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CHAPTER XXXV.

Dr. Morris was very tired, for his labors that day had been unusually severe, and it was with a feeling of comfort and relief that at an earlier hour than usual, he had turned his steps homeward, finding a bright fire waiting him in the library, where his late dinner was soon brought by the housekeeper. It was very pleasant in that cosy library of oak and green, with the bright fire on the hearth, and the smoking dinner set so temptingly before him. And Morris felt the comfort of his home, thanking the God who had given him all this, and chiding his wayward heart that it had ever dared to repine. He was not repining tonight, as with his hands crossed upon his head he sat looking into the fire and watching the bits of glowing anthracite dropping into the pan. He was thinking of the sickbed which he had visited last, and how a faith in Jesus can make the humblest room like the gate of Heaven; thinking how the woman's eyes had sparkled when she told him of the other world, where she would never know pain or hunger or cold again, and how quickly her lustre was dimmed when she spoke of her absent husband, the soldier to whom the news of her death, with the child he had never seen would be a crushing blow.

Just at this point of his soliloquy, the telegram was brought to him. "Come in the next train. I am in great trouble."

He read it many times, growing more and more perplexed with each reading, and then trying to decide what his better course would be. There were no patients needing him that night, that he knew of; he would go, as there was yet time for the train which passed at four o'clock.

It was nearly midnight when he reached the city, but a light was shining from the windows of that house in Madison Square, and Katy, who had never for a moment doubted his coming, was waiting for him. But not in the parlor, she was too sick now to go down there, and when she heard his ring and his voice in the hall asking for her, she bade Esther show him to her room. More and more perplexed, Morris ran up to the room, where Katy lay, or rather crouched, upon the sofa, her eyes so wild and her face so white, that, in great alarm, Morris took the cold hands she stretched feebly towards him, and bending over her, said: "What is it, Katy? Has anything dreadful happened? and where is your husband?"

At the mention of her husband, Katy shivered, and rising from her crouching position, she pushed her hair back from her forehead and replied: "Oh, Morris! I am so wretched—so full of pain! I have heard of something which took my life away. I am not Wilford's wife, for he had another before me—a wife in Italy—who is not dead! And I, oh, Morris! what am I? I knew you would know just what I was, and so I sent for you to tell me, and take me away from here, back to Silverton. Help me, Morris! I am choking! I am—yes—I am—going to faint!"

It was the first time Katy had put the great horror in words addressed to another, and the act of doing so made it more appalling, and with a moan she sank back among the pillows of the couch, while Morris tried to comprehend the strange words he had heard: "I am not Wilford's wife, for he had another before me—a wife in Italy—who is not dead."

Dr. Morris was thoroughly a man, and though much of his sinful nature had been subdued, there was enough left to make his heart rise and fall with great throbs of joy as he thought of Katy free, even though that freedom were bought at the expense of dire disgrace to others, and of misery to her.

"My poor little wounded bird," he said, as pityingly as if he had been her father, while much as a father might kiss his suffering child, he kissed the forehead, and the eyelids where the tears began to gather. Katy was not insensible, and the name by which he called her, with the kisses that he gave, thawed the ice around her heart and brought a flood of tears, which Morris wiped away, lifting her gently up and pilowing her hot head upon his arm, while she moaned like a weary child.

"It rests me so just to see you, Morris. May I go back with you, as your housekeeper, instead of Mrs. Hull—that is if I am not his wife? The world might despise me, but you would know I was not to blame. I should go nowhere but to the farm-house, to church, and baby's grave. Poor baby! I am glad God gave her to me, even if I am not Wilford's wife; and I am glad now that she died."

She was talking to herself rather than to Morris, who smoothing back her hair, and chafing her cold hands, said:

"My poor child, you have passed through some agitating scene. Are you able now to tell me all about it, and what you mean by another wife?"

There was a shiver, and the white lips grew still whiter as Katy began her story, going back to St. Mary's churchyard, and then coming to her first night in New York when Juno had told her of a picture, and asked her whose it was. Then she told of Wilford's admission

of his earlier love, who, he said, was dead; of the trouble about baby's name, and the aversion of Geneva; but when she approached the dinner at the elder Cameron's, her lip quivered in a grieved kind of way, as she remembered what Wilford had said of her to his mother, but she would not tell this to Morris—it was not necessary to her story—and so she said: "They were talking of what I ought never to have heard, and it seemed as if the walls were closing me in so I could not move to let them know I was there I said to myself: 'I shall go mad after this,' and I thought of you all coming to see me in the mad-house, your kind face, Morris, coming up distinctly before me, just as it would look at me if I were really crazed. But all this swept away like a hurricane when I heard the rest, the part about Geneva, Wilford's other wife."

