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The Cross of Fire.

There is an old poem, 'Bright Broad-
 way,' which has the rhythm of a song.
 Alice Randolph sang it, to an improv-
 ised melody, as her carriage rolled
 down the gay street, forgetting the last
 verse, where, in the gloom of midnight,
 amid snow and sleet, an outcast died
 on Bright Broadway. Just then the
 street was filled with sunshine and fra-
 grance from the 'piny woods'—the
 breath of Christmas, Alice said, recall-
 ing the little country church, where,
 amid Christmas greens, she had stood
 a year before in bridal attire, looking
 upon the holiday of life undismayed by
 the dismal prophecies of her guardian,
 quaint Aunt Sophy, whose experience
 had induced a poor opinion of men.

The old life and the new were still
 in vivid contrast that evening, when in
 her lovely Brooklyn home Alice ex-
 pressed her enthusiastic gratitude to
 the man whose love had wrought the
 transformation.

'I wonder, Arthur, how I ever en-
 dured my colorless existence in the
 prosy town of Branford. One lives
 more in a single day here than in a year
 where, as Auerbach says, 'nothing ever
 happens.' Day after day the same
 people are in the same places at a given
 hour—a wonderful contrast to
 Broadway with its ever varying combi-
 nation. Then there is the broad river
 flowing past the two great cities, bear-
 ing ships from every sea. I sit at the
 window watching them as they come
 and go, some of them from arctic re-
 gions, some from tropic lands; and then
 there are always ships sailing away
 into the unknown sea, ships that reach
 no earthly port. So over all broods
 the perpetual charm of mystery.'

The charm of mystery enveloped
 Alice's life. After a year of marriage
 her husband's occupation was still un-
 known to her. She had felt a curious
 delicacy about asking questions, and he
 had volunteered no information. Aunt
 Sophy had instituted no investigation,
 because she considered New Yorkers
 'all of a piece anyway,' so inquiries
 were superfluous. Her permission to
 the marriage was granted in character-
 istic fashion.

'Yes, you can have her, as you both
 seem determined, and I don't know as
 you'll make her any miserabler than
 some other man would.'

Since Alice's marriage she had often
 urged Aunt Sophy to visit her, and this
 had been the burden of the answers:
 'I never see no good come of traspin'
 round the world. I hain't never been
 but twenty miles from home in all my
 life, and can't see but I'm as well off
 as though I'd been to China and Aus-
 traly.'

The approach of the Christmas holi-
 days, and the prospect of sharing in
 the glorious festival as celebrated in
 New York churches, beguiled Aunt
 Sophy into undertaking the dreaded
 journey, though she prudently made
 her will before starting. She arrived
 in the city the day before Christmas,
 comparatively calm and happy, though
 haunted by the fear that something
 unchurched might creep into ground-
 pin decorations of the Brantford
 Chapel without the guard of her vigil-
 ant eye. 'Them young folks is so
 flighty.'

Her first expressed wish regarding
 her entertainment was to visit 'them
 toms where they shut up live folks.'

Alice went reluctantly, as she was
 anxiously looking for her husband, who
 had been absent the previous night
 Courtesy to her guest, however, de-
 manded the sacrifice, and they were
 speedily transferred to the dismal pris-
 on.

Aunt Sophy insisted upon exploring
 every corridor of the structure, greatly
 to Alice's distress, who felt as much
 hesitation in intruding upon the pris-
 oners as though they had been in their
 own homes.

When the distasteful exploration was
 nearly concluded, quite by chance Alice
 caught a glimpse of a prisoner in
 one of the cells, and recognized her hus-
 band. She gazed fascinated; there was
 no mistaking his identity. As long as
 she sees anything in this world
 she will see that dreary cell, its inmate
 sitting in an attitude of deep dejection,
 while far above his head—so high that
 he could not by any possibility catch a
 glimpse of the bright world without—
 streamed the few rays of light that
 showed only more clearly the horrible
 desolation of the place.

