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WARDEN, KEEP A PLACE FOR ME.

AN INCIDENT OF PRISON LIFE IN THE PENITENTIARY.

Discharged again? Yes, I am free,
But, Warden, keep a place for me;
For freedom means that I must go
Out in the wind, and rain and snow,
To fight with hunger, shame and cold—
A woman, gray, and worn and old,
To clothe myself in rags again,
And seek some wretched, narrow den;
And after that what must be done?
Steal? Beg? Hard lines for any one;
To work is easier. I would try,
But there's no work for such as I;
A fine thing truly to be free—
But, Warden, keep a place for me
For I'll come back. It's seven years
Since first I entered here with tears:
"Drunk and disorderly" I came,
And for the burden of my shame—
The prison taint, the outlaws' dread,
Which first I felt, his hopeless tread—
The gates clang to with dreadful sound,
And the dark pall on walls close around.

But when I went away, I said,
"If I can earn my daily bread,
I'll work my fingers off before
I'll wear a convict's dress once more."
I've easy said. I meant it too.
Work? Is there work enough to do
For those who spend their weary lives
Like toiling bees in busy hives,
And starve or last? When willing hands,
That never broke the law's commands,
Are idle by the thousands, how
Can I all hard, keep a virtuous vow.

No work! but all the same I found
The time for meals would come round,
No work! but one thing I can do, I think,
And that's the way I got to drink.
Well, Warden, what can say, that I was then
Drunk and disorderly again?
Why, I was drunk ever since that day
I was there last. It was the only way
I could forget the place I had left behind,
Where, I know, I was less than they,
And curse the man and curse the day.

How did I know that he would be
A drunkard, and degrading me
Down to his level? Why, the life
He led me! Oh, the hell of strife
I had to lead! He went away
And left me with my little May—
My child! I say it proudly, for
I was a true woman, and I bore
Scorn and shame, scoffing and jeers
For years, for her dear sake. I had
Hard work to live, but I bore my lot
Till I married him a drunkard, and
Had a drunkard's home to share.

But I've a little baby dear—
The one spot in my heart tenderness
Has not turned to gall—I'll share
Her lot, I'll bear all there's hateful
In my lot, if God will give me
Strength to keep her from the life I led.
Warden, I'm going a time with a lark,
Drunk and disorderly, and a shade of shame
Will come over my face when I come back
To my child. Warden, I'm going to reform, right.
When I go, I want to be able to say
To my child, when she grows to be a woman,
Her mother's memory is
As it means there was a time
When I knew, and will want and crime,
Had I strayed, I am teaching
Her how to love and dared to pray.

What did I do? How could I know
That the world would open for me no
Door, and I, in despair, turned to the
Dark road that led me to that man—
That fate that dragged me down
Among the wretches of the town?
I had made a fair and honest chance,
And had tried every circumstance
Against me, till at last I stood
Stripped of my very womanhood.
I tell not this to excuse, I think—
Why, my fault I do not think;
For, I'm not in fear or misery;
It isn't a thousand-one thing for me;
The jail takes care of me too well.
Better to be locked up in a cell,
Where all is clean and sleep is sweet,
Than roam the misery haunted street;
Better the work they give us here
Than what awaits me when I'm clear;
Better the silence we must keep
Than drunken cries, and curses deep;
Better the dull days, free from pain,
Than shattered nerves or throbbing brain:
Better the quiet, sober life
Than yonder city's desperate strife;
Better the prisoner's homely fare,
Better the prison's watchful care,
Better for me than liberty—
So, Warden, keep a place for me.

HILTON TREWAVAS.

It was a fair, sunny day in August. They were out on the cliffs, fathoms above the sea, at play. She a dark-eyed, wonderously beautiful girl of thirteen; he a tall, stalwart boy, a year her senior. There was a wide difference in their stations in life; you had only to note the richness of her silk attire, the threadbare scantiness of his, to feel assured of that.

No rich man's son would have been dressed quite so shabby as Hilton Trewavas, and yet, in spite of the worn out clothes, the boy, in beauty of form and feature, might have been a fit son for a nobleman.

The children were chatting gaily together and gathering mosses from the rocks, forgetful of life or station.

They had met often thus for the last six years.

Hilton's father was the agent of the estate of Clara Mansfield's high-bred mother. Their cottage was but a short distance from the Hall, and the children, in search of amusement, wandered out often to the cliffs, and whiled away sunny afternoons in juvenile sports.

