

Morning Star and Catholic Messenger. NEW ORLEANS, SUNDAY, AUGUST 29, 1875.

The crowd—the boys most loudly—gave a cheer. She then looked, and amazed, perceived how many eyes were upon her, but by the time a second cheer had gone up to the sky—

"Where is your home, dear?" she asked. "What is home? I don't know!" said the child.

"Where your mother is. I think, dear, you will know it best that way."

"But I—I have no mother. I have nobody." Eugene said he saw tears then fall from her eyes upon the tangled, dirty little head of the child, and she answered quietly:

"Come home with me then. So have I nobody. We will be somebody to each other I hope."

She took her into the carriage and another cheer went up as it drove away, and showers of young leaves and flower-buds torn hastily from the shrubbery were cast upon it, till it reached the Park gate. Covered by them, she went out of sight, all the time bending over the ragged little stranger in apparently earnest talk.

Then Eugene said a hubbub ensued in the Park. For the policemen began to pursue those who had plucked the branches of the shrubbery; indeed, the boys and the poor people. But I understand it is the way of the world to punish such excitement as that which caused the act, though the uncomplaining earth so freely gave its blossoms for a tribute to her.

And the eyes which had watched from fine vehicles the whole scene, smiled sarcastically, and such of their owners as were near enough to each other to speak said, "How odd of her! How odd!"

That was all, and they drove on then, laughing mockingly. For that is the world's estimate of such acts, it seems, which puzzles me beyond measure. It is as if it believed no one could possibly do anything from pure charity, when even so far off a motive as the distinction of being odd is given to a deed like Ethel Edmond's, but surely it ought to remember that our dear Lord's words, making love the rule of his law, could not fall to take root in some human hearts; and the world cannot have all.

The woman, still watching under the shadow of the trees, drew a long breath, as if of intense relief, when Ethel Edmond had performed her kind act, and the anxiety, at least, died out of her eyes as she said, like some one who had been watching in fear, and from whom the fear was now removed, "Thank God!"

Then, taking up her heavy basket, she cast a loving, yearning look after Ethel Edmond's retreating carriage, and any one very near her might have heard her say, in a broken and sorrowing whisper,

"I'll tell her; oh! I'll tell her; so quick to do justice. But not yet, not till the last!"

It was not Eugene who told me this part of my story. It was the woman herself, the tried, and worn, and anxious, and long suffering woman, for she was my mother.

III.

We were very poor, hopelessly and unchangeably poor, as long as I could remember. There was no touch of concealment or palliation for our poverty in our bare and shadowed room; there could not be; it was too real to admit of any graceful subterfuge; and our meagre allowance of food and drink was quite as palpable a fact as our unadorned, nay, I may almost say, unfurnished attic; for our whole subsistence was derived from the labor of my mother's hands, poor hands, now nearly worn out, nearly ready to fold themselves in a clasp of eternal rest. If I could have helped her it might have been different, but I was a heavy burden on her instead, lying helpless there always. I used to think, as evening drew near, and I looked round the comfortless room, what a golden blessing it would deem it if I had the power of motion for even that one half hour of the twenty-four. I used to shut my eyes—I always shut my eyes when I am going to make pictures for myself—and imagine her, at that moment, bending over the steaming tub, wringing out the last pieces of her weary work, wet and half blind with weakness, and aching from head to foot. And then I used to conjure up a scene; to you it will seem a very poor little attempt at happiness I am sure, but to me it wore all the unattainable attributes of a castle in the air; it was only myself awaiting her, with floor clean swept and fire brightly burning, the little tea-kettle hissing on the hob, and our humble supper table spread. It seemed to me I would bear all the pain and monotony of the rest of my days to purchase this. Ah! in the midst of my dreams she would come wearily up stairs. I could hear each tired step of her feet from the lowest landing, and each fell on my heart, I am sure, with all the pain she felt in them. And she would enter the room white and almost breathless, not speaking at first, because she could not from exhaustion. I would say "Poor mother!" or oftener stretch my hands towards her in silent sorrow. And in a moment then she would say, trying to speak cheerily: "Don't mind, love; the day is over now."

Nearly always that simple and touching thanksgiving, "the day is over," the one boon her tolling hours could bring! And I would say, perhaps, "But you are so tired, and I am so sorry nothing is ready for you here." Then she would answer, with a very patient sigh, "My honey, when you say that, it only reminds me of One who came to us in the night, and the cold, and found nothing ready for him, though the whole world could have made ready if he but wished it."

