

One Day Too Soon.

IT IS all over! I am not yet thirty years old, but my hair is streaked with gray, my heart lies like ice in my bosom, and my life seems a long, dreary waste—a punishment.

Ah, if my sin was great, I was sorely tempted, and my punishment will only end with my life!

When was it I first loved my cousin Kate? It might have been when Aunt Carrie offered her soft cheeks out of a bundle of flannel for my boy-lips to "kiss the baby." School holidays were days to see Kate, and as I entered man's estate my boy-love was only deepened to the one absorbing devotion of my heart.

I was wealthy, my father having left me a fortune when I was six years old, that had been nursed carefully by my conscientious guardian, till it was nearly trebled in value when I came of age. Aunt Carry, my mother's sister, had only the smallest income from her dead husband's estate, and lived in a wee cottage not far from the great house that would be my home when I choose to occupy. It was therefore, a kindness on the part of my guardian to consider my aunt's home as mine, and to pay a most liberal board for the privilege. My own mother had died when I was a baby, and all home affection in my heart centered in Aunt Carrie and Cousin Kate.

Yet it never was a brotherly love I gave Kate after I was old enough to think of my own home and future happiness. I knew that my beautiful house would be to me desolate and empty if Kate refused to share it with me, and although she laughed at me that I had made love of her, I never ceased to hope until—ah me!—until Gerard Hopkinson came to Barton.

Gerard Hopkinson was, without exception, the handsomest man I ever saw, and with his stately figure, a noble face and gentle courtesy of perfect breeding, the varied conversation of a cultivated mind, and the candid expression of a pure heart. Yet Gerard Hopkinson was without one dollar in the world, excepting as a clerk in my guardian's manufactory, the Gordon Mills.

I had been in New Orleans all winter, visiting my grandmother, who had written me a most imploring letter, begging to see me "once more before she died," and seeming so heart broken whenever I proposed to leave her, that I remained until she died, early in May. I had left Barton in November, and one week after my departure Gerard Hopkinson came from New York to take a situation in my guardian's counting-room.

There was nothing of the snob about John Gordon, my guardian, and finding his new clerk to be a gentleman he invited him to his own house, and introduced him to Barton society. Every-where he met Kate, the belle of Barton by universal consent. When I came home in May, Aunt Carrie told me that Gerard and Kate were engaged.

I will not dwell upon what I suffered. My whole life seemed to me a blank; but I had no word or thought of blame for Kate. I had never been able to win my answer to my love, but I had hoped against hope that it would come. She was so young—only eighteen—and I thought she did not know what love meant. Some day, I hope, I would teach her; but before that day came Gerard Hopkinson won her whole heart.

I hid my pain as best I could. I was true to my better nature in those long summer days that followed my return to Barton; and when I tried to win my rival's friendship there was no hypocrisy in my heart. Aunt Carrie knew all, for my heart had been an open book for her loving eye all my life, and when we were all together she accepted my attentions as a matter of course, leaving the lovers to take care of each other. To Aunt Carrie only I confided my plan for opening my own house in the winter, and she consented to come and share my home after Kate's marriage.

In October I went to New York to nerve myself by absence for the wedding, and to purchase many additions for the modest *trousseau* Aunt Carrie was making for my cousin. It was like a thunder clap to me when my guardian wrote to me that Gerard Hopkinson had robbed him!

"It was a very clever forgery," he wrote, "and it had been traced directly to Hopkinson. Evans, who has been with me thirty years, and has my perfect confidence, detected the forgery and traced it up. Of course, Hopkinson denies it, but it is too clear a case. Still, for his father's sake, I shall not prosecute him. He is the son of one of my dearest friends, dead many years, and is spared this disgrace. I have discharged Gerard, of course, and he has left Barton, but I shall keep the affair secret. I have told your aunt and cousin—no one else."

