

gressed. All hope was given up, and she felt conscious that her end was approaching. One day she sent for me to visit her. As I entered she dismissed the nurse who attended her, and motioned me to a seat beside her bed. Her voice was faint and broken, and I saw at a glance that the end was not far off.

"Maggie, my child," she said to me with tears in her eyes, "this is the last time we shall ever be alone together. I have wanted to speak with you for some time, but I dreaded the ordeal, and, Maggie, you have avoided it."

She looked at me keenly, and my eyes fell before her dying glance. I felt she suspected me.

"Maggie, you have the shadow of a great sin resting on your soul. It is wasting your life away. Tell me all about it. Is it—Is it murder?"

"Aunt!" I exclaimed, starting to my feet, "do you believe me so base? No, by the God who judges us all, I swear to you that Minnie Lee is safe and well. I am guilty, dear aunt," I added, more softly, moved by the kindness and consideration she showed me, "guilty of a mean and treacherous scheme, but thank God, the crime of murder does not burden my soul. I bribed the gypsies to take her out of my sight, out of Herbert's sight, for I could not bear the misery of seeing the affection he once felt for me lavished upon her. O aunt, pity me, for I am very wretched. What was her insipid love to mine? I would have laid down my life for him, and he threw away my devotion and took her to his heart. You must know, dear aunt, she could not love him as I did."

My aunt did not answer. She covered her face with her wasted hands, and sobbed with a violence that made me fear for her weak condition.

"Oh, hush, dear aunt, calm yourself," I cried, throwing my arms about her neck. "Pray calm yourself and tell me that you forgive me and think I had some excuse for my crime."

"My child, I pity and forgive you from the bottom of my heart. Your love for Herbert was passionate and overflowing. But, Maggie, would it not have been a proof of greater love if you had sacrificed your feelings for the sake of the love you bore him? You say he loved Minnie, that he gave her the love he once bestowed on you. How could you then wound him so deeply as to take from him what he valued most in the world? It was jealousy, Maggie, woman's besetting sin, that prompted your action; but it is not too late to make an atonement. Promise me, it is the last request I shall make to you, promise me that you will not rest until you have restored Minnie to her mother and to Herbert."

"O aunt, I cannot!" I cried passionately. "Never, never can I see her Herbert's wife!"

My aunt raised herself in bed, her dilated eyes evincing the excitement that had taken possession of her.

"Promise," she cried in a loud, strong voice, "or my spirit will not rest quietly in the other world. Promise what I demand, or it will be with you day and night, giving you no rest, sleeping or waking, until the atonement is made."

Her voice faltered, and in an instant her white dress was stained with a bright crimson stream that flowed from her lips. I quickly summoned the nurse. My aunt could no longer speak, but all the time her dying eyes were fixed on mine with a wild and beseeching look, as if extorting the promise I had refused to give.

I knelt down by her bedside, and whispered in her ear, "Dear aunt, your spirit shall have rest, for I will do what you require, and may God give me strength to subdue the bad passions that I cannot yet conquer."

A look of serenity came over her face as I spoke these words, and she feebly pressed the hand I held. In a few moments she was dead.

As soon as the funeral was over I set about fulfilling my promise. Taking only a change of garments, and what little money I had on hand, I set out on my expedition.

"To the north," the gypsy woman had said, and I started in that direction. After wandering about for several weeks, traveling most of the way by railroad and stages, but going many a weary mile on foot, I at last found a clue to my search. A party of gypsies, answering to the description I furnished, were encamped on a deserted estate about fifteen miles distant. Noting down carefully the direction given me, I set out on my expedition that must be made on foot through lonely and uneven roads, surrounded on both sides by dense forests.

Occasionally a small farm-house was passed, but I seldom took advantage of the rest it might have afforded me. My mind could not rest until my conscience had relieved itself of the burden that had rested on it day and night since the interview with the old gypsy.

Late at night I came upon the gypsy camp. In spite of my anxiety and disquiet, the picturesque beauty of the scene forced itself upon me. The scattered tents stood out softly against their background of thick foliage, and here and there a wagon and sleepy horse bespoke the thrift of this gypsy tribe. A large log fire was blazing in the centre of the settlement, and about it was seated a group of several men and women.

As I approached, feeling somewhat insecure as to the prospect of a reception, a dog sprang out at me, barking wildly. In an instant dogs of all sizes and every description surrounded me, and I stood still, too terrified to move.