Katy was panting for breath, but she went on with the story, which made Morris clench his hands as he comprehended the deceit which had been practiced so long. Of course he did not look at it as Katy did, for he knew that according to all civil law she was really Wilford's wife as if no other had existed, and he told her so, but Katy shook her head. "He can't have two wives living, and I tell you I know the picture—Geneva is not dead; I have seen her—Geneva is not dead."

"Granted that she is not," Morris answered, "the divorce remains the same."

"I do not believe in divorces. Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," Katy said with an air which implied that from this argument there could be no appeal.

"That is the Scripture, I know," Morris replied, "but you must know that for one sin our Saviour permitted a man to put away his wife, thus making it perfectly right."

"But in Geneva's case the sin did not exist. She was as innocent as I am, and that must make a difference."

She was very earnest in her attempts to prove Geneva was still a lawful wife, so earnest that a dark suspicion entered Morris's mind, finding vent in the question: "Katy, don't you love your husband, that you try so hard to prove he is not yours?"

There were red spots all over Katy's face and neck as she saw the meaning put upon her actions, and covering her face with her hands, she sobbed violently as she replied: "I do, oh, yes, I do! I never loved anyone else. I would have died for him once. Maybe I would die for him now; but, Morris, he is disappointed in me."

"You cannot go home with me, Katy; your duty is to remain here in your husband's house," he said, and she offered no remonstrance. "It is not safe for you to be alone. Esther must be with you," he continued, feeling her rapid pulse, and noticing the alternate flushing and paling of her cheek.

A fever was coming on her feared, and summoning Esther to the room, he said:

"Your mistress is very sick. You must stay with her till morning, and if she grows worse, let me know. I shall be in the library."

Then, with a few directions with regard to the medicine he fortunately had with him, he left the chamber, and repaired to the library below, where he spent the few remaining hours of the night, pondering on the strange story he had heard, and praying for poor Katy whose heart had been so sorely wounded.

The quick-witted Esther saw that something was wrong, and traced it readily to Wilford, whose exacting nature she thoroughly understood. Numerous were her conjectures as to the cause of the present trouble, which must be something serious, or Katy had never telegraphed for Dr. Grant, as she felt certain she did.

"Whatever it is, I'll stand her friend," she said, as she bent over her young mistress, who was talking of Geneva and the grave at St. Mary's, which was no grave at all.

She was growing worse very rapidly, and frightened at last at the wildness of her eyes, and her constant raving, Esther sent down for Morris, and bade him come quickly to Mrs. Cameron.

"She is taken out of her head, and talks so queer and raving," Morris had expected this, but he was not prepared to find the fever so high, or the symptoms so alarming.

"Shall I send for Mrs. Cameron and another doctor, please?" Esther asked.

Morris had faith in himself, and would rather no other hand should minister to Katy; but he knew he could not stay there long, for there were those at home who needed his services. Added to this, her family physician might know her constitution, now, better than he knew it, and so he answered that it would be well to send for both the doctor and Mrs. Cameron.

It was just daylight when Mrs. Cameron arrived, questioning Esther closely, and appearing much surprised when she heard of Dr. Grant's presence in the house. That he came by chance she never doubted, and as Esther merely answered the questions put directly to her, Mrs. Cameron had no suspicion of the telegram.

"I am glad he happened here at this time," she said. "I have the

most commoance in his skill. Still it may be well for Dr. Craig to see me. I think that is his ring."

The city and country physicians agreed exactly with regard to Katy's illness, or rather the city physician based in acquiescence when Morris said to him that the fever raging so high had, perhaps, been induced by natural causes, but was greatly aggravated by some sudden shock to the nervous system.

Mrs. Cameron was very glad that Dr. Grant was there, she said.

"Perhaps it is best she should not know of the telegram," he thought, and merely bowing to her remarks, he turned to Katy, who was growing very restless and moaning as if in pain.

"It hurts," she said, turning her head from side to side: "I am lying on Geneva."

With a sudden start, Mrs. Cameron drew nearer, but when she remembered the little grave at Silverton, she said: "It's the baby she's talking about."

