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Notice.

The interest of Wm. H. Miller, of Carlisle, in the Perry County Bank, of Sponser, Junkin & Co. has been purchased by W. A. Sponser & B. F. Junkin, and from this date April 28th, 1874, said Miller is no longer a member of said firm, but the firm consists of W. A. Sponser & B. F. Junkin. Banking as Sponser, Junkin & Co., who will continue to do business in the same mode and manner as has been done hitherto, with the full assurance that our course has met the approbation and thus gained the confidence of the people.

W. A. SPONSER & B. F. JUNKIN.

APRIL 30, 1874.

A JEALOUS WOMAN'S PLOT.

FOR a long time old General Johns had held possession of a park opposite his residence, which the authorities of Elmswood had tried to purchase. At last a law suit which had been long pending, placed this portion of the estate in the possession of another, and from him it was purchased, and the public jail erected thereon, much to the disgust of the old General. I had been absent from the town quite awhile, and was now on a visit to the General's wife, with whom I had long been intimate.

We chatted, and laughed, and lounged till the cool of that summer's day. At tea the General made himself visible. There were whiter hairs mingled with his grey locks, his stern eye had sunken, his forehead high and bald, was thickly traced with lines, and his lips were not so resolute.

"You see we are still opposite the jail," he remarked, and it was almost the first thing he said, showing that under the healed flesh, the wound festered a little still.

"I live in hopes yet," he added, "that my eyesore may be removed; I have pledged myself for two thousand if they will locate the house over on the hill and convert the ground into a public park. I live in hopes," he repeated; "and I believe it will be done before I die, too."

My chamber that night was the front room on the second story; I did not retire till late, and the moon flooding the apartment to its remotest recess rendered the candlelight superfluous. So beautiful was the lustré of the night, so inky black and well defined the shadows, that I could not think of sleep. I sat at the open window, gazing out upon the road along which I could almost see the wild flowers grow. The soft masses of foliage in the distance—the gloomy walls where crime slept uneasily upon its hard pallet—how strangely they contrasted together—the innocence and the guilt of nature. As my eye roved from casement to casement, I fancied I saw a white hand grasping the bars that secured the window exactly opposite where I sat. I looked more eagerly, and soon the outlines of a figure, and then a face with flowing hair became cloudily visible. But as I fastened my whole attention upon the object, it grew more and more distinct, until the features of a young girl, her head leaning pensively against the side of the frame, her eyes gazing upward, were plainly distinguishable. For many minutes she stood thus, sometimes white and misty, and then again as palpable as if it were beside me. But gradually her arm fell down; there was a blank at the window; she was gone. I retired, but could not sleep for thinking of the vision whatever it was. I fancied, too, that imagination had beguiled me into the belief that what I saw was young, or had some of the attributes of youth. Some old hag it undoubtedly was, experienced in drunkenness, or theft, or harlotry, whose conscience would not let her sleep, or who possibly was contemplating some means of escape from durance vile.

In the morning I told my impression that seemed rather like a dream.

"Yes, you saw Alice," said Mrs. Johns, her smile vanished on the instant—"poor Alice!"

"Is she young? Is she unfortunate? I laughed at myself for supposing her youthful," I replied.

"Both young and unfortunate," returned Mrs. Johns, "and this morning we will go over there. 'Tis a sad, heart-breaking case. She is on trial for theft—that is, she will be in a month's time. They have tampered with her case strangely, but I hope in mercy. To make her situation more distressing, she is under engagement of marriage to a young man, supercargo of the best ship that sails from here to England, and he as yet knows nothing about it. They love each other tenderly, and I fear it will be almost a death blow to him."

"But do you believe her innocent?" I asked.

"As innocent as I am; but come, suppose we visit her now? I am the only person admitted to see her, and I am allowed to take in friends sometimes, and you can easily go at this hour if you wish."

I need not say that I did; we crossed the street, were admitted into the jail-yard, and then into the jail itself. Two doors were locked upon us as we advanced, until we entered a room tolerably furnished, where, seated at a table, sewing, sat a person whom I recognized immediately as the vision of the preceding night. Slight almost to attenuation, with colorless cheeks, grey eyes, large and very sad, a profusion of light chestnut hair, rolled back carelessly from the most perfect and expressive brow I ever saw, she seemed to me at the first glance an imprisoned angel; especially as my friend, in whose judgment I had the firmest confidence, declared her belief that she was as innocent as she was herself.

"You are not well, dear Alice," said Mrs. Johns, tenderly smoothing back her hair, a sweet affectionate way of hers.