Kate knew, then! My heart ached for her, for I knew she had loved Gerard even as I loved her. I wrote to Aunt

Carrie and received letter after letter, telling me of Kate's grief and her firm faith in her lover's innocence.

The weary winter passed, and Kate's health failed, in her pain and humiliation. All Barton knew of her engagement, but no one knew the cause of her lover's desertion, so that there was the bitterness of appearing to be jilted in addition to the burden of knowing the truth.

I was shocked when I returned to Barton to see the shadow of my bright, beautiful cousin in the pale, languid girl who greeted me with sisterly affection. I consulted our old doctor privately, and he strongly advised "change of scene."

"She is fretting here," said he, "and everything reminds her of her faithless lover. If she went away for a year, she would come back herself again."

Armed with this opinion I laid siege, to Aunt Carrie, and the result was that we went abroad, no time being set for our return. I was of age, with an income far beyond my wants, and we went to Europe without any definite plans, save the one object of restoring Kate's health. It was a labor of love with me to win my cousin back to cheerfulness, and if I was lover-like in my attentions I was as sincere in my devotions.

I believed Gerard Hopkinson to be a forger, one who had robbed not only his employer, but his friend; and I honestly held the opinion that Kate's happiness would be best secured if she could forget him. With this conviction and my own love, I hold myself blameless that I tried to gain Kate's heart, even though I knew I never could be first there. I left no stone unturned, and Aunt Carrie was my faithful ally. Yet it was two years before I could venture to ask Kate to be my wife.

We were in Paris when she put her hand in mine, saying:

"You know all. I will be your true, faithful wife, since you love me in spite of knowing that my heart was given to Gerard."

She had never regained the old saucy brightness of the past, but she had lost her heavy sadness, and I think she loved me as one who had helped her to overcome her sorrow.

There was no reason to delay our wedding, and I made every preparation to be married on the 12th of May, and sail for home early in June. Aunt Carrie banished me to another hotel, for a week before the ceremony, to have Kate's undivided attention in the *trousseau*, and other details of the wedding, for we had many friends invited, and had resolved to have a grand breakfast after the return from church.

My pen fingers, and heart sickens, as I write what follows. On the 11th of May I received a letter from my guardian. He wrote:

MY DEAR BOY: You will be as glad as I was to hear that Gerard Hopkinson is an innocent man. I cannot be too thankful that I never openly accused him of the forgery. Evans died last week; committed suicide. He has been robbing me systematically ever since I took him into my full confidence. The forgery was committed to cover a loss by speculation, but he has gone from one venture to another, until discovery was inevitable, and suicide seemed his only escape. He left a full confession, and fortunately I knew where to find Hopkinson. I wrote to him at once, and he is now at Barton, in Evans' place, and with his salary. Need I say he is faithful to Kate? I inclose his letter to her."

There it lay, the letter that was to destroy my whole scheme of happiness. Only a day later it would have been powerless, for I should then have been Kate's husband. Only one day! I spent hours of torture trying to be true to myself, true to Kate, but the temptation was too strong.

I put Gerard's letter, unopened, into the flame of the gas-burner, and watched it burn to ashes. Then I folded my guardian's letter, which had some business details I intended to copy before destroying it.

What excuse could I make for delaying our return to Barton? Worn out already with mental excitement, I left that question open, undecided whether to take Aunt Carrie into my confidence in so far as to tell her of her of Gerard's return to Barton.

I heard more than one comment upon my pale face at the wedding breakfast, but everything passed off well, and Kate was my wife! I thought my happiness must be perfect when I could call her by that sacred name. With Kate my own, I had thought to defy fortune to injure me, but before the honeymoon was over, I knew that my wife would be dutiful and faithful, but never loving.

I had not thought before of my wealth in connection with my marriage, excepting that I was glad to have it in my power to give every luxury to my wife; but Aunt Carrie confessed to me, only yesterday, because she did think of fortune. I do not think she would have urged her a merely mercenary marriage; but when all else was favorable, she thought it no harm to secure a rich husband as well as a loving one.

