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Deacon Sharpe's Wife's Niece.

"YOU just look here," said Mrs. Forbearance Sharpe, wife of Deacon Sharpe, of Pentonville; "if you stay here, Mercy Lane, you'll have to pay your way. We've seven children of our own to look out for, and the deacon isn't a very forehanded man. You're fourteen years old now, and you've had all the education you'll ever get out of me, I can tell you, once for all. Any gal that can read the Bible and the newspapers, and write a fair hand, ought to be satisfied, unless she's got a fortune. And as for them new-fangled notions Miss Carter's putting into your head, the sooner you get over them the better. You're at liberty to leave us any day, but, so long as you stay here you've got to earn your bread and butter," and Mrs. Sharpe settled anew to shelling a bushel of beans, which she intended to "lay up" for the winter's use.

I cannot say what notion induced that lady's progenitors to christen her "Forbearance;" but there certainly never was a greater misnomer, as any physiognomist could have told by one glance at her sharp wiry visage, with its small, keen, sunken eyes, and its thin, pale lips, whereon her character was written, as legible as the life can write itself on the face.

Mercy Lane was an orphan, and the daughter of Mrs. Sharpe's younger sister. She had resided with her aunt about six years; and temperaments more thoroughly antipathetic were never brought in social and domestic relations with each other. Mercy was a very singular child, combining those qualities which are accompanied with genius of a certain order. She was dreamy, indolent, and impulsive; capable, too, of a great deal of stubborn endurance, and outbreaks of wild energy and wrath. There was in her a great latent power of great good, or evil; but her aunt did not understand her, any more than a savage would the soft beauty, and the stirring grandeur of the Iliad.

It is one of the darkest riddles of life, why two natures so essentially unlike should ever be brought in contact with each other—a contact that must result in exquisite suffering to one of these. But so it is; the early life of most geniuses is a harrowing history to him who reads it. But the fearful discipline may be needed; the fine gold must have the ordeal of the fire. Up there we shall "know even as we are known."

Mercy Lane stood very still, and listened to her aunt's speech. She was neither pretty, nor, at first sight, interesting. She was a dark, thin, sunburnt child, and just now her face had a harsh, sullen expression, that made it almost disagreeable. The lips, large and full, were set down firmly together, and the thin brown arms moved to and fro with a nervous restlessness. Her features were large and irregular; her figure lean, awkward, undeveloped; you would never have dreamed there was any beauty or loveliness there. And yet there was. If she were to lift suddenly these short thick lashes you might see a pair of eyes, dark, and warm, and radiate as a choice bit of agate; and if that harshly set mouth were to flash out on you suddenly one of its smiles, the face of Mercy Lane would be something more than dark, and lean, and homely to you; for you would see it ever afterward in the light of that wondrous smile.

Deacon Sharpe was a good man, but he was a weak, lymphatic sort of character, largely controlled by his active spouse, who, to do her justice, was

much the smarter, and sharper of the two. She was a notable housekeeper, an ingrained termagant, a coarse, narrow-minded, most unlovable woman.

We lived half a mile from the Sharpes, on the road that leads from Pentonville to Fairfield. There were only three of us; cousin Miranda Carter, my brother Gorham, and myself.

We two were orphans, and cousin Miranda Carter was the village school teacher. Our house, all that our parents left us, was a straw-colored cottage, not large, but plain and neat, and comfortable, with two great chestnut trees in front.

Gorham was ten when mamma followed papa "across the river." Two weeks later, cousin Miranda Carter came to our house. She and mamma were own cousins, and had been the tenderest of friends through all their girl and womanhood.

"Children," said cousin Miranda Carter, drawing her arms around Gorham and me, "I am an orphan too, and God has brought us together. Ever since they laid Lucy by Edward's side I have heard a voice in my heart that I knew was God speaking to me, 'Go, and be a mother to the children, Miranda,' and I have come to be this." And she was father and mother to us. She was poor, and taught school, as she had done before. We lived, of course, very plainly, but still comfortable, for Pentonville was not an expensive place, and we had a garden, some chickens, and a cow. Nobody need starve with these in the country.