Hilton gathered for his fair playfellow the brightest-tinted shells, and in return she brought him musty old books of chivalry and romance from the great library at the Hall, which he read and re-read until his soul was filled with dreams and aspirations, vague and sweet, and unreal as the visions of an opium eater.

The Trewavas family had not always been dependents. Generations back there was noblemen in the family, but political differences had taken title and wealth from the name.

Early in life Hugh Trewavas, Hilton's father, had become agent to Mr. Mansfield; a post he had retained when Mr. Mansfield died, leaving a widow and an only child, a girl, as heiress to his vast wealth and estate. Hugh Trewavas had married a young wife, beautiful and refined, but after a few years their happy life was broken. Mrs. Trewavas died, and her husband had only his six months' boy to toil for.

No restraint was put upon the intercourse between Hilton Trewavas and Clara Mansfield by the proud lady mother of the young heiress. If she though of the matter at all, she trusted to the inborn pride of her daughter, and of the cold contempt she had tried so faithfully to imbue her with—contempt for all that was low born or ill bred.

Mrs. Mansfield would never have thought of looking for a princely heart beneath the rough jacket of the one she considered too far beneath her to merit even the tribute of a passing thought.

The sea breezes gave a beautiful bloom to the cheeks of Clara, and the sports she shared with Hilton rounded her limbs and gave grace and vigor to her steps. Mrs. Mansfield read her favorite novels, entertained her chosen company, and reigned queen of the Hall, while Clara enjoyed the wild freedom of the cliffs.

The young girl was almost reckless in her daring at times, and this afternoon was in her most dangerous mood.

A cluster of flowers, growing in a cleft of the rock below the surface of the cliffs, attracted her attention. She sprang toward them, but Hilton moved her back.

"It is perilous, Clara," he said hurriedly. "Look at the black rock beneath. A single mis-step and—"

"I am no coward," she laughed, defiantly. "You are pale; I am not; and I am going to carry these bright things home to mamma."

Before he could prevent her she had swung herself over the precipice, and, resting one foot on a narrow shelf of rock, her left hand clinging to a frail shrub that had taken root in the sparse earth at the top, with the other she grasped the coveted blossoms.

Hilton, white and rigid, stood above her looking down.

She shook the flowers above her head.

"See!" she said, "I dare do what a boy trembles at seeing done!"

She stopped hastily in the gay, taunting speech she was making. The treacherous rock under her feet crumbled and fell;—there was only that little swaying shrub to hold her back from eternity.

Hilton threw himself upon his face, reached over, caught her uplifted hands in his, and drew her slowly, laboriously up—for she was nearly his own weight, and he realized too well how much hung on the result to be hasty or reckless of his strength. He rose to his feet, lifting her up with him.

For one moment, breathless, and overcome by the thought of what she had escaped, she leaned against him, then tearing away she seated herself on a rock.

"O Hilton!" she cried, pale with the terror of her late danger, "You have saved me! what will mamma say? What can I give for a keepsake to show how grateful I am? and she began to detach the heavy gold chain she wore at her girdle.

The boy's face flushed proudly as he put it from him.

"Give me the bunch of heliotrope in your hair," he said. "I want nothing else."

She pulled it out and laid it in his hand.

"You will throw it away tomorrow, when it is withered," she laughed.

"No! I shall never throw it away!"

The day was setting in steel-blue clouds; great banks of them obscured the setting sun. From the troubled sea vast masses of drenching fog swept up the rocky coast, and settled heavily on the land.

That night Mr. Trewavas called Hilton into his bedchamber, where he kept his private desk and his meagre store of books. He took from an ebony casket a ring set with large diamonds.

"There, my son," he said, "this is the only thing I have on earth to show that noble blood flows in our veins. That ring belonged to my great grandfather, the duke of Somerset. It cost one thousand pounds, and will bring readily more that half that sum. I give it to you. Will you keep it to show the world that your ancestors were nobles?—or—"

He paused and looked into the face of the boy.

"Or what, father?" Hilton's face was eager, hopeful, already he had half divined his father's meaning.

"You love books, Hilton. I had thought you might desire an education. The proceeds of that ring will defray your expenses at school—maybe help you through college; but you can keep it if you choose. Which shall it be?"

"Father! knowledge before anything else in this world! What care I if my body starve so long as my mind be fed?"

So it was decided. A fortnight after Hilton left Bradley and entered the renowned school at D——.

Six years passed. Hilton had been six months at college, and was home on a brief vacation.

Miss Mansfield had completed her education and come "out," a wonderfully accomplished and beautiful young lady, followed by a train of obsequious admirers.

One still July night she stole away from the revelry at the Hall, and went, as of old, to the cliffs; to the very spot where Hilton Trewavas had saved her life.