Fortunately Aunt Sophy did not
 share Alice's discovery, and so she
 brought to her service that sublime
 power of human self-control that hides
 so many agonizing secrets, and she
 asked quite calmly of the attendant
 policeman the offense of the prisoners
 on that tier, and learned that 'they
 were all pulled in a gamblin' hell last
 night.'

Gambling! This was the myster-
 ious occupation that she had idealized
 as some work of art or literature.
 Strangely enough Aunt Sophy, who

had always had her suspicions, was the
deus ex machina of the betrayal. Some-
 how Alice endured the drive home, pre-
 sided at luncheon, and then excused her-
 self to her guest.

Alone at last, face to face with the
 horror which had suddenly darkened
 her life, she regarded with bitterest
 loathing her luxurious surroundings.
 They were the wages of sin! The per-
 fume of rare flowers floated around
 her; the December sunshine flooded
 the room; the birds sang blithely, care-
 less that their mistress's heart was
 breaking.

At this time the criminal in his cell
 Alice no longer identified with her
 husband, the one who had made a year
 of life so bright that she often wonder-
 ed if heaven could be better. He was
 suddenly lost, and with him all faith.
 She felt as those must who have for
 years anchored their hopes on the old-
 fashioned religion and then had it sud-
 denly swept away by some apostle of
 the new light, who has nothing to offer
 for the old firm foundation.

'A gambler's wife!' She slowly re-
 iterated the phrase, till a hundred
 mocking voices echoed: 'A gambler's
 wife!' How low she had fallen! There
 was acrimony in his prison cell
 who might escape and come home to
 claim her. He would be at liberty to
 take her hand, to kiss her, to force up-
 on her the contaminating influence of
 his presence. The only refuge lay in
 flight. Then the question arose: 'Where
 will I go?' There is one refuge

denied to none, however poor, or
 sinful, or wretched—all may flee to
 death. The deep flowing river offers
 graves to all in the great city whose
 burdens pass endurance.

She must yield to the impulse to fly
 from the house. Without she could
 think more calmly; but she could not
 go without a farewell. Every room
 had its history, every picture and or-
 nament its story. But she must not
 linger, or she might be weak enough to
 stay and share a life of guilt. She would
 fly—away from self if possible. How
 she came there, or how long the jour-
 ney had been she could never tell, but
 she found herself with the multitude,
 thronging the bright Broadway—but how
 the thoroughfare was changed! She
 had not noticed the shadows in the pic-
 ture, the gaunt figures shivering in
 the winter's blast like spectres from a
 nether world, gazing longingly at the
 beautiful things in which they had no
 share. Christmas was not for them.
 It only defined more sharply the great
 gulf fixed between the rich and poor.

Night was falling. The time was
 coming to make her way to the dark
 river.

The journey took her through unfa-
 miliar streets—a revelation to her
 guarded and innocent life. Revolting
 sights, exponents of crime and destitu-
 tion were plainly revealed even in the
 dim light. On either hand were the
 homes of drunkards, thieves and mur-
 derers. Homes

Whose Christmas guests are only want
 and care.

The wretched denizens reared the
 sight of respectability, and greeted
 Alice with insulting epithets; she
 went on, untouched by fear or indigna-
 tion. What was this to one who had
 already passed the bitterness of death?
 This path through pugatory was only
 a part of the horror that had suddenly
 surrounded her. Gamblers were ply-
 ing their vocation in the low saloons,
 some of their victims lured to the play
 by women vile as themselves. If she
 lived she might sink lower and lower
 till she came to such degradation. This
 prospect only urged her to the river,
 where crime and misery find oblivion.

The water dashing against the dark
 pier! A horrible refuge from the ter-
 rors and darkness of night, and of a
 desolated life!