We had been married nearly two months, when one morning Kate came into the private parlor of our London hotel, where I sat reading. Upon one pretext and another I had delayed our return to Barton, and we had been some weeks in London. I looked up as Kate came in, and her ghastly face and set lips, absolutely frightened me. Before I could speak, she held out to me my guardian's letter.

"You asked me to clear up your table-drawer," she said, "and this was folded in another paper, but so that I read one line, 'Gerard Hopkinson is an innocent man!' Then I read the letter. I only ask one question: Did it reach you before we were married?"

I could not lie to her, with her eyes riveted on my face.

"Before," I said.

"And you destroyed the inclosure?"

She uttered no reproach. She simply put the letter upon a table beside me, and left the room.

But it killed her. For months she faded away, coldly dutiful to me, gentle affectionate to her mother, but crushed by the weight of her misery. Her only hope of happiness was gone when her quiet affection for me turned to bitter contempt, and I faltered in every attempt to win back even the dull semblance of love she had tried to show me.

I am writing in my own home at Barton. Kate's dying wish was to be buried here, and we brought her home to place her beside her father in the Barton cemetery. Yesterday the coffin that held my heart was lowered into the grave. Aunt Carrie knows all, and has forgiven me, and will share my home. It was her hand that burned the fatal letter, and no one has questioned us about it. My guardian thinks it reached me after my marriage, and Gerard Hopkinson shares this belief.

But I know that my treachery has killed the only woman I ever loved, and that my life will be one long agony of remorse.

A SUCCESSFUL MESMERISER.

THE other morning while the swell barkeeper at Baldwin's was putting an extra polish on some pony glasses, a couple of stangers entered, and, as they ordered drinks, one of them, a long-haired cadaverous person, in a faded ulster, said:

"Oh, it's very easily done, I assure you."

"Easy?" exclaimed his companion, with much animation; "why it's the most remarkable—the most astounding thing I ever saw. What did you say you called it?"

"Mesmerism," said the long-haired man, holding his glass up to the light. "The principle was discovered by a German scientist named Mesmer, although it is, unquestionably, identical with the animal magnetism known to the early Greeks. Tacitus says—"

"But you don't mean to say," interrupted the other, who was making a formidable demonstration on the free lunch, "you don't mean to say, Professor, that the person subjected to the influence hasn't the faintest idea of what's going on?"

"Exactly," said the Professor. "The person under the influence of mesmerism has no more self-consciousness than a cane-bottomed chair. For illustration, there you see that man at the corner over there? He is evidently waiting for a car—big hurry to go somewhere—and yet I could bring him into this saloon in a perfectly unconscious state in less than two minutes."

"But you five dollars you can't do it," said the other man, producing a somewhat dubious looking V.

"Ya-a-s," added the barkeeper, arranging his diamond pin in the glass, "and I'll go him twenty better he can't do it."

"Well—er—gentlemen, I don't want to rob you—and—ahem—I'm not sure I have that much with me," faltered the professor.

"Oh! you haven't, eh?" said the cock-tail mixer, winking at the bystanders, who were also eagerly fumbling out their coin. "Well, we'll trust you. Just fire away, and if you win, you take the pot."

"Well, gentlemen, I suppose I'll have to try anyway," and, amid a variety of significant winks from the gathering crowd of bystanders, he walked to the window and began making a series of mysterious passes in the air, with the eyes fixed on the party at the corner.

"Did you ever see such a blamed idiot?" said the barkeeper. "Looks like a Santa Clara windmill, doesn't—hello! by jove, the feller's coming!"

The man on the corner had slowly faced the window, passed his hands across his eyes in a bewildered manner and then began walking in an uncertain way across the street. "It will have more effect on him when he gets closer," said the Professor.

The man entered the saloon and stood still, looking straight ahead with a vacant expression.