Chance had taken him that night to the same spot. He was sitting silent in the moonlight, looking out at the sea, thinking of that by-gone day when she had given him the heliotrope for a keepsake.

All these six years the heliotrope had been kept by him as his greatest treasure. Her image had been ever present with him, spurring him on to exertion in his studies, making every fresh victory, every upward step, a triumph for her sake; and yet he never asked himself why this was, or what it would end in. It was so, and he could not help it. But he felt that to aspire eventually to the hand of Clara Mansfield, the richest heiress in the country, the daughter of one of the proudest women in England, was as hopeless an aim as an attempt to grasp an ignus fatuus. He heard her step—perhaps the thrill at his heart told him, who was coming. He rose and turned toward her, waiting her pleasure. She might recognize him or not, just as she chose.

She passed him with a haughty glance.

He did not flinch, but stood with folded arms, his tall, manly figure outlined against the purple sky, his face lit up by the young moon. A faint flush rose to her forehead.

"Is it Hilton Trewavas?"

"It is, Miss Mansfield; will you not welcome me home?"

She gave him her hand. After all, old memories still held their way in her heart.

Some secret audacity moved him to say it. He bent over her head and whispered, "I have the heliotrope yet, Clara."

Her eyes blazed; She snatched her hand from him as if his touch stung her.

"Remember to whom you are speaking!" she said, sharply. "I have other business than listening to the silly talk of a lovesick boy! Good night Mr. Trewavas."

Hilton gazed after her as she hastened away.

"The time may come," he muttered. "Yes, it may happen that she will be glad to unsay those words! I can wait."

Six years passed again. Hilton Trewavas was making a fame in the land. On his graduation he had studied law, been admitted to the bar in due time, and after two years was in successful practice, one of the most rising men in his profession.

Wealth came to him slowly, but fame was not chary. He had turned his attention and his leisure moments to literature, and already ranked high as a poet. His father was dead. There was no tie save memory to bind him to the old place at Bradley. So he travelled, when he could do so with benefit. He frequently met Clara Mansfield in the gay world. Their old familiar footing of early days had given place to a cold and more distant acquaintanceship. He could not forget the hint he had whispered to her respecting the heliotrope that hot July night.

Clara's pride had taken alarm, yet to him she was, and always would be, the one woman the world contained. His heart never for one moment wavered from its passionate allegiance. And she? What meant that frequent absence of mind, that dreamy look in the beautiful eyes, that constant look of sadness on the exquisite face? What meant that sudden flush, that lighting up of the features at the first entering the room? Were pride and love having a battle? It would seem so, for on his approaching her the light and the flush would die away, and a cold, proud word would be his greeting.

Suddenly it was announced that Mrs. and Miss Mansfield were going to America. An illness had attacked the elder lady, and a sea voyage was recommended by her physicians as her only chance of recovery. They had advised Australia, but to this she would not listen; so long a voyage seemed to her bidding farewell to earth.

She resolved to try the efficiency of a trip to New York.

The news reached Mr. Trewavas, among others, and startled him. Could he make use of this opportunity? For some time past a certain matter of business had demanded his presence in America, but he had been unwilling to devote the time to the journey.

It was now the commencement of the long vacation, and, so far, circumstances were in his favor. As he thought of the long and close proximity to Clara Mansfield this voyage would give him, and of what it might bring about, his heart leaped with hope and his face flushed as the blood coursed more rapidly through his veins; for the Hilton Trewavas of by-gone days and the Hilton Trewavas of to-day, to whom the highest honors of his profession were possible of attainment, were two widely different men.

So it came to pass that one day he found himself on board a steamer bound for New York, and Mrs. Miss Mansfield were among the passengers.

The second day of the voyage they were all on deck at sunset,—promenading, laughing, chatting, and enjoying the fresh breeze. More than ever, as Mr. Trewavas gazed at Clara Mansfield from a distance, he confessed that her youth had not made false prophecies of the glory of her womanhood. Her wealth of dark hair rippled away from her broad, white forehead. Her eyes were deep and fathomless as some woodland spring into which the sun never looks; her lips red, ripe, perfect; her whole air and bearing were fail of haughty grace.

She was leaning on the arm of a tall, proud-looking man; but, though she smiled at his soft nothings, she was gazing out over and beyond his range of thought, to the sea stretching so darkly blue and boundless to meet the twilight glory.

Hilton Trewavas stopped before her just as she disengaged herself from her companion.

"It is the same old ocean which we used to look at from the cliffs, Miss Mansfield," he said quietly.

