushed about they had been——"

"That will do, Nancy," interrupted Mrs. Hobson. "Lady Fordyce will push her furniture about as she pleases, and when she pleases. It is your duty to re-arrange it without remark."

Tossing her head indignantly Nancy took up the tray and left the room. Instead, however, of going at once to Simes with it, she carried it to the end of the corridor, opened a heavy door that shut off the servants' rooms from those in the south wing, where Kathleen's suite of rooms were situated. Going quickly then to her own room she took the cold chicken and tongue from the tray and put them into a small basket, filled a common brown flask from the decanter and placed it also in the basket. She then picked up the tray and took it down to Simes.

Seeing it so very well emptied of its contents, the old fellow heaved a sigh of relief, and said: "Sir Harold is back then?"

"Back!" said Nancy; "I didn't know he was away."

"Nor was he very far," returned Simes. "But he was not back when I saw her ladyship at breakfast time."

"When did he go out?" she asked.

"Last night, of course."

"Well," said Nancy, with a giggle, "if Sir Harold was away all night, I know he's not back now. An' see here, Simes, between you and me, who's been drinking the brandy?"

The old man started, picked up the tumbler, smelled it and said: "Them's been drinkin' the brandy as has the best right to it."

"Oh, of course, I don't deny that, but——" and here she peered into the glass while speaking, "what's that white stuff in the bottom of the tumbler?"

"Soda," was the prompt answer.

"Oh, come now, Simes," she said. "I know that gentlemen's sodas don't settle that way—they fizz all away to nothing."

Quickly Simes stuck his finger into the glass, dipped up a trifle of the contents and tasted it. He spat it out immediately, saying: "Deuced queer stuff. Some medicine her ladyship has been a takin'. She hasn't been lookin' like herself lately at all."

"No. People that go tearin' around mad with jealousy don't——"

"None o' that here," shouted Simes. "Get out o' this, you and your gabby tongue."

"Oh! I'm going, don't fear, Mr. Simes. Good-morning," she said, sweetly. "Oh! I say, Mr. Simes, I'm going away for good soon,"

"Umph! Glad to hear it," he grunted.

"Yes," she continued, "I'm going to be married and we are going to Australia. Won't you be sorry then?"

"No," he roared, "you can go to the devil—if you like. Only get out o' here."

As the door closed after her he sat down quickly in a chair near by, muttering to himself: "What ails me? I feel queer—and sick. Must be that nasty stuff in that tumbler—I'll just wash it out at once." He did so, and put the tumbler back among its fellows, his feeling of sickness and nausea increasing all the time. "Dear! dear!" he muttered, "I'll just go to Mrs. Hobson and get her to give me a little something to settle my stummick."

Going to the housekeeper's room, he told her he felt very queer and sick; thought he must have eaten something that disagreed with him.

"Oh! it's just this bitter change in the weather that's upset you," said Hobson. "I'll give you an emetic—that will set you right."

As good as her word, she prepared a good strong one, which Simes drank thankfully, being a firm believer in all of Hobson's doses. Very soon, however, poor Simes felt

desperately sick and did not care much whether he lived or died. But the dose was effectual, and after many moans and groans he settled back into Hobson's arm chair, but she being a kind-hearted dame, said, "Now, Mr. Simes, you just lay right on the sofa and I'll cover you up warm. You'll take a nap and by luncheon hour you'll be as right as a trivet."

Nothing loth Simes did as he was bidden, and was soon sleeping the sleep of the just man, little knowing how near he had come to sleeping his last sleep.

X.

When Nancy left Simes' pantry, she hurried back to her own room, where she put on a shawl and hat, and taking the basket in which she had placed the chicken and other things, she went softly down a back staircase and out of a little side door. She knew that it was quite safe for her to leave the house at that hour, as she would not be needed again until it was time for her to lay out the gown which her mistress would wear at dinner. Once outside, she hurried quickly along a bye path to a place where she expected that John Bolton awaited her. She was not disappointed. He stood silently whittling a stick and, as she approached him, looked up with the remark: "Well, lass, so you've got here? It's time."

"I came as soon as I could," she answered; "I had to wait for a chance to get this; it was all I could do. Here take it," handing him the basket, which he took from her and set carefully down in the grass near his feet.

"Do you know what I've been sent to do?" he asked.

"No, of course I don't. What is it?"

"Why, to look round a bit and see if there's any sign of Sir Harold, and go back and report what I see."

"Well, that's not hard to do. Who sent you?"

"Simes," he said shortly.

"Oh! I thought it might have been her ladyship,"

"He's sent me because he wants to find something out to tell her ladyship that will make her feel less uneasy."

"Oh! so she's uneasy, is she? Well, I didn't see any of her uneasy ways. Proud, stuck-up thing."

"Nance, what makes you hate her so?"

"That's my business," she replied. "I told you so before. You promised to help me and ask no questions."

"Yes I did promise an' I'm sorry for it, or for doin' anything that could hurt a good, beautiful lady like her."

"There you go," said Nancy, beginning to whimper. "Because she's a beautiful lady, she's to have everything and I'm only a poor girl and have got to go without."

"Now, now, Nancy. Dry them pretty eyes o' yours. You know I love ye, an' would give my soul for ye. An' I'm in a fair way to do it, for it was hell's own work we did last night. I wish I was out of it," said Bolton.

"Yes! That's your boasted love for me! You're sorry already and for her sake, for fear she would suffer a little, you'd undo it all if you could."

"Yes, I am sorry, for I can't see how such devil's work is going to help you. It can't pay, Nancy, it can't pay."

"Undo it now if you dare," she said. "You do not know my plans and if you work against me you'll rue the day. Now go, undo it all, you great big coward."

As she turned to leave him he grasped her arm and held her back growling out, "You dare to call me a coward? Me! that never saw the living man yet I was afraid of."

"No, but last night I saw that you were afraid of a *dead one*," she hissed at him.

"Oh—h—h!" and he staggered backwards. "Don't, don't speak of it, lass, I can't get over it."

She turned suddenly and faced him saying, "Look here John Bolton, don't be a fool. If I was you, I'd be ashamed to be outdone by a woman. Look at me, I don't mind. I'm not shaking and shivering over it. Now its just this—You say you want to marry me?"

"Yes I do, lass, and I'll marry you or die."

"Well its just this,—you go back on me, and I don't marry you, but I do marry the first fellow that next asks me."

"If you do, I'll kill you, as sure as——"

"Pouf," she said, snapping her fingers in his face, "Loud words don't frighten me. Be true to me and I'll be true to you."

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"Keep your promise, and, keep mum, that's all. No matter what happens, you keep mum, and remember, its only my plans working out all right. Nobody will be hurt, if you do as I plan. Now swear it to me over again, or I don't trust you any longer."

"I swear it, Nancy. I'll do anything at all, so that you marry me."

"Well, that will do. Now take the basket and go; *some one* might be hungry. I must be gettin' back for fear I might be missed. Good-bye. You've got to see about everything after this."

"All right, lass, I'll do all I can. Just give us a smack before you go, for I thinks ye owe it to me."

Nancy gave him the "smack" he asked for, then ran off, wiping her lips as she ran and saying, "Ough! I hate to kiss a fellow like that. If he was only a gentleman I would not mind it a bit."

The day passed slowly on. Another night dragged through, during which Kathleen snatched an occasional fitful sleep. Daylight again,—still her husband did not return. What could be the matter? When becoming greatly alarmed she sent messengers and searchers out in all directions. All of no avail. There was no trace of the missing one.

Going, on the fourth morning, to Simes she said, "Simes is there a key for the manor house here?"

"Yes, my lady," replied Simes, "one hangs in the library with all the others."

"Well, get it and come with me. I have reason to think that we may find some trace of Sir Harold there. Do not speak of this to anyone. I will meet you in the Park."

"Yes, my lady. I will attend to you at once," said the old man, bustling after his great coat and the key. They met near the southern avenue and walked silently on till they reached the manor house. Simes noiselessly opened the door and they entered. All was silent; only the hollow echo that haunts each deserted house answered the gentle raps that Kathleen gave upon the panel of every door before entering the room. Signs there were indeed of its having been recently occupied and nothing more. It was a deserted house. Turning at last to the servant, she said gently, "Come away." She went out and left him to close the doors behind them. When the old man joined her she placed her hand upon his arm, saying, "Simes, where, where is he?"

"God knows, my lady," sorrowfully replied the old man.

"But he is not—he can't be——"

Reading her unspoken thought he strove to speak pleasantly as he answered: "Oh! no, no, my lady. He's just gone away, that's all. We must wait."

As soon as they reached home Kathleen went at once to Harold's mother, and for the first time, spoke with her of his singular and unaccountable absence. She told her how she had sent men to search the park and the surrounding wood, but they had found no trace of him; also how she herself had gone, accompanied by Simes, to the manor house thinking he might be there, and they had only found it empty of all life. The mother listened in silence while she spoke but, when she had finished she placed her arms about the poor, deserted young wife and said:

"My child, this is all hard, very hard for you to bear,—

but you must have patience. I believe in my son and think no wrong of him. He will return and all will be explained to your satisfaction. You must have patience and wait."

Then poor Kathleen broke down; choking sobs and bitter cries escaped her. She wept unrestrained and unchecked upon that dear motherly breast, feeling that in her husband's mother she had indeed a true, kind friend. Raising her head at last, she placed a gentle hand upon each of her mother's shoulders and said, "Mother, I too believe in your son, and I trust and have faith in my husband. I will try to have patience and to wait."

XI.

The long dreary winter passed with great cold and snow storms of such violence and severity as was without parallel in the memory of the "oldest inhabitant." Through it all those two lonely women endured and waited, each striving, as best she might, to comfort the other, speaking words of hope after the manner of women, when hope was well nigh dead within them. So they hoped and waited,

"The young heart hot and restless,
The old subdued and slow."

March passed away. April came with her soft, light showers, her balmy winds, her sweet green grass and gently opening buds, all telling of the glad spring time; but no gladness came to them. Cicely had come to stay with her friends once more, hoping that she might, in some small way, cheer and comfort them.

One warm bright morning Frank rode over and by way of a change, proposed that they should walk with him to the lake shore, and if they thought the water looked tempting enough, he would get a boat out and row them about a little. Cicely was willing but Kathleen seemed to hesitate.

"Go, my dear," said the old lady, "this warm spring weather will give you new life. You are too much in here with me."

"Very well, mother," she said, "I will go since you wish it. Come, Cicely, we will need some light wraps on the water, despite this warm clear sunshine." They left the room together and soon returned dressed for walking.

When they reached the lake it looked so calm and placid they both decided that a row would be delightful. So, opening the boat-house, Frank selected a well cushioned little row boat and helping them in, they were soon being rowed by his strong young arms swiftly across the water. Cicely was leaning over the side of the boat trailing her hand through the water as all girls do when boating. Kathleen was seated in front of her friend with her beautiful sad eyes fixed on distant space as though her thoughts were far away. Frank had been watching his little lady love with admiring eyes for some time, and, seeing her hand growing rosy in hue from the cold of the water, asked her if she "did not find the water rather cold, as it made her hand so red?" Cicely glanced down smilingly at her red tinted fingers and was about to give a merry response when!—the words froze on her lips—her face grew white as death, her eyes seemed fixed in a stony stare of horror. For an instant she gazed, then turned to Frank and said in a hoarse, strange voice, "Row back." The strange tone seemed to pierce through Kathleen's distant thought and rouse her from her abstraction, for she turned quickly towards her friend, and seeing her pale face, said:

"Cicely, dear, you are sick," and as she moved close beside her she continued, "Come, lean your head against my shoulder. You look as though you would faint."

"Yes, yes," returned Cicely, "I am faint," and she clung to Kathleen with a convulsive clasp as though she feared some danger or harm for her.

During this incident Frank was rowing back so rapidly they soon reached the shore, and Kathleen said, "I will run home as quickly as possible and send down a carriage, for, poor child, you are not able to walk. Frank, come sit near her and support her for she is trembling dreadfully."

"Yes," said Cicely, "Frank will stay with me; but never mind the carriage, I will be all right soon. It is too

cold here though for you, Kathleen. Go—go,” and to the surprise of both Frank and Kathleen she pushed the latter from her, saying, “Go. I don’t want you to stay here.”

“I will go at once, dear,” returned her friend gently, thinking that poor Cicely must be suffering some terrible pain.

When she had seen Frank seat himself beside the poor girl and support her tenderly with his arm around her, she at once started off at a rapid pace, feeling much anxiety and alarm for her dear friend, and wondering what could have caused her sudden illness.

As soon as the last sound of Kathleen’s footsteps had died away Cicely raised her face from Frank’s shoulder, where she had hidden it, and grasping his arm, she wailed out: “Oh! Frank, it is too horrible! Too awful! Who can tell her?”

Thinking that her mind must be wandering Frank attempted to soothe her and said: “There! There, dear. There is nothing here. Do not be afraid.”

“Oh! you do not understand, but I saw it.”

“Saw it! Saw what, dear?” he asked, wonderingly.

“I saw that face—his face.”

“His face. Whose face? Where?” asked bewildered Frank.

“In the water,” she returned.

“No, no,” he said, soothingly, “there was no face there, darling. I saw none. You only imagined it.”

“Oh! how stupid you are,” she returned impatiently. “I could not imagine it. It was a face—horrible—swollen—bloated, but it was his face.”

“Whose face did you think it was?” asked Frank, willing to humor what he thought must be a sickly fancy in his darling.

“I did not think it. He is there, in that dreadful water. He has been there all those long, cold months that they have

been watching and hoping for his return. I saw him there; I saw him, I tell you. Frank, I saw Harold Fordyce in that lake."

"What!" shouted Frank. "Harold Fordyce there! Dead—drowned! Impossible."

"Yes, yes; it is true, I say. I saw it only too plainly. Oh! poor, poor Kathleen! Who can dare to tell her?" And overcome by the thought of the awful grief and suffering coming to her friend, Cicely burst into a fit of uncontrollable sobs and tears. In a feeble way Frank tried to soothe her, but he seemed unable to regain his sense after the awful shock of her last words.

The sound of carriage wheels rattling over the gravelled roadway at last recalled them both and Frank awoke to the fact that there was some awful work to be done. Stepping from the boat, where they had been seated all this time, he advanced to meet the carriage, and seeing that Lady Fordyce had not returned in it, he felt much relieved. He was also pleased to note that the man who drove was a steady, middle-aged person whom he knew had been for many years in the service of the Fordyce family.

As the speed of the horses slackened he returned at once to Cicely, asking, "Are you feeling better now, dear? Do you think you are able to return to the house?"