Then she would set about arranging the comfortless room, always first coming over to my bed and kissing me, and saying, "Thank God for you, my honey, through all!" I would be silent then, my heart chafing my veins. And because I was silent I would think all the more earnestly how true and

beautiful was the love that so thanked God for a useless cripple, and how real the heroism that could make her endure her hard life with the saintly patience I saw every day, and which, without any words, taught me the way to bear my one cross. What was it to her numberless ones after all? And she was poor and uneducated, my dear mother, but I am sure no sublimer sentiments ever passed the lips of the most learned, than I have often heard from hers, brought there by the lofty power of her continual union with God; for that elevates and refines the soul, I am sure, beyond any words of mine to say. Gazing continually on the divine image, it grows more and more like it, which is infinitely noble and beautiful.

But, apart from this, some awful shadow seemed to rest upon my mother's life, some shadow no one could see, but which to herself was a constant presence. Even her sleep seemed haunted by it, for while she slept, she moaned always, and she would often come when she thought I slept, and passing her hand over my forehead, say, with inexpressible longing in her voice, "My honey, do I make up to her for it?" And then she would kneel and pray.

I can still often feel that light and tender touch on my forehead, and hear that longing voice, and the memory of them is dearer to me than all that my life has brought to me, since the hand and the voice can come no more. Indeed, I would give all back to be again in the desolate room, and know she was coming home to it once more. But then she would not be at rest as she is now.

I have written this principally to show you what manner of mother she was, who watched over my helpless and darkened life at this period. And I wish to add to it, that no sunshine ever came to me afterwards half so fair as that which went out with her life.

IV.

Eugene was very poor too. If he had not been, I do not suppose we would ever have come to know him. It was through a simple act of kindness on his part that we did so at all. My mother, carrying her heavy basket one evening, stumbled, and would have fallen, had not a gentleman passing put out his hand to break the fall. Then he took the basket from her, laying it down. As she strove to lift it again, it was found a strain on her wrist rendered it powerless. So he said, "I will carry it home for you." And my mother, who had been accustomed to serve ladies and gentlemen, said he addressed her with as much politeness as if she were in a drawing-room, the finest lady there. She thanked him, and he carried it home for her. That gentleman was Eugene Woodruff, whom I now call my friend Eugene.

When they came up stairs that day, he looked around the room at the bare discolored floor, at the worn furniture, at the broken, stained walls, finally at the bed, lying motionless on my poor bed with its faded coverlet. I do not know why, but it went to my heart, that he then turned away, putting up his hand before his eyes. It was more to me than if he had said all the kind and compassionate words in the language. In a moment after, he was busily binding up my mother's wrist, and pouring cold water over it. When the pain was relieved, she said, with a gentle way she had,

"You have been very kind, sir, and I thank you. Gertrude," and she turned her dear, pale face to me, "help me to thank him, my honey."

"I thank you, sir, with all my heart," said I, from my little prisoned spot; "my mother is all I have."

He came over near me, and looked. His face was the handsomest I had ever been my lot to see, though, to be sure, I had not seen many. He was very young, and had soft hazel eyes, full of light, and a high white forehead, and beautiful, curling, brown hair. I remember, as I saw his look of wondering pity, I wished he was my brother. He said gently,

"Have you been sick long?" "Always," I replied; "I can never get up."

"So young! My God! how dare I?" There he stopped. Then, as if he could bear to look no longer, he turned away, and walked to the window.

"She was born a cripple, sir," said my mother; "yet she is the one blessing of my life."

He turned to her in amazement, very plain to see.

"Yes!" she clasped her hands, "I have to live for her as she is. If she could help herself one bit, she would not be so entirely the life of my life."

"And as it is!" said he, looking on her reverently, I thought.

"As it is, sir, a hard life is made easy to bear, because, thank God! I bear it for her, not myself."

"What a lesson!" he said, as if to himself; "what a sight!"

Then he came back to me.

"And you cannot move?" he asked, in a half whisper.

"No, sir, except my hands and head."

