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The Sin of Omission.
It isn't the thing you do, dear,
It's the thing you leave undone,
Which gives you a bit of a heart-ache
At the setting of the sun.

But you were wrong.

The letter you did not write,
The flower you might have sent, dear,
Are your haunting ghosts to-night.

The stone you might have lifted
Out of the brook in a way
The tree you never planted
You were hurried too much to say.

The loving touch of the hand, dear,
The gentle, comforting tone.

That you had no time nor thought for,
With troubles enough of your own.

These little acts of kindness,
So easily out of mind,
These chances to be angels,
With a smile or a kiss—

They come in night and silence,
Each chill, reproachful writh,

When the love is faint and flagging,
And the heart is laid open on faith.

For I am all too short-sighted,
And sorrow is all too great,

To suffer our slow compassion
That tattles until too late.

It's not the thing you do, dear,
It's the sin of omission, which gives you the bitter heart-ache
At the setting of the sun.

A LITTLE BROWN WITCH.

She was an indescribably lean little brown creature, with elf-locks hanging around her head; her face where the eyes all "live" and awake looked out of their places" bright as those at Browning's "grey witch."

"At pleasure the play of either pup."

The tan of all the sun in the sky and at the shadow of the sea was on her skin; and a melancholy like the bloom of the sphinx seemed to have turned that face to stone. She sat in a little hut by the shore, whose door was open; and she had a little dead child across her knees.

"Of course we looked in, and then we went in."

"You poor child!" I said. "Tell me, what is this? What does it mean? How terrible for you all alone! Is there nobody?"

"This is just it," she said, in a low, hollow tone, and as if talking to herself. "Nobody."

I kneeled down beside her, and just at the dead three-year-old baby, just our Effie's age—putting my arm about her shoulder, I did so.

"You can keep her if you want to," said the child, with a sort of gasp. "She was so sweet."

"I didn't want to. But I kissed her; and then I kissed the little mother and the baby on her knee. And I looked at her again, and with those fervent eyes, and then she leaned forward and rested her head on my shoulder.

"There's nobody kissed me," she said faintly, still the same, that wave turned to her father and her mother's up. And the baby had fever, and he'd gone up to town for some medicine, and I was looking out for him, and I saw him and the wave. It's stormed a week since. Of course, it's stormed. The sun hasn't shined since it would. There's been nobody here. And there's been nothing to eat. And—"

"And what are you going to do?" I interjected.

"I'm sitting here till I die, too."

"I wish to goodness you'd go home, family, leaving up and leaning back in her chair again. "I'm so little it won't take so long to starve as it does sometimes. I don't feel so bad, you know, because I shall see them so soon now."

"Starve!" I cried. "My dear child! What do you think of such a thing for?"

"There's nothing in the house to eat," she replied in a dull tone. "There hasn't been this two days. Why else should I do this? I'm glad of it. It's the only way I can have my dear people again!" she said with a little dry sob. "And of course God meant that I should, or he would have sent something. I couldn't leave the baby."

"I've sent for a doctor, but he's crying over me. You'll have to go home with us." And I took the poor baby and laid it on the bed, and while the other child looked at me with half-bewildered eyes, I proceeded to unpack our lunch box, and light the camp lamp—for Ralph and I had strayed down the beach for an old-time picnic by ourselves—and to heat some milk and water, which I made her drink. "It's too late for the baby," she said, holding it in a more comfortable position, and a little time made her drink some more. And then as she seemed falling asleep I went to the door, where Ralph waited for a whistled consultation about the baby.

"No," she said quickly, all alive again, ready to tell me where his father was. In the middle of a wave. We can row out there in a boat—the boat came ashore, you knew. Baby would like best." She said then quickly: "She might, you know, she might like to find her father's arms—he loves her."

How wretched and old and præternatural she looked as she was saying this in her thin and feeble voice! But, of course, we could not think of any such burial as she proposed, and the baby was a little dead child, and had none of the proprieities. And as no one in the region roundabout knew anything more about the children and their fate than that they had come there and had lived some months in that desolate but out of sight of man, but the little village, we went away, which was in a couple of days, we took the little, lean, brown creature home with us.

"For what else is there to do?" I said.