"Yes. I am all right now, thank you, Frank. I will go back at once. I know there is much to be done, but you cannot work alone, Frank. Tell that man what I saw; he will help you." Seeing that he stared at her in amazement she continued, "No; do not mind my feelings; do not think of me at all. I am no foolish child to be afraid. I know just what you have to do. You see," she added, "I have read about such things." Turning quickly she beckoned to the man, and he left the horses standing in the road and came to her. When he was almost beside her she said to him, "Mr. Wyburn has something to tell you."

"Yes," said Frank, "I have some awful news. It will be best to tell it here far away from the house."

In as few words as possible he told him of the ghastly object that Miss Fordsham had seen in the lake and that she believed it to be the face of Sir Harold. Too horrified to speak or move the man listened, with blanched face and wild frightened eyes, and when the story was finished, dry sobs broke from his heaving breast, for he loved his young master well. At length he asked:

"How could he ha coome there?"

"I know not," said Frank, "and I have still a hope that there is some mistake. I have no doubt but that there is some poor fellow there, and we must at once get to work and have the body taken out of the water. To do that, however, we must get help from the town. You know all that we will require, I need not speak further. I will drive Miss Fordsham home now, and then we will go together to the town, for the doctor must be brought, as well as others."

A few minutes more and Cicely was again obliged to confront Kathleen. She did it with downcast eyes and sinking heart, as she thought of the dreadful secret she kept from her. She need not have feared, for Kathleen was too anxious about her to attribute her changed manner to aught save her sudden illness, and only waited upon her and cared for her with love and kindness.

Hours passed before Cicely heard any unwonted stir. Then it was only a few sharp cries that penetrated to the apartment where she sat with the dowager Lady Fordyce. There was no steady tramp of feet, such as she had been dreading to hear all the day. Soon the door opened and Frank, accompanied by the doctor entered, followed by Hobson and old Simes. One glance at their faces was sufficient; she knew that the worst was come. They stood within the door an instant till Simes, with uplifted hands and streaming eyes, advanced and said brokenly:

"Oh! my lady! my lady! They are bringing the master home."

The poor mother dropped her knitting in her lap and looked up eagerly as the old man spoke, and then said: "They are bringing him? Why? Has he been——"

The words died on her lips, for their grief-stricken faces told their dreadful news. She sank back trembling and faint into her chair. Sobs burst from her heaving breast. A few hot, heavy tears fell from her dim eyes, such as come only from the aged and sorrow-laden, within whom the fount of tears is well-nigh drained dry. Claspings her hands she raised them towards Heaven and said with trembling voice, "My God! He was the only son of his mother and she is a widow! Doubly bereaved now."

For a while the silence of the room was broken only by the sobs of all present. Rousing herself at last, the bereaved mother spoke: "I have lived my day," she said, "but that poor child above stairs has only just commenced her life's journey. I suffer for her. Who can tell her? Who can dare approach her with such dreadful tidings and shatter all hope for her future life?"

No one answered at first till a thought struck Hobson and she said, "Little Charlie came a while ago to see young madam; he brought her some flowers. I kept him resting in my room a bit before taking him to see her. He is wise past his years. Now he might break it easy to her, and better than any one else."

"Yes," said the doctor; "he is a bright child and very fond of Lady Fordyce. Let me see him. I can make him understand."

Hobson led the way to her own sitting room, where the little fellow was resting on the sofa, after his long walk up from the Lodge. When they all entered the room he looked

surprised, and seeing their sorrowful faces, his thoughts flew at once to his dear friend and benefactress, and he asked, "Is she sick? Is anything the matter with Lady Fordyce?"

"No, Charlie," answered the doctor, "she is not sick but there is sorrowful news to be told to her and we've come to ask you to do it."

"You want me to make her sorry? Me! That she was always so good to?" asked the child.

"You would not pain her so much as we would," said the doctor, "for you would tell it better, you love her so much."

"Yes, I do love her with all my heart, and if you really think I would not hurt her so much as you would, I will tell her. What is it you want me to say to her?" he asked.

Plainly and clearly the doctor spoke and told him the sorrowful story. The child listened intently to it all. The doctor concluded by asking: "Now Charlie, do you think you can tell that to her and do it without saying the dreadful words: He is dead?"

For a while the boy sat as if in deep thought, then his face brightened, and he looked up quickly, saying:

"She told me once that there was no death. Yes," he continued, "I can tell her. Take me to her." And grasping his little crutches he stood up, and took the offering of white roses from off the table, where he had placed them when he first entered the room. So the sad hearted little group wended their way to the rooms of the girl wife—a widow they thought, and she knew it not.

When they reached her door they had not courage to enter, but sent the child in alone, and watched without as he approached her.

Kathleen looked up with a faint smile, saying, "Well, Charlie, little friend. Have you come to visit me?"

"Yes, Lady Fordyce, and to bring you these," he said, as he laid the roses upon her lap.

She took them up with trembling fingers, saying, "Ah! Charlie, when you first gave me roses like those, my husband was beside me. Now I am alone." Then, as if speaking to herself, she continued: "Yes, always alone with my breaking heart. I deserve it all. I was cruel and cold to him. I doubted his love and was angry because he took my roses. Oh! I would give all the roses in the world, all that I possess, to hear from him, to know that he loves me still."

"He does love you still. I know it," said the child.

"Charlie!" she said quickly. "Have you a message for me? Where is he? Is he safe? Is he home?"

"Yes," returned the little one, "he is safe—he is home."

"Home! Home!" she cried, starting to her feet, "When? Where?"

"He is safe home—in his home up there," said Charlie, pointing with one little hand towards Heaven.

With dilated eyes and hands clasping her head she stood an instant muttering "Gone! Gone! Gone!" and the doctor ran in in time to catch her as she fell forward in a state of blessed unconsciousness.

XII.

They had brought the master home. The lord of that proud domain! They had brought him home, but, where was he? He lay in an outhouse, The master of it all was too ghastly, too loathsome an object to be brought within his own lordly halls. Oh! what a mockery of all mankind. Love itself turned from him with horror and loathing, sickening at the awful sight. They traced a likeness in that face, so disfigured now, to their once loved master. The linen was marked with the initials 'H. E. F.' and beneath them was worked the crest of the house of Fordyce, used by them for generations. What more was needed? As a matter of form an inquest was held. All testified to the love and esteem in which he was held. No one would offer him harm. The rector and the doctor both told, how, they had been in his company some hours, and parted from him outside of his own gates, on the night of his disappearance. After that no one appeared to have seen him alive. So the verdict was returned, "found drowned."

The poor remains were then given into the hands of the undertaker and his assistants who did their work well. By means of a heavy sealed casket, they made it possible, for all that remained of that loved form to be taken within and kept for a few days in solemn state under the roof that they thought, once had been his home.

On the third day with much pomp and ceremony and many bitter tears they laid him in the family vault beside his father and his place on earth knew him no more.

An heir at law came forward and desired to take possession and have both widows—the young and the old—retire from Monkswold and live upon their jointures.

“No,” said the family lawyer, to the delight of their many friends, “You cannot do that, for an heir to Sir Harold is expected.”

Oh! joyful news for the old and faithful servants of the house. No interloper should come in there and turn those two dearly-loved and tender-hearted ladies adrift. It should still be their home and Sir Harold's child should, if all went well, be master in his dead father's place.

When Nancy first heard this good news she ground her teeth with rage and muttered, “I must act soon for if that fool John hears this he will be hard to manage. I must get rid of him at once.”

Three weeks after the burial of the Baronet, Nancy went out one day and did not return, but as a consequence of her absence, next morning came a rough-looking man who walked boldly to the front entrance and demanded admission. On being asked his business he produced a paper, and asked to be shewn to the Lady of Monkswold.

“What business have you with her ladyship, just now, an' her in such trouble?” asked Hobson.

In a low tone the fellow replied.

As she listened to his words the red blood flamed into the face of Hobson, her eyes blazed and she answered loudly, “It's a lie, man. It's a lie. You'll not dare to do it.”

“I can't say what it is, that is got to be found out. Just you lead me to her for I must do what I am sent to do.”

“You'll get no help from me I tell you, nor from none o' the rest of us. More like you'll get your ferret eyes scratched out if you don't put your dirty self outside o' that door. Simes! Simes!” she called, “come here I tell you.”

Simes came at her call and when he heard the errand of the fellow he gave free vent to his indignation, "Ye nasty, dirty rascal, what do ye mean comin' to a place like this with yer lies got from that impudent baggage? Be off out o' this or I'll set the dogs at ye."

"Dogs or no dogs, I come to do my dooty an' I'll do it," said the man.

At this moment the door of the morning room opened and, hearing voices within the room, he immediately stepped to the door intending to enter. Simes did his utmost to prevent his entrance, but even with Hobson's help, did not succeed in keeping him out.

As soon as the fellow found himself in the room, he looked about him with the paper open before him in his hand and said, "I have——"

"Don't mind him, ma'am" interrupted Hobson, "but come away upstairs with me," and she tried to lead her young mistress from the room.

"Come now, none o' that," said the unwelcome visitor, roughly. "This 'ere lady's got to go wi' me," and he laid his great red hand on Kathleen's shoulder as he spoke.

At this insult the indignation of Simes burst all bounds and he flew at the fellow and placed a few well directed blows on his face and head, which were pretty well returned.

As soon as she could make herself heard above the noise Kathleen said :

"Simes, Simes, you forget yourself. If this man has business with me let him speak," and turning to the man she said, haughtily, "and you, sir, state the nature of your business here, but do not presume to touch me again."

Again producing his paper he said, "I am a constable, and I hold here a warrant which empowers me to arrest you, Kathleen Fordyce, for the murder of your husband on the third of January last." All this was delivered in the pomp-

ous, would-be-consequential tone so often assumed by these minions of the law, who think themselves of such importance in the working of that great structure.

Amazed—nothing more, though her mother sat horrified—Kathleen listened, then said :

“ Arrest me for the murder of my own dear husband ! Why the man is crazy.”

“ Crazy or not, ma'am, here's the warrant, an' you must come with me.”

All of the servants had collected outside in the hall, and, at a word from Simes, a couple of stalwart young grooms entered and advanced in a threatening manner upon the luckless intruder, saying, “ We'll soon settle him, your ladyship. A ducking in the horse pond will do him good.”

“ Nay,” interposed her ladyship with quiet dignity, “ do not touch him,” and turning to her mother and Cicely, she said, “ You both know, mother, Cicely, that I was sinking under my heavy load of sorrow. I only wished to die and leave it all, but this infamous charge has moved me from my despair. You all know how monstrous it is ?”

“ Aye, we do,” they answered as if in one breath.

A hot-headed young groom burst out, “ Aye, an' let yon chap dare try to take your ladyship from here an' we'll tear him limb from limb.”

“ Aye ; that we will,” the servants all agreed.

“ My friends,” and Kathleen spoke again, “ I thank you all for your loving championship. I know that you do not believe this awful thing of me. This man has been sent here, by those above him, to perform a duty and we must not interfere with that duty. He shall not take me with him.”

“ No, no ; that he sha'nt,” they said.

She held up her hand asking silence. “ But I shall freely and voluntarily go with him.”

A groan burst from the men as she finished and the women burst into tears.

"Do not cry, I beg of you. It can all come to nothing." Then addressing herself to the constable she asked, "Who has brought this charge against me?"

"Nancy Perks, your ladyship," answered the man respectfully, awed into respect by her quiet and gentle dignity of manner.

The little group stood in silent amazement for a moment at hearing this unexpected name. Surely the girl had gone crazy, they thought, to make this monstrous assertion. How dare she proclaim such a thing! It was well for her that she had never given voice to anything like it in their presence, some of the servants thought, or it had gone mighty hard with her.

In a great rage old Simes burst forth at last with, "The lying hussy! An' how could a weak, delicate body like her ladyship kill a man and put the body such a long place away, I'd like to know?"

"She did not work alone," answered the constable. "She poisoned him first and got John Bolton to take the body and put it in the lake."

"Poisoned him!" gasped Simes, and he stood staring at the man with a face that grew whiter and whiter each instant as the recollection grew upon him, of the tray brought from Kathleen's room, upon which was the tumbler containing the dregs that he himself had tasted of and afterwards became so strangely sick.

"I'll not believe it," he muttered at last. "Yon hussy herself put it there. I'll not believe it."

"Ah! old cove," said the constable, who had been watching him and had heard his muttered words, "So you know something, do you? Well, mayhap we'll want you for a witness. What do you think, eh?"

"I think you'll get now't out o' me," returned the old fellow doggedly; "for her ladyship never did it, poison or no poison—that I'll swear to."

"All right, old boy, but if you know anything you've got to tell it when the time comes."

"The time 'ill not come for me to tell what I don't want to tell, an' no one can make me either," said Simes.

"Well, well; may be not, but I've seen one o' them there clever lawyer chaps, take a cove like you that knowed something as he wouldn't tell, an' before he knowed it, he'd have him squeezed as dry as a lemon. So now your ladyship," as he addressed Kathleen, "if you're ready we'll go to town together."

"I must make a few preparations first," she answered. "I will go to my room awhile and return here presently. Will you come with me, Cicely?" she asked, turning to her friend.

The constable was about to make some objection, but seeing the many angry faces about him he thought better of it and said, "Well, I'll wait in the hall for your ladyship."

"And," said Hobson, "if you really mean to go, my lady, I will order out the closed carriage so that you can go comfortable."

"I have a fly waiting," interposed the officer.

"I prefer my own carriage," said Kathleen haughtily. "You can order it for me please, Hobson," and speaking thus she left the room accompanied by Cicely. She soon returned dressed for her short journey. In her trailing black gown, close fitting widow's bonnet and long black veil thrown back from her beautiful face, she entered the room proud and erect. A moment she stood and then going to the stricken old lady seated apart from the servants, she knelt beside her, and with her arms clasped around her, said:

"Mother, I must leave you now. Will you not kiss me and bless me before I go?"

"Oh! My child! my child," said the mother brokenly, "May Heaven guard and keep you through this awful time, I know you are innocent. I know it — I know it."

"Yes, mother dear. My Harold's mother. You know it, but we must make the world know it as well. Cicely," turning to her friend, "Will you send or go to Frank and tell him all? He or his father will see that I get the best of counsel and advice. I shall need both. Now dear, sweet, true friend, good-bye."

She said good-bye to the weeping servants, pressed a kiss upon the withered cheek of Hobson and said, "Do not forget little Charlie while I am gone." To Simes she said, "Simes, give me your arm to the carriage." It really seemed as though it were Simes that needed assistance, as they went out together, for the old fellow literally trembled under the touch of her light hand upon his arm. She, thinking he feared for her, said, "Do not tremble for me, old friend, I am safe."

