

Suggestion.

THE STORY OF A PRISON CHAPLAIN.

BY HAROLD BEGGIE.

"You will no doubt tell me that I allowed myself to be cajoled and befooled by a pretty woman," said the chaplain. "Nevertheless, against the impression my story produces upon your mind I will set my long and critical experience of humanity. I am a connoisseur in crime, villainy, roguery and hypocrisy, and I preface this story with the emphatic pronouncement that I am persuaded of the genuineness of Mrs. Fulham's delusion."

With that he pushed his chair a little back from the fire, set his pipe in his lap, and with his feet resting upon the fender told me the following extraordinary story:

Eliza Fulham was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment on a charge of forgery. Her maiden name was Chambers, and she was the daughter of a Canadian rancher. At the age of eighteen she married a man named Fulham, who came from the States, and after some five years of life in Canada she went with him to England, where they settled down to a humble, humdrum existence in the suburbs of London. There were no children of the marriage.

The man, Thomas Fulham, was several years older than his wife and her very counterpart. Whereas she was small, fair, gentle and infirm of will, he was huge, black, stern, and a man of iron determination. His full, dark eyes were expressive of the most profound melancholy, and the character of his mouth was severe, and at times even cruel. He was frequently thrown into fits of gloomy depression, which lasted several days. He was glum, taciturn, secretive. His wife, at the time of her marriage and for several years after, knew nothing of his antecedents. He came suddenly into her somewhat lonely life—a striking looking man of magnificent physique, a great hunter, a bold rider, a lover of solitude—and so powerful was the enchantment he cast over the girl's mind that for many months, thinking he did not care for her, she suffered severely both in mind and body. Her love for him was of the blind and unreasoning order—a girl's love for a hero of romance; the sort of love that is common enough in young and unsophisticated communities, however rare it may be in modern Europe. She loved blindly, and when one day he rode up to her father's ranch, tied his horse up to the rails, entered the house, and without preface of any kind told her that she must marry him, the girl was wild with happiness.

Her father appeared content with Fulham's assurance that he had private means, and no bar was raised to their engagement. They were married, and at her father's death, five years later, they left the country.

My story begins after their arrival in England. But I must tell you first that, soon after the marriage, although she continued to adore her husband, Eliza Fulham was distressed by his deepening melancholy and by the unlifting shadow that overhung his thoughts. She realized that she was married to a confirmed hypochondriac, and after vain attempts to dispel the mists of his melancholy she settled down to a gray colored life, content if she avoided giving him offence, and enchanted if he ever bestowed upon her any mark of tenderness or affection. Such a life, as you may well imagine, had a numbing effect upon her intelligence. The vigor of the strongest mind would decay and atrophy in an atmosphere of this kind; and as the poor girl was of a weak and clinging nature her environment was peculiarly adapted to the destruction of her sanity.

One day, she told me—it was some eight years after her marriage—Thomas Fulham returned to his villa after a visit to London, came into the kitchen where she was helping a little maid of all work to prepare the evening meal, and, taking her hand, led her without a word into the sitting room. Here he laid both hands upon her shoulder, and for several moments looked deeply into her eyes. Then he drew her nearer to him, kissed her gently between the eyes, and spoke as follows:

"My dear Mary," said he, "it has been dawning upon me slowly for several days that I have not shown you the kindness and the attention which your great affection deserves, and which my love for you is most ready to display. I have had thoughts to worry me, business to occupy my mind, and conscientious difficulties in the matter of religion. But by the mercy of Heaven I have now shaken these troubles from my brain, and from this time forth we will be all the world to each other."

She was so enraptured by this confession that she did not concern herself to tell him he had addressed her by a wrong name. She threw herself upon his breast, told him that he had always been good to her, and professed the most complete and consuming adoration for her one friend in the world.

He seemed pleased by her artless love, fondled her with quiet affection, and studied her countenance with lingering interest. "You are not looking at all well," he said presently. "You stay too much indoors. I must take you about."

She said she was perfectly content with her life.

"You deceive yourself," he answered. "You are not well. You have grown much thinner, and I notice that in order to obscure this effect upon your face you have taken to wearing your hair in a different fashion."