They called her an old maid, cousin Miranda Carter; and she must have been more than thirty when she came to us, for she was just my mother's age. She was not handsome, and yet she had one of those gentle, fair, womanly faces that "grow upon you." Years afterward we learned the history of her life, and why she gave so many of its years to us. Perhaps my father and mother have learned it now in heaven, and, perhaps, if they had learned it sooner they would never have been my father and mother, for cousin Miranda Carter was very dear to the hearts of both; but my mother was very beautiful!

Ah! I wonder often, if amid the crowns which the angels set down on the foreheads of the redeemed, there are many fairer, even among priest, and prophet, and the holy of the world, than the one she wears—cousin Miranda Carter!

Mercy Lane had attended her school two terms. Our cousin had remarkable acute perceptions of character. She saw the germs of much that was rare and good in the girl. She encouraged and stimulated her in her studies. Mercy's teacher was the first friend she had had since her mother died; and the hapless child grew in a little while to love her with all the ardor which belonged to her deep intense nature.

At the close of Mercy's second term her aunt removed her from school; needing, as she averred, her services at home. This was a terrible blow to the child, for Mercy's taste of knowledge had awakened a great "hunger and thirst in her soul." Cousin Miranda called on Mrs. Sharpe, and vainly endeavored to induce her to send her niece to school another term. Mrs. Sharpe was inexorable. "It was useless to stuff girl's heads with notions and knowledge," she said. "Mercy must stay at home, to take care of Tom," a fat, white haired, flabby-faced boy, of two and a half years.

But Miranda did not despair, for the sight of Mercy's disappointment greatly moved her. She told the girl she would give her lessons every evening, in geography, grammar and arithmetic, if she would come over to our house, after the supper dishes were washed. She was more diplomatic, however, this time, and urged Mercy to make the proposition herself to her aunt, fearing she might dislike interference on her part.

With what success Mercy urged her cause may be inferred from Mrs. Sharpe's remarks at the commencement of my story.

"Mercy! Mercy! what is the matter?"

The golden painting of the twilight had filled the little back sitting-room, where we were all at supper, when Mercy burst suddenly into the room,

threw her sun-bonnet on the floor, and sinking into a chair, broke into quick, sharp sobs that fairly convulsed her thin frame. We all sprang up from the table and rushed to her with exclamations of alarm and commiseration. At last Mercy sobbed out the story of her appeal to her aunt, and its unsuccessful issue.

"And now I shall have to go back and drudge and slave from morning till night and never see the inside of a book. I just wish I was dead this minute, and lying close by the side of mamma!"

"The old curmudgeon! I've a good will to get two or three of the boys, and go down there and give her a flogging she'll remember till she's greyer than she is now," said Gorham, glancing at his horsewhip which stood in the corner.

"I wish you would, Gorham. I'd peep through the window and clap my hands with a relish," I answered.

"Children, children, it is very wrong for you to talk so," said the soft, grave tones of cousin Miranda Carter. "Of course I do not attempt to deny that Mrs. Sharpe is very unkind to Mercy, but you see her conduct doesn't excuse our talking about her after this fashion."

"Yes it does too," retorted Gorham, in his fiery way. "Oh, wouldn't I like to—" an expressive pantomime with his clenched hand concluded the sentence more emphatically than any words could have done; and I could not help thinking how handsome he looked with his great, bright, flashing eyes all aglow with generous rays.

But we gathered round poor little Mercy Lane with what words of sympathy and consolation we could. At last we prevailed upon her to sit down and take supper with us; cousin Miranda telling her in that soft cheerful voice of hers not to despair, for some good would surely come to her yet. Oh, it was because of her faith in God, the Father, that cousin Miranda Carter's voice always dropped like sweet balsam to a wounded heart.

After supper Gorham pulled Miranda's sleeve, "Come into the parlor with me," he whispered.

So they went into the parlor together and stood by the window, and Gorham said very rapidly as he always talked, "See here, Miranda, you know that twenty-five dollars I earned by carrying the mail-bag last winter?"

"Yes, Gorham."