"Oh! God grant it, my lady," was all he could say.

As she entered the carriage the constable attempted to follow her, but Simes slammed the door and shouted, "Drive on." The coachman, obedient and understanding the situation, whipped up his horses and went at full speed down the avenue, leaving the crestfallen guardian of criminals to follow at a slower rate of speed in the humble fly.

I am sorry to say that Simes forgot his years and the dignity of his long service in a noble family, forgot it all in his satisfaction at having outwitted the constable, even in respect to so trifling a thing as the manner of his return to town. He manifested his delight and satisfaction, combined

with his contempt for the official, as the fly was driven off by standing with his head thrust forward and his tongue stuck out of the side of his mouth.

It was a trifle indeed; but it was a comfort to Simes to do it, and as the constable, seeing the grimace, shook his fist at him from the window of the fly, he gravely and deliberately bowed most profoundly as if doing honor to some august personage.

XIII.

The news that Lady Fordyce had been arrested for the murder of her husband soon spread far and near. By some it was received with incredulous horror; by others with nods and shrugs, as though there was nothing to be surprised at. Among those of the latter class was our old acquaintance, Mrs. Benrose, whose comment was, "I am not surprised. What else was to be expected from a woman like that?"

"Like what?" she was asked.

"Why! A woman who could talk and give full expression and vent to her horrible ideas as she did," was her reply.

"Horrible ideas!" echoed her questioner, "When? Where? Where did she do so?"

"That, my dear, is not for me to speak of at present. I will tell my story in the proper time and place, for I believe that every criminal, no matter how vicious they may be should have a chance given them to vindicate themselves," said this charitable (?) lady,

"Of course, of course. That is why there are trials," said the wise one.

"Yes," coincided Mrs. Benrose, "and I mean to be present at the trial for, of course, she will be committed, as the evidence is all dead against her, at least I have heard so."

"Yes. Against her and her accomplice, John Bolton," said the wise one again.

Poor Kathleen! Out of her own mouth and by her own acts they would condemn her. Words that she had spoken

and that meant no harm. A simple act that she had done in her loving anxiety about the long absence of her husband on that fatal night, would confront her with deadly effect.

The preliminary examination before the magistrate took place a few days after the conversation just narrated. Nancy Perk, who was the principal witness, testified: "That Sir Harold returned home about midnight on the third of January; that he seemed very tired and sad—he did not remove his mackintosh or coat, only threw himself, just as he was, on the couch; that Lady Fordyce asked him to eat something as it would do him good; that she went to the tray and poured out some brandy into a glass which she (the witness) saw had some white powder in the bottom of it; that she was not sure of what it was, but she knew that her mistress had a small bottle in her dressing-case which held a white powder and which was labelled 'poison.'"

"Did you see your mistress put the powder into the glass?" she was asked.

"No, it was in it when I saw her pour the brandy into it. Lady Fordyce carried the tumbler to Sir Harold and said: 'Drink this it will make you eat.'"

"Did he drink it?"

"Yes, right down. All but a little that remained in the bottom of the glass which he handed back to his wife saying: 'What's the matter with that brandy? It tastes strangely.' Then he lay back on the couch again and was still for some time and then he began to moan and toss about."

"Where were you all this time?" she was asked.

"In the dressing room hidden behind the door."

"How long did Sir Harold lie there?"

"I could not say for sure. I was too frightened I wanted to get away. After a while he got still, only he called out his wife's name twice, 'Kathleen, Kathleen'—like that—and then he did not move or speak again. After a little her ladyship opened the glass doors at the head of

the turret steps and John Bolton came in. She said to him! 'All is ready. Have you the light cart?' and John said, 'Yes,' with his teeth shaking in his head as it seemed and she said then to him: 'Best have some brandy before we begin,' and went to pour some out for him, but he said: 'No thank you, ma'am, mine is the safest,' and he took a flask from his pocket and drank from it. Then they picked up Sir Harold between them and as they carried him out and down the steps, she, (the witness) crept to the door and watched them carry him away through the darkness. She then ran and hid herself in her own room."

When asked why she did not tell all this before she replied that "she did not know Sir Harold was dead till they found him in the lake and at first she was afraid to speak as Lady Fordyce was a great lady with many powerful friends while she was only a poor girl without any one to speak for her."

When asked why she told it now the answer was "Because I can't sleep in my bed at night with thinking of it all, and I hate her, that I do." This expression of hatred seemed to be involuntary on the part of the witness who, after giving utterance to this expression, shut her mouth tightly and looked confused.

She was asked if she also hated John Bolton and she replied, "No. I just think him a fool."

"Why is he a fool?"

"Because he is a fool," was her answer. "If he wasn't a fool he wouldn't let a woman lead him by the nose."

When she made this reply John Bolton broke in with "You're right, lass, you're right."

Nancy was asked then how she knew that her mistress had poison in her dressing case?

"I knew because I saw her put it there."

"Did she know that you saw her conceal it there?" she was again asked.

"Yes. She told me the day she brought it home."

"Then she made no secret of having it?"

"No, not to me. She knew I would see it in the dressing case anyhow. She pretended she was going to use it, as some ladies do, for the complexion."

"Did she ever use any of it for that purpose to your knowledge," she was asked.

"No. I spoke of it once and she pretended that she had forgotten all about it being there, in the dressing case."

This concluded her evidence to which she was duly sworn.

James Green, clerk in the apothecary's, was then called, and testified that he had sold some arsenic to Lady Fordyce, in the month of December last. Could not remember the exact date, but remembered the circumstance well, because he always remembered any time her ladyship came to the shop."

"Why did you remember?"

"Because she is such a handsome lady, I always followed her to the door to watch her drive off. I used to watch her as long as I could see her."

"Was there anything unusual in her ladyship's manner that day?"

"No, except that she seemed in a hurry."

"How much arsenic did she buy?"

"She did not tell me how much to put up. She just said she wished to purchase some arsenic, so I weighed an ounce and put it into a small, wide-mouthed bottle or phial."

"Was the phial full?"

"No, not quite."

"Could you tell now if any had been taken out of it?"

"Yes. I think I could."

"Could you recognize that phial again so as to be sure it was the same phial you gave lady Fordyce?"

"I could be sure if the label has not been removed from it. I put one on it and marked it 'poison,' as her ladyship told me to do, for she said she did not want any accident to happen from it."

He was shewn a small phial and asked if that was the same.

"Yes," he answered, "that's the one I gave her ladyship. I know it by the label; that's my writing on it."

Lady Fordyce was asked if she wished to interrogate the witnesses and she replied: "Yes. I would like to ask that girl a few questions myself." Nancy was therefore brought back to the witness stand and Lady Fordyce said to her quietly: "Girl, why do you hate me?"

"Just because I do."

"That is no reason," she was mildly told, "but it is of no consequence. You need give me no reason. I dare say you could not find one if you tried."

"Couldn't I, indeed?" Nancy rejoined pertly.

Without noticing her remark Kathleen continued, "Is it by reason of your hatred for me that you dare to stand there and give voice to such a fabrication as you have uttered? Have you no fear of God before you that you dare swear to the truth of such a tissue of lies as you have just told? Wretched girl! I do not wonder that you were unable to sleep in your bed if you were plotting such vile and unfounded slander as this."

Nancy stood silent, but tossed her head defiantly.

"If," continued Lady Fordyce, "you do not hate this poor man—referring to Bolton—why do you include him in your accusation? I once thought him your lover. I have seen you with him in the park."

At this remark Nancy started violently. She turned and faced Lady Fordyce; her lips parted as though she would speak, then she thought better of it and turned away from the gaze of those sad, pure eyes which seemed as if

they could read her very soul. There was a silence in the court room for a moment, after which the magistrate asked if there was anything further her ladyship wished to say.

"No, I thank you," she answered, "that is all."

John Bolton was asked if there was anything he wished to say, and to the surprise of Kathleen and the horror of her friends, he turned to her and said: "Your ladyship, I swore to keep mum and I must do it." That was all.

Nancy's face beamed with delight when this answer was given by John Bolton, as she well knew how it told against her mistress.

The examination ended and, after a few remarks, the magistrate declared that "In view of the—ah—strong evidence—ah—all telling directly against her ladyship—ah—he was compelled—ah—to commit her for—ah—trial at the next high court, and my action—ah—in reference to—ah—Bolton shall be identical."

He was asked if he would not accept bail.

"You will, of course, accept bail for her ladyship's future appearance," said Mr. Wyburn. "I am prepared to become bail for any amount you please to name."

"And I," said Mr. Brown, a gentleman standing near and a friend of the late Baronet, "am also prepared for any amount you wish."

"Well, really, gentlemen—ah," said the magistrate, "under the circumstances—ah—I do not think it will be possible—ah—and I am compelled, though reluctantly—ah—to decline to accept bail—ah."

"But, man, think. Why its monstrous," said irate Mr. Wyburn. "It's—it's iniquitous to refuse bail and commit a refined, delicate lady to the common jail."

"Sir—ah," returned the magistrate, in a dignified manner and with stern accent, "you—ah—forget yourself—ah

—sir. This court—ah—needs no one—ah—to teach it—ah—its duty, sir, and the majesty—ah—of the law must be respected—ah.”

Now he was not really a bad-hearted man, this magistrate, but he had become the possessor of wealth and on one or two occasions he had been made use of by some politicians in the county. He became troublesome to them after a while, however, so in order to keep Lim quiet and as a sop to his vanity they had made him a county magistrate, therefore in his own opinion at least, a very great man. His greatness was not recognized by the gentry of the county—not because they wished to slight him or hurt his feelings but really because they were, in some instances, unaware of and, in others, indifferent to his very existence. And now that such a grand opportunity was given him for self assertion would he allow it to pass by? Not so. He would make those stuck up aristocrats learn at last who and what he was and they should knuckle down to him. So to his own satisfaction and that of some few others, and to the grief of many. Kathleen was committed to the county jail to await her trial.

After being placed in the jail Lady Fordyce had a long consultation with the lawyer engaged to defend her. He was a barrister celebrated alike for his ability and skill in pleading difficult and in some instances, it might be said, almost hopeless criminal cases, and also for his goodness and kindness of heart. He was the father of a grown up family, among whom he numbered three fair, sweet daughters. His heart, therefore, warmed with love and pity towards the young frail creature seated before him whose life itself, it might be said, rested wholly on his skilful pleading. So far everything seemed against her.

When he entered her room she was seated on the one chair the humble place contained, her hands clasped upon her knee, her head bent forward on her breast. In her

black dress she looked the picture of gloom and despair. She took no notice either of the opening or closing of the door. She sat motionless.

Only a poor weak woman—alone—within a prison room. Before her enemies her pride had upheld her and she scorned to show her fear of the net that seemed entangled about her. But alone—with no human eye to note her weakness, her heart sank within her and despair filled her breast.

Going to her side the kind, tender-hearted man laid his hand upon her shoulder and said:

"My child, this will not do. We must not be down-hearted."

She looked up into the kindly face with an expression of wild appeal on her own face and then sank upon her knees beside him with the wild cry: "It is not true. It is not true; Oh! Save me! Help me."

"No, no, of course it is not true, child. No one believes it true."

She moaned aloud as the strain gave way. Then tears, blessed tears, came to her relief, and she sobbed and cried with her head resting against her old friend's knee, as though she had been one of his own dear girls. When she became calmer he raised her gently to her feet, saying: "Now, child, lie right there on that bed; and rest a little, while I look over the notes of that girl's evidence." And he pretended to examine his papers till he saw that she was able to speak calmly.

"Now, he said, "let us talk a little and remember, my dear, there must be no half confidence between us. I shall expect you to repose perfect, absolute trust in me."

"I shall do so," she returned. "I have nothing to conceal."

"I think," said the lawyer, when the long interview ended, "I see a plot of some kind hatched by clever Miss Nancy. I must find her motive. Keep up a brave heart, Lady Fordyce. We will soon get you out of this. I will work day and night to discover all."

The following day he went down to Monkswold, and had a long interview with the dowager Lady Fordyce, into which consultation, Hobson was called to take part. In consequence of this interview and of information given to him by Hobson, he felt, if possible, more than ever convinced that there was some great mystery underlying all this trouble, some plot that must be unearthed and the motive for that plot discovered. They would, of course, do all in their power to aid that discovery and would be guided by him in all things. He took his departure feeling somewhat more hopeful than he had felt on his arrival.

The next afternoon a new man servant made his appearance at the Wold, much to the disgust of Simes, who resented his appearance the more that the fellow seemed to do as he pleased and went where he liked through the house.

"A nasty, peekin', pokin' critter that don't know his place at all," said Simes. "What is he here for anyhow, Mrs. Hobson?"

"Oh! it's a notion of old madam's," was the answer, "and it's not our place to make remarks."

"Well! well; of course I don't find fault with anything her ladyship likes to do. All the same I don't know what he wants here, and a pokin' into my pantry of all places. I don't like it, that I don't."

In spite of the dissatisfaction felt and expressed by Simes, the new man stayed on, made love to all the maids, was 'hail fellow well met,' with all the other men servants and worse than all, to the great disgust of Simes, was often invited to a cup of tea in Mrs. Hobson's snug little sitting room. He seemed never to tire of hearing them sing the praises of their sweet young mistress, who was suffering now so much, and so wrongfully; and he quite agreed with them all when they abused and called the hated Nancy Perks bad names.

XIV.

The day of the great murder trial dawned clear and bright. The little Court House of Monkstown, was crowded. From far and near the people had come to hear the trial. Friends and enemies alike were present, and to the honor of mankind, be it said, that the friends far outnumbered the enemies.

When Kathleen entered the court room, leaning on the arm of her Counsel, there was an outburst of sympathetic feeling as they gazed upon her, hearing which she raised her eyes and looked inquiringly around. Seeing many kindly faces, some of which she recognized, she bowed slightly and did not feel quite so forlorn as she had expected to feel. When she took her place in the dock, side by side with John Bolton, her late husband's gamekeeper, and, as some thought her accomplice in the awful deed that had made her a widow, she looked kindly though sadly at him, but under the gaze of those sad, sweet eyes, he, great giant though he was, shrank and cowered as far from her side as the limits of the dock allowed.

The jury was sworn in and the usual formal questions put to the prisoners. In a clear, low, but slightly tremulous tone, Kathleen responded, "Not guilty." John Bolton shook his head and said, "I swore to keep mum, an' I'll do it." Nothing would make him change this answer. When remonstrated with, he lapsed into a dogged sullenness and refused to speak at all. "Not guilty," was therefore entered for him.

