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The Expositor

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ORILLIA, ONT. CANADA, THURSDAY, MAY 16, 1872.

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ORILLIA, 26th Feb. 1872. P. MURRAY.

The Home Fireside

From the elm tree's topmost bough, Hark! the Robin's early song.

Of the winter we are weary, Weary of its frost and snow,

Then as thou wert wont of yore, Build thy nest and rear thy young,

LADY THORNHURST'S DAUGHTER. BY MISS HARRIET LEWIS, Author of "The Double Life," "Tressilian Court," &c., &c.

"I can do that next time," said Tessa, watching Dennis's operations with a grave intentness.

"Well, she was Miss Agnes says," said Dennis, as he snatched up his frying-bacon from a greedy, lapping flame.

"She don't deny it, you see," said Mr. Stacy, with something of exultation.

"You need not advise me to marry another than Agnes, Mr. Stacy," he said, with a certain sorrowful dignity.

"I am glad to have you come, Reuben," said Agnes, before her father could reply.

"I can lay up money to hire a farm after our marriage."

"A farm, said Agnes, a sudden glow lighting up her worn, sad face.

"Did I do right, Agnes?" asked Dennis, when the story was concluded.

"You could not have done otherwise, Reuben," declared Agnes, with a gentle heartiness that set any doubts her lover might have experienced at rest for ever.

"She is a dainty little creature," said Dennis, softly, as Tessa, with in-

stinctive delicacy, wandered to the other side of the room, and busied herself with a wood and wire puzzle.

"I found her in the hands of a cruel old woman; although indeed the woman talked of sending her to the union. But what am I to do with her?"

"You'd better get married at once, Dennis, muttered old Mr. Stacy sulkily. Agnes coloured.

"Can you not keep her, Reuben?" she asked. "She will be a great comfort to you."

"I was thinking perhaps you might take her," said Dennis, as Agnes hesitated.

"She's not coming here," interposed Mr. Stacy, hastily. "I am respectable if I am poor, and won't have any child of doubtful birth under my care."

"Hush, father! Don't talk so," said Agnes in a pained voice.

"So much the worse for the lady," muttered Mr. Stacy. "You can do what you please with the girl, Dennis, but she can't come here."

"It was a degree more meagre in appearance than Mrs. Porter's dwelling, and had more of the air of a cheap tenement house."

"On gaining admittance into the house, Dennis led Tessa up to the third floor, and knocked at the door of the front room."

"The woman was Agnes Stacy. The man was her father."

"Miss Stacy was some five and twenty years of age, not handsome, not fine-looking even; but she had a strong, patient, gentle face, from which beamed a spirit of quiet heroism, such as became a woman who was the sole support of a father and two young brothers, and whose whole life was a battle with the world for a living for these dependent ones, her only weapon a frail needle."

"She looked up with a smile of welcome at her visitors, but did not lay down her work. She could not afford even one minute's rest during the day."

"Back again, Reuben," she said. "I expected you this evening."

"I could not wait till this evening, Agnes," answered Dennis. "I have news of your advice."

"He introduced little Tessa to her, and narrated the circumstances of the previous day which had made him the child's guardian."

"Did I do right, Agnes?" asked Dennis, when the story was concluded.

"You could not have done otherwise, Reuben," declared Agnes, with a gentle heartiness that set any doubts her lover might have experienced at rest for ever.

"Mr. Stacy uttered a growling sound of discontent, but did not speak."

"She is a dainty little creature," said Dennis, softly, as Tessa, with in-

"But I live on half my salary," said Dennis eagerly. "And I've got two hundred and fifty pounds interest in the savings banks. In ten years more I shall have interest and savings included, a handsome amount."

"You won't lay up any fifty pounds a year with that child to support, growled Mr. Stacy. "You'd better pack her off to some public institution."

"If I do, may heaven forsake me!" cried Dennis. "While I have a crust she shall share it! I will never cast her back upon the world from which I rescued her!"

Agnes bestowed upon her lover a look of tender sympathy. She had a warm heart, and was already deeply interested in little Tessa. Presently as she bent over her work, she assured Dennis, in a low voice, inaudible to Mr. Stacy, who resumed his reading of her entire approval of his course.

Dennis exhibited to her the little embroidered dress and golden armbands that Tessa had worn years before, and the pair agreed that there was some mystery about the child; but of what that mystery might be they could not form any conception.

CHAPTER XIV. CAPTAIN HOLM'S RETURN.

It was a dark and stormy evening in December, some five years after the entrance of Tessa Holm into the boarding-school of the Misses Lacy, at Clapham, and some nine years after the second oration of Ignatia Redruth.

The wind was blowing in wild, chill gusts out upon the wild Devon moors; there were whirrs of dead leaves in the moaning air wherever trees grew; a mist of rain was falling thickly, and the sky was black with gloom.

The hour was late, and the little wayside inn of the Pig and Thistle had long since been closed to the rude labourers who were wont to frequent it.

The windows were barred with their rude wooden shutters, and through knot-holes and crevices a faint light struggled out from the tap-room into the outer world of storm and darkness.

In the quiet tap-room, perched upon a tall stool, sat Mrs. Kiggs. Her few wisps of yellow-white hair were drawn away from her bony forehead, and her keen eyes, looking through steel-rimmed spectacles, were busy with the day's accounts.

The lapse of years had not improved her appearance. Her long hooked nose was more like a parrot's beak than ever. Her chin was even more pointed and upturned than of old, and nose and chin seemed actually to meet.

She looked, in fact, more than ever like a faltered witch, and she had a weird, uncanny air, that would have startled a superstitious person, or one given to reading old legends.