"I'll make him ask you for a drink," whispered the disciple of Mesmer—"Just stand back, gentlemen," and sure enough the subject walked mechanically up to the counter and asked in a hollow voice for a little old rye.

"Give it to him—humor him in everything," whispered the Professor, and the victim solemnly swallowed the drink and then stood motionless as before.

"Now, I'll make him think he's an actor," said the illustrator of will power, and immediately the other began to strut about and recite Shakespeare in a tragical voice.

"Make him bark like a dog," suggested the man who had bet five dollars. Whereupon the man began to imitate a terrier, and tried to bite a spectator, to the immense amusement of everybody. After that he was caused to do several things, such as crowing like a rooster, catching a fly, and pocketing the "pool" money, which lay on the counter.

"Make him think he keeps the bar," put in the Professor's friend, and the subject walked promptly around behind the counter, turned up his sleeves and compounded a cock-tail, putting the money in the drawer and counting out the change, with great deliberation.

"Now," said the Professor, "we will make him put the contents of the drawer in his own pocket, then restore him to consciousness, and accuse him of having stolen the money."

Everybody said that would be a first-rate joke, and then the five-dollar man thought it would be better to let him walk outside and arrest him in the street—his astonishment would be all the greater, he said.

The man solemnly cleaned out the till, walked from behind the bar and out of the door. As soon as he struck the pavement, however he darted down Powell street at a three-minute clip.

"Dear me," shouted the Professor, "I must have been thinking about running somehow. Come on, Mr. Smoothy, and help me catch him," and the soul-subduer and his friend dashed off in pursuit.

They are still waiting at the Baldwin for the return of the trio, who must have divy'd about \$55 apiece, and the detectives think they are liable to wait for a long time. The barkeeper says he wishes he may be blank blanked to everlasting blanknation, while Manager Tom Maguire, who is out \$8 on the mesmeric proposition, says he's half a mind to have the whole thing dramatized for the fall season.

The Old Darkey's Belief.

AN old colored Presbyterian at Little Rock, Arkansas, was met by a Baptist preacher one day, and accused of stealing his saddle. First he denied it, and at last he said:

"Now ketch de pints ez I gin 'em ter yer. Dar is jes' so many saddles in his worl' what is ter be stole, an' dar's jes' so many men what is ter steal dese saddles. Dis is predestination. Now, ef yer saddle happens ter be one ob de predisposed saddles, an' I happen ter be one ob de predisposed men, kin I hep it?"

"I don't want a religious discussion, Dave," said the parson. "It isn't the saddle now that I care so much about, it is that you told me a lie in saying that you didn't steal it."

"Well, den, parson, 'spose I takes back de lie an' keeps de saddle?"

"A lie once told always stands. You have lied to me, you scoundrel, and I believe it is my duty to have you arrested."

"Parson, dar's jes a certain amount ob lies ter be tole in dis worl', an' ef I is one ob de men what is predisposed to tell one ob dese lies, hits not my fault, an' I can't hep it."

"You go on now and get that saddle, or I'll swear out a warrant for your arrest."

"I'll do de bes' I kin, parson, but dar's jes a certain amount ob stole saddles ter be returned in dis worl'. Ef I see one ob de predisposed men, an' I b'lieves I is, you'll fine your saddle hangin' on de yard fence 'bout sundown dis ebenin'."

Sightless Pigs.

Mr. Adam E. Rauck, of Fishing Creek mills, on the Columbia and Port Deposit railroad, is the owner of three sows, each of which has, within a few weeks past, given birth to a litter of pigs, and every pig of the three litters is stone blind, several of them having not the semblance of an eye in the eye-socket. In every other respect the pigs are perfect and healthy. They are growing finely and seem to be endowed with unusually good hearing. It is quite amusing to see them prick up their ears and listen, apparently with the keenest interest, to any strange noise. The pigs are of the Chester White breed, and there are from ten to a dozen in each litter. The sows and boars from which they were bred have good eyes. Can any of our scientists give a reason for this wholesale blindness?

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