She was leaning over the side of the vessel, looking down in the water. She lifted her eyes, shuddered slightly, and drew up her shawl. Hilton assisted her.

"It is like going back to my lost boyhood to see you," he continued. "I—"

She stopped him with a haughty gesture. Her late companion approached. He was a stranger to Mr. Trewavas, and she introduced them to each other—

"Sir George Trevor, Mr. Trewavas."

They bowed coldly; they would never be any better acquainted. There was nothing in their natures that would assimulate.

After this Miss Mansfield and Mr. Trewavas never met alone, whether she was afraid of her own strength if brought too much in contact with his winning presence, or afraid that her pride would give way to the dictates of her heart, cannot be known. Certain it is that she allowed him no opportunity of pleading his cause.

The voyage was drawing near a close. They were nearing the end, when a heavy storm arose, and the vessel was driven far out of her course, and drifted down to the Cape. One dark, direful night, in spite of skill and frenzied effort, the ship struck the rocks of the lea shore, and parted.

A little moment to realize the dread horror of their situation, only, was left for these on board. Miss Mansfield, pale but calm, was holding the arm of Sir George Trevor; her friends, shrieking and terrified, stood near. She was not looking at the threatening destruction before her, but over her shoulder, with a hungry, wistful something in her eyes, as if she forgot what she saw not. The expression died out as Hilton Trewavas looked toward her; for an instant their eyes met; in that moment he knew he was beloved with a wild fervor even equal to his own.

Then there was a dull plunge, a wild shriek of agony, and the water swarmed with struggling human beings. The world had grown dark to Clara, but she felt herself borne up by some power beyond her own—upward and onward through the billows, till her feet touched the firm shore of the Cape. Then into the light and warmth of a fisher's cottage, and when they had laid her down on the rude settle, she opened her eyes and saw—Hilton Trewavas.

"You saved me!" she asked.

"I had the honor."

"And my mother?"

"She is also saved."

The door opened, and Sir George Trevor appeared. Whatever Clara might have said by way of thanks, was checked by his entrance, and directly afterwards Hilton went away. A few days later a vessel from the Cape conveyed, among other passengers, Mrs. and Miss Mansfield and Sir George Trevor, back to England. Mr. Trewavas proceeded to New York and accomplished his mission.

It was months before he and Miss Mansfield met again, and then it was at the old place on the cliffs at Bradley. Mrs. Mansfield was dead; the shock of the shipwreck had proved too much for her, and she returned to England only to die. Clara had been to visit her grave, and on her return sat for a moment on the gray, familiar rock, to look out on the wintry sea. Her eyes were still wet: She had been weeping.

Hilton found her thus, and seating himself beside her, drew her head down on his shoulder.

"Clara," he said, "I love you. I defy your contempt. I dare repeat it to you: I love you."

For a moment it seemed to him that she clung to him, then she cast him away and rose to her feet; and when she spoke her voice was cold and unmoved.

"On New Year's eve I am to be married to Sir George Trever."

Hilton started up—seemed about to make some impetuous speech, checked himself, and left her.

And she threw herself down where he had stood, moaning out:—

"Oh, pride! pride! it will be my death!"

* * * * *

It was the last day of the old year.

Hilton Trewavas, a stern and gloomy man, was about to bid adieu to his native land for a long season.

He did not wish to breathe the air of the same country with Clara, and she the wife of another.

People are different, you know, some keep their disappointment ever at heart; others put them eternally out of their reach in the past.

Hilton wished to free himself from memory. He had destroyed everything but the heliotrope, and even that should be sacrificed, he said, when the ocean rolled between it and the soil which had nourished it.

It was a dark, moonless night, with prophecies of snow in the air.

He shut the door of the cottage where his father had died, and went out for a walk. He avoided the path to the cliffs; he had closed his heart to all dreams of tenderness.

Almost unconsciously he turned his steps toward Mansfield Hall. It rose up, a gloomy, massive pile, lighted only by the red firelight at a single window. To-morrow it would blaze with the lamps lit to shine upon her bridal.

He paused to turn back, but something led him on—through the deserted gardens, up to the broad door, which stood ajar. All was quiet. The guests had retired for the night. Only a few tardy servants were up,—It would do no harm to glance within.

He stepped to the door of the room where he had seen the light, and pushed it softly open. He saw no one. Still he went on, and sat down in a great arm chair, before a warm blaze. For a moment, he said to himself, he would sit in the chair she had recently occupied, gaze into the embers she too had gazed into.

Some one rose from a sofa at the other end of the room; he started up, an apology on his lips, for his audacious intrusion.