"Well, you see I intended to buy Deacon Hubbard's colt with it, (love of horses was Mr. Gorham's greatest passion.) Now I've concluded to go without the colt this year, and I'll give the money to that skin-flint if she'll agree to let Mercy come here five nights out of the week to study with Lettie. You said she told you she wanted a new carpet for her front room, but the deacon couldn't afford to get her one. Twenty-five dollars will buy it, and I know she can't resist the temptation. I'll leave you to manage the matter, women folks always understand these things best."

"Gorham! you are a noble, noble boy! God bless you!" said cousin Miranda Carter, in an unsteady voice, for she knew how Gorham had set his heart on the colt.

"Well, mind now you must give me permission to slander the old witch just as long and as hard as it suits my pleasure to do. I must be off now to Jack Howe about that fishing to-morrow," and he plunged out of the room in his usual nervous, graceful way, and standing at the window his cousin watched him, murmuring with unsteady lips, "He has the eyes, oh, he has the eyes of his father!"

Cousin Miranda returned home with Mercy Lane, and had a private interview with Mrs. Sharpe. The prospect of a new carpet for her parlor reached the one vulnerable corner in the heart of that lady; and under its softening influence Miranda succeeded in obtaining promises of unexampled magnitude and generosity. Mrs. Sharpe consented to Mercy's coming to recite five evenings out of the week for the next year and a half, and to her studying two hours each day at home.

Of Mercy's delight and gratitude to us all, especially to Gorham, I cannot tell you now, because I cannot write it with-

out tears that blind my eyes and blister my paper.

Well, to tell the story briefly. Mercy pursued her studies with us for the next year and a half. She made rapid progress, for her heart was in the work. God knows she suffered enough at home, but she was not unhappy as she had been, for her life had an object, and its horizon was not bounded by Mrs. Sharpe's kitchen.

"I shall be free some time," she said, and there flashed something of settled purpose over the thin, sun-browned face, that was a prophecy for the woman's future.

It was cousin Miranda's idea to prepare Mercy for a district school teacher, and it was with this purpose she had directed all her studies.

"Shutting my eyes now I still see the head with its mass of bright, half-tangled hair, drooping over the books on the little stand near the great fire-place, in those long winter evenings—evenings whose memory shine down on me now like the tender, mournful faces of those that have lain lower and soared higher than me.

Somehow we all felt that Mercy was, in a degree, our protegee. She was always gentle and docile with us, and there was a good-humored rivalry between her and myself, but after awhile she outstripped me, for I was two years her junior, but my advantages had been much superior to hers.

Mercy was just fifteen and a half years old when she went to South Woods to take charge of a small school there. It was all cousin Miranda Carter's doings. Farmer Peters would never have consented to take her except on Miranda's earnest recommendation.

The old man shook his head when pale and tremulous with hope and excitement, the little thin, restless figure, looking scarcely as old as it was, stood before him.

"She'll never do, Miss Carter," said the old man, peering at her through his iron-bound spectacles. "The children are all small, and haven't much larnin', but they're very obstropolous; they'll never mind such a little kinderlin as that."

"Try her," answered Miranda Carter. She knew what was in Mercy Lane; and at last the old man consented.

"Though you mustn't be disappointed if we send her back in a week," he added.

I do not think Mrs. Sharpe would ever have consented to Mercy's leaving her, (her domestic assistance being almost invaluable to that lady,) if she had not so frequently averred to the neighbors that her niece was a terrible expense to the poor deacon, and nobody could tell how glad she should be when Mercy could shift for herself; a period that was nearer than Mrs. Sharpe apprehended, she was therefore obliged to submit with the best grace possible.

Well, Mercy was duly installed school mistress of the little district school in South Woods. It was a newly organized one, and the salary only a dollar and a half a week. But this seemed a fortune to the young orphan, and certainly she earned it. People stared, and said they were "sending their children to a child," and anticipated no good from her youth and inexperience, but they soon discovered there was a world of power and energy encased in the small, thin figure of Mercy Lane.

She soon succeeded in making her scholars stand in awe of her, and she succeeded in making them learn too; in short, she gave such general satisfaction that she remained a year at South Woods, coming once a month to visit us.

