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Mary Turner is good or bad according to the way you look at her. The police and the representatives of law and order that had condemned her to a felon's cell called her bad. One young man believed her to be good, and he stood by her through storm and stress, through circumstances that tried his soul.

This story gives an accurate if fleeting view of the methods of work of the police and the criminals, and it shows the finish of a brave crook who followed undeviatingly the course he had mapped out.

CHAPTER I.

The Panel of Light.

THE lids of the girl's eyes lifted slowly, and she stared at the panel of light in the wall. Just at the outset the act of seeing made not the least impression on her numbed brain. For a long time she continued to regard the dim illumination in the wall with the same passive fixity of gaze. Apathy still lay upon her crushed spirit. In a vague way she realized her own inertness and rested in it gratefully, subtly fearful lest she again arouse to the full horror of her plight. In a curious subconscious fashion she was striving to hold on to this deadness of sensation, thus to win a little respite from the torture that had exhausted her soul.

Of a sudden her eyes noted the black lines that lay across the panel of light, and in that instant her spirit was quickened once again. The clouds lifted from her brain. Vision was clear now. Understanding seized the full import of this hideous thing on which she looked. For the panel of light was a window set high within a wall of stone. The rigid lines of black that crossed it were bars—prison bars. It was still true, then. She was in a cell of the Tombs.

Crouching miserably on the narrow bed, she maintained her fixed watching of the window—that window which was a symbol of her utter despair. Again agony wrenched within her.

The girl was appalled by the mercilessness of a destiny that had so outraged right. She was wholly innocent of having done any wrong. She had struggled through years of privation to keep herself clean and wholesome, worthy of those gentlemen from whom she drew her blood. And earnest effort had ended at last under an overwhelming accusation, false, yet none the less fatal to her. This accusation after soul wearying delays had culminated today in conviction. The sentence of the court had been imposed upon her—that for three years she should be imprisoned.

There had been nothing in the life of Mary Turner before the catastrophe came to distinguish it from many another. Its most significant details were of a sordid kind, familiar to poverty. Her father had been an unsuccessful man as success is esteemed by this generation of Mammon worshippers. He was a gentleman, but the trivial fact is of small avail today. He was of good birth, and he was the possessor of an inherited competence. He had as well intelligence, but it was not of a financial sort.

So, little by little, his fortune became shrunken toward nothingness by reason of injudicious investments. He married a charming woman, who, after a brief period of wedded happiness, gave her life to the birth of the single child of the union, Mary. As the years passed the daughter grew

toward maturity in an experience of ever increasing penury. The girl was in the high school when her father finally gave over his rather feeble effort of living. At his death the father left her a character well instructed in the excellent principles that had been his own. Of worldly goods, not the value of a pin.

Yet, measured according to the stern standards of adversity, Mary was fortunate. Almost at once she procured a humble employment in the Emporium, the great department store owned by Edward Gilder. To be sure, the wage was infinitesimal, while the toil was body breaking, soul breaking.

Mary nevertheless avoided the worst perils of her lot. She did not flinch under privation, but went her way through it, if not serenely, at least

the Tombs awaiting trial. She was quite friendless. To the world she was only a thief in duress. At the last the trial was very short. Her lawyer was merely an unledged practitioner assigned to her defense as a formality of the court. At the end twelve good men and true rendered a verdict of guilty against the shuddering girl in the prisoner's dock.

That which was the supreme tragedy to the broken girl in the cell merely afforded rather agreeable entertainment to her former fellows of the department store. Mary Turner through out her term of service there had been without real intimates, so that now none was ready to mourn over her fate. Even the two roommates had felt some slight offense, since they sensed the superiority of her, though vaguely. Now, they found a smug satisfaction in the fact of her disaster as emphasizing very pleasantly their own continuance in respectability.

On the day of Mary Turner's trial there was a subtle gaiety of gossipings to and fro through the store. The girl's plight was like a shuttlecock driven hither and yon by the battle-axes of many tongues. It was the first time in many years that one of the employees had been thus accused of theft. Shoplifters were so common as to be a stale topic. There was a refreshing novelty in this case, where one of themselves was the culprit. Her fellow workers chatted desultorily of her as they had opportunity, and complacently thanked their gods that they were not as she—with reason.

Smithson, a member of the executive staff, did not hesitate to speak his mind, though none too forcibly. Yet his comment, meager as it was, stood wholly in Mary's favor. And he spoke with a certain authority, since he had given official attention to the girl.

Smithson stopped Sarah Edwards, Mr. Gilder's private secretary, as she was passing through one of the departments that morning to ask her if the owner had yet reached his office. "Been and gone," was the secretary's answer. "He went downtown to the court of general sessions. The judge sent for him about the Mary Turner case."

"Oh, yes, I remember now," Smithson exclaimed. "I hope the poor girl gets off. She was a nice girl—quite the lady, you know. Miss Edwards will you please let me know when Mr. Gilder arrives? There are one or two little matters I wish to discuss with him."



"Hello, dad!"

"All right," Sarah agreed briskly, and she hurried on toward the private office.

The secretary was barely seated at her desk when the violent opening of the door startled her, and as she looked up a cheery voice cried out:

"Hello, dad!"

At the same moment a young man entered with an air of care free assurance, his face radiant. But as his glance went to the empty armchair at the desk he halted abruptly, and his expression changed to one of disappointment.

"Not here?" he grumbled. Then once again the smile was on his lips as his eyes fell on the secretary, who had

now risen to her feet in a flutter of excitement.

"Why, Mr. Dick?" Sarah gasped. "Hello, Sadie!" came the genial salutation. The young man advanced and shook hands with her warmly. "I'm home again. Where's dad?"

Even as he asked the question the quick sobering of his face bore witness to his disappointment over not finding his father in the office. And in the patent change under which the son now labored was to be found a certain indication of character not to be disregarded. Unlike many a child, he really loved his father. The death of the mother years before had left him without other opportunity for affection in the home, since he had neither brother nor sister.

In that simple and sincere regard which he bore for his father, the boy revealed a heart ready for love, willing to give of itself its best for the one beloved. Beyond that as yet there was little to be said of him with exactness. He was a spoiled child of fortune, if you wish to have it so. Certainly, he was only a drone in the world's hive. Thus far he had enjoyed the good things of life without ever doing ought to deserve them by contributing in return, save by his smiles and his genial air of happiness.

In the twenty three years of his life every gift that money could lavish had been his. If the sum total of benefit was small, at least there remained the consoling fact that the harm was even less. Luxury had not sapped the strength of him. He had not grown vicious, as have so many of his fellows among the sons of the rich.

Sarah explained that Mr. Gilder had been called to the court of general sessions by the judge.

"But what is dad doing in court?" Sarah explained the matter with her usual consciousness:

"One of the girls was arrested for stealing."

"And dad went to court to get her out of the scrape. That's just like the old man."

"She was tried today and convicted. The judge sent for Mr. Gilder to come down this morning and have a talk with him about the sentence."

There was no lessening of the expression of certainty on the young man's face. He loved his father, and he trusted where he loved.

"It will be all right," he declared in a tone of entire conviction. "Dad's heart is as big as a barrel. He'll get her off."

Then of a sudden Dick gave a violent start. He leaned toward the secretary's desk and spoke with a new seriousness of manner:

"Sadie, have you any money? I'm broke. My taxi has been waiting outside all this time."

"Why, yes," the secretary said cheerfully. Dick eagerly seized the banknote offered him.

"Mighty much obliged, Sadie," he said enthusiastically. "But I must run. Otherwise this wouldn't be enough for the fare." And he darted out of the room.

Continued next week.

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