"Only a little weak," replied the young girl, smiling faintly. "But oh!" she paused a full moment to govern her voice—"the worst is to come."

"Perhaps the worst is passed, my child,"

said Mrs. Johns, soothingly; "never forget that the Almighty is stronger than man, and who can tell by what mysterious providence he may clear you from suspicion, and exonerate you before the world?"

"Oh! God help me!" quivered the pale lips; and a few tears fell, and the sewing was resumed.

"Has Miss Westerly been near you yet?" asked Mrs. Johns.

"No, nor my aunt, nor any one connected with the house; have you seen Belle, lately?"

"No, nor do I want to—prejudicial, cruel girl!"

"Why, Mrs. Johns, you do not think—you surely do not think—" she did not finish the sentence, but sat bending forward, her hand pressed the table till the delicate cords stood out, her eyes wildly dilating, her lips apart.

"I think your cousin knows all about it; she was cunning as an infant, deceitful as a child; she is as deep and deceptive a woman as her antecedents presaged."

"Oh! Mrs. Johns, what could be her motive? She so beautiful! with luxury surrounding her, an heiress, and I only a poor orphan, with hitherto an unspotted name. I cannot suspect her; I cannot think she would do so deadly a wrong."

My friend bent forward and whispered in her ear. The fair girl crimsoned, neck, hands, brow, then hiding her face, I thought she wept.

When she lifted her head her strength seemed gone, and she said, as if with an effort, "I did think that, sometimes; she was so strange whenever he came. Oh! Mrs. Johns, if God would but take me to himself! It seems as if I could not bear this dreadful, unmerited disgrace." She burst into tears and sobbed violently. I walked away to another part of the room; I was sorry I had come, for my heart beat painfully at the sight of sorrow so real, so agonizing; and I longed, in some way, to exonerate her from this vile charge.

While I stood at the grated window, the same at which I had seen her the night before, I heard my dear friend soothing her with her own soft voice and gentle words, till she became more quiet.

"And if it should be so," said Mrs. Johns, "when your friend arrives, it will in some manner be cleared up; he may find important testimony. I am sure he will feel unbounded confidence in your integrity, a man like De Witt Dalston is ill swayed like a reed either by good or ill fortune. Put your trust and faith in God who is able to save unto the uttermost."

"Oh! I am all wonder to know how any one could accuse that sweet girl of crime!" was my first exclamation, as we left the gloomy precincts of the jail. "Her very face is an index of integrity; I shan't sleep for thinking of it while I am here. An orphan too! no mother to weep with her—no father to vindicate her; I wonder how she can live, guiltless though she is."

"I had rather be there, my head pillowed within a cell, than to lie on the costly down on which her cousin dreams, for I think she is at the bottom of the whole affair. I have no doubt but that she obtained false keys, and placed the bank-bills and jewelry in her cousin's trunk. She was always a plotter, a spoiled, neglected child, who never scrupled to lie and dissimulate; and now with her passions full-grown, she would stoop to the meanest treachery."

"But what could be her motive?" I asked, as Mrs. Johns ceased speaking.

"Love for this young supercargo who is engaged to Alice. He was a frequent visitor in the family, after the innocent, artless child went there. Alice was ostensibly one of the family in her uncle's house, but she fully earned her living; she was a slave at the needle and kept in the back-ground as much as possible. De Witt saw in her the woman he wanted for a wife, and before he left port, six months ago, Alice was engaged to him. He had been gone three months when the valuable jewels and bank-notes were missing. The time was well chosen; Alice was ready to go on a journey, some thirty miles away, to visit another uncle—a farmer. All the house was searched one morning; suspicion fell upon one servant after another, and Belle Westerly confessed, with great trepidation and many tears, as if the words were wrung from her, that she had found one of the bank-bills in her cousin's traveling-dress that morning. An officer was in attendance, and there, concealed with the greatest care, between the lining of the trunk were many bank-bills, a rich necklace, an old-fashioned diamond brooch of great value, and some lesser jewels. The poor child for a few moments completely lost her reason, so stunning was the stroke; and though the family made some faint show of hushing up the affair, they allowed the delicate girl to be carried to this jail, where she has been three months awaiting trial. Now my only hope is in De Witt Dalston—see! there stands a carriage at the gate—if he has indeed come back!"

I turned as we entered Mrs. Johns' yard; Alice stood at the barred window with clasped hands and wild eyes.

