

THE TRAGEDY OF JOAN POLGARATH.

"That'll teach thee, then," said a brutal voice in a strong Cornish dialect, and the words were followed by a blow, a half-stifled scream from a woman, a fall, and then stillness.

A passer-by hearing the words, stopped, heard the blow, the cry, the fall, noticed the silence, and then went on his way again. Down the little village street he met an acquaintance.

"Ned Polgarath's a-teaching his wife something with his fist again," he said, jerking his head backwards to indicate the house he had lately passed.

"Poor creature," said the other, "she does have a hard life of it with him."

"Who's that?" asked a third gossip, joining the other two.

"Neighbor Trevallin here was saying that Joan Polgarath was getting her husband's hand laid on her this morning as he passed by, and I says it's a hard life she leads with him."

"Hard, do you call it! It's my opinion that it there's a hell upon earth it is at Polgarath's, and he's the devil himself for cruelty."

A good-looking girl, too, she was before she married him, Joan Pennooth, there wasn't a girl for miles around but had to yield her palm for good looks."

"What could she have seen in Polgarath, I wonder, when she had the whole country to pick from?"

"Ah, that's it. There must 'a' been something behind it all that we don't know of."

"There was that cousin of her's Ralph Leigh. I thought it was sure to him she'd marry."

"Ah, to be sure, he did seem a likely one, a fine, cherry young fellow, too."

At this moment Polgarath's door opened, and Ned Polgarath himself walked out and strolled off toward the mine where he worked.

To the superficial observer he was a tall, handsome, good-natured looking man; perhaps a bit rough, and a dangerous man to tackle if provoked, on account of his great height and breadth of shoulder; but far different when one knew him. The good looks still remained, but they were of a coarse, fierce, almost repellent kind; the rough, good-nature vanished entirely and gave place to a surly brutal-tempered moroseness; whilst his passion once roused was frightful to behold and dangerous to withstand.

In the mine he was hated, but his strength made him so feared that the hate was kept out of sight. In the village he was hated, feared, and despised as that greatest of all evils, a wife-beater. And miners and villagers alike gave bare civility and nothing else. Yet, well knowing all this, he had that morning struck his wife a cruel blow, because she, poor soul had tried to feign ignorance of the fact that he was thus avoided.

And now she sat in their little back room, her elbows on the table, from which the breakfast things had not been cleared, her face resting on her hands, staring with fixed eyes at the fire-place, in a hot glow of out-raged womanhood burning on her cheeks.

She had sat like that ever since her husband had gone out, only that the look in her eyes had grown harder as the time went on.

What had she done, she asked herself, that such treatment should be meted out to her? Was she not an obedient wife, a careful manager, and would she not have been a loving helpmate if he had only let her?

She saw herself again a pretty, light-hearted girl, with the lads for miles around anxiously seeking a favor from her as she cast her glances upon none more than another.

There were so many she had forgotten the greater number, but as her mind ran over a few of their names, she wondered how they, if they were married, treated their wives.

Harry Penberthy she knew was a loving husband, and him she had secretly laughed at when he asked her to marry him.

George Davies she had seen but yesterday with his little child crowing merrily in his arms, and looking at her so confidently that she knew he must be a good man.

Ralph Leigh! Her small hands tightened and her face wore an expression of bitter, tormenting pain. She had loved him dearly, passionately, until he jilted her, and she believed he had when in a moment of pique she had accepted Edward Polgarath.

Her face clouded over again, and the look in her eyes became harder. To think that Ralph never loved any one but her, and even now was single for her sake, prospecting in the world, though he was!

What a different existence to the one she was now living might have been hers!

Certainly Ned Polgarath would make two Ralph Leighs, and was handsome, and had been a more devoted lover; besides, she had been very fond of him, thinking she loved him and determined she would make him a good wife.

And had she not, truthfully say, and her husband could not deny it, that she had given him all the love she could, had cared for him, and had done her duty well and brightly; in return receiving—what?

A gradual dropping on his part of the lover-like ways; a rough, may course, manner of speaking, grumbling at the food, though she was known to be one of the best cooks and housewives in the district; then when she remonstrated with him, outbursts and curses; finally—though she had striven to keep her own temper and do all she could not to provoke his—a blow!

Should she ever forget it?

The flush on her cheeks showed how deeply that first blow had struck—had struck not merely her face, but her heart.