Morris knew better, and as Katy still continued to move her head as if something were really hurting her, he passed his hand under her pillow and drew out the picture she must have kept near her as long as her consciousness remained. He knew it was Geneva's picture, and was about to lay it away, when the cover dropped into his hand, and his eye fell on a face which was not new to him, while an involuntary exclamation of surprise escaped him, as Katy's assertion that Geneva was living was thus fully confirmed. Marian had not changed past recognition since her early girlhood, and Morris knew the likeness at once, pitying Katy more than he had pitied her yet, as he remembered how closely Marian Hazelton had been interwoven with her married life, and the life of the little child which had borne her name.

"What is that?" Mrs. Cameron asked, and Morris passed the case to her, saying: "A picture which was under Katy's pillow."

Morris did not look at Mrs. Cameron, but tried to busy himself with the medicines upon the stand, while she too, recognized Geneva Lambert, wondering how it came in Katy's possession and how much she knew of Wilford's secret.

"She must have been rummaging," she thought, and then as she remembered what Esther had said about her mistress appearing sick and unhappy, when her husband left home, she repaired to the parlor and summoned Esther to her presence, asked her again, "When she first observed traces of indisposition in Mrs. Cameron?"

"When she came home from that dinner at your house. She was just as pale as death, and her teeth fairly chattered as she took off her things."

"Dinner? What dinner?" Mrs. Cameron asked, and Esther replied: "Why, the night Mr. Wilford went away, or was to go. She changed her mind about meeting him at your house, and said she meant to surprise him. But she came home before Mr. Cameron, looking like a ghost, and saying she was sick. It's my opinion something she ate at dinner hurt her."

"Very likely, yes. You can go now," Mrs. Cameron said, and Esther departed, never dreaming how much light she had inadvertently thrown upon the mystery.

"She must have been in the library and heard all we said," Mrs. Cameron thought, as she nervously twisted the fringe of her breakfast shawl. "I remember we talked of Geneva, and that we both heard a strange sound from some quarter, but thought it came from the kitchen. That was Katy. She was there all the time, and let herself quietly out of the house. I wonder does Wilford know?" and then there came over her an intense desire for Wilford to come home—a desire which was not lessened when she returned to Katy's room and heard her talking of Geneva and the grave at St. Mary's "where nobody was buried."

In a tremor of distress, lest she should betray something which Morris must not know, Mrs. Cameron tried to hush her, talking as if it was the baby she meant, but Katy answered promptly: "It's Geneva Lambert, I mean, Wilford's other wife, the one across the sea. She was innocent, too—as innocent as I, whom you both deceived."

Here was phase of affairs for which Mrs. Cameron was not prepared, and excessively mortified that Morris should hear Katy's ravings, she tried again to quiet her, consoling herself with the reflection that as Morris was Katy's cousin, he would not repeat what he heard, and feeling gratified now that Dr. Craig was absent, as she could not be sure of him. If Katy's delirium continued no one must be admitted to the room except those who could be trusted, and as there had been already several rings, she said to Esther that as the fever was probably malignant and contagious, no one must be admitted to the house with the expectation of seeing the patient, while the servants were advised to stay in their own quarters, except as their services might be needed elsewhere. And so it was that by the morrow the news had spread of some infectious disease at No. — on Madison Square, which was shunned as carefully as if small-pox itself had been raging there instead of the brain fever, which increased so fast that Morris suggested to Mrs. Cameron that she telegraph for Wilford.

"They might find him and they might not," Mother Cameron said. They could try, at all events," and in a few moments the telegraphic wires were carrying the news of Katy's illness, both to the West, where Wilford had gone, and to the East, where Helen read with a blanched cheek that Katy perhaps was dying, and she must hasten to New York.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Wilford could not forget Katy's face, so full of reproach. It followed him continually, and was the

magnet which turned his steps homeward before his business was quite done, and before the telegram had found him. Thus it was with no knowledge of existing circumstances that he reached New York just at the close of the day, and ordering a carriage, was driven towards home. All the shutters in the front part of the house were closed, and not a ray of light was to be seen in the parlors as he entered the hall, where the gas was burning dimly.

"Katy is at home," he said, as he went into the library, where a shawl was thrown across a chair, as if some one had lately been there.

It was his mother's shawl, and he was wondering if she was there, when down the stairs came a man's rapid step, and the next moment Dr. Grant came into the room, starting when he saw Wilford, who left intuitively that something was wrong.