At the end of the year, cousin Miranda Carter received a note from her enclosing twenty-five dollars, and it ran—

"MY DEAR MISS CARTER—You will no doubt be greatly surprised to hear I have had an offer of a situation in a seminary in Brooklyn. My salary will be two hundred dollars a year, and include my board. Will you please tell Gorham I send him many thanks, and thank God too that I can pay him that debt. And remember, dear Miss Carter, what I shall never forget, that if the future shall find in me anything that is great and good, I shall owe it to you, to Gorham, to Lettie. And in this belief I am yours, as I am no other's on earth. MERCY LANE."

Eight years had passed. It was wearing tenderly into October. The bright, still morning looked into our pleasant

home in the suburbs of the city, with the "God bless you!" which is the language of all beautiful days if our hearts could but understand them.

Our home was now quite in the suburbs of New York, and though by no means a pretending, it certainly was a very pleasant one—that little white cottage, with its long window-blinds, set down behind larches and cedars. We had sold our home in the country, and for two years had resided here.

Gorham, my noble, handsome, fascinating brother was one of the book-keepers in a large mercantile firm in New York; and it was to him that we owed most of the comfort and happiness of our lives.

"Yes, Gorham," I answered, to a remark of his, on the morning of which I write, "I'll go to this grand party next month, if you'll consent to my taking music scholars, and supplying my own wardrobe. I'm tired of being dependent on you."—Concluded next week.

FOUND BY A DREAM.

JOHN CALLAGHAN, was a well-to-do farmer, residing in the County Cogh. He was a sober, steady man, and had never been known to be behind-hand in paying his rent. Though his farm was not very large, still, by good management, he was able to support his family comfortably out of it. There came one summer, however, that the weather was so bad that nearly all poor John's crops failed, so that when rent-day came he had no money to meet it. There was only one thing to be done under the circumstances—he must sell off his stock. He regretted much being obliged to do this; but he had no other alternative, if he wished to retain his farm, for the agent was a very hard man, and would soon turn him out if he did not pay punctually. So the next fair-day John took two of his best cows and some fat hogs to sell at the fair. He spent all day there trying to get a good price for them, and at last he succeeded in doing so. He was very tired on his return, and looking so ill that his wife remarked it to him. Assuring her that it was nothing but over-fatigue, and that he would be all right in the morning, he told her he had sold the cattle very well, having got fifty pounds for them, which was enough for the half year's rent, and something over. He went to bed immediately after his supper, and soon fell asleep. Next morning, however, his wife wondered why he did not answer her when she spoke to him. At first she thought he was in a faint, and sent at once for a doctor, who pronounced him dead. It was supposed that the anxious state of his mind, and the over-fatigue he had gone through, had hastened his death, his heart having been affected for some time past.

Poor Mrs. Callaghan got such a shock by this sad occurrence that at first she did not think of looking for the money her husband said he had got at the fair; but as the rent was due, and accounts came in for the funeral; she went to the place where her husband usually kept his money. Her search was fruitless; no money was there. She looked in the pockets of the clothes he had worn, and in every press and drawer in his room. It was all in vain. The fifty pounds could not be found anywhere. Could he have lost it on his way home? Or had he been robbed? Perhaps so. He certainly said he had got the money; but she had not seen him with it. It may have been only promised to him by the parties he sold to; but that was not likely. The poor woman was in a bad way, and spent all her time in searching for the missing money, and could think of nothing else. In a few days the agent was to call for the rent; and if she could not pay, she and her helpless little ones would have to leave their dearly beloved home, and either beg or starve. Such was the state of things when the very night before the expected agent's visit, Mrs. Callaghan dreamed that her husband came to her, and told her that she would find the fifty pounds pinned to the paper behind the looking-glass over the chimney-piece in the bedroom. He put it there for safety, he said, fearing the house might be robbed, as it was known he brought the money home with him, and he thought it would be safest there. The moment Mrs. Callaghan woke she went over to the place mentioned by her husband in her dream and found the bank notes in the exact position he had described.