The Attorney General who, of course, represented the Crown on this important occasion, then arose and himself opened the trial, in an able speech for the prosecution. He first referred to Sir Harold's strange disappearance on the third of January last. On that evening he had taken dinner as usual with his family. After dinner he had gone out as had been his habit on each evening, after his return from abroad. His wife, the prisoner, said he did not return at all that night, nor ever again. The chief witness for the Crown, would swear that Sir Harold had returned that night and was then given the poison by the prisoner, which resulted in his death. Now, for such a crime, there must be a motive and he would shew that there was a motive in this case, and that such a motive was—jealousy. "It might be argued," said he, "that the prisoner was of too calm and equable a temperament to give way to such an extent, or to be swayed or influenced by any passion to the extent of committing a crime. But it was a well-known fact that 'still waters run deep,' and beneath the serene and dignified manner of the lady prisoner there slumbered great depths of passion and power, which could be only seen and comprehended by the few who had ever heard her give vent to the great musical genius, which she possessed. Unfortunately for her he had heard her sing, and had discovered through her soul stirring voice what a deep, passionate nature she possessed. Now, it might be said this argument was far fetched—it was not so—as it was a further well-known fact, that a true and soul-stirring musician must be possessed of deep, strong and intense passions, else they could not speak to the emotions and move all hearts, as the prisoner could do when she raised her voice in song.

"She had been heard to say that should she ever have reason to consider herself a slighted or neglected wife, she would have no hesitation in killing her husband. Some of her friends had heard her declare this, and they would be

before the jury as witnesses. She had for some time been suspicious of her husband and resented his frequent absences from his home. This feeling, no doubt, had been greatly aggravated by the reception of the anonymous letters which he had in his possession."

Here the Attorney General read aloud the three scrawls which had so excited poor Kathleen. They created a great sensation among the spectators in court and caused much speculation as to their author. "These letters," continued the Attorney General, "vile and execrable as they are, had been sufficient to fan into a blaze the suspicion and jealous feeling which had hitherto only smouldered, and the poison being ready to her hand she had then formed the revolting scheme of poisoning her husband, and, by the help of an accomplice, making away with his body. Such an accomplice she had found in her fellow prisoner, John Bolton. That her wicked scheme had succeeded but too well had been fully proved by the finding of her husband's body in the lake. Who, he asked, to look upon the prisoner as she sat there in her womanly beauty could think her capable of such brutal and ghastly work? But jealousy was a terrible passion, and ever since the days of Cain, the first murderer, had been known to incite men and women alike, to revolting and terrible crimes, and his was now the painful duty to prove that the hand of the jealous wife in this case, and her's alone, had been the one that compassed her husband's death—the death of Sir Harold Fordyce.

He then called the principal witness, Nancy Perks. Her evidence was the same as that given at the preliminary examination. Nothing could shake or confuse her. She underwent the most searching cross-examination, by the defendant's counsel, with the utmost composure; her evidence was just the same. It was all clear and concise. Too clear

many thought, to leave much or any doubt of the guilt of the prisoner. After giving her evidence Nancy returned with a defiant air to her seat.

James Green was called next and he again told of having sold arsenic to the prisoner, Lady Fordyce. He again recognized the phial shewn him as the one he had given, he should say about half of the contents had been taken out of it.

Henry Simes was next called. He objected at first strongly to being sworn; said he "knew nothing about it"

"We will find out for ourselves just how much or how little you know, Henry," said the prosecutor blandly. "You think a great deal of the prisoner, do you not?" asked the learned Counsel.

"I do think a great deal of Lady Fordyce," he said, "and there's nothing that will make me think any less o' her."

"Yes? Well, we understand all about that. Did you not, on the third of January last, take a tray with some supper on it, at the bidding of the prisoner, Lady Fordyce, up to her rooms?"

"I did. And who had a better right to bid me?"

"Can you remember the contents of that tray?"

"I can. There was a cold chicken, cold pressed tongue, some biscuit and a small dish of preserved apricots, which, if I do say it, there is'nt the like of in the country, an' for nobody but her ladyship, would I a' opened that jar, that night."

"Anything else on the tray, Henry?"

"Oh! Yes sir; yes sir. A bottle of sherry."

"What else?"

"Wine glasses and a corkscrew," answered Simes briskly.

"What else?"

"Oh! Ah—knives and forks, sir."

"Henry Simes," said the Attorney General severely, "I want no trifling and remember you have taken your solemn oath to speak the truth. Now was there not a decanter of brandy on that tray and a tumbler?"

The old fellow bowed his head in assent.

"Come; that will not do. I must have an answer. Was there not brandy on that tray?"

In a low tone he answered, "Yes, sir; there was."

"And a tumbler?"

"Yes, sir."

"When did you see the tray again after leaving it in the prisoner's, in Lady Fordyce's room?"

"The next morning," Simes answered quickly, "Nancy Perks brought it back to my pantry and I washed up the things at once and put them back in their places."

"Very good; but before washing up the things, did you not sip some of the brandy that was in the tumbler?"

"I had no need to sip brandy what's left in tumblers. I could have a full and plenty when I wanted it," said Simes sullenly.

"No evasion of the question. Did you not taste the dregs of the tumbler and were you not made sick by so doing?"

"I did taste wi' the end o' my finger. It couldn't hurt a baby what I took."

"Did you not become sick afterwards?"

"I was sick but——"

"Answer me plainly," interrupted the Attorney General, "Did you not get sick, very sick after tasting the contents of the tumbler that was taken from the room of the prisoner, Lady Fordyce?"

"I did," answered poor Simes in a low, broken voice. This telling answer concluded the testimony of Simes. When told that he might stand down, he turned to Kathleen,

his face working convulsively, and said: "Oh! my lady. I wish I'd a died before I saw this day," and bursting into tears he was led from the court room.

This created another sensation in the court, as it all told against the prisoner and the tide turned. Many who before would not believe in the guilt of Lady Fordyce, were now sure of it, and believed that she had killed her husband in cold blood and they turned from her in horror as from a beautiful fiend.

Mrs. Benrose was the next witness called. She looked around the court room with a gentle air as she took her place in the witness box. She seemed to shrink from the deplorable necessity that brought her there to do what she considered her duty. She said she "had heard Lady Fordyce once on the occasion of a luncheon at Mr. Wyburn's use threatening language towards her husband—at least she considered it threatening, for she, Lady Fordyce, had said that if she had ever reason to consider herself a neglected wife, or that her husband was recreant to her, she would have no hesitation in killing him. There were several others present when she said this. It was in answer to a question of mine that she declared she would have no hesitation in so doing if the said reason should arise. She was sorry to have to repeat this story but she believed in justice and retribution."

To the surprise of Cicely she was next called and asked if she did not also hear Lady Fordyce use this threatening language.

"No," replied Cicely, bravely. "I was present on that occasion, but it was not threatening language nor meant as such. It all occurred in the course of conversation, and after Lady Fordyce had spoken, she turned laughingly to her husband and told him to note what a few clever questions from Mrs. Benrose had done in making her appear a blood-thirsty Borgia and," said Cicely in an outburst of indigna-

tion, "it is only the envy and malice of an evil mind that could try to make harm or material out of such a simple thing."

This speech was greeted with applause from the few who still believed in Kathleen and in the midst of it Cicely returned to her seat feeling full of repressed indignation and a strong inclination to cry. She was somewhat comforted on receiving a loving squeeze of the hand from Frank accompanied by the reassuring remark: "Good for you, my brave little girl, you did right to pitch into the old cat."

One of the grooms from Monkswold, was the next witness. He said that on the night of the third of January, John Bolton had come to him and asked to have a horse and a small light cart harnessed for him. He had often had the same cart before, by Sir Harold's orders, so he, the groom, thought nothing of it, but got it ready for him, and John had driven off in it early in the evening. Both horse and cart were all safe home in the morning. There was a good deal of mud on the wheels and some fine gravel, but he, witness, did not think anything strange of that. It might have been got on the road to the lake, he could not say, as it was a wet night and there was a deal of mud on the roads.

Nancy was then recalled to identify and testify to the ownership of the black velvet dinner gown worn by her mistress on that night. It was produced, dragged and mud stained, as when Kathleen had thrown it off on that dreadful night.

Alas! for Kathleen! What more was needed to confirm her guilt? Her firmest friends and strongest believers in her innocence, trembled and shrank, as they looked upon what seemed a strong proof of guilt. What woman would go out on foot on such a night as that had been, and in such a dress! Certainly no woman in such a high position as the Lady of Monkswold, would have occasion to walk out on such a night, and drag so costly a dress through the mire,

unless her hands and arms were engaged in upholding, and helping to carry the dead burden, which the principal witness against her had sworn, that she and her accomplice had carried out between them.

The Attorney General said, "This, my lord, closes the case for the Crown. I have no more witnesses to call nor do I need them. This last piece of evidence is, I consider, not only confirmatory of all that has gone before but conclusive. This part of my painful duty is ended." As he finished speaking he took his seat amidst a solemn silence.

Kathleen sat faint and weary, wondering what was to come next. Her counsel seeing her pale looks had some whispered conversation with her. Then he addressed a few words to the judge, which resulted in the announcement of the court being adjourned till the following morning at ten o'clock.

Making a supreme effort Kathleen arose and walked proudly erect beside her counsel as she left the court. Cicely followed her closely out as she had obtained permission to visit her in her cell after court hours.

As the friends were left alone together, Cicely advanced towards and would have embraced her suffering friend, but Kathleen raised her hand between them and stepped backwards saying: "First tell me, Cicely, has not all this changed your feelings towards me, and made you think me a base, guilty woman, a creature without heart or feeling, one unfitted by reason of her cruelty to live among or hold any communication with her fellow creatures?"

"No, Kathleen, No," answered Cicely earnestly. "I know it seems overwhelming, but I do not believe it. I am sure if we could only see, there is treachery and falsehood behind it all."

"Oh! Thank you, Cicely, you are one in a thousand," said Kathleen, as she threw herself into her friend's outstretched arms. After a while she spoke again saying: "If you had

forsaken me and gone with the multitude, I could not have blamed you, dear, for there is so much that is black, piled up against me, that I wonder how I can have even one friend left."

"They do not know you as I do," said Cicely warmly, "or they could not doubt you. But keep up a brave heart, dear one, you have many friends still, and one great champion is your little friend Charlie."

"The dear little fellow," said Kathleen softly, "How does he seem those few days since I left home?"

"Well, very well indeed. It seems as if fighting for you gave him strength and he has even walked up to see Hobson, and hear about his dear beautiful lady."

For some time longer the friends talked together and then Frank was allowed to enter the cell for a short visit before it was closed for the night. With quiet grace, Lady Fordyce received him and as he bowed over her hand she said with a faint smile, "Then you also still believe in me?"

"Yes, dear Lady Fordyce," he answered, "We all do at home, and we will make all the world do so yet."

He spoke bravely but did not feel so, for he was dreading what the morrow might bring forth for her.

XV.

It dawned fair and beautiful, as the day so often does even when our hearts are filled with sorrow, and our bodies racked with pain. Notwithstanding the glorious sunshine, all was gloom at Monkswold.

"The prospect wore a chill and gloomy shroud,
As though the sun was hidden by a cloud."

The hearts of all there, were filled with a dread foreboding of coming ill. Ever since the return of Simes from the court the day before, they had felt no hope, for it did not seem to them that Lady Fordyce could be successfully defended, or in any way prove her innocence.

Down at the humble lodge, there was a faithful little heart that mourned for Kathleen. Not even the sweet dream voices, though he listened to them often, could console him in her absence.

It was near the hour for the court to reopen, and the dowager Lady Fordyce had driven into town, for she wished to be present on the last trying day, and, if possible, give courage and strength to her dear child by her presence. She had been gone some time when little Charlie, weary and exhausted, arrived at the Wold and in almost breathless accents, inquired for Mrs. Hobson. It was one of the under maids whom he saw and she answered him sharply, saying:

"What's brought ye here again? Some o' ye're ghosts' voices, I'll be bound. Enough to make a body's flesh creep, ye are with ye're witless talk."

The child turned from her with quivering lips, but seeing the new man servant standing near, and regarding him with a kindly glance, he said:

"Oh sir, I must see Mrs Hobson. I have a message for her. Indeed I am not witless. Oh! Take me to her—do please, sir."

"Yes, I will so, my poor child," replied the man. "And I will carry you up to her room, for you are not fit to walk." As he spoke he raised Charlie in his arms and carried him up to Mrs. Hobson's sitting room, where she and Simes were seated in a very solemn and tearful state.

"Here, Mrs. Hobson," said Charlie's new found friend, as he entered the room and placed him on the sofa, "this child says he has a message for you."

"Oh!" said Hobson, "Its just some foolish talk of his about them 'voices' he's always dreaming about."

"No indeed, Mrs. Hobson," said Charlie. "I did not dream. Let me tell you all about it please?"

"Well, child," she answered kindly, "Go on, if it pleases you. I'll listen."

"Well," began Charlie, "You know, Mrs. Hobson, every day since my beautiful lady was taken away, the sweet voices kept calling me to 'come away, come away.'"

"I thought so," said Hobson aside. "It's just that foolish talk of his."

"And," continued the child, "I used to go to the Abbey, because I heard them louder there, and because it was there she sang to me, and when I stood still and shut my eyes, I could hear her voice singing in the clouds."

"Heaven protect us!" said Hobson. "One would think to hear him that our sweet young mistress was dead."

"No, no!" returned Charlie gravely. "She's not dead nor she's not going to be dead. But once I heard a voice so close to me call 'Charlie, Charlie,' and I called back again, 'I am here,' and then the woman with the wicked eyes ran in—and picked me up—and carried me right home. She told me if she ever caught me there again she would kill me."

"When was that?" asked the strange servant gravely.

"Just since my sweet lady went away," answered the child. "But I told her I wasn't afraid of her, but I did hate her nasty eyes."

"That was right, my boy," said Simes.

"So this morning early, I went again to the Abbey, and again I heard the voice call, 'Charlie! Charlie.' I stood to listen and it came again, but not out of the air—but out of the stones under my feet."

Here the child paused for breath, and the stranger asked: "Did you hear anything else?"

"Oh! Yes," was the reply. "For I answered back, 'I am here,' and the voice said—'Charlie, do not be afraid, but go around outside to the north end of the wall, and low down behind the ivy you will find a grating.' I went where the voice told me. I knelt down in the moss and pulled some ivy aside."

"Yes, yes," said the strange man, intent on the child's story. "Go on," as the child paused again.

"It's only one of his dreams," said Hobson. "Don't mind him. Don't you see he's all worked up?"