"Is Katy sick?" was his first question, which Morris answered in the affirmative, holding him back as he was starting for her room, and saying to him: "Let me send your mother to you first."

What passed between Wilford and his mother was never known exactly, but at the close of the interview, Mrs. Cameron was very pale, while Wilford's face looked dark and anxious as he said: "You think he understands it, then?"

"Yes, in part, but the world will be none the wiser by his knowledge. I knew Dr. Grant before you did, and there are few men living whom I respect as much, and no one whom I would trust as soon."

Mrs. Cameron had paid a high tribute to Morris Grant, and Wilford bowed in assent, asking next how she managed Dr. Craig.

"That was easy, inasmuch as he believed it an insane freak of Katy's to have no other physician than her cousin. It was quite natural, he said, adding that she was as safe with Dr. Grant as any one. And I was glad, for I could not have a stranger know that affair. You will go up now," Mrs. Cameron continued, and a moment after, Wilford stood in the dimly lighted room where Katy was talking of Geneva and St. Mary's, and was only kept upon her pillow by the strong arm of Morris, who stood over her when Wilford entered, trying in vain to quiet her.

She knew him, and writhing away from Morris's arms, she said to him, "Geneva is not in that grave at St. Mary's; she is living, and you are not my husband. So you can leave the house at once. Morris will settle the estate, and no bill shall be sent in for your board and lodging."

In some moods Wilford would have smiled at being thus summarily dismissed from his own house; but he was too sore now, too sensitive to smile, and his voice was rather severe as he laid his hand on Katy's and said:

"Don't be foolish, Katy. Don't you know me? I am Wilford, your husband."

"That was, you mean," Katy rejoined, drawing her hand quickly away. "Go find your first love, where bullets fall like hail, and where there is pain, and blood, and carnage. Geneva is there."

"What God hath joined together let man put asunder," was the text from which she preached several short sermons as the night wore on, but just as the morning dawned, she fell into the first quiet sleep she had had during the last twenty-four hours. And while she slept, Wilford ventured near enough to see the sunken cheeks and hollow eyes which wrung a groan from him as he turned to Morris, and asked what he supposed was the immediate cause of her sudden illness?

"A terrible shock, the nature of which I understand, but you have nothing to fear from me," Morris replied. "I accuse no man, but leave you to settle it with your conscience whether you did right to deceive her so long."

Morris spoke as one having authority, and Wilford simply bowed his head, feeling no resentment towards one who had ventured to reprove him. Afterwards he might remember it differently, but now he was too anxious to keep Morris there to quarrel with him, and so he made no reply, but sat watching Katy while she slept, wondering if she would die, and feeling how terrible life would be without her. Suddenly Geneva's warning words rang in his ear.

"God will not forgive you for the wrong you have done me."

Was Geneva right? Had God remembered all this time, and overtaken him at last? It might be, and with a groan Wilford hid his face in his hands, believing that he repented of his sin, and not knowing that his fancied repentance arose merely from the fact that he had been detected.

Worn out with watching and waiting, Mrs. Cameron, who would suffer neither Juno nor Bell to come near the house, waited anxiously for the arrival of the New Haven train, which she hoped would bring Helen to her aid. Under ordinary circumstances, she would rather not have met her, for her presence would keep the letter so constantly in her mind; but now, anybody who could be trusted was welcome, and when at last there came a cautious ring, she went herself to the hall, starting back with undisguised vexation when she saw the timid-looking woman following close behind Helen, and whom the latter presented as "My mother, Mrs. Lennox."

Convinced that Morris's sudden journey to New York had something to do with Katy's illness, and almost distracted with fears for her daughter's life, Mrs. Lennox could not remain at home and wait for the tardy mail or the careless telegraph. She must go to her child, and casting off her dread of Wilford's displeasure, she came with Helen, and was bowing meekly to Mrs. Cameron, who neither offered her hand nor gave any token of greeting except a distant bow and a simple "Good morning, madam."

But Mrs. Lennox was too anxious to notice the woman's haughty manner as she led them to the library and to her son, Wilford.

Gradually the noise in the room died away, the tread of rumbling wheels ceased, and the

law, but he tried to be polite, answering her questions civilly, and when she asked if it were true that he had sent for Morris, assuring her that it was not. "Dr. Grant happened here very providentially, and I hope to keep him until the crisis is past, although he has just told me he must go back to-morrow."