She laughed, and said that he was quite mistaken.

"Do not distress me by contradictions," he answered, a little impatiently. "I remember perfectly well that you always wore your hair parted in the centre, and caught away from the brows, which gave your face a more open and simple expression. I hope you will return to that fashion. I liked it, and it suited you."

To humor him she said that she would dress her hair in future like a Madonna. At that he shuddered.

"Like the Madonna!" he said, almost under his breath. "Yes, yes, like the Madonna. All women should emulate that holy purity; certainly, certainly." And then he added, thoughtfully, "I desire my Mary to be like the Mary of Scripture."

"Why do you call me Mary?" she asked, smiling up into his eyes.

He looked at her in surprise. "Why? Because your name is Mary."

"No," she answered; "it is an uglier name, a much uglier name."

"My little wife is ill," he said, gently. "Come, I have neglected you too long."

"No, dear, I am not ill," she answered, "and I know that my name is Eliza."

He frowned angrily. "Your name is Mary," he said.

"If you call me Mary, Mary I will be," she answered.

"Your name is Mary," he rejoined.

That evening, when they had finished their meal, he drew from his coat an old leather pocketbook, which he had kept in his possession ever since their marriage.

"I was looking to-day at one of your old photographs," he said; "it was this that made me realize how much thinner you have become since your arrival in this country." He looked for a minute at a photograph in his hand, and then passed it to his wife.

"That was the old Mary," he said, tenderly.

She looked with amazement at the picture of another woman. It was the picture of a girl some twenty years of age, with large, quiet eyes, and a beautifully gentle mouth. The hair was worn as he had described, and there was no likeness between herself and this woman.

"This is not I," she said, looking up.

He smiled sorrowfully. "Is it possible that you have forgotten yourself?" he said.

"But, really, this is some one else."

"My dear Mary, you are ill. What can possibly have occurred to make you doubtful of your own identity? Look at the back of the photograph: you have written your own name there."

She turned the picture over, and there on the back, written across the photographer's usual advertisement, was the name of Mary Townsend.

She looked up; her husband was regarding her with a smile of quiet triumph.

"Well?" he asked.

"This is all wrong," she said. "There is some mistake. My father's name was Chambers. My own name is Eliza."

Without answering, but continuing to smile tolerantly, he drew from his pocketbook a folded document, and passed it to his wife.

She opened it and saw that it was a certificate of marriage. Her heart began to beat nervously, and tears rushed to her eyes. The document witnessed to a marriage between Thomas Fulham, of Cedar City, Nevada, and Mary Jefferson Townsend, of Salem, Ore.—four years before her own.

"What does it mean?" she cried, with a sob.

"It should convince you," he said, tenderly.

"that your name is Mary, that this picture is your photograph, and that the signature at the back is your own."

"No, no!" she cried, starting up. "It is a lie! I say it is a lie!"

At that moment, she told me, the poor thing felt the full horror of her loneliness. Without a relative in the world, alone in a strange country, she found herself in the grip of a man who persisted in attaching to her an identity not her own, who forced upon her a personality that was not hers; and this man was her one guardian and protector in the world! Her brain was possessed with horror, and she could do nothing but cry out, "It is a lie—a lie!"

He looked at her calmly as she said this; then he took the paper from the floor where she had dropped it, and with quiet precision folded it up and replaced it with the photograph in his pocketbook. She stood there, mesmerized, while he slowly closed the book and pulled the elastic strap about its covers. The room was growing dark, and she remembered that the street lamp outside their window was suddenly lighted as he placed the book in his pocketbook and looked up at her. She could see his black eyes shining upon her as he stood there on the other side of the fireplace—huge and tyrannic—the flame of the street lamp dancing against the window of the room.

He came to her, rested his fingers upon her shoulders, and regarded her with fixed intensity, his face close to her own. It was for many minutes, or so it seemed to her, that he stood there in the gloom fixing her with this long and searching gaze; then, very gently, and very slowly, he put his arms about her, gathered her up to his breast, and, as if she had been a sick child, carried her from the little parlor up to their bedroom on the floor above. She was completely under the spell of his gaze, and could say nothing, and could make no protest against his action.