Alice paused to gain courage, recall-
 ing a French proverb: 'When one dies
 it is for a long time.' But she could
 not live. In a few hours she had
 measured her own capacity for suffer-
 ing as effectually as by years of agony.
 Gazing at the pitiless stars, she mur-
 mured:

'You will still be shining when I
 have been dead a thousand years.'

She paused, but without faltering in
 her deadly purpose, and gazed at the
 sky. Far above the horizon gleamed
 a luminous point, larger than any star,
 which instantly flashed out—a cross of

fire, vivid and glorious as that which
 dazzled the Emperor Constantine, and
 glows forever in the page of history.

As she gazed at this vision, super-
 naturally impressed, the frenzy which
 had goaded her to destruction was dis-
 pelled—the intense selfishness of her
 intention clearly revealed. Her life,
 instead of being recklessly flung away,
 must be devoted to her husband's red-
 emption. 'What nobler work,' she
 asked, 'than that could be given to any
 woman?' as the natural human love
 asserted itself.

Uphorne by this inspiration, she hast-
 ened toward home, now and again
 catching a glimpse of the wonderful
 cross, still glowing against the dark
 background of the sky, and she wonder-
 ed if the vision had been vouchsafed
 to others on this Christmas Eve to
 save them from despair and death.

A larger outlook of life had suddenly
 dawned. For a night she had been
 homeless and friendless. Could she
 ever forget those who are always so
 desolate?

Alice approached her home with
 mingled emotions of comfort and ter-
 ror, to encounter her husband rushing
 frantically out to seek her.

'O my darling, my darling, I thought
 I had lost you!'
 She only answers with the sentence
 that the mocking voices had kept ring-
 ing in her ear.

'A gambler's wife, a gambler's
 wife!'

And the story was told. There was



no denial, no retutation. The crim-
 inal had faced the terrors of the law
 and all consequence of his calling with
 reckless bravery, be completely broken
 down by this despairing acclamation.

This was retribution! At the su-
 preme crisis of life words are few, the
 most intense emotion is silent.

Some hours passed before that
 night's history was told, and Arthur
 Randolph knew how near he had been
 to losing the great treasure of his life.
 Only the sight of St. Augustine's illu-
 minated cross had saved her. He was
 not likely to incur like peril again. A
 solemn vow was registered of the kind
 that is kept.

The hour of midnight struck. To-
 gether, hand in hand they stood listen-
 ing to the faint sound of Trinity's charm-
 ing bells:

Hark the Herald Angels sing!
 The sound floated over the two great
 cities, but there was no pause in the
 midnight rattle. Day and night the
 tide of life sweep on. There is human
 love and noble aspiration forever wag-
 ing war against suffering and evil.
 The victory is sure, only it is long in
 coming unless in His sight with whom
 a thousand years are but as yesterday.
 The Christmas chimes meant hope
 and salvation to the two whose lives
 were redeemed—one from sin and one
 from selfishness. Over all the Christ-
 mas peace rested in benediction, while
 the bells chimed:

Joy to the world!
 The cross still gleamed with dazzling
 rays of hope amid the darkness of the
 night. Those who sat in darkness saw
 a great light.

Mr. Murphy, the temperance lectur-
 er, quieted a noisy baby in the audience
 by sending out and buying some candy
 for it. Mr. Murphy is not the only lec-
 turer who gives his audience 'tuffy.'

NAN AND SIM.

Story of an Enforced Christ-
 mas Present.

'Nan come here er minit,' said old
 Bob Horner, addressing his daughter.
 The girl, who stood spreading the cov-
 er on an old-fashioned bed, pretended
 not to hear her father's demand. 'Nan,
 ef I come ater yer, I'll bet yer'll wish
 yer had come. Oh, yer neenter lounge
 around thater way.'

'Pap,' said Mrs. Horner, looking up
 from her work of baking corn bread on
 the hearth, 'don't nag at the child.'