"And what do you do all day? you cannot sit up?"

which I was trying to make flowers and collars, in imitation of the embroidery on some of the clothes my mother washed for ladies. I worked with ravellings from another bit of rag, which I twisted together instead of cotton; but it was not embroidery, though it was flowers done in a way of my own, and though it looked very nice, my object was not attained when it failed in being of the kind I imitated.

"What is this for?" said he, in a gentle tone I already liked to hear; "tell me all about it."

"I wanted to embroider, sir," I answered; "and that is the way I tried."

"And why did you want to embroider? to pass away the heavy time?"

"No; my mother told me people paid very high for real embroidery, and I know, if I knew how, it would take me a long time to do even a small piece of it, for I cannot hold up my hands many minutes. But even if it took years, I wanted to do it, to get her a thing she longs for—I stopped; I could not tell him then."

"Can you not tell me?" he asked very gently. "No, sir; please don't ask."

"Now, how long were you doing this?" then said he.

"Nearly six months."

He laid it on the palm of his hand, viewing it all over.

"It is beautiful, exquisite, this flower made of ravellings so patiently and wonderfully. When it is finished—I see it is not quite finished—let me know. I will find a buyer."

"Not for this rag, sir. It must be done on fine muslin, with real cotton, to be sold."

"No; that—just as it is." He laid it down like something very valuable, but I thought if he had been a lady instead of a gentleman, he would not have admired it so.

"Why did it take you so long?"

"I can only hold it up such a little while, and then I often have to rip it, from putting the needle in the wrong place, and then these threads break so often, and it takes me so long to thread the needle."

"Great heavens! So much for so little, and I—he stopped as once before.

"It is not little, sir, what I want to do by it," I said then; "and if I ever do it—"

"You shall do it," he broke out; "only finish that little miraculous flower made so perfectly out of such materials. And this is all your recreation?"

I turned my eyes to the window. An old pitcher stood there, with a bunch of green growing in it, my pet and my pride.

"I watch that," said I; "it will have flowers some day."

He went over and examined it.

"Queer! A potato plant!" Now he laughed. So did I.

"Where did you get it?"

"A little child in the court below brought it to me. She had planted it herself. I am very fond of it, sir—next to my mother, I think I am fond of it. The leaves are so perfect and so beautiful to me, I could examine them all day, and never think I had then seen half how wonderful they are."

"And then?"

"Well, of course thinking who made them so has to come next, and I feel myself bowing down before Him; I cannot help it."

"Wall!"

"I cannot just put it into words," said I, "but after that bowing down, I feel myself raised. Indeed, I feel as if I were not a cripple at all."

"And you are not," said he, in a hushed way; "you are a princess ignobly chained here, and through this," touching lightly the poor, common plant, "you have been enchanted into seeing a glimpse of your country, so your royalty rises up and makes you cease for awhile to feel your chains."

Then he looked at the plant with eyes full of feeling, and I know, if they had not been those of a man, they would have melted to tears, but though he did not let that happen, I felt they were ready to come. And a moment after I heard them in his voice, as he turned to go.

"May I come back?" said he to my mother; "it is indeed good for me to be here."

"You may, sir; and thank you."

After that, he became to me Eugene, my friend, and he said I saved him, but just then would not tell how. I know he was dearer to me than any one on earth except my mother, and his coming was happiness and sunlight to me. He taught me to read, and by that created a new world for me. He fixed from the ceiling a support for my book, so that I need not tire my arms holding it. He showed me how to write really, and I created a world for myself by that quite as wonderful as the one I myself in reading. Of course all this happened by degrees, and if I told it as slowly as it happened, and all its beautiful and cherished incidents, it would take a volume, not in place just here. But from what I have told, I think you will understand what Eugene became to us, and we to him. What we grew to be to each other was, I think, all the more precious and unchanging too, because it had its origin in the soul and heart, not affected by outward things at all, unless, indeed, that our mutual poverty made it more pure and intense. He ministered to the needs of my lonely, craving mind, filling it with what it had unconsciously missed, since I could think—knowledge. He said I ministered to his equally, though I could not make out what it needed, royal as it seemed to me.