"No! I did not dream it," said Charlie in a weak voice, "For I found the grating and behind it, I saw a white—white—face, and the voice spoke again. It said, 'Here Charlie take this little piece of paper to Hobson. Tell her to read the writing on it and she will know what to do.'"

"Only his dreams," said Hobson, again shaking her head sadly.

Not heeding her, the stranger said eagerly: "And the paper, boy, did you get it?"

"Yes, he pushed it between the holes. I did not dream it. Here it is, pinned inside my jacket," and with little trembling fingers the child took a scrap of paper from the inside of his little jacket and as he handed it towards Hobson, he sank back fainting.

With tender hands the stranger raised him up and placed him on the sofa comfortably, saying, "Here, Mrs. Hobson, is work for you. I think the child is faint from hunger and fatigue." Then he drew the paper from the nerveless fingers, read the faint scrawl upon it, and said, "Mrs. Hobson, nothing in this house is too good for—no one here can be too kind to that child, for he has saved your mistress. All will now be well." After speaking these words hurriedly, he left the room.

Together Hobson and Simes worked to bring the child back to life and sense. When he recovered, a dainty repast was set before him to which he did only slight justice in their opinion. As he finished eating, Hobson said: "Now then, deary, lay you down and sleep."

"But, Mrs. Hobson," he asked in a wistful tone, "Do you think I am foolish? I did not dream it indeed."

"No, you did not dream it, dear, and you are not foolish, but just the best and smartest boy that lives this day."

With those comforting words ringing in his ears, little Charlie slept.

XVI.

Again was the court room at Monkstown crowded to excess. Standing room even was not to be found, while excited groups were seen at different points in and around the court house grounds and on the street, discussing the trial. All were eager to hear what possible defence could be made against such a well proven, such an overwhelming case as that for the Crown seemed to be.

After the judge and other officials had taken their places and the prisoners were placed in the dock, and the usual preliminary ceremony was gone through with, Kathleen's counsel, amid an almost breathless silence, arose and began his speech in opening for the defence.

Bowing gravely to the judge, he said:—

“My Lord, and Gentlemen of the Jury:—I stand before you, today, a proud and honored man. I am proud and I consider myself honored most highly, because I have been chosen, to speak for and defend this noble and basely slandered lady. Can any one look upon her as she sits there in her noble dignity, with virtue and innocence stamped upon her features, and, for one instant, think her guilty of the cruel and monstrous crime with which she has been charged? No, not one, I am sure. Her whole past life, a life of goodness and charity, and the teachings of her childhood, makes such a charge, horrible as the crime undoubtedly is, ridiculous in the extreme. She was the daughter of a sweet and virtuous mother, who died on the day her child saw the light. Her father brought up that child in the way that she should walk. He was an honest man, generous and kind to

all—a noble gentleman—a brave and distinguished soldier, who lived for his God and his country, and who laid down his life in battling for his country's rights. I ask you, Gentlemen of the Jury, do you—can you believe that the child of such a father could forget that father's teachings and become the base and cruel creature, she has been painted? No, a thousand times—no.

“Honor and truth, added to a nobility of purpose and a steadfast wish always to do the right, have been her characteristics, her guiding principles during the course of her short life. She is not without her faults. What earthly woman is? The learned counsel for the prosecution, had said, that beneath my client's calm and dignified demeanor there slumbered great depths of passion and power and that such depths of passion and power, could only be comprehended by those who had been swayed by her wonderful voice when raised in song. I admit all of this, but I will add further that her power and strength of character were only used for good, and base indeed, must be the nature that could receive, other than a heavenly inspiration, on hearing her soul-thrilling voice raised in song.

“In spite of her noble nature, she was not without her womanly vanity. I ask you, what woman is? She wished at all times to appear fair and beautiful, especially in the eyes of her husband. What are the facts then about the arsenic? Finding that she was becoming thin and frail in appearance and failing in her good looks, she openly and fearlessly purchased some arsenic, to be used as a toilet requisite, or a medicine, that she had been told would give her that plump appearance, which she admired so much in English ladies. This, Gentlemen of the Jury, had been told my client by her maid, Nancy Perks, who is the principal witness against my client. This was the poison that Lady Fordyce had in her possession and this, the sole purpose for which it

was procured. None of it, not a particle of it, was ever used by herself for any purpose whatever—not even for the purpose originally intended.”

The counsel was here interrupted by some slight confusion near the door. He waited a moment, and found it was caused by the arrival of a mounted messenger from Monkswold, who had leaped from his horse and was forcing his way, panting and eager, through the crowd, to the side of the counsel. When he was beside him, the messenger said in a low tone, as he handed him a folded paper. “I was told to make all haste to you, sir, with this.”

The counsel took the paper and after apologizing to the Judge, opened and read its contents. He then calmly placed it carefully among the papers before him on the table, looked intently at Kathleen, and then, with permission of the court, approached and spoke earnestly to her for a few moments. As she listened a slight joyful exclamation escaped her, which was quickly suppressed, but she clasped her hands and raised her eyes towards Heaven, as though returning thanks for some great mercy. Quietly the counsel returned to his place and resumed his speech.

“I can prove to you, most positively, Gentlemen of the Jury—notwithstanding the testimony for the Crown—that my client never mixed any poison with brandy, with the intention of administering it, and never administered poison in any form, to Sir Harold Fordyce, either on the night of the third of January last, or at any other time. That some of the arsenic had been removed from the bottle was sworn to by the witness, James Green, but it was not done by my client.” Here he paused, as though listening intently to a faint sound in the far distance, and then proceeded—“I do not think it will be necessary for me to occupy the time of the Court, in dealing with all the evidence accumulated on behalf of the Crown against my client, and without further delay, I

will now proceed to call my witness——” The murmuring sound in the distance, had now increased in volume and seemed like the distant roar of the waves on the sea-shore.

“Now mark me, Gentlemen,” continued the Counsel. “I said— I used the word ‘witness’. I used that word advisedly—for I shall call but one witness, and only one.”

Here the roaring sound which had grown louder and louder was recognized as the sound of human voices. What could it be! Had the assembled crowd grown weary of waiting for the verdict? Those within the court-room grew pale as they listened, thinking that the maddened and infuriated throng, were calling for vengeance upon Sir Harold’s murderess. Nearer and louder, came the roaring sound. With pale faces and bated breath, they listened. The constables drew nearer to the dock, as though to protect their prisoners.

As they listened, the sound changed, as the Court House was approached—changed into loud cries, not for vengeance, however, but, wild exultant cries and cheers of delight and triumph. What could it all mean? Kathleen, who seemed to share in the excitement, had risen to her feet, and was listening intently, regardless of the many eyes fixed upon her.

“Now, Gentlemen,” resumed the pleader, raising his hand and voice at the same time. “I shall call my one, solitary witness, to refute at once this monstrous and diabolical charge against my client, and the name of that witness is—Harold Egbert Fordyce.”

As he finished speaking, the swaying, struggling crowd parted, and through the narrow lane they made, came Harold himself—pale, haggard and worn, but—Harold Fordyce in the flesh. With rapid steps he reached the dock, and heedless alike of Judge, jury or spectators, he wrenched open the door of the dock, and clasped his wife, within his arms, with the cry of, “What a place for you, my precious wife!”

Speechless, almost senseless, she sank upon his breast. Surprise, for a while, held all spell-bound, and then in spite of the Court's dignity, cheer after cheer, went up till the very rafters rang.

In the confusion, Nancy Perks who had been seated with the other witnesses, arose and tried to slip quietly out, but, a strong hand was placed upon her shoulder, and a quiet voice said in her ear, "You had better remain quiet, I have a warrant here to arrest you for conspiracy." She turned and faced a constable. Baffled, defeated and filled with rage, and no little terror, she sank back into her seat, wondering what would come next.

Kathleen soon regained her strength, and clasping her husband closely, said: "Oh! my love, my husband! You are still here with me! not gone forever as I thought!"

"Yes, my love, my darling," he replied. "I am still with you and hope there are many happy years to come for us both."

Just then came a faint, tremulous cry of "Harold, my boy, I, too, am here."

"Mother, dear!" he said, as still holding his wife with one fond encircling arm, he made his way to his mother's side. "I did not forget you, but I could do nothing till I had rescued this poor injured girl from her ignoble place in the felon's dock."

Order being now restored, the Judge said:

"Sir Harold, will you be kind enough now, to tell the Court where you have been all those months?"

"Certainly, my lord," he answered. "It is my intention so to do, and being thereupon duly sworn, he proceeded: "I have been confined in a vault, beneath the Monastery ruins, in Monkswold."

"In a vault beneath the ruins!" repeated the amazed Judge. "How did you get there?"

"How I got there, my lord, I cannot tell you, as I do not know. All I can tell you is that on the night of the third of January last, I was engaged in the performance of a sad and melancholy duty. After that duty was done, I bade good-night to my friends, the rector and doctor, who had assisted me in the performance of that duty. I was going as rapidly as the darkness would allow, up the avenue, towards home, where I knew my wife was anxiously awaiting me. Just where the trees are thickest and the avenue darkest, I thought I heard a step. I stood to listen and was instantly felled to the ground, by a violent blow on the back of my head, which must have been repeated after I fell, because I remember I did not lose consciousness at first, for in a dazed way I attempted to regain my feet. That, my lord, is all that I can tell you of that part of a most villianous plot or conspiracy between John Bolton and Nancy Perks. When I recovered consciousness I found myself in the vault. I recognized the place at once as I had been down there many times when, as a boy, I explored the ruins."

"Then, Sir Harold, whose could have been the body that was found in the lake at Monkswold and placed in the Fordyce vault as yours?"

"That, my lord, was the body of Henry Edward Fordyce, seventeenth baronet of Monkswold and my elder half-brother."

XVII.

When the murmurs of amazement and almost incredulous astonishment that this assertion gave rise to, had subsided, and after the Crown Counsel, recognizing that Sir Harold was actually present in person, had applied to the Court for permission to enter a *nolle prosequi*, a request the Judge promptly complied with, Harold continued :

"It is a long story, my lord, which for the vindication of my dear father's memory and the satisfaction of the public I shall have published in all the principal newspapers."

"Yes, Sir Harold," returned the Judge, "that will be your best course with regard to your late brother's history, but, what I am now most anxious to hear is, the history of your imprisonment in the vault and the manner in which you sustained life while confined there."

"I was fairly well supplied with food by Nancy Perks and John Bolton, also with many comforts carried from the manor house."

"Then I will at once order the arrest of Perks," said the Judge.

"She has already been arrested, my lord," replied Sir Harold. "I had a warrant procured before I drove here."

"And it's been executed, my lord," said the constable, who was still stationed close by Nancy.

"That is well done," said the Judge. "Do not remove your prisoner yet, she may be wanted here. Before you proceed with your narrative, however, Sir Harold, I would wish to announce the fact that Lady Fordyce is discharged from custody and most honorably acquitted of any crime or

attempted crime whatever. I would further offer to Lady Fordyce the apologies of the Court for her most unwarrantable imprisonment, and express at the same time my honest admiration and respect for her ladyship's noble and dignified bearing all through this most difficult and trying time for her."

Oh! the cheers that filled the air as Kathleen blushingly arose and bowed her thanks to the courtly old Judge! What more was needed to complete her triumph? Such an unprecedented thing had never been seen or heard of before as that of the Court offering apology to an erstwhile prisoner.

After silence was again restored the Judge asked Sir Harold to finish his recital, which he did in these words:

"When I recovered consciousness I found myself in total darkness, but lying on what appeared to be a comfortable bed. I attempted to rise but was unable to do so and sank back faint and giddy. I lay still for many hours, as my head gave me great pain whenever I moved. After what seemed a long, dreary time, I was aroused by a sound above my head and a gleam of light entered my prison. It was then I discovered where I was. I looked up towards the sound and saw that a trap door, that was in the floor of the chapel, had been raised. In the opening I saw the face of John Bolton looking down at me. Thinking that he had come to my rescue I told him to procure a short ladder and help me out at once, as I was too faint and ill to be of much use to myself. To my surprise he answered: 'As I helped to put you there, squire, I don't think I'll help to get you out till them that wants you kept there is willing you should get out.' Threats, reasoning, bribes, were all alike useless. I could not move him to help me.

"He lowered a small basket containing a cold fowl and some brandy in a flask and told me I had better eat as no one wanted me to die like a rat in a hole. I took a sip or

two of the brandy and ate what I could of the fowl. It renewed my strength in a great measure, and then at intervals I called for help, but it was useless.

"After many hours the trap was again opened. I knew it was night time, as Bolton carried a lighted lantern, and by its gleam above I saw the face of Nancy Perks. I commanded her to go and bring me help. She pretended not to hear or at all events she made me no reply. I saw them many times together near the opening while I was confined there, as they brought food or clothing at intervals. I ate all they brought me as I meant to keep up my strength if possible. I had at last no hope of rescue till winter was over, as the Abbey was seldom visited during the cold weather."

"But, Sir Harold," asked the Judge, "how did you manage to keep from freezing in that cold place all the winter?"

"Oh!" answered Harold, "I managed to keep tolerably warm by means of a small American oil stove which they brought me from the manor house, and by its light I managed to move around the vault and found the grating which I knew was in one corner.

"The first hope I felt of being soon able to escape was raised in hearing the little lame boy walking one day on the stone floor above. I called to the child who evidently stood to listen. I called again and he answered back. Then there was another step and a voice spoke which I recognized as that of Nancy Perks. I waited day after day, hoping that the child would return, and doing my best to keep up my strength, as the supply of food was neither so good nor so plentiful as at first.

"This morning I was lying on the bed but partly awake, when I was fully aroused by again hearing the tapping of the lame boy's blessed little crutches overhead. I sprang to my feet and called loudly to him. He listened—I called

again. He answered, 'I am here.' Then I told him where to find the grating on the outside; he went at once and found it. I gave him a scrap of paper on which I had written a message to the housekeeper. I did not send it to my wife as I feared to alarm her. The child did his message bravely and well, for, after an interval of anxious waiting I heard footsteps and voices above me. I called aloud at once and told them where to find the trap. This they quickly did and I was soon above ground, in the blessed light of day—but I must confess I found it rather overpowering at first. As speedily as possible they helped me to my home. Then and not till then I learned where my wife was, and of the most villainous plot that had been working during my confinement in the vault.

"And now, my lord," continued Harold, "I would like to ask those two arch-schemers, with your permission, what they hoped to gain by all of this vileness?"

Before the Judge could reply Nancy sprang to her feet and said loudly, "You brought it all on yourself by marrying her," pointing at the same time to Lady Fordyce.