She—it was Clara—clad, not in bridal robes, but in sable vestments, and destitute of ornaments, came toward him, looked up into his eyes, and let her white hands rest on his shoulders.

"Hilton," she said at last, her eyelids drooping, her cheeks crimson, "have I offended past forgiveness?"

He did not answer; only looked at her.

"I will let the truth speak, Hilton. I love you! I have loved you all along, but pride came nigh to being my ruin! Thank God, at last I have clean hands and a pure heart! I have dismissed Sir George Trevor, and, true to you, true to myself, I cast aside all womanly modesty and shame, and tell you that I love you."

"Clara," he said, "is this thing true? Is all that at an end between you and that man?"

"All—all," she whispered softly, "forever."

Hilton Trewavas pressed her more closely to him, and left his first warm kiss upon her lips.

She had found her haven at last. Love, as it ever should, had conquered pride.

He gathered her in his arms.

"And where are you now?"

"Yours if you will take me."

And Hilton Trewavas forgot his animosity to England, and did not go abroad.

On Skates.

"You see," said my friend Albert, as he cut a "pigeon's-wing" on the glassy surface of the rink, went off on one foot and came circling round on the other—"you see, it is an exercise which brings all the muscles into play, and must be healthy. In fact Dio Lewis says it is better than riding on horseback."

It looked so easy and so nice that I winked at the boy who had skates to lend, and he came over.

"That's right, old boy!" called Albert as he sailed around with a handsome girl on each arm, and a lovely blonde hanging to his coat-tails—"I'll bet a hundred dollars you'll learn all the flourishes within an hour."

I was highly gratified at this expression of confidence in my ability, and I kept hurrying up the boy as he fastened on the skates. The impudent sauce-box said I'd better strap a pillow on the back of my head before I started out, but I passed the insinuation by in silent content.

"Now, then," said Albert, circling up with a dozen French flourishes, "the main thing is to have confidence in yourself. Strike right out like a pioneer getting away from a troop of wolves, and I'll bet a hundred to one you'll make a skater."

I struck out. I struck in several other directions besides out. One foot went to the left, the other went to the right, and I whirled around and sat down. The blonde young lady came up and said that I had made a capital hit, and the other two said I was certain to combine grace with muscular effort when I got fairly started.

I didn't feel much like starting out again, but I had to do it. Albert helped me up, said that he could already see an improvement in my health, and he warned me to shove my feet as I saw him do. I obeyed. The left foot shot out, leaving the right some rods in the rear, and in trying to even up the race a little, something struck the ice. It was myself. The back of my head struck first; and there were five distinct shocks before the whole of my body got down.

Albert sailed up and said he never saw that I eaten, and the blonde declared her belief that I was an old skater, and was just playing off on them. The rink danced round and round as I sat up, and the small boy, who was grinning at me, appeared to my vision like eight or nine small boys with eight or nine grins.

"Come, old boy, this exercise will brighten your cheek until your own girl won't know you," called Albert, offering to help me up.

I wanted to go home and sit down by the coal stove and ponder and reflect, but he dragged me to my feet, and the blonde wanted to know if I wouldn't please give them "the Prince of Wales flourish." I glanced at her and tried to smile, and they all edged off to give me a fair show.

"Come, dart right off!" yelled Albert, and I carefully started my feet out on an exploring voyage. They hadn't travelled over six inches before they got ahead of my body. I reached out for something to support me, clawed around, and the back of my head dug a hole in the ice. I thought the roof of the rink had fallen in, and that twenty-eight tons of boards and shingles had struck me in a heap, but I was deceived.

"You struck an air-bubble or you'd have made a splendid show," said Albert, as he pulled at me.

The blonde said that I had come within a hair's breath of cutting one of the grandest flourishes known on ice, and they wanted me to try once more. I told 'em I had to go to a funeral, and that I would be back in half an hour, but it was no use.

"See how easy it is," exclaimed Albert, as he pushed out and swung one leg around.

I pushed out and swung one leg. I couldn't pull it back. I tried to, and yelled to Albert that I'd give him a hundred dollars to grab me. He was too late. I clawed and waved and tottered and fell, and when I came to my senses again Albert said that if I would go through the same performance every day for two months, he'd warrant me that I could eat a hundred hot biscuits per day and never have a touch of dyspepsia.

I am in bed yet, and a friend has written this from dictation. The doctor says that two ribs on the left side are fractured, the collar bone is broken, the bones of one elbow are laid and the spine column is three inches out of str, but he is laboring away in hope mending me up by spring.