He had made a clumsy attempt at an apology when he saw the mark of his blow, and she met him before he was half through with it, and with loving, tender words bade him think no more of the matter; it had been greatly her fault, and they must forgive one another and try to live better and happier lives.

She hoped after that he would be kinder; but, alas! it was not to be. A few days later his temper mastered him, and he would have struck her a second time but for the opportune entry of a neighbor.

And now of late he had grown worse, and to his other vices was adding that of a drunkard; several times lately he had come with unsteady step from the village inn; and she had grown to fear him more than ever when he was in that state, for he thought little of striking any one then.

The previous night he had come home worse than he ever had been before; she had said nothing, had given him his sup-

per, and awaited his going to bed patiently, so as not to irritate him.

One thought only passed through her aching head, fast discoloring where his heavy clenched fist had struck her—he had killed her love, for which she hated him, and she was fast bound up to him forever.

Angry because one of the neighbors had refused to drink with him, he had wrecked his vengeance on the poor girl he had sworn to love and cherish. She had, with loving words, tried to evade his questions as to whether she knew the reason that people avoided him; but, his sense of honor completely gone, cried out, as he struck her with almost all his force just above the eyes, which he once had sworn were the most beautiful in the world:

"That'll teach thee, then," and as she fell headlong to the ground he coolly sat down and began his breakfast, leaving her to get up as best she could.

She had staggered to her feet, half stunned by the blow, and groped her way to a chair, from which she never stirred all the time he was there.

He finished his meal, and taking his hat, strode from the house without a word, and she continued to sit in just the same attitude until now.

Presently her head, paining so acutely, forced her to get some water to bathe it with, after which she began slowly to tidy her room; but with never a variation in the hardness which seemed to have come over her face.

Thus an hour or more passed, and she never noticed a commotion that took place down in the village, but kept on, her mind racked with anguish on account of her unhappiness with the man to whom she was bound, and whom she loathed.

Another hour passed, and another, but her emotions grew deeper and stronger, until she felt that all she desired was to die—when she would be at rest.

A knock at the door roused her, and she opened it to find the clergyman of the parish standing outside.

Something in his look startled her. It was not with his usual cherry smile that he asked permission to enter, but with a hesitating voice and troubled mien.

"Did your husband go to the mine this morning, Mrs. Polgarath?" he asked as he entered the little sitting-room.

"Yes, sir, I think so," she replied.

"I asked," he went on, "hoping he had not, for unfortunately a deep sorrow has come into our midst very suddenly indeed. There has been an accident in the Lulworth this morning. A large portion of the mine has fallen in, and some of the men are entombed either behind or under it. Among the missing is, I fear, your husband."

She said nothing, and betrayed no emotion whatever, but gazed at him with a strange, fixed look, which he had noticed some over her face when he mentioned there had been an accident.

"I cannot, dare not hold out any hope of his safety, but must tell you the truth, that he as well as those who are with him, must be looked upon as dead."

No change even then in the expression; scarcely any in the attitude of the woman, except the sudden elapsing of the hands, and for a moment the good clergyman thought his words could not have conveyed their full meaning to her, and he essayed to find another way to break the tidings.

She, however, understood. And it was the understanding that deprived her for the time of all power of either speech or movement.

"Leave me, sir, leave me," she at length managed to gasp. And the clergyman, thinking her tears were restrained by his presence, murmured a prayer that her affliction might be lightened, and, with a pitying look, went softly out.

A horrible desire to laugh now took possession of the solitary woman, so much so that she had to bite her lips to prevent herself from giving away to this wild emotion. The pain of her struggle was awful, and her bosom heaved convulsively as she fought desperately against it.

Dead! She was free! It seemed to good to be true.

Free. Free as the air! Yes, as the air she was choking for, and she staggered to the window and took in deep draughts of the sea-laden breeze that came up softly from over the distant cliffs and across the meadows.

Ah! Those blows, they had left their mark more deeply than the striker ever dreamed of, and the pain of them now on her heart out-weighed all regret for him, and bade her rather be thankful she was released from him.

As the day wore on sympathetic neighbors came in and consoled with her, and through them she learned what she now on her heart out-weighed all regret for him, and bade her rather be thankful she was released from him.

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As no sound could be heard from them, it was assumed that they had either been crushed or suffocated, but relays of men were endeavoring to dig a way through; though it was agreed by everyone who had any practical experience of such matters that the labor could not result in the saving of any lives.