At first it appeared very strange to me to know that he, with his youth, and his talent, and his fine appearance, should be as poor as I, lying helpless on my bed always, and owning no gift of all those I knew God gave to others around me. But I found out such things are quite common in the world from which I am shut out; that it does not give its riches to those whom I might look upon as being made for them. And I thought often, if I could only have the power of action, I would compel success to crown my toil for them—I wanted them for my mother, you know. But I am told the will is not enough to compel success, and many who strive, and toil, and endure suffering for weary years, lie down at the end in a poor man's grave, and others, by one sudden "stroke

of luck," without any effort or merit of theirs, are made wealthy. So I said one day to Eugene, "Why did God make it so?"

And he curled his lips, that could smile so exquisitely in pity or tenderness, into a bitter laugh, and said, "That is the galling problem of my life—I cannot answer it."

Then I asked my dear mother, and she said, "It is because He does not consider riches a gift needful for our getting to Heaven, my honey. Don't you know, if He did, He would always place them at least within the reach of honest labor, and never, as they often are, within the reach of chicanery and crime."

"Then they are not really worth our thoughts or our strivings, are they, mother?" said I.

"No, my honey; you see the only thing on earth worth our strivings He has placed within the reach of all."

"What, mother?"

"The right to heaven. Every one can gain that."

I told Eugene, and he was silent a long while after, sitting leaning his head on his hands. Then he stood quite as long at the foot of my bed, looking down at me. I will never forget that look: it was so completely and touchingly full of sorrow that seemed to me to hold in it something grander than common grief. So it did, for then said he:

"I think you understand all that tells to one whose life has been a lie upon such mercy. I stand nobly reproached, my Picciola. But I can say no more. There are things in the heart which words spoil, and this is one of them."

"Yes." Words would have spoiled what was in mine then. I think he saw it, for he was silent for some time, and I was glad to be. In a book he had brought me was this beautiful thought, "Silence followed the song like a tear." Such seemed that silence to me. It was delicious; it was more, it was heavenly, for within it God's presence deigned to veil itself, making ecstasy.

After awhile said he:

"I have never told you my story. I am now going to tell it to you and mother—for a long time he had called her thus—"that you may see what you have done for me."

"I am glad. What is Picciola? You called me that just now. Why did you call me it?"

In beautiful language, peculiar to him when he narrated anything, he then told me Saintine's exquisite story, saying at the end:

"And you are to me in a captivity, not of bolts or bars, to be sure, but worse, what Picciola was to the poor prisoner."

"A very withered Picciola," said I, smiling, to hide the fact that my heart was weeping for joy to hear such touching words of my poor, crippled self. But he saw through the smile.

"Nay, dear Picciola, God keeps you here with his mighty hand from that which might wither your wonderful bloom. Not withered, indeed, but still fresh from the miracle of his touch, because untouched by the world."

It went to my heart—that is all I can say of it here, and in that moment I could say nothing.

After a few moments more he told us his story. I cannot put it exactly in his words, but I will as nearly as I can, for they are so much better than my own.

"I do not know," he said, "that I could tell you all my unworthiness, but I see you so patient and so unconscious of the grand mission your patience has fulfilled in my regard, I know of no other way to let you see what you have done, obscurely working for your Master here, and I would have you see it. I liken it often in my own mind to the miracle achieved by an humble violet, hidden in the shades of a forest, where man was not supposed to penetrate, and yet the perfection of its beauty converted an infidel idly roaming there to the faith that won his salvation."

"I was not always as you see me. I was brought up to believe myself rich, kept at the best colleges, and surrounded by all those advantages consequent upon the possession of wealth. I am now twenty-one; two years ago—I was a mere boy then—the bitter trial came to my life, which made me—I will not say what—less than a man certainly."

"I do not remember my mother; if I had any word or look of hers to consecrate my heart, it might have striven to keep white, in order to be worthy of holding that memory. My father was one of those men who do not impress a child with the idea of father at all. He was to me the banker who liberally provided my funds; the arbiter who decided upon laws for my movements; the judge who sentenced me if I infringed on those laws; that was about all. Wrapped up in business and grief for my mother, the cause of whose death was my life, he and I lived our lives as far apart as if oceans divided us. He ordered things with the object of making me worthy to bear his name, but it never seemed to me I held any place in his heart."

"I was at college, and had just achieved its highest honors; laden with them, I was about to return home, when a telegram brought me the news of my father's sudden death, nothing more."

"I see you wonder at those words, used in connection with what, it seems to your good hearts, should form the record of an overwhelming trial. If nothing more really remained, it might have seemed so to me too."