Cold as was the night, the fire on the broad hearth, around which the evening's guests had sat, had died out, leaving only a few embers gleaming from the ashes.

The miserly old woman would have been horrified at the thought of heap- ing on a few coals for her own comfort. She made her charges in a sheep-skin covered book, counted her actual cash gains, and then locking both money and book in her desk pushed away the lamp, and leaning her cheek on her hand, fell to muttering, as was her custom when alone.

"I never did so good a business as I'm doing this year," she said in a low cracked voice. "The two shillings I sent to London for the little book of receipts for making wine and brandy without a particle of wine, brandy, or cider in them, is worth a fortune to me. None of my customers suspect that I impose upon many of them water coloured and flavoured with drugs and acids. Still I had better be careful and not overdo the matter. I must keep up my name for cider; I shall be suspected, if only Captain Holm had sent his allowance of money as usual I should have felt like a rich woman. Why did he not send it? Can he suspect that I have been imposing upon him for the past nine years, sending reports about the child and so on, when I don't know whether she is dead or alive?"

She meditated, contracting her brows until her forehead was puckered into innumerable folds and wrinkles. "He can't suspect the imposture I've practised on him, she said, presently, with a long breath of relief. "He knows no one in this neighbourhood. He is not friendly with his own people, and it's a good many years since he was in England. He's simply out of money or else he's dead. I hope he is dead!"

She started, as a sudden gust of wind shook the shutters and window sashes. As the wind swept over the wild moors, and a comparative calm succeeded, a knock, loud, startling, and imperative, sounded suddenly upon the door.

Mrs. Kiggs gave a frightened cry, and with a gusty face and chattering teeth clambered down from her high stool, and beat a precipitate retreat to the door of the inner room. Her impulse was to summon her stout handed serving maid, her first thought being of tol-

lers. At the threshold she halted, and looked back over her shoulder, her person asserting itself, and suggesting that the person demanding admittance might be a belated wayfarer, who would have means to pay liberally for a night's lodging. While she was deliberating the knock was repeated more loudly and imperatively.

"Who is there?" asked the old woman in a high, quavering voice.

"A traveller, was the response from without. "Open the door and give me the last."

Still the old woman hesitated. The thought occurred to her that the traveller might be some wayfarer, who had heard of her reputation for miserliness, and who had come to rob her.

"Are you going to open the door, the traveller peevishly demanded. "Open, I say, or I'll break your door in."

Something in the voice struck the old woman as familiar.

"Tell me your name, she quavered. "If you are an honest man, tell me your name."

There was a moment's delay, as if the person without did not care to trust his name to the wild night winds. Then, as a pause came in the storm, a fierce, sibilant whisper came hissing through the capacious keyhole, bearing the words—

"I am Tessa's father!"

Granny Kiggs staggered and leaned back against the doorpost, in a panic of fear and consternation. Then she tottered across the floor and up the bolted iron bars, moving slowly and heavily. The iron chain, was scarcely loosened when the door was swung open by an impatient hand, and a tall man, closely wrapped in a dripping cloak, and wearing a hat drawn down over his eyes, stalked into the lonely, chilly tap-room. The keen-eyed old woman could not discern his features, but she shivered as she felt a basilisk gaze fixed upon her. She shot a single bolt, to secure the door—her caution, predominant even then—and tottered back towards a chair, dropping heavily upon it.

"You didn't expect me, eh?" asked the intruder in a sardonic voice. "I have surprised you, I see. Did you fear robbers, my miserly dame? Or are you overcome with joy?"

"Are you Captain Holm?" stammered the old woman, feebly.

The intruder laughed softly. Then he flung off his dripping cloak, and stood before her with his face revealed in the glowing lamplight. It had been fourteen years since Mrs. Kiggs had seen him, and time had changed him as it changes all, but the old woman recognized him at once. It was indeed Captain Holm. He was not so slender nor so graceful as in the old days, when Ignatia Redruth had been his wife. He had grown heavier, although he was not yet forty. His face, that had been so Apollo-like, had become, with years of dissipation, more like the face of a satyr. It wore a flush that seemed habitual to it; the cheeks were flabby and bloated; the eyes that had once been famed for their power of expression, were listless, save when some sudden excitement lent them a temporary fire. One could readily see that the man had once been extraordinarily handsome, and as the scent of the rose hangs about the ruined vase, so a faint remnant of his former beauty still clung to him. But what his face had lost in bloom and fine outlines, it had gained in power, although that power was evil. The light in his eyes was sinister; the smile that came the readiest to his lips was sardonic and mocking. He looked like one who would scruple at nothing, who regards the world as his football, and all men either his enemies or the instruments of his will. He was the impersonation of a cruel daring, of a wicked and remorseless will.

(To be continued.)

Some one was praising the public school to Charles Lamb and said, "All our best men were public-school men. Look at our poets. There's Byron, he was a Harrow boy." "Yes," interrupted Lamb, "and there's Burns, he was a ploughboy."

THE Queen has desired Colonel Hon. Desvost to inquire at all the hospitals respecting accidents that occurred on the Thanksgiving Day, and to apprise her of any distress from them. One case only has been discovered—that of a poor woman who kept a school, which has been broken up by her absence. Her Majesty has sent her £20.

SAVE A LETTER.—Every man who is obliged to work for his living, should lay up a little money for a "rainy day" which would be all liable to encounter when least expected. The best way to do this is to open an account with the savings bank. Nobody knows without trying it how easy a thing it is to save money when an account with a bank has been opened. It gives a man lessons in frugality and economy, and is the very best guard in the world against Intemperance, dissipation and vice.