"What do you mean, girl?" asked Harold sternly.

"I mean," said Nancy, "if you had never seen her and never married her, you'd have married me."

For a moment, Sir Harold stood confounded. Then the absurdity of the thing seemed so great, he laughed aloud. His laughter aroused Nancy to a frenzy of rage, and she almost shrieked.

"Oh! You can laugh, now that you're out. But I was born to be a lady and I know you'd have married me, for you always spoke kind to me and I know you liked me. I could have made you love me, if she," (again pointing her finger towards Kathleen), "hadn't come between us. The fortune teller said a dark woman would cross my path and I must get rid of her. After she was hung for killing you, as everyone thought, I would have let you out after you swore to marry me."

"Disgusting creature!" said Sir Harold, turning from her as he spoke. "You are much mistaken, girl, in the man you were dealing with, if you think you could have compassed any such scheme. It is unnecessary for me to tell my friends that you would have gained no such promise from me, if I had expected to end my life in that vault on my refusal to comply with your absurd demand."

John Bolton had listened to Nancy with gleaming eyes and a face livid with rage, and he now said, accompanying his words with a blow of his clinched hand on the dock. "An' ye little knew the man ye had to deal wi' in me, for I'd cut yer false throat, afore I'd let ye marry any other man."

"You fool!" retorted Nancy, "you would have been hung along with Lady Fordyce if my plans had all worked right."

"You're a bad woman, lass, and a wicked liar. I deserve the hangin', I'll not deny it, but I'd a kept no oath to you, when I seed such wickedness as that workin' for harm to yon sweet lady, so help me, Heaven?" Then he said to Kathleen: "I humbly ask your ladyship's pardon, an' also yours, Sir Harold, for all the harm I did ye, but I was wild wi' love for her, an' she said it was only a bit o' a plan to raise a bit o'money for us to get to Australia, wi' an' after we were started you would both be all right," and turning again to Nancy, "An I wouldn't marry ye now, lass, that I know yer black heart, if ye were the last woman in the world."

This was too much for Nancy. To find that the poor tool she thought so easily handled, could turn and cut herself! It was more than she could stand, and she fairly shrieked with rage, as she made a spring towards Bolton. What her intention might be, no one knew, for she was quickly seized by the constable, and by order of the Judge, she was removed, screaming and kicking, from the court room.

John Bolton was then removed from the dock and escorted back to jail, by half a dozen police, a measure of protection, which was highly essential to his safety, for many muttered threats and maledictions greeted him on his appearance before the crowds, assembled on the street.

The glow of the first great excitement, attendant upon her husband's unlooked for return, had subsided and Kathleen had begun to feel so weary and exhausted, that she thankfully agreed to Sir Harold's proposal of returning home.

Home! What a sweet, restful word it was! How her thoughts lingered on the sound of the sweet word and she longed to be once more within its hallowed precincts. The home that she had been taken from as a suspected criminal, she would now return to vindicated and triumphant with that dear husband whose widow she thought herself when she left it! Oh! the rapture of the thought! It gave her new life and strength to undergo the ordeal of facing the crowds without.

Long and loud were the acclamations that greeted their appearance. Though thankful for the kindness that would seem to underlie all the noise and excitement consequent upon her husband's resurrection, as it were, and her own honorable acquittal, she could not help but contrast in her own mind the "might have been." Had her husband not returned when he did—her trial gone on to the bitter end—and she had made one more victim of circumstantial evidence! Her very soul sickened at the thought and shuddering she drew close to her husband's side as though seeking his protection. He divined her unspoken thoughts and, as they stood a moment till his mother entered the waiting carriage before them, he said: "It is all over now, my wife. There must be no looking backwards and mine shall be the task to teach you to forget."

XVIII.

What a home coming it was!

Smiles and tears were mingled on the faces of the servants assembled in the great entrance hall to greet them. A subdued quiet happiness, that was such a relief, after all the excitement and noise of the crowds they had left behind in the town. Simes alone seemed depressed, and understanding instantly, the cause of the old fellow's low spirits, Kathleen said to him:

"Simes, are you not pleased to see me home again?"

"Pleased indeed, my lady; but I can't look you in the face."

"And why not, my old friend? You have done nothing to injure me. All that was done was caused by the wickedness and machinations of one wicked woman. You have nothing to reproach yourself with."

Simes shook his head despondently as he answered: "I wish I could think so, my lady."

"But you must think so," she returned, and then smilingly added, "Simes, I am just longing for some of those preserved apricots."

That settled it. He was off at once to open a jar, happy in the thought that the first to do her a service on her return was himself.

Little Charlie was not forgotten in the joyous homecoming. He was made blissfully happy by his beautiful lady taking him in her arms and kissing him with warm fervent kisses, mingled with many loving words of praise for his bravery in finding Sir Harold. Her husband entered the room as she was talking with the child and she said to him, "Harold, we must make this dear child's future our care."

"Yes, my darling, we shall do so," he answered. "And now, dearest, you are to come away and leave him to Hobson. Mother has sent me after you to say that you must come and rest, for you need it."

"Well, I am quite willing to rest, but not to sleep. Come and talk to me, Harold. Tell me everything that I am to hear. It will help me to grow calmer, for I do feel excited and bewildered even now."

When Kathleen was comfortably settled upon a couch and her husband seated near her where she could feast her eyes upon his beloved face, he told her of his father's early history, which was as follows :

"Sir Richard was always of a kind and generous disposition with, as was natural to his temperament, a warm and loving heart, at all times willing and ready to aid others. Just after his college life ended he went for a trip on the continent. During his travels he fell in with an old Spanish musician who, broken alike in health and spirits, was slowly dying, his sufferings much aggravated by his poverty. Sir Richard did all that was possible to aid him and the members of his small family, which consisted of a daughter, some seventeen years of age, and her old nurse.

"The daughter was a beautiful girl but exceedingly delicate, and her father's misery was much augmented by his fears for her future when he would be taken from her. Finding such a kind friend in Sir Richard, he one day expressed his fears to him, and was told to be at peace and have no fears for her as he, himself, would see that she and her old nurse were well cared for. Relying on his friend's promise the poor old man's fears were soothed and he faded peacefully away. True to his promise given to the father, Sir Richard made every arrangement for the comfortable maintenance of Inez and her nurse or companion. Some weeks after the old man's death, he called at their apartments with the intention of bidding them good-bye, as he

was most anxious to continue his travels. To his surprise he was met by old Bridgitta, who refused him permission to see his young charge, saying gruffly, 'We want no more of your visits, my fine gentleman, and we accept no more of your kindness. I know you now for what you are—a wolf in sheep's clothing.' Naturally indignant at this reception Sir Richard demanded an explanation of her words. After much questioning she gave it, telling him that she 'had been told he meant no good but only harm to her sweet young charge, and that already evil tongues were busy with her name, while she, poor innocent, was pure as the lamb.' Young in years and full of chivalry and respect for all pure women, Sir Richard was filled with horror and indignation at the malice of men in traducing so young and innocent a creature and he answered hotly: 'Lead me to your mistress and I will silence their evil tongues once and for all. In your presence I will ask her to be my wife. If she consents the marriage will be performed at once, then who shall dare say aught against her?' Inez loved him with the wild passion so natural to her race and clime. She was filled with a rapturous delight at the thought of being Sir Richard's wife, and instantly gave her consent. They were soon married and Inez went with her young husband on a wedding tour. Of course Bridgitta accompanied them, as her mistress was wholly incapable of doing without her. At first all was sunshine, but, to his cost, Sir Richard found that his wife was not all sweetness, and her passionate caresses and burning kisses were often varied by scenes of wild temper, and the insane accusations of a jealous nature, which made it somewhat trying for his calm English temperament. Sir Richard was one day summoned, unexpectedly, back to England by the serious illness of his mother. He left his young wife in charge of her old companion, and with many promises of a speedy return to her, started for home. His absence was somewhat prolonged as his mother's illness resulted in

her death. When all was over, he returned speedily as possible to Turin, where he had left his wife. He returned to find his apartments empty and no trace left of either her or her aged companion. His long and eager search resulted in—nothing. No trace of them could be found. He returned to England, hoping that they would find their way to him there, as he had told his wife of his home and country many times.

"Six months after his return, he received a brief curt note from old Bridgitta, telling him that Inez Cruzado, was dead and that she forgave him all. Again he left his home, this time in a frantic search for Bridgitta, but this, too, was unavailing.

"Some few years after," continued Harold, "he met my mother and loved her with the one strong love of his life. His love for his girl wife had been more the love and pity for a lonely child than the love of a husband for a wife. Years passed. Of the four children born to them, you know I was the only one who lived and I was, of course, considered the heir. After I had married you, my darling, and we had started on our wedding journey, my poor father received a letter telling him that he had an elder son, the child of his first wife. Accompanying the letter were certificates of the child's birth and baptism. Many conflicting emotions disturbed my poor father,—dismay at having brought me up to consider myself the heir and remorse at having so long neglected his first-born son. He lost no time in setting detectives at work to confirm the truth of the revelation and to find where my brother was, if living. It was found to be all true and my poor injured brother was known to be alive and struggling, as a teacher of music, to maintain his life. As soon as we returned home Sir Richard intended setting out himself to meet and bring his boy to his home, but he lingered here trying day after day to force himself to tell me the truth.

"Poor father! If he had only spoken to me and spared himself so much worry and misery we might still——"

Here Sir Harold broke down at the thought of what his much loved father had suffered in the endeavor to spare him pain.

After a pause he continued: "He decided at length to write me an explanation of all the facts and leave it for me to read during his absence. He also deeded to me a small estate in Wales, left to him by his mother. It was not entailed so, of course, he could do with it as he pleased. The explanation he finished writing the very day he was stricken with his last illness. After reading the manuscript I at once determined to go myself in search of my brother and give to him his own. I gave no explanation of my intended journey as I could not tell exactly how my overtures of friendliness would be received. The last advices from the detectives said he was in the south of France. I went there direct and I found him, poor, sick and alone. Consumption had fastened its grip upon him—it was in his mother's family—he had inherited it from her.

"He was a true Fordyce in both nature and face. So much alike were we that you might take us for twin brothers. The only difference being that he had the dark eyes of his Spanish mother while I had the gray eyes of my father.

"It seems that some fiend had gone to his mother and told her that my father had deceived her; in other words made the poor girl believe that she was no wife, that the marriage had been a false one. Frantic at her supposed disgrace she had fled with Bridgitta to hide herself from all, and died broken-hearted when my brother was born. Bridgitta had sworn solemnly never to reveal the fact of the child's existence to its father." So the wrong was begun and continued till the one who caused it chose to make a

tardy reparation by a last confession of that wrong. My poor brother was a noble fellow. He possessed a grand and noble nature. When he learned all the facts from me he was happy, but nothing I could say would persuade him to come home with me and accept his rights.

"No," he said, 'he would die happy in the thought, that he had a name and a brother who loved him. That was all he cared for, as his life was so near over.' He argued that there was no reason to reveal his existence now, as no one could be injured by still keeping the secret. He had but one wish, and it was to die in England.

"Gladly I brought him here, right to the Manor house, thinking that I might persuade him to let me make his presence known, but he shrank from the thought. When I urged it, all for the best as I supposed, he grew so excited, that it brought on a hemorrhage—which hastened the end."

"My poor Harold!" said Kathleen, "and you had to bear it all alone."

"The rector was a constant visitor to him and helped me to soothe many weary hours for him. My brother asked me to promise that I would bury him at night as quietly as possible. I promised him all that he asked. It was to perform that last sad office for him that I left you that last night."

"My poor Harold," again said Kathleen. "What you have suffered alone and in silence!"

"Oh! replied Harold, "I felt it only for him. When I thought of the hard, suffering life his had been, I could not think of myself. I loved him from the first, and he died praying for blessings on my head. It was for him, my wife, that I took your roses"

"What a cruel, hard creature you must have felt me to be!"

"No, dear, I did not," interrupted Harold. "It was only natural that all the mystery surrounding my movements after my return should seem suspicious."

"But I should have felt no suspicion, no doubt; only trusted and——"

"Say no more, sweetheart," returned her husband as he closed her lips with a kiss, "you meant no harm but loved me through it all."

"Indeed I did, my husband, with all my soul."

XIX.

The following day Sir Harold had a long interview with John Bolton in the prison. Bolton was fully penitent for all the harm he had helped to do and was willing to suffer any punishment that might be given him.

He told Sir Harold that Nancy had seen him the night he returned home with his brother. She had been watching the manor house continuously and knew who entered and who left it. She noticed the marked likeness there was between the brothers and also saw that the elder brother was dying. Her cunning brain had contrived the plot on which they had acted, though she had told only part of her plans to him. If she had told him all he would have had nothing to do with them.

"Sir Harold," said he, "I don't tell this to excuse myself, nor give blame to her. I ha' been a fool, an' I'll deserve all I get."

He told further, how they knew when his brother died, and they knew he would be placed in the vault as no grave was dug elsewhere. On the night on which they had knocked Sir Harold senseless, they took his mackintosh and light overcoat off of him and went to the vault for which they had previously procured a key. The casket was easily opened and they took the body out and put Sir Harold's coat upon it, carried it out and placed it in the light cart, and drove with it to the lake. When they arrived there they placed the body in a boat which had been taken from the boathouse for the purpose, rowed to the middle of the lake and dropped it in.

"Great God!" broke in Sir Harold at this point in the ghastly recital, "Had you no dread, no horror of your awful work?"

"Aye! That I had, sir, an' as I dropped the poor chap over the side o' the boat—his cold face came against my cheek—an' I thought it were the kiss o' death—an' I felt it then, an' I feel it now—at all times,—day in an' day out—till I think I'll go mad—mad, or die."

A deep groan burst from his breast as he uttered these words and he clutched Sir Harold's coat with frantic hands as he dropped on his knees before him and wailed out: "Oh! Sir Harold! For the love o' Heaven, get 'em to let me ha' a bit o' light here at night, so as I won't see that dead white face a shinin' through the dark, an' comin' closer an' closer—till it presses its ice cold face to mine."

Surely he was being punished for his awful deed, thought Harold, and he felt pity for the poor frantic wretch, so he answered gently: "I will try what I can do, my poor fellow, but I am afraid that they will refuse my request."

And it was refused, though he did his best to obtain the simple boon, but the rule could not be varied—it was a fixed one, that "no prisoner could be allowed a light within his cell."

Through the long dark hours the fear stricken wretch fought against the touch of that phantom face and fought in vain. When the morning light came they found him hidden underneath his bed—a harmless idiot—still fighting with and jabbering at the haunting face, begging of it to keep away, for it felt "so cold, so cold."