Presently, however, a rumor came that a faint knocking had been heard proceeding from the other side of the fall; to the relatives of the other imprisoned men the news gave hope to each one that "her" man would be brought forth alive.

Polgarath it brought neither fear nor rejoicing; her husband was dead and that was enough; her heart told her so, and she remained tranquil.

The hopes thus raised were dashed down the next day when no further knocking was heard, and the dead body of one man, crushed beyond recognition, was discovered in the midst of the fallen earth.

During the day three more bodies were found, and no hope remained that the men behind the earth would be found alive.

Joan Polgarath sat in her house that evening; her mind was quieter now, and she was thinking that she would stay in the village no longer than she could help; she would go to her brother, a farmer, near Bideford, and rest before doing anything else.

The next day came, and with it a letter in a hand totally unknown to her.

She opened it, and turned to the signature first.

A cry of mingled astonishment and pleasure broke from her, a flush mantled her cheeks and her eyes sparkled.

The name signed at the end was "Ralph Leigh," and the writer said he had heard of her loss, and hastened to express his sympathy with her. As her cousin, he hoped if there were anything he could do then or later, she would not hesitate to apply to him.

Altogether, it was such a letter as a man loving a woman with all his heart, yet not daring openly to tell her so while she was yet in the midst of her bereavement, might write; and Joan Polgarath, with quite feminine intuition, knew what he meant, and kissed the letter a hundred times.

All day long she thought of it; if her conscience pricked her at any time for so

thinking, when as yet her husband's body lay crushed in the mine, she told herself, and felt in her heart she spoke truly, that no love had existed between her and the dead man; she would kill it by all his coarseness and brutality, and she could not mourn his death, so far as it affected herself.

The third day broke, and the first thing that came to her hearing was a message, sent hastily up by the manager of the mine to say that the fallen earth had been removed sufficiently for the space between to be explored, and that all the bodies, including her husband's, had been found.

A feverish anxiety now took the place of the calm tranquility that she had shown, and she could settle to nothing.

It was true, then, her life of unhappiness was over, and one of peace and love was about to rise before her. Her ears, accustomed to oaths and hard words, were to hear tender and gentle speech; her eyes, instead of looking on a sullen drunken sot, would feast upon a cheerful honorable man; blows would give place to worship.

She would write him at once, thanking him for his kind letter and accepting his proffered aid and help.

The reply was begun, considered with loving hesitation, and at length finished.

She held it in her hand, and was crossing the room, when she caught sight of her husband's body, and she stopped.

Was that indeed Joan Polgarath? That happy bright-eyed woman, who seemed to have grown young again as she stood with a flood of golden sunlight falling upon her?

"You're a nice widow—a-looking at yourself that way," said a well-known voice behind her.

With a scream of agony, fear and sorrow, she turned—and saw her husband!

The other was the girl who had an eye on number two. Well, others thought so; but the doctor brought me round, the only one he could, and here I am again, a bit shaky, but mighty hungry. Get me something to eat and don't stand staring at me like that, or you'll go away to do his bidding.—Harry E. Chapman in *Everybody's Magazine*.

Where Camphor Comes From.

Florida Now Bids Fair to Supply Us a Large Amount of the Useful Gum.

The State of Florida bids fair to become a most important center for the production of camphor in the near future.

Supplies of camphor have heretofore come from China, Japan and Formosa, but of the vast camphor forests that once existed in these countries but a small portion remains, and is the direct result of the wanton waste in the process practiced there for centuries.

Camphor is usually obtained by boiling the chips of the wood and roots and bark in deep kettles with water, and condensing the volatized gum on rushes suspended over the kettles.

In the present the entire tree is cut down, and even the roots dug up, but in Florida it was found that the gum could be commercially produced from the leaves and twigs, seventy-seven pounds of which yield one pound of gum. Hence the bearing trees need not be disturbed or injured in any way, as the foliage it bears is very dense, and may be thinned down one-half without scarcely being noticed. The tree, besides, bears a very great amount of pruning without injury. It is an evergreen and makes the growths a year in April, June and October. The tree removes nothing from the soil, the gum being formed entirely from the gases of the atmosphere; and hence the leaves, when deprived of their camphor and returned to the soil, constitute a fertilizer of the highest quality. Camphor is usually obtained by boiling the chips of the wood and roots and bark in deep kettles with water, and condensing the volatized gum on rushes suspended over the kettles.

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Two Great Mining Booms.

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