"I don't know as there is anything," said Ralph, dubiously. "And the little witch relies on us so much that I don't suppose we can put her off into any institution, as Aunt Juliet suggests."

"No—it would not do. Don't you see the child is full of a certain sort of refinement and strange idealities? Didn't you see her rocking Effie in the twilight? Effie takes the place in some fashion of that baby of hers. She sings the old English ballads that I can't imagine she has picked up. And did you notice how careful she was to make up the little parcel to take with her? What do you suppose there was in it? Something she called her mother, and bending from his lordly height to kiss me good-bye, turned and gashed and kissed her, too."

In another instant she had broken away, and had raced into the long orchard and hidden herself in the long grass; and when she came in, some hours afterward, she announced that

she said all this as she was putting up the parcel. I haven't asked to see any-

thing in it."

"That is right. Respect her reserves. And by and by she may forget the things, hope so, if we keep her. And it looks as though it were meant we should."

"Well, if ever there were two young fools who ought to have guardians appointed!" cried Aunt Juliet, coming over later. "Oh, I do not care to find a lending of Providence where you want it. But I hope you are going to keep her in the kitchen and make her of some use!"

"I don't mean to send me away!" cried the young girl, who had come in behind us, and Nina was the name we called her, her mother's pet name—stood there tip-toeing, her great eyes glowing and darkening, her hands wringing one another. "You can't mean to send me away! I have brought you here, when I've got nothing else but—when I love you so!" And the tears that her great despatch and neighbor hood to death had not called forth, pashed over now in large drops. "You were driving your mare, Kate, when she was a slender, dark young girl whose angles were turning into curves; on whose olive cheek a ruddy tint was blossoming, whose lips were a bouquet of scarlet, and white, and yellow, and green! The swift capriciousness of movement had become a sort of flashing grace; indifference to dress had changed to a wondrous taste for the pictorial and carelessness for the feelings of others had vanished before her intense tenderness for one and all of us."

"She has been going through the chrysalis stage," said Ralph. "And what a gorgeous butterfly she is going to be!"

"She is not going to be a gorgeous butterfly at all," said I. "All that has resulted from some dream of Lance. And Lance will marry her white enemy there, of course, and she will have a little brown moth to be her husband!"

For a while now, Nina was very quiet; sometimes she cried a little all over, but, quite gently, over a doll she played with; sometimes she came and stood by me, holding an arm about my neck, and for a while she would sometimes sit in the big window and crooned her old ballads to Ralph, for whom she had developed an extravagant devotion. "He is lovely," said Effie, and rung the errand bell to see Jane all day long, and I will teach her letters, and I can wash dishes and pick over berries, and I can dust and feed the cats, and put ice on your headaches, and air the newspaper. For goodness sake, hold your tongue, child!" cried Aunt Juliet. "I should say she went by machinery. Of course you'll make yourself useful. And I expect," she said warningly to me, "you'll be doing a lot of house work."

"I suppose that's the place for me," said Jane, all the time, and I will teach her letters, and I can wash

the clothes, and wash the spot upon her face that Lance had kissed.

"That girl is a fool," said Aunt Juliet, who had dropped in. I don't know whether the fact that her foot caught in a croquet wicket and threw me to the ground on my way to the gate afterwards had anything to do with her remark or not.

Shortly after this Nina said, "You know I always said anybody could do anything if they only wanted to do it wanted to do those things; and I wanted to make him a purse, and there wasn't a knot in the silk. Now I want to learn French and music, and all that white thing Flora Denby knows. And you see?" And she should.

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A THIEF'S STORY

How a Crying Baby Kept Him From Robbing a County Treasurer.

Mr. Richard Church of Belvidere, Allegany County, well-known in western New York, recently visited Auburn Prison, to look after the construction of a steam engine which was being built for the State prison shop. He was allowed to converse with the convicts at work on the engine.

"How do you do, Mr. Church?" said one of the prisoners, who had paused to wipe his face on the sleeve of his shirt jacket.

"I was talking with the convicts, and I was told that you were a thief."

"I have the advantage of," said the visitor, "not recognizing you—certainly not in that uniform."

"Well, I know you," said the convict, smiling. "Do you remember one of the men you used to know?"

"Yes, I do," said the visitor, "but I don't know who he is."

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