With kindly hands they drew him from his hiding place and tried in soothing tones to reason with his fears, but reason had fled from him—they could not make him understand that his alarm was groundless, that no dead face was near.

"The mills of God grind slowly
Yet they grind exceeding small."

Bolton was removed from the jail to the lunatic asylum there to live a life of endless fear.

When Nancy was told of his terrible fate she said flippantly, "Oh! he was always a fool. I am not surprised." So she stood her trial alone. By some unknown friend she was provided with good counsel, and either through his clever pleading or the failure of the counsel for the prosecution to make out a strong case against her, she was declared "not guilty." Who is prepared to swear after this fact that the oldest and most sedate of jurymen is proof against the charm and power of a pretty face, when a pair of sparkling green-gray eyes in that face, are used with good effect to ogle them one moment and in the next appeal to them for sympathy and pity? Certainly not Nancy. On her release from prison she left her native place and wandered abroad. At long intervals some word would come to her old neighbors of her reckless life and her rapid progress on the downward path, that path which is so broad and fair seeming, to the unthinking and reckless girl, but which in reality is fraught only with danger and a bitter shameful end.

* * * * *

During the weeks that succeeded the triumphant vindication of Lady Fordyce, our little friend Charlie was fighting a bitter fight with death's messenger. The excitement of his search in the ruins and the consequent fatigue, brought on a fever from which they feared he would never recover. For some weeks he hovered on the borders of the shadow-land, and day after day the sweet spirit voices called to him to "come away, come away." But it was not to be. Slowly he floated back to life and strength once more. Nursed with loving care and gentle affection he regained his health and spirits and became more like an earthly child, and only in his dreams, when gentle sleep kissed his eyes, did he talk with his spirit friends, and bring messages from them to earth.

One day he said to Hobson. "When I am a man, I am going to make pictures and the nicest and loveliest picture I shall make will be my beautiful lady."

Hobson duly reported this to Lady Fordyce, who said: "So he shall be an artist, for I think he has a decided taste for it, and he shall have the best masters that money can procure."

Cicely and Frank were married in the month of July, and are, of course, blissfully happy, as they deserve to be.

Simes took to drinking inordinate quantities of tea. At all times of the day, he would drop into Hobson's room and beg a cup, "just to keep my spirits up."

"What has come over your spirits, poor man?" she asked him one day, "that they need so much cheering?"

He scratched his old head and looked sheepish awhile, and at length he said: "Mrs Hobson, mem, I've admired and respected a certain lady, for a great while—ahem—now—ahem—Mrs. Hobson, would you say that I was too old a man to think of matrimony?"

Hobson stared at him a moment, over the teapot, before answering slowly.

"Really, Mr. Simes, I am not prepared with an opinion."

"Don't you think, mem, that I am a lonely man?"

"Well, yes, it may be said that you are, Mr. Simes."

"And, Mrs. Hobson, you are a lonely woman, and you are the lady that I have admired so long."

"I—I'm—ah—sure that I am much obliged to you for——" began Hobson confusedly.

"Please don't interrupt, ma'am" said Simes solemnly, "but just tell me, if you don't think that two arm-chairs in this room would look better than one, especially, ma'am, if I filled the second one always of evenings? Now tell me, Mrs. Hobson, will you have the second arm-chair and me to fill it?"

As he concluded his speech he offered his hand to her and she placed hers within it, saying, "I'll have the second arm-chair, Simes, and you to fill it."

"That settles it, ma'am. I always said you were a sensible woman; I'll go and tell the master." And he went out, leaving Hobson in doubt as to whether he intended telling Sir Harold that "she was a sensible woman," as he expressed it, or that they were a pair of old fools for thinking of getting married at their time of life.

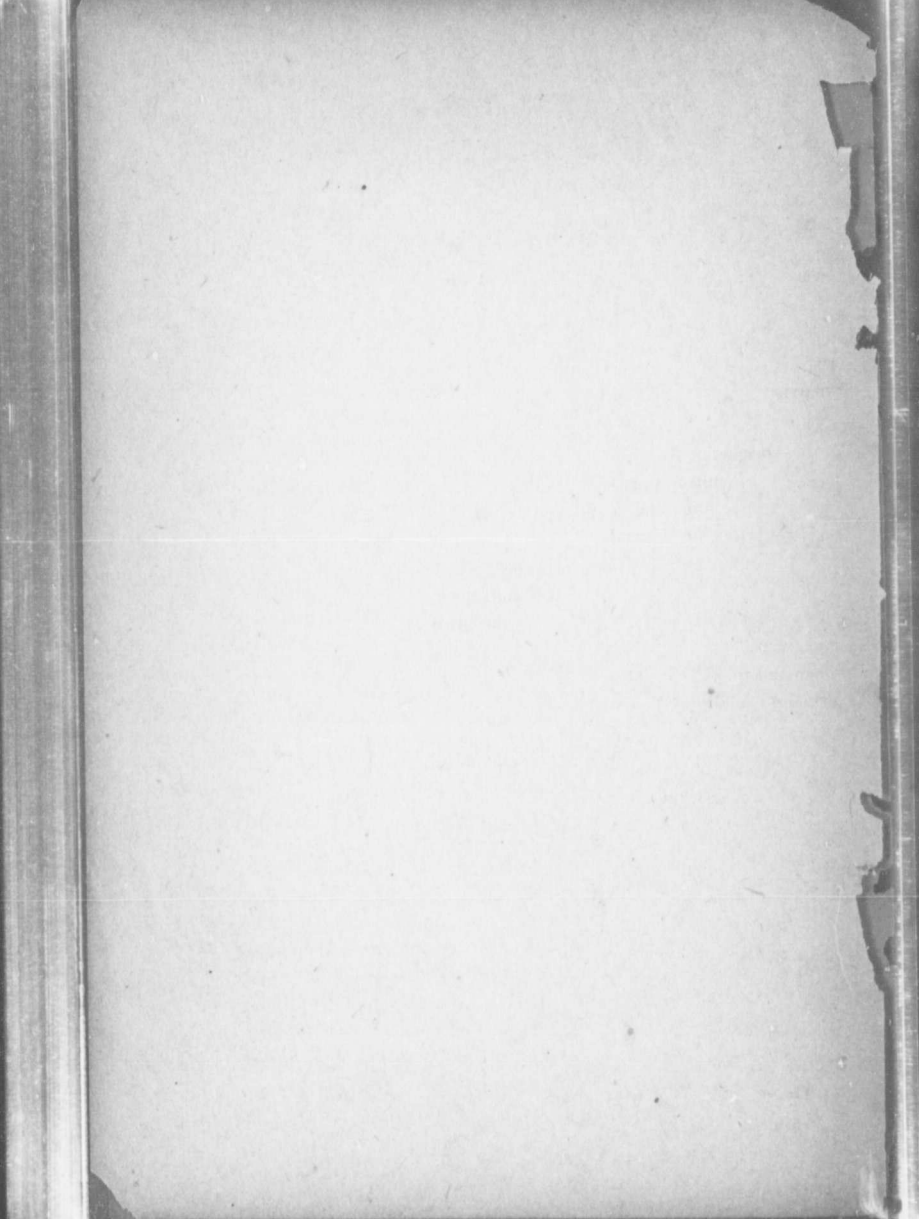
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It was a clear, bright evening in August. All day long there had been some unusual bustle and stir at Monkswold. A quiet stir, as it were, and a subdued excitement that certainly meant something unusual.

Just as the first twinkling stars were peeping forth, a mounted messenger left the Wold and galloped into town. A few whispered words here and there and soon all the town was agog with excitement. Then the bells were set ringing. First one and then another took up the strain, till the merry peal rang out loudly over hill and dale. They were joyous bells.

A quiet woman within her humble home heard the joy bells ringing where she sat, and going to the door inquired their meaning. A passer-by replied, "They mean that there is an heir to Monkswold,—a bonnie boy, and all is well."

THE END.



“WHOSE CRIME?”

A place fair and beautiful as a poet's dream, a spot so fair and perfect that it would seem as though sin could never enter there, but it was only of this earth, not a part of Eden. A delightful valley shut in by great tree-clad hills, while in and out, between the grand old hills, there wound a sparkling river. At the mouth of the river lay the village; not a village noted for its onward march, but one rather behind the age, whose inhabitants seemed as if they were loathe to rouse themselves and compete with other places more ambitious to take a prominent part in the great world.

One bright summer day there entered the village a woman who walked as though foot-sore and weary; indeed her dusty and travel-stained clothing showed that she had come from a great distance. In her arms she carried a sleeping child upon whose pale little face she cast many loving and anxious glances. On through the street she went, not seeming to notice the curious looks nor heed the whispered comments of the villagers, by whom she passed as if she saw them not. On, still on she pressed, until she reached a hill quite beyond the village. With faltering steps she ascended its steep incline, then she paused as she reached the top, and shading her eyes with one thin, frail hand, she looked eagerly towards a neat cottage standing some distance from the road within a well kept garden.

After a momentary survey she gave a thankful exclamation and hurried towards the garden gate, which she opened with trembling fingers. She entered, closed and fastened the gate carefully behind her, then slowly approached the house and, upon the partly open door gave a timid knock, which was responded to by a gruff

“Come in, whoever ye are.”

She entered and turning into a room at the right of the hall, stood before a sour looking old man, seated in an arm-chair, against one of the arms of which rested a pair of crutches. He looked at her as she stood timidly before him, then crossly asked: “Well, missus, what’s your business?”

“Uncle, don’t you know me?” she faintly asked.

He leaned forward and peered into her face an instant, then exclaimed: “Oh! It’s you, is it? What’s brought you here?”

“I walked here, uncle, to ask for shelter, for a home, not for my own sake but for that of my dying child.”

“Where’s that precious husband of yours that he does not make a home for his wife and child?”

“He is in prison,” she said in a low, shamed tone, as she stood with bowed head before him.

“What for?” As she stood silent he roared out, “Tell me the truth, woman, or go,” pointing to the door as he finished speaking.”

Fearing that the much needed shelter would be denied to her if she hesitated longer, in faltering tones she answered:

“He was sent to prison for habitual intemperance.”

“How did he treat you before his imprisonment?” As she gave no answer to this question, he continued:

“You need not answer, I know how those love matches end, when rum takes possession of the lover; blows and curses where once were given love words and kisses. Oh!

I know, I know all about it. Well! You're not the first woman who's had her eyes opened. So you want to stay here do you?"

"Yes, please," she faintly answered, too weak and exhausted to heed his taunting words.

"Well I suppose I've got to take you in. I'm not going to let yonder village curs say that old Jacob Sheldon turned his own flesh and blood from his door, but remember, you've got to work and look after things. I won't keep you for nothing."

"Oh! I'll work—I'll work—do everything—all that woman can do—I will do," she answered, roused to fresh life, as she listened, and knew that the longed for home was given to her child. Then she sank into a chair and with many kisses, and tender cooing words, undid the babe's wraps.

The old man watched her silently at first, then asked the mother, "What's the matter with it?"

"Want and misery," she answered.

"So bad as all that with you, eh? Well, there's bread and milk in the pantry. Best get it some, mayhap it will pick up a bit now it's in pure air."

The bread and milk was soon prepared, and in feeding the baby the mother's hunger was forgotten.

That same evening after the child was put to bed, the old man said to his niece:

"Mabel, I've given you a home again, see that you deserve it."

"Uncle, believe me, I will try to do so."

"That's all right now, but promise me that you'll never bring that husband of yours here—if you do—if I ever find him here—out you go."

"But he cannot come, he does not know that I am here. If he did, he could not follow me. I told you, that—that he——"

"Yes! Yes!" the old man answered impatiently. "I know that now he is where he ought to have been long ago, but when his time's up, he will be after you again. I won't have him here—I swear it." As he spoke he thumped upon the floor with one of his crutches.

"Ah! No! no," she said in frightened tones. "I hope he will not find me. I could not bear it. I could not bear it."

Her trembling tones and pale sad face told more to the watchful old man, of her miserable story, than her words had ever done. He eyed her in silence a while, then he said in taunting tones:

"You could not bear it, eh? A few years ago you could not bear to live away from him. What a pair of love-birds you were then! He! he! he! Now you couldn't bear to see him. Well! See that he doesn't tempt you to see him, and keep him round here; if you do, out you go—out you go."

As he finished speaking he rose slowly from his chair and limped painfully to his bed-room.

For one year Mabel lived in peace and saw her child slowly but surely gain health and strength. If she was ever haunted by a fear of her husband finding her place of refuge she strove to put the thought from her, and live only in the peaceful present. She looked well and carefully after her uncle's interests about the place, and he, though never given to gentle words, seemed in his own grim way to appreciate her efforts. But she wished for no word of thanks from him; her child's renewed life was sufficient reward and she was deeply grateful for the comfortable home which she owed to his generosity.

One day in the early autumn, as the old man was preparing for one of his walks to the village, Mabel asked him:

"Uncle Jacob, will you bring me back a new clothesline this evening? I fear the old one will not hold another heavy wash."

"I thought so," he snarled. "Never saw me going to town yet that you didn't want something. Ye might think that I had enough to do to carry myself and my wooden legs without making a pack-mule of me."

"Never mind it then, uncle," she answered, "I can run in for it this evening after I put baby to sleep."

"Ye can, can ye? Not much ye can't for I'll bring it home myself," and he started towards the door. Then as a thought struck him, he turned and faced her.

"Are you expecting a letter from that precious husband of yours, that you're so anxious to get to town?"

"Oh! No. No, uncle, I never hear from him, you well know."

"No. I don't well know," he mimicked. "But I ought to know, that it's about time for you to know, that if I catch him about here—out you go—at least ways—I've told you so often enough."

"Indeed, I never hear from him, uncle, I know nothing about him; nothing, nothing."

"See that you keep on knowing 'nothing, nothing,' or out you go," and he left the house, muttering as he went "out you go."

"Oh, I can well believe that we would be turned out should Richard ever come here. I have been told so often enough to know it."

She stood in the door-way and watched the old man disappear from sight over the brow of the hill, then she returned to her household duties. As she worked a nameless fear, an unspeakable dread seemed to oppress her, from which she tried in vain to escape.

Old Jacob went his weary way with many a groan and heartfelt sigh, for it was indeed a work of labor for him to walk to and from the village. Why he went there so often was a mystery to everyone who knew him, as he was not on good terms with any of the villagers, and had no old friends

with whom to spend a pleasant hour. Arrived at the village he went to each of the three stores in succession—of which the place boasted, and in each one he examined their stock of clothes-lines, expressly stating that he wanted “a good strong one.” In the first two stores he could not be satisfied; at the third, in answer to his question if they had any “extra strong clothes-lines,” the proprietor produced many, but none pleased him. At length one was taken from an upper shelf and handed to him with the remark :

“Here’s what you want ; it had ought to be strong enough to hang a man.”