"Was you a widower when you married my daughter?" she said to him, when at last Helen left the room, and she was alone with him.

"Yes, madam," he replied, "some would call me so, though I was divorced from my wife. As this was a matter which did not in any way concern your daughter, I deemed it best not to tell her. Latterly she has found it out, and it is having a very extraordinary effect upon her."

And this was all Mrs. Lennox knew until alone with Helen, who told her the story as she had heard it from Morris. His sudden journey to New York was thus accounted for, and Helen explained it to her mother, advising her to say nothing of it, as it might be better for Wilford not to know that Katy had telegraphed for Morris. It seemed very necessary that Dr. Grant should return to Silverton, and the day following Helen's arrival in New York, he made arrangements to do so.

"You have other physicians here," he said to Wilford, who objected to his leaving. "Dr. Craig will do as well as I."

Wilford admitted that he might, but it was with a sinking heart that he saw Morris depart, and then went to Katy, who began to grow very restless and uneasy, bidding him go away and see Dr. Morris back. It was in vain that they administered the medicine just as Morris directed. Katy grew constantly worse, until Mrs. Lennox asked another doctor be called. But to this Wilford would not listen. Fear of exposure and censure was stronger than his fears for Katy's life, which seemed balancing upon a thread as that long night and the next day went by. Three times Wilford telegraphed for Morris, and it was with unfeigned joy he welcomed him back at last, and heard that he had so arranged his business as to stay with Katy while the danger lasted.

With a monotonous sameness the days now came and went, people still shunning the house as if the plague was there. Once, Bell Cameron came round to call on Helen, holding her breath as she passed through the hall, and never asking to go near Katy's room. Two or three times, too, Mrs. Banker's carriage stood at the door, and Mrs. Banker herself came in, appearing so cool and distant that Helen could scarcely keep back her tears as she guessed the cause. Mark too, was in the city, having returned with the Seventh Regiment; but from Esther, Helen learned that he was about joining the army as captain of a company, composed of the finest men in the city. The next she heard was from Mrs. Banker, who incidentally remarked, "I shall be very lonely now that Mark has gone. He left me to-day for Washington."

There were tears on the mother's face, and her lip quivered as she tried to keep them back, by looking from the window into the streets, instead of at her companion, who, overcome with the rush of feeling which swept over her, hid her face on the sofa and sobbed aloud.

"Why, Helen! Miss Lennox, I am surprised. I had supposed—I was not aware—I did not think you would care," Mrs. Banker exclaimed, coming closer to Helen, who stammered out, "I beg you will excuse me, I cannot help it. I care for all our soldiers. It seems so terrible."

At the words "I care for all our soldiers," a shadow of disappointment flitted over Mrs. Banker's face. She knew her son had offered himself and been refused, as she supposed; and she believed too, that Helen had given publicity to the affair, feeling justly indignant at this breach of confidence and lack of delicacy in one whom she had liked so much, and whom she still liked, in spite of the wounded pride which had prompted her to appear so cold and distant.

"Perhaps it is all a mistake," she thought, as she continued standing by Helen, for it was not as if she had returned, and she felt tempted to ask why Helen had been refused.

But Mark would not have anything to do with her interference, she said, and so the golden moment had, and when she left the house, the misunderstanding between herself and Helen was just as wide as ever. Wearily after that the days passed with Helen, until all thoughts of herself were forgotten in the terrible fear that death was really brooding over the pillow where Katy lay, insensible to all that was passing around her. The lips were silent now, and Wilford had nothing to fear from the tongue hitherto so busy. What Wilford suffered none could guess. He did not ask that she might live, for if all were well hereafter he knew it was better for her to die in her young womanhood, than to live till the heart, now so sad and bleeding, had grown calloused with sorrow. And yet it was terrible to think of Katy dead; terrible to think of that face and form laid away beneath the turf of Greenwood, where those who loved her best could seldom go to weep.

And as they sat there thus, the night shadows stole into the room, and the hours crept on till from a city tower a clock struck ten, and Morris, motioning Helen to his side, bade her go with her mother to rest. "We do not need you here," he said; "your presence can do no good. Should a change occur, you shall be told at once."

Thus importuned, Helen and her mother withdrew, and only Morris and Wilford remained to watch that heavy slumber, so nearly resembling death.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

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