'Martha ever when I want yer ad-
 vice I'll ax fur hit. Nan, air yer com-
 en?'
 'Yes, I'm er comin. Kaint yer gin
 er body time?'

'Oh, yas, ken gin er body time, but
 don't feel like given' er body eternally.'

The girl slowly approached him, and
 he continued: 'When I wuz out ter
 the sco' the yuther day I hear that
 you wuz a goin' ter marry Sim Buck
 next Christmas.' The girl's eyelids
 dropped. 'The fellers out ther that
 peered to know all er bout it said yer
 love no nuther fit ter kill. Whut yer
 got ter say er bout it?'

'Nuthin'.'
 'Wall, then, I'll say suthin. Ef I
 kitch Buck round here I'll hurt him,
 an' mo'n that ef yer run off an' marry
 him I'll foller yer up. Wall, never
 mine, yer ehan't marry him, that's all.
 I've been er tellin' yer fur er long time
 that I want yer to marry er preacher.
 Thar never wuz er preacher in our
 family, an' it's now time thar was one.
 I've sot my min' on this, an' yer
 meenter think I ain't goin' ter have
 it thater way. W'y jis look at Preach-
 ur Martin's wife. She gits er new cal-
 liker coat ever when she wants it. Er
 new one, min' yer. Er new caliker coat
 all spotted ez putty ez yer please. I've
 don't said eruff. Ef Buck comes on
 this here place er gin it won't be good
 fur him.'

Old Horner was a hill-side farmer
 in the northern part of Arkansas. He
 lived in the conventional double-log
 house on whose stack chimney the
 whippoorwills sang their melancholy
 songs when the summer's twilight
 settled down. The old man was set in
 his ways—had become convinced
 that he was right and that every one
 else was wrong. He was tall and
 gaunt, with long, yellowish hair and
 a sickly sprinkling of beard, like a thin
 growth of wire grass, growing in
 where the land is poor. His wife had been educated in
 to meekness, and thought that she
 should find her greatest pleasure in hov-
 ering over the sizzling bacon and watch-
 ing the hoe-cake. Nan, the girl, was
 a beautiful blonde, full of life, but
 afraid of her father. Sim Buck, to
 whom Nan was secretly engaged to be
 married, was the neighbors' said, 'a rip
 snouten' sort uv er fellar that mou't er
 mount ter suthem ef he would try, but
 the chances wuz er gin him.'

Mrs. Horner took up the supper, and,
 sighing wearily, said:
 'Come, pap, an' eat er snack.'

'The old man drew up his chair, wait-
 ed with an air of impatience, until the
 other members of the family were seat-
 ed and then asked a blessing, begu-
 ining with an elongated 'gracious Lord'
 and ending with an unintelligible sigh.

'Ain't yer goin' ter eat nothin',
 Nan?'

'Ain't er hungry.'
 'Buck's tuck yer appertite. I reckon.'
 'Sir!'

'Heard whut I said. Wall, never
 min', I'll take his appertite the next
 time he comes on the place.'

'Pap,' said Mrs. Horner, don't tor-
 ment the child.'

The old man took a swallow of but-
 ter milk, looked at his wife and replied:
 'Let us don't have no advice, Martha.
 Keep in the straight an' narrar path
 an' don't fret.'

About one month later, on the day
 before Christmas, old Horner, while
 splitting a 'rail-out,' some distance
 from home, accidentally stepped in the
 opening of the log just as one of the
 'gluts' flew out. The two sections of
 the log closed on the old man's foot
 and ankle, and but for the thick
 sole of his boot, would have crushed
 his foot. He uttered an exclamation
 of thankfulness, muttered a few words
 in praise of old Riggsby, the shoemak-
 er, and then attempted to liberate him-

self. This, he soon found, was not an
 easy or even a possible task. His axe,
 maul and wedges were beyond his
 reach. He shouted until he could no
 longer cry, and then, in despair, he be-
 gan to pray. The stiff sole of his boot
 began to yield, and the splintered sides
 of the log began to painfully press his
 foot.