"The gentleman has got home as was going to marry the poor girl yonder," whispered the servant who waited upon the door. We hurried into the green-room.—A young man stood with his back towards

us, gazing earnestly at a picture. He turned—a dark, handsome face, bearing the marks of severe agitation, met my view.—He pressed his lips firmly together, but said nothing as he silently took the proffered hand of my friend—then after a moment of violent self-control, he exclaimed, "This is terrible news!—terrible news to meet me when I expected so much happiness."

"We have just come from Alice," said Mrs. Johns.

"It is a base lie!" he thundered, passionately, with quivering lips, as if he had not listened—a base lie! to accuse that sweet girl of theft—a conspiracy; and I'll sift it to the bottom, no matter who is implicated, so help me heaven! and he brought his hands together with a clap that startled me.

"I went first to Mr. Westerly's," he said, speaking slowly, after his excitement had in a manner worn off. "Belle met me—well, I hardly know how; there was such fawning, such flattery. I asked after Alice; she seemed embarrassed, but finally told me the story—and I wonder heaven did not strike her dead! I know how they have treated Alice!" he exclaimed, rising again and walking hurriedly back and forth; "I saw it long ago—the dear, meek angel! I knew what was in Belle Westerly's heart; it is no egotism in me now to say that she has tried her best to entrap me, and this was her last resort—great heaven! the ruin of a helpless orphan! great heaven! the crushing of a motherless, fatherless dependent. I can't bear it, Mrs. Johns—it unmans me;" and he sat down again with his hands clasped about his forehead—perhaps to hide the tears.

"What will you do?" ventured Mrs. Johns, extremely alarmed at this strong excitement.

"Do! move heaven and earth but what I punish the person who has dared to implicate my betrothed wife in a theft of this base character," his voice sank; "and I told Belle Westerly so. Oh! you should have seen her cheek blanch as I spoke; said I, 'Belle, somebody has done this foul thing to serve their own hellish purpose; you see my soul was fired; I could not use tame language—and then I added, 'Belle Westerly, if you had known or even thought her guilty, for your own honor and that of your family, the whole thing would have been kept in eternal silence; but—to send your own cousin to the common jail!—among thieves and pick-pockets, and harlots and gallows-birds—a poor, timid, frail girl of seventeen years—a mere child, yet, whom you feel in your own heart is as pure as heaven—I want no other evidence of her innocence.' The girl trembled—gaped, grew like a sheet in her paleness. I don't know how I looked, but on her forehead I read—guilt; Alice steal!—Alice steal!—good God! the imputation drives me almost mad."

"So much for living opposite the jail," muttered Gen. Johns, who met me as I left the room, unable to bear the sight of a strong man in anguish—"we've had these scenes before."

"Why don't you move into some other part of the city?" I ventured.

"Move!" he cried, striking the banister with his cane, "I'd see them all rot first; do you know they want to make this the warden's house—these rooms where my father's feet have trod—I'd see them all—"

He broke off abruptly, without the oath his passion prompted, and, with a flush on his face, hurried along the passage. "Turk as you are, in your obstinacy," thought I, "you have conquered yourself."

Let me finish the story in another way.

When De Witt Dalston left the home of the Westerlys, Belle sank, white, motionless, and with staring eyes, upon the lounge. For a long while she sat thus, overwhelmed with the anguish of a guilty conscience, and terrified by the accusations which the young man had hurled upon her head. Excited as she was, it seemed to her that he knew all; that he had seen her going, with stealthy tread, and face full of horror, to the chamber where her cousin slept the sleep of love and innocence; that he had seen her in her undress, with her bare feet and dishevelled locks, her hand shading the flame of the lamp, her eyes glaring with the blank stare of guilt over at the bed—now creeping—now standing still—now lifting the little key from the pocket of the humble traveling dress, fitting it to the lock, turning it—starting and shivering at the sound, and holding her breath lest another heard—opening the cover—ripping the lining, forcing a package down, re-arranging a few neat garments so as to hide the spot—locking the lid again with shaking hand—placing the key back, with money and a ring—never once turning her ashy face to the unconscious slumberer—then snatching the lamp, almost flying out of the room across the passage, and covering a heap of guilt in the centre of her silken draped couch.

To stupor succeeded the ravings of passion. She leaped like a tiger to her feet, and threw herself against the wall, stamping, striking her forehead, breathing convulsively, flinging her carefully braided locks in wild confusion over her face, and, with smothered shrieks and cries, giving way to the ferocity that consumed her.—At that moment the door opened—her mother entered, flushed from a walk, and stopped in dire amazement, exclaiming, "Belle, Belle, what is it?"