"You are ill, dearest," he said, when they reached the bedroom. "You must go to bed, and rest there until you are quite restored." He bent down and took the shoes from her feet.

"I am not ill," she answered. "I am, indeed, quite well. Only—only why do you say I am somebody else?"

He kissed her, and she told me that never before had he been so deliciously tender to her. His very voice was a caress.

"Beloved," he said, "you are ill, though you do not know it—very ill. I will watch over you and nurse you till you are restored to me again, for I could not support life if you were taken from me."

He assisted her to undress, and put her to bed. Then he drew a chair to her side, and, sitting there, holding her hand, spoke as follows:

"I once had a terrible dream, dearest; I dreamed that you were dead; that people came and bore you away from me, locked up in a coffin so that I could not see your beautiful eyes, nor fondle your dear hands, which they had folded upon your breast. It was a dream from hell, and when I woke up and found you still alive I could scarce believe that it was true, so strong was the hold of that bad dream upon my mind. And now that you are ill I am full of terrible fear that my dream may come true. You must live, Mary—you must live to comfort me, for without you the devils will goad me to madness and self-destruction. Promise me that you will try to live."

The yearning in the last sentence filled the mystified girl wife, and she kissed the hands fondling her own, promising that she would get well, and that she would never leave him.

Then he sat there and talked of a past in which she had never shared. He recalled anecdotes of her home, her father, and her old uncle the ironmaster, and she knew that he was talking of the home of this Mary Townsend whom he had married four years before he married her. It was a horrible situation; to all his appeals, "Do you remember this?" and "Don't you recall that day we rode to this place or that?" she had to nod her head and express recollection of a past she knew nothing about.

Well, for the first day of this treatment she listened eagerly, curiosity naturally urging her to learn all she could of this man's first wife. And he never left her save to fetch food and drink, tending her with extraordinary tact and tenderness. But at the end of the second day her brain grew weary, and it was then that her delusion first began its assault upon her consciousness.

"Brilliant, sophisticated and clever, this novel breathes a fascinating spirit of modernity."

THE MODERN OBSTACLE

By ALICE DUER MILLER

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Now, you know how frequently we think during a conversation, "I have heard that before," or, on visiting a scene, it suddenly strikes us that we have seen it on former occasions. You know all that? Well, there is a scientific explanation. When the intelligence is alert the sound of words is conveyed instantaneously to the consciousness; the lobes of the brain grasp the meaning of words at the very moment their sound strikes upon the drum of the ear. But let one lobe of the brain be fagged and weary, the attention flagging, and there is delay—albeit infinitesimal, that delay, that fraction of a second's interruption in the normal working of the mind is sufficient to produce these wandering delusions. "I have heard that before!" we exclaim, believing it to be years and years ago; and quite truly, we have heard it before—the thousandth part of a second ago.

This explanation I apply to the case of Eliza Fulham. She told me that on the second day as he sat by the bedside talking to her of this past, it suddenly struck her that she was familiar with it, familiar with the very words he was addressing to her, and that somewhere in the mysterious past she had threaded the ways of which he spoke. She roused herself to see if she were not dreaming. Then she checked her thoughts and brushed the theory aside. She was herself, Eliza Chambers, daughter of a Canadian farmer, and now the second wife of Thomas Fulham, the man who had lived beside her dead father in the far-off Canadian days.

It was a battle between memory and the present. On the one side was recollection of her past, on the other the live and active present which told her she was Mary Townsend. You may imagine the conflict.

Days went by, many days, and still he kept her a prisoner in bed, nursing her with engaging gentleness, and waiting upon her smallest whim with the alacrity of a lover. They were in a measure the best days she had known, for the pretty little creature had long been sick for love, and now the hero of her romance was showering upon her a thousand tenderesses. But they were days of struggle—the conflict of memory and present—and every day found her memory weakening in the strife. She could not tell me definitely when she abandoned her personality. The transition must have been so gradual, she thought, that no actual date could be assigned to it; but when she rose from her bed it was with the full and complete conviction that she had been Mary Townsend, that she had lived in Oregon, and that it was in the old town of Salem she married Thomas Fulham. Eliza Chambers was forgotten.