By the assistance of curses and kicks administered indiscriminately, the beasts were called off, and I was regarded curiously by many pairs of bright gypsy eyes. I described my gypsy friend as I could, and was relieved to find they knew whom I meant.

"Oh, she means old Sal," said one of the men. In an instant several eager messengers started off to acquaint "old Sal" with her visitor's arrival. They came back with a message from her for me to enter her tent.

With my heart beating fast I soon found myself standing face to face with the old gypsy woman who had saved me from a watery grave, and who had afterward tempted me to commit the sin for which I had suffered so acutely, and for which I was about to make atonement.

She retained the same shrewd eyes, the same wrinkled, shriveled skin, but the insinuating tones, with which she had proposed her scheme and demanded my watch and pin, were gone, and a hard and bitter look of hatred, that warned me of danger, had settled on her face.

"What more do you want of me?" she asked, regarding me intently.

"I came for the innocent girl I committed to your care so cruelly. Where is she?"

She stepped to the further end of the tent, and lifted a covering, disclosing a sleeping figure. By the bright moonlight that entered the tent I recognized the features of Minnie Lee. Not in the bloom of health and girlish beauty as I had last seen her, but wasted by suffering. Overcome with remorse at the sadness expressed by that pale face, I threw myself on my knees by her rough bed, and took her wasted figure in my arms.

"Look at me, Minnie Lee. I have come to take you home, home to Herbert."

She opened her large blue eyes, and gazed vacantly at me, but there was no recognition in her look.

"Speak to me, Minnie," I cried, alarmed by the vacant expression. "Do you not know me, Herbert's cousin Maggie?"

"No," she said softly, and closing her eyes wearily, "I don't remember you, but please let me go to sleep."

"It is no use," said the old gypsy with a bland grin. "You won't get any other answer out of her. She has been just that way ever since she found out she could not get away from us."

"What have you done to her?" I cried wildly. "You shall answer for your inhuman conduct. Help me to dress her, for she must leave this vile place instantly. Why do you not do as I tell you?" I said, stamping my foot in my despair at her delay.

"Because," she replied slowly and vindictively, "I don't choose to allow either you or her to leave us. You shall answer to the 'wretch' and 'bag' that you would have the keepers drive off, for your insults to her. You will find that a gypsy never forgets an insult."

In a moment dark forms appeared, to whom she addressed some order. Regardless of my struggles and entreaties, I was hurried off and placed in a small hut, the door of which was locked upon me.

It was in vain to call for aid. I was in the power of relentless enemies who would stop at nothing, for, once in their possession, no help from without could reach me. I tried to think, to form some plan of escape. To break the walls that surrounded me was impossible, and even if I did succeed in doing so I would be captured before I got outside of the camp. Suddenly my eyes fell on the two rings I wore. They were left me by my dead mother, but they should now save her child. A gypsy's heart is always to be reached by gold, and I felt a sudden sense of security in the thought.

The next morning a man appeared and threw in to me some coarse kind of bread. As he was about to close the door I held up one of my rings. He stared at me in astonishment.

"Do you like gold?" I asked. "You shall have this ring, and this too," I added, showing him the other. "If you will get me and the friend I come for out of this camp."

He reached his hand for the rings, his eyes twinkling at the sight of such riches.

"No," I said firmly, "when I am safely outside the camp you shall have them, but not till then. You must share them with some one who can assist you, and do it as soon as possible."

"It shall be done," he said quickly, and shut the door on me without a word more. All day I watched and listened in vain for any information that would give me hope, but no one came near my prison.

Night came, but still no sound that brought me tidings of deliverance. Worn out by watching and excitement I fell asleep, and was awakened by a hand placed lightly on my shoulder.

The man who had promised to assist me to escape stood before me.

"Come," he said, in the same dogged manner he had displayed before.

Without a word I followed him. It was a bright night, with the sky full of stars. Not a sound was to be heard. My heart sank within me as we passed the tent of "old Sal," but she did not appear and recapture me as I fully expected.

About the fire were seated two men, and as I caught sight of them I suspected treachery, but they did not rise or even turn their heads as we passed.

Just outside the settlement we found a man seated on an old horse, and in front of him reclined a figure that I knew must be Minnie Lee.

We silently began our march, and by daylight reached the village where I had obtained my information concerning the gypsy camp.