"Oh! nothing," returned the girl, with quivering lips, and catching her hair up she wound it carelessly over her brow.—"Nothing, only I had a ringing head-ache; it is better now," and, humming an air lightly, she left the room, and proceeded to her chamber. Her face had grown deadly pale. A marble smoothness and polish rested on the brow, and the eyes were glassy. The rigid outlines of the lip and chin told of some resolute determination, fraught with evil. She passed on to her toilet table, took therefrom a small vial, gasped as she gazed, and whispering, "Better this than utter ruin," closed her eyes, and dinged its contents.

The day of the trial dawned without a cloud. Mrs. Johns and myself went early to the jail, in the hope of imparting some degree of strength and comfort to the gentle Alice. We found her standing dreamily, with clasped hands, and lips from which every vestige of color had fled. She turned away as we entered, and lifted both hands to her forehead.

"I shall certainly die before the trial begins," she said, looking wanly at my friend. "You cannot think how strangely I feel."

"Courage, my dear girl; don't give up yet—I—" The words failed, the voice broke down, and there was silent weeping and a breaking heart in that gloomy jail-room. I was leaning on the window-sill, full of anguish, when I heard the voice of prayer. I turned; Mrs. Johns was on her knees, lifting her folded hands and streaming eyes to heaven. "Oh! thou God of the orphan," she supplicated—"Thou who hast promised to be a father to the fatherless, bend down thine ear to our cry. Look on this afflicted one, thou mighty God—strengthen her to bear the great trial now before her; or, if it be thy will, interpose thy mighty arm to save her from this terrible sorrow."

There was a noise without, a confusion of voices. My friend arose from her posture of prayer, and placed her arm about the slight figure of the sinking girl. A key turned in the lock, the door flew open, and De Witt Dalston, with one bound, caught his betrothed to his bosom, shouting, "Saved! saved! My precious bride—oh! thank God! thank God! Good heavens! I have killed her;" he cried, in the same breath, for she had fainted in his arms.

"Let me attend to her—she is overcome with joy; I was looking for this deliverance;" murmured my friend, applying restoratives to the passive form. "As soon as she revives we will take her over to my house, and you shall tell us how it has happened."

As Belle Westerly lay senseless on the floor, two of her fashionable friends called. Her waiting-maid, receiving their cards, hurried up to call her mistress. The door was ajar—the form of Belle was just discernible from without. "Has she fallen asleep?" thought the girl. Entering, she went toward her; her face was pallid, her hair dishevelled, her arms flung over her head. The fearful shriek rang out on the air—"Miss Belle is dead!" Medical aid was summoned, and, after a few hours of fearful suspense, animation was restored. Fever and delirium ensued, and then a season of prostration that threatened her life. As soon as she could command her reason, the guilty girl prayed to make restitution, but her mother, more haughty and heartless even than herself, mocked at her entreaties, and commanded her to keep silence.

Night and morning was she watched that she might not bring disgrace on the family. But one day, as she appeared to sleep, she overheard a soft voice asking the doctor if he thought she would recover, and, in a low, but decided tone, he answered, "No."

"Doctor—doctor—oh! help me to do one good thing before I die," she cried.

"The hollow, unearthly voice brought the wondering physician to her bedside; it is too late to prevent her now. She saw the full horror of her coming doom if she died as she was, and, clinging to his grasp, she exclaimed, hurriedly:

"My cousin Alice is innocent; it was I who put the jewels in her trunk, and the money too. God be merciful to me!"

Let me draw a veil over the touching interviews that followed—the burning tears of remorse and penitence—the purely worldly agony of the mother that the truth must be made public; the forgiveness of De Witt Dalston, the tearful meeting of Belle and her cousin—the one stricken to the tomb through the wantonness of her own sin, the other blanched and trembling, agonizing in her innocent heart for the suffering and the dying, yet thanking God that He had appeared for her deliverance.

Not many days after, a coffin stood in the halls of that proud family, and the victim of her misguided passions lay within, white as her shroud, but peaceful in expression, for she had not died without hope. It was borne to the costly grave on the hill-side, and laid within the first compartment of the family vault. The sunshine streamed over the narrow floor as they took the last leave with longing eyes, and kissed the coffin, soon to be shut from mortal sight. Mrs. Westerly, unable to bear her overwhelming disgrace, moved from the town, and secluded herself from all society. Alice married De Witt Dalston, and immediately accompanied her husband to England, that she might, in other scenes, and for a period, forget the anguish and misery, caused by a jealous woman's plot.