She was weak in health, and her weakness increased. The greater part of her day was passed on the sofa, her husband in the closest attendance. In brief, she had become a complete invalid.

Three years after this, when she had almost forgotten her belief in the existence of Eliza Chambers, her husband came to her room one morning, in a state of great excitement, with a letter in his hand.

"Mary," he cried, "I have bad news for you, and good news, too. You remember your uncle, Zachary Townsend, the ironmaster? He is dead, and he has left you a fortune—a big fortune."

He came to the bedside, put the fluttering sheet in her hands, and as she read it he placed his arms tenderly about her and kissed her hair.

Well, when she had received that fortune she believed herself to be the dead wife. That is her statement—that is my unswerving conviction. You can guess the sequel. After some months of great wealth, other heirs in the States heard that Mary Townsend had died, proofs of her death were forthcoming; evidence, too, of Fulham's second marriage with Eliza Chambers was speedily produced—and then the newspapers here got hold of it, and rumors of "a gigantic swindle" were in the air.

Reading the account of the story in one of the papers, the conviction returned to Eliza Fulham that she was not Mary the daughter of Auberger Townsend.

Bewildered and all confused—for her mind, I fully believe, was affected—she hurried to her husband.

"Read this!" she implored. "It is all about us,

about you and me. O, something is wrong, something is wrong! Tell me what it means."

He drew her upon his knee, held her gently against his breast, and read the article. But as he read a great shudder shook him, he drew his breath in sharply, and she felt his arms tighten about her. And then—all in a minute—he sprang up, flinging her from him, and cried out, in a loud voice:

"Mary in heaven, forgive me! I have forgotten you—I have been false to you."

He was looking up, one arm raised above his head, the fist tightly clenched.

His wife went to him.

"What does it all mean?" she whimpered.

He turned upon her a glance of the most horrible ferocity, shrinking back from her.

His brows were black with rage, his parted lips were curled into an expression of loathing and contempt. He raised his arm as if to strike her.

While she trembled and gasped before him, however, his face suddenly softened, a look of the most tender compassion dawned in his eyes, and he stretched out a hand, resting it gently upon her head.

"Against two women have I sinned," he said, slowly and brokenly; "the wife whom I forgot in death, and the woman whom I must forget in life."

And he left her—without another word he went out of the room and out of the house.

She never saw him again. Shortly after this she was brought to her trial; she confessed everything as though she had impersonated the dead wife for purposes of fraud, and the doctors finding nothing wrong with her mind she was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.

I attended her every day, struck by her fragile beauty, and the extraordinary dreaminess of her expression which gave the lie to her confession of premeditated guilt.

But it was only toward the end, when she was dying in the hospital, that she told her story, charging me to seek out her husband and tell him that she forgave him everything. And that story of hers I believe implicitly.

"And the husband?" I asked.

"He has never been discovered."—(Black and White.

THE CITY'S BIRTHDAY.

Continued from page nine.

end of the reception room hangs Trumbull's portrait of Washington, with the Battery and New-York Bay as a background, while a portrait of General Clinton by the same painter hangs on the west wall directly opposite. All around the walls are portraits of the older Governors of the State. The only piece of statuary in the room is a small bust of Henry Clay, on a tall pedestal.

The principal article of furniture in the easternmost of the three rooms is Thomas Jefferson's desk. It is almost exactly like the working desk of Washington at the east end of the reception room and was used by the author of the Declaration of Independence while Secretary of State in Washington's first Cabinet. The desk is of mahogany, beautifully finished, and has the sloping centre-top once thought essential to comfort in writing. The working desk of Washington lacks this feature. It is said that the first message to Congress was written at the last mentioned desk. The seats for these desks are plush upholstered benches as long as the desks themselves.

The immense chinaware punch bowl presented by Jacob Morton to the Corporation of the City of New-York on July 4, 1812, is an interesting relic. The giver seems to have been in favor of canal building to an extent bordering