'Hello, old man!'
 Looking up, with a start of joy, the
 old man beheld Sim Buck leisurely ap-
 proaching.

'Fur the Lawd's sake, Simmie, run
 here!'
 'Ain't in no puttickler hurry,' the
 young man replied, tearing off a chew
 of tobacco.

'Great heavens, don't yer see how
 I'm fixed?'

'Ah, hah! Sim replied, as he came up
 and carelessly sat down on one end of
 the log.

'Confound yer fool soul!' shouted the
 old man, 'ain't yer got no sense?'

'I'm all right; ain't nothin' the mat-
 ter with me. Come ter think er bout
 it, thar do peer ter be er fool in the
 neighborhood, an' it sorter peers like
 he's du' jammed his foot inter the
 crack uv er log.'

'Never mind, I'll fix yer fur this.'
 'Peers like you've already fixed
 yuse?'

'Sim, fur God's sake split open this
 log an' let me git outen here.'

'Don't like ter split wood, but ef
 yer've got any plowin' yer want done I
 don't mind doin' it fur yer.'

'You air a brute, the old man raved.
 'Yas, that's what they said down in
 the holler, but the branch kep on er
 runnin'.'

'Simmie.'
 'That's me.'
 'Please turn me er loose.'
 'I ain't got er holt uv yer.'

'You air the blamedest fool I ever
 seen.'

'That's me, an' ter-morrer will be
 Christmas, too. 'Lowed that I'd come
 over an' take dinner with yer, but I
 hear that yer didn't want nobody but
 peachers ter come round yer.'

'Turn me loose, Sim, an' yer may
 come.'
 'Tell yer whut I'll do. Turn yer er
 loose ef yer'll gin me er Christmas pres-
 ent.'

'I'll do it, I'll gin yer er calf.'
 'Come er gin.'
 'Two hogs.'

'I won't do it!' the old man indig-
 nantly shouted.

'All right, then; good-bye.'
 'Hol' on, Sim.'
 'Wall.'

'This thing is er bout ter pinch my
 foot off.'

'Ah, hah, but I must go.'
 'Say, Sim.'
 'Wall.'

'I'll gin yer the gal. I cain't stan'
 this no longer.'

'Shall we take it down in writin'?'
 'Oh, mussy, no; my word's ez good ez
 my bond.'

'All right.'
 'He soon split open the log and liber-
 ated the old man.'

'Come on ter the house, Sim, an' git
 yer present. Thar ain't no back-down
 in me.'

When they reached the house the old
 man said: 'Hide out here till I go in
 an' have some fun with Nan.'

He had never seen his daughter look-
 ing so happy.

'What's the matter, Nan?'

'Nuthin'.'
 'Wall, whut makes yer giggle thater
 way? W'y, Martha's gigin' too. I
 wish I mer die ef I ever seed sich a
 pack er geese. Confound yer, Sim, I
 told yer ter stay out thar. W'y, look
 at the gal, a kissin' the fool feller.
 Martha, whut do all this mean? W'y,
 dog my cats, whut yer wanten kiss me
 fur? Wall, wall—er haw, haw—I never
 did see the like.'

'Old man,' said Sim, 'it won't be
 many hours now till Christmas, an' I
 tell yer whut I 'lowed was best. Jest
 ez soon ez ther first rooster crows air
 ter the clock strikes twelve I'm goin'
 out, git a justice uv the piece an' git
 married.'

'Yer ain't er goin' ter do no sich uv
 er thing!' the old man exclaimed. 'No,
 sir, yer ain't er goin' ter budge, fur I'm
 goin' ole man Horner, when he takes a
 notion, is er good one.'

When the clock struck twelve Sim
 said: 'Now lessen fur the rooster! Ding
 him, will he never crow; thar he
 is! Git yer nag, ole man.'