“Maybe that’s what I’m going to do with it,” was the grim reply, as he carefully tested the strength of the line. After asking the price of it and bickering with the man till he had it reduced to what he considered a reasonable figure, he slowly left the store not vouchsafing a reply to the man’s parting salutation of :

“Well! Good-afternoon, neighbor ; hope you’ll be safe home before the storm bursts. Best get along quick as you can.”

“Best keep ye’r advice till ye’r asked for it,” he muttered as he reached the street, and, so contrary was his nature that instead of hastening towards his home and avoiding, if possible, the fast rising storm, he went from place to place, and spoke with people that he had for years passed without a word, till, at length, when he turned his homeward way the darkness was fast thickening about him.

In the meantime, Mabel had become most anxious on his account, as she feared he would be caught in the storm, and she well knew that his sufferings would be terrible, should he get a drenching. Her household duties ended and her child put to bed, she made many trips to the garden gate, to see if he was coming. As she entered the house after one of those fruitless errands, she said aloud:

"I will place a light in the window, so that uncle will know I am looking out for him." Instantly a voice from the room beyond, answered:

"You placed no light in the window for me, though the road was strange."

"Ah! Great heaven! Is it you, Dick?" she asked.

"Yes, it is I, your husband. Get a light till we have a look at each other."

"Yes! But you cannot stay here, you must go."

"That's a cool way to treat your husband, after being separated for more than a year too. What's the reason I can't stay where you stay?"

"Because my uncle has sworn to turn us both out of the house, if I ever allowed you to come here, and he will keep his word if he returns and finds you here."

"You can hide me in some snug spot, for I tell you I won't go out this night."

"You must go—you must—for the child's sake. Oh Richard, you loved us both once—have some pity now for you child—do not be the means of having it turned from the only shelter open to it. It is frail and delicate."

"Yes," was the answer, "I loved you both once and I love you both yet, so much that I can't bear to part from you both again, so I'll go and take the child with me. Where is it?"

"No, no! You shall not take him from me," she screamed, terrified at his threat.

"Well, then, I'll stay here," he returned doggedly, and he seated himself in the old man's arm chair.

Just then the outer door opened, and she knew her uncle had returned. He entered the room. At first blinded by the sudden glare of light he did not notice the strange occupant of his chair, but when his eyes fell upon and recognized the intruder, awful was the expression that came upon his aged face. A wild rage, fierce hatred, a malignant

loathing, all seemed blended into one. Speechless for an instant he stood glaring upon him, then with a savage snarl, like of a wild cat, he struck at the unwelcome guest with one of his crutches. The blow was well aimed and powerful, it struck the man on the side of the head, making a wound from which the blood spouted. Mabel sprang between them crying:

"Go! Go; or he will kill you in his rage!"

Then the old man turned upon her, shouting:

"You wicked, scheming liar. Only this day you declared that you knew nothing about him."

"Nor did I, uncle; he came of his own accord."

Unheeding her words he continued:

"You broke your word with me; I keep mine with you. Go."

"Not to-night, uncle; not in this storm? You do not mean it?"

"I mean what I say—go——"

"At least let me stay till morning, and keep my child here, safe from the storm and rain."

"Not another night. Not another hour, will I shelter you," and the rage maddened old creature struck at her also with his crutch. She avoided the blow and attempted once more to plead with him; his answer was:

"Ask me again to keep you here, and I'll strike you dead where you stand."

Seeing that he was pitiless, she turned hopelessly from him, and ascending the narrow stairs, she went to the little room, where her child was sleeping. For some little time she stood with breaking heart and gazed upon the sleeping innocent; she well knew that to carry it out in the rain, in its delicate health, would be to carry the child to its death, and what comfort would she have in life when her darling was gone.

"Oh, my sweet one," she said, "If we could only die together—sleep to-night and never awaken."

She started as a thought struck her, and dropping on her knees beside the bed, she whispered in the ear of the sleeping child:

"My lamb, we will go together, it will be only a long, long sleep." Then she sprang to her feet, as the harsh voice of the old man rose from below stairs, asking:

"What's keeping you up there? I'am going to the barn, see that you're out of here, by the time I get back." Then she heard him leave the house.

With a white, set face she went down stairs and going to her uncle's room she took from a bureau drawer a bottle containing a mixture marked "Molphia." The old man always kept some of the drug to take in small doses, when his rheumatic pains were almost unbearable, though it must be said of him that he suffered much in his grim silent way without seeking relief in the narcotic. Quickly she went to the kitchen, and putting some honey in a glass she mixed with it a large and deadly dose of the terrible drug. Returning to the sitting-room she placed the tumbler on a small table that stood near her uncle's arm-chair, while she went to his room to replace the bottle in the bureau drawer. While there she heard him re-enter the house; she turned at once to the window, raised it noiselessly, and climbed out through it, intending to wait outside till the old man would go to his room; then she could quietly return to the house, procure once more the fatal glass, give a portion to the child and take the remainder herself.

Poor woman, it was an awful deed that she was about to commit; but she did not realize how great would be her crime nor how terrible her after-punishment, for she was half insane with her misery—therefore we must not judge,

As she sped across the garden beds to the barn, intending to take shelter there till she could return to the house, she was met by her husband, who asked :

"What, Mabel! Has he turned you out and kept the child?"

"No, I am going back to it directly. I—I—am not ready to go yet."

"He is a cruel, cold-blooded old rascal, to turn you out a night like this."

"He is no worse than you are," she retorted. "You brought it upon me—in the time to come remember that."

"How was I to know he was such an old brute? Say, Mabel," he continued, "my head's ready to burst with pain, from that blow he gave me, can't you do something for it?"

Silently she took her pocket-handkerchief and bound up his head, wondering in a dim way at herself, that she could feel for his suffering, or try to ease it.

After what seemed an hour to the man, she said:

"The light has been out for some time, I think he must be asleep now."

"Yes, and now I wish you would get me some food for I am starving. You can, can't you, Mab?" he asked coaxingly.

"There is bread and cold meat in the pantry, I will get some of that for you."

"That's a good girl, and like a nice little woman, can't you get a bit of the old man's money? I know he has plenty."

"I have a few dollars of my own," she answered in listless tones, "you can have them. I will not touch my uncle's."

In amazement her husband heard, and wondered that she gave from her little store so readily, as he knew that she well understood that any money he ever had, all went one direction.

A little longer they waited, then she went to the house, and entered the back door, which, according to the primitive custom of the place, was left 'on the latch.' Not forgetting her promise of food to Richard, she went to the pantry and procured some bread and meat, which she silently handed out to him.

Mabel stole softly to the door of the sitting-room, where she stood and listened intently. No sound being heard she entered the room and groped her way, through the darkness, towards the table where she had left the glass containing the drug. Having secured it she returned to the kitchen for a light; then she glanced into the tumbler in her hand, and to her surprise saw that it was empty. Like a flash it burst upon her that her uncle had taken its contents.

With a crash she let the glass fall, and snatching the lamp from the table, rushed to his bed-room, uncaring for his mad rage, should she only find him safe.

The old man lay in what seemed a calm and peaceful sleep. She grasped him by the shoulders and shook him vigorously, at the same time calling, "Uncle, uncle," but he was deaf to her cries. She placed her trembling hand upon his forehead—it was cold, cold as death. The thought that her husband was near, for the first time since his return, gave her some comfort. She ran out to the door and called:

"Dick, Dick; come here at once." He hurried towards the house, asking as he ran:

"What's the trouble? Has he hurt the child?"

"No. I—I'm afraid he's dead," she gasped.

"Is he choked with his own rage? Good enough for him if he is, I say."

Together they went to the old man's room, and by every simple means in their power, such as mustard and water, raw fresh eggs, etc., which they tried to administer in the form of emetics, endeavored to restore him to life. But it

was useless, as Richard at last told her. With a despairing cry she turned away, and weak and faint, went into the sitting-room, where she fell to the floor.

"I don't see what you want to take on so for," said her husband. "He's no loss, and of course you'll have the property. He can't turn you out now."

"But I—I—did it," she hoarsely answered.

"You? You did it?" he repeated incredulously. "Why you are too meek to hurt a cat. You must be raving."

"It was not meant for him. I mixed it for myself and the child, so that we both might sleep and never awaken."

For a while he stood silent, and even his drink-numbed feelings were touched as he looked upon his stricken wife, for he murmured:

"Poor Mabel; poor girl. I brought you to it all. But no one can blame you. He took it himself."

"But I mixed it, and they will say I did it purposely, as I always prepared it for him; and they all knew that he had sworn to turn me out if I ever sheltered you." For a while they sat there, and only the driving rain against the windows broke the grim silence.

"I can save you from the accusation, poor girl," he said at last. "Will you let me try? Trust it all to me. No one saw me come here. I will go away now, and so will your uncle. Go up to the child and whatever happens say nothing—the neighbors will think that he was storm stayed in the village."

Mutely she turned from him, and went to her child. She had no hope that she would escape suspicion, she could only wait for the worst.

When left alone, Dick muttered, "It's a nasty bit of work to do—but I'll try it—it can't hurt anyone, and it may save poor Mabel."

He picked up the new clothes-line, old Jacob had brought home, and going into the hall, took the barn lantern from

the hook, where it hung, and then went out of the house across the garden on to the road, peering as he could through the darkness. Nothing could he see, save the inky blackness of a starless, stormy night.

Returning to the house after some time, he entered the old man's bedroom and at once began to dress him, putting the old fellow's hat into one of his own pockets. Then with a great effort he lifted the body in his arms and carried it out of the house, where he was soon hidden from human eyes, by the darkness. After a long time, he returned without his burden, and taking the old man's crutches left the house and did not return again.

The next morning a neighbor from a couple of miles farther up the road, came to the house and asked Mabel if her uncle had returned the night before. She answered: "He is not here."

"Yes," returned the neighbor, "I thought he couldn't a got here. I offered him a lift on the road, but you know, Mrs. Coombs, he's none too ready to take an obligation; anyhow I'll see whereabouts he put up and bring him home—that's if he's willin'," said the kind-hearted fellow, as he walked away, saving her the need of a reply. All day long she waited in dread, but she had no cause for fear.

The next day about noon the same kind neighbor called again, and standing in the little kitchen near to Mabel, but looking away from her through the window towards the distant woods, said:

"I seed nothin' o' the old man yesterday, missus, none o' the folks did, an' seein' as how he was old and feeble, and kind o' queer, and you was alone, why we just started a search party, and—and——"

Mabel stood wild-eyed and white, with rigid lips; she could only bow her head as the man paused, glancing nervously at her as she stood beside him.

"Well, missus," he continued, "it ain't just a nice thing to tell you, but—we found him."

"Where?" she managed to ask.

"Wall! ah, they do say as how he killed himself."

"Killed himself! No, no! Impossible; he did not."

"It's a nasty thing to hear, missus, but there's not a doubt of it, and they do say in the village as how he was around among them ail, kind o' friendly for him, and talkin' all about old times,—as my missus said, 'just as if he wus struck fur death.' An' the line he wuz so pertickler about, pertickler it shed be strong. Why, yon's the line he's a hangin' by now."

"Line? What line—tell me?"

"The clothes-line—he bought it a purpose an' hanged himself wi' it."

"Merciful heaven!" she gasped, as she suddenly realized the awful means by which Dick intended to save her from suspicion.

"Yes! Its kind o' bad to hear tell on, but he was old and queer, anyhow—don't fret yourself, missus. We got to have a inquest, doctor says, but it's only a matter o' form. I'll be gettin' on to the village now, mum, and some o' the wimmen folks 'ill be in soon, to stop wi' you a bit, till it's all over."

And so it was told before the jury—all that the queer old man had said and done, that afternoon, was repeated, which in the opinion of those wise (?) men, went to prove that he had taken his own life, and a verdict was returned accordingly. The law of the land had been obeyed, justice was satisfied, and Mabel was saved.

It was all over and she was left in quiet possession of the home she had so coveted for her child. But not for long would that child need an earthly home—the gates were already ajar, and before the winter snows were thick upon the ground, another little white-robed saint had entered "Unto Life." Another little grave was made in the village churchyard, and another mother's heart was desolate.

One day as she sat alone and despairing, a gentle rap sounded on the door, it was followed by the entrance of the village pastor. Taking her hand he said:

"My child, I have come to give you comfort."

"You cannot," she answered, "My heart is broken; I only wish to die."

"My child, you must bide your time; your work on earth is not yet completed."

"What work have I? I am alone."

"No. There is one, weak and erring, whose feet have often strayed; he is now earnest in his wish to repent. Will you not help him? Give him a welcome here?"

"If he wishes it," she answered listlessly, knowing that the minister referred to her husband, "but I can help no one." Then like a great wave it rushed over her all that he, her husband, had done to help her on that dreadful night. The thought of it all made her cry aloud in her agony, and clinging to her heaven-sent friend, she said:

"Oh! Let me speak, let me tell you all."

"Speak, my poor child; tell me all you please. With me your confidence is sacred."

Then she told the whole awful story, without reserve; nothing was kept back. When she had finished the clergyman said:

"My child, your Heavenly Father saved you from yourself. Had you rushed then with your child unbidden into His presence, the gates of Heaven would have opened to the spotless child, but would have closed against the mother with blood-stained hands—stained with her own self-murder and that of her child."

"And now," she wailed, "I am forever shut out, for my hands are stained with the blood of the old man."

"You had no wish, no thought to injure him, therefore I think that they are stainless, at least so far as wilful guilt goes. You are given time to repent and you can atone in some measure by helping the erring one."

Some time longer they talked and he left her feeling hopeful and much comforted.

That night, as she sat again alone, the door opened and the wanderer stood without. He prayed :

"Mabel, my wife, upon whom I have brought so much misery and suffering, can you forgive?" And a great feeling of peace and tenderness for him filled her heart as she answered :

"Richard, my husband, come in. I give you a welcome to our home. What am I, that I should refuse forgiveness? Come, we will help each other."

Long years they lived on that hillside, helping each other and doing good to many. If, at times, the fierce thirst for stimulants threatened to overcome Richard, Mabel was ever ready with fervent prayers and loving words to help him "fight the good fight," and in the end he proved that man's will, did he only exert it, could conquer in the fight.

I tell this tale as 'twas told to me, to give to the world, in the hope that

"Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
Some forlorn and shipwrecked brother
Seeing, shall take heart again."

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