I gave my rings, as I promised, to the gypsy who had befriended me, and I was then left alone with my charge.

The journey home was slow and tedious. I dared travel only a few miles each day, for Minnie's feeble health forbade the speed that my eagerness prompted. On the way I tried in vain to rouse her memory of the past. Even Herbert's name made no impression on her dull brain.

At last our journey came to an end. We reached the town that adjoined my uncle's estate, and I went at once to a hotel to reflect on the next step I ought to take. To write Herbert a letter confessing my crime, and the atonement I had made in compliance with his dying mother's request, and ask him to meet us at the hotel, seemed to me the best course to pursue.

In a few hours after my letter was despatched to its destination, a carriage drove rapidly up to the door, and in a moment more I heard Herbert's step rapidly ascending the stairs. I opened the door before he had time to knock, and he stood before me, a flush of excitement dying his usually pale cheeks, and restoring in a measure his former brilliant beauty.

He hardly looked at me, but I did not expect thanks for what I had done. If he but forgave me for the suffering I had caused him it was more than I deserved. And yet I felt a twinge at my heart as I saw his eyes fixed eagerly on Minnie's pale face.

As he stood looking at her, unprepared, in spite of my letter, for the change that had been wrought in her, she started, and a tremor took possession of her; she was aroused from the state of apathy into which she had fallen.

"Minnie, my darling," he murmured, holding out his arms to her.

With a cry of mingled pain and joy she sprang to his side, and laid her head on his bosom. I felt I had no right to intrude on their joy, and I left them to themselves.

Minnie recovered her former health, and they were married before the year was out.

I was ever after their truest friend. In sickness and health I remained with them and gave them a sister's care, and when the gentle Minnie died she placed her little daughter under my care, and I promised to be a mother to her. You, Alice, are that daughter, and it was your parents whom I so cruelly wronged.

It is needless to say that the lesson was not lost on Alice. It is also needless to remark that a reconciliation took place, and a happy married life was the result.

#### PERSONAL PECULIARITIES.

ABOUT forty years ago, I had a had in my employ who had the habit when unexpectedly spoken to of pricking up his ears in so decisive a manner as to remind one of the ears of Puss or Tray when suddenly called. Marie Louise, the second wife of the great Napoleon, was in the habit of amusing the ladies of her court at their private soirées by turning her ears almost completely round, and in a manner closing them up. She did this by a peculiar motion of the jaw, and she is said to have prided herself on the exploit not a little.

A man I knew well wore an enormous shock of raven hair, and would allow himself to be lifted by the hair from the ground by any one strong enough to do it, and be dragged along the floor.

The faculty of sleeping at will was one of the endowments of the first Napoleon, who it is said could sleep any length of time, long or short, and awake at the time, almost to a minute, he had resolved upon.

Among the muscular movements not common, I have noticed several instances of persons who could throw back the four fingers of either hand until they stood perpendicular to the back of the hand and wrist. Other instances I have seen, though but a few, of persons who can project the lower point of the thumb almost into the hollow of the palm. In neither of these persons is the ordinary use the symmetry of the hand at all affected. Of left-handed people we have seen many, and they abound among the working classes; but of the arthandist, or both-handed, that is, of persons who could do everything with either hand, as well with one as the other, I have known but one in the whole course of my life. This was an orphan boy, who had no parental care but had been left almost to himself from infancy. Quick active, and sharp-witted, he had taught himself many things tolerably well, could draw fairly, could play the fiddle and the flute, and wrote admirably and with unrivalled rapidity with either hand.

There are many persons who, from causes they can never explain, have a repugnance, almost amounting to horror in some cases, for certain animals. The French General Junot, who was as cool as a cucumber amidst a perfect storm of bullets, and would face the cannon's mouth unmoved, would take to his heels at the sight of a live frog, and would not recover his equanimity for hours.

I have known a man who would not touch mutton, however cooked, while he would eat heartily of any other meat. Some there are in whom the thought of eating hare or rabbit excites loathing; some who would starve rather than eat shell-fish of any kind, and there are not a few to whom butter and cheese are abominations. Others are equally prejudiced against certain vegetables, but why or wherefor they can never tell.

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Then there was a scene. The agent angrily asked, "Why the deuce didn't you get on that train; I flagged it for your benefit?"

"My God! That's so. I forgot to get aboard!" replied Jeff.

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