"We learn the true measure of a grief by encountering a greater. Hard as was my father's indifference to me, his death might have come as a heavy blow if it had come alone. But when, penetrating through the shadow enshrouding the telegraphic message, I found its dread mystery to be not merely death, but dishonor and suicide, I felt not its weight, but its force."

"He was one of your wonderful business men, whose ability might almost be called genius, at whom the others gaze in envying amazement, as from below a height not theirs to climb; a daring speculator, and a successful calculator of the ups and downs of money transactions. But often such men are suddenly thrown from the height to which they

have climbed by its giving way, and in its very ruins they themselves are crushed beyond help.

"This was his fate. In plain words, he failed. But failure is not dishonor, and I could have borne it if it were all. The speculation was a mighty one though, and when it began to totter he needed money to build it up—it is terrible to repeat it, even in the simplest way—money entrusted to him by poor and struggling and honest men and women in his employ. They had trusted him thus because he was their employer, and 'a safe business man.' This money, too, was buried with the crash when it came, and he escaped their excoactions by suicide."

"So they were poured on me. I was surrounded by wailing women and infuriated men, whose all had been robbed from them. My heart was alike stung by the woful disgrace heaped upon me, and torn by their grief. I cursed my fate, I hid my name, vowing never to bear it again, and left the place, only saved from being lynched by the furious mob, of whose injury I was so innocent, by escaping secretly in the night."

"That was not all. I gave up the practice of religion, impulsively deciding to myself, that if there were a God at all, he was neither just nor merciful, since, if he were just, I should not have been visited with the punishment of another's crime, and if He were merciful, he would have shown some mercy to my youth and hitherto unblemished name. Yes, turn aside those pure shocked eyes, my Picciola; despise me as I deserve. Then you will feel more intensely how great has been your mission to me, degraded, almost ruined soul."

"According to this miserable code I resolved to live. I did not seek for any honorable situation, feeling myself a sort of outcast on earth. I assumed the name of Woodruff, and contented myself by writing 'Items' for a third-class daily paper, lived in the poverty which was the only remuneration it afforded me, and gave myself up to the sins which a young, semi-idle, and wholly irreligious man cannot escape. For temptation is everywhere, and there is but one thing in all the wide world to overcome it. I do not care how noble or great a man's mind may be; how much he may naturally feel inclined to keep his soul spotless; how strong his will, or how sincere his intention, it is simply impossible without that one thing. It is the grace of God. I had it not, and I would indeed be showing you a sight you must never even dream of, if I described to you my career. Ah! how frightened you look, my Picciola; but it is only thus I could show you what you have done for me."

(To be continued.)

A proposition suggested by Her Majesty's Government, and submitted to this and others, is now under consideration with regard to dispensing with some of the unnecessary salutes which take place between the services of different nations on the occasion of the meeting of their vessels of war and the reception of high officials. It is desired to establish a set of rules to be observed by all. The proposition, which it is understood meets with the concurrence of the Navy Department of the United States, is not to return salutes of the following character: To royal personages, the chief of a State and to members of royal families, whether on arrival at, or departure from, any port, or upon visiting a ship-of-war, to diplomatic, naval, military or consular authorities, or to a Governor, when using a ship-of-war. It is proposed to return only those which are not considered personal, and which should receive gun for gun, such as the national flag on arriving at a port, and the salutes of flag officers when meeting. These rules, if generally concurred in and adopted, will obviate many of the annoyances which constantly arise, and sometimes lead to unpleasant feelings. Besides, such unnecessary expense will be saved. The returning of personal salutes has long been regarded as objectionable.

A Boston publishing house, finding the new rates of third-class postage too exorbitant, prepared the following postal card, which they mailed to their subscribers: "The ridiculous postal law, by which we are compelled to pay treble postage on all magazines sent to subscribers in what is known as 'Bar's Syndicate,' compels us to establish a postal service ourselves. Your magazine will be left by the 10th of the month at—, where please call for it hereafter." Finding that the cards were not delivered they learned at the Post Office that they were withheld because "the firm were using the mail to scandalize the department." This they naturally think is a stretch of postal authority. We think so too. If the postal matter is to be subject to the approval of the Post-masters, why may they not refuse circulation through the mail of newspapers opposed to the Administration?

Convenience has destroyed religion, morality and politeness.—J. Doubert.

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