

The Glad Story in Her Face.

Mrs. Henry Dudeney in the Treasury.

It was November, late afternoon, and fishing smacks were sailing out. A man and a woman sat on the rude stone pier...

They went slowly up and down the little salt and silent street, in the brooding, fond way of lovers.

'You—you needn't let me go—for good,' it might have been the flutter of a gull's wing, that pallid, fine quiver of her mouth.

'Sweetheart, my most dear, I must—and, yes, for good; that little round word in more senses than one. Don't you see that you're devout and that I don't believe in a single thing?'

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tion. Whose hand was it that shot forth the arrows of one's sudden and most mystic moods? Why, she can't die easy else, said the Captain.

He struck his weather-beaten, most distressed face close. There was reproach and strangeness in his eyes.

'Well, all the wrestlin' for her soul, he said solemnly, 'and you'll be forced to offer up a prayer—with the rest. You don't cross the threshold else, mark me. Is that a bargain between man and man?'

'I'll pray, Paul promised, and feeling horribly sorry for this stricken old sailor who was known to love his beautiful wife beyond the measure of his class.

He felt when he went in that his litter of artist materials, that his very presence, assailed the death-room. It was full of grim neighbors and relatives—their magnet the wide bed with the dull hangings.

'I shall pray for you,' she said, her low voice muffled.

'Love, I know that you will; your prayers shall be the mists to which I cling. And who knows, Mary,—he was caressing her hair, limp, long hair and dark—his lips moved along the salt-sprinkled locks—a miracle may be worked. For I am never a man to be moulded by slow processes; Faith will be sudden with me, beautiful light, as Saul of Tarsus saw—would you, would you? Oh, but it won't be for years, and probably not at all. You will have married someone else by then.'

'I shall never marry anyone else. How could I possibly?'

'How true she sounded—inflexibly constant! 'You'll wait—really?'

'Paul! She was holding him tight, she was speaking fast, she was losing that serene, calm manner of the securely grounded woman. 'You are spoiling our two lives for a fantasy—and that is an artist all through.'

'Dear! Fantasy is the only real thing; it's another word for mysticism. Doesn't your own Bible teach you?'

Not go gracefully, obligingly through with it? It was—nothing! Even the Lord's Prayer forsok him and fled.

He looked at her; she returned the look beseechingly. Silently she implored his prayer. The mysterious face had changed. She was no longer cynical, no longer sure, no longer proud queen of the occasion.

A heavy hand, a hard hand, a hand soaked through and through with the salt white smell of the sea, pressed upon Paul's shoulder. It was the Captain's hand, and the Captain's face, broken up with misery, was once more stuck close to his.

'Pray, I tell you, he choked. Never had a man been told—to pray—in a mode which so nearly approached the cursed "Paul" dropped down—the submissive stone. He had meant to pray, when the time came, apostolically; since the spirit of fishermen souls must be so. He had thought it out, on the artistic side, as he walked from his studio to the Captain's sea-girt house. Directly he went into the room and began to work he had forgotten.

Knelling down he thought of St. Thomas, the one who, of all the disciples, most had his sympathy and understanding. What was it St. Thomas said? He could remember—nothing! The one word in the English language was just—nothing! He could not link words into the shortest chain.

It was horrible; for they were all waiting, and the room seemed to be instinct with suppressed growl. It grew—with the moments. They were a wild lot—always; and most when their sacred feelings were stirred. They would as soon pick him up and throw him out into the sea as look at him, these big, lawless fellows.

They were certainly more sullen, more threatening, the neighbors in the room. For he was flouting them on their most sensitive side; and the more fervid of them were probably prepared to admit that he was in league with the devil to wreck Janet's soul; that some wife of Satan brought him there; for, always, they suspected and hated the painters of the place.

Then suddenly, and why and how he knew not, nor ever would know, he sobbed out the Publisher's prayer, 'Lord, be merciful.'

Janet Nancurvis said it too. He heard her suddenly broken voice, her harsh, completely worn-out breathing—the last, cruel gasp. He felt her quick collapse, her pleading, bleating sobs, her dying thanksgiving. And they all knew that—perhaps through the window, past the powdery mists, and out into the warm salt air—her soul had set forth for the Port.

The nasal 'Amen' of neighbors went round the room as Paul dropped his head on the knotted quilt, hiding his face in those long, sensitive hands that seem so womanish to fishermen.

There was a faint rushing in the room also; not sound of the sea, nor patter of big rain drops; not brush of gulls' wings, not heavy red burning of the fire. It was of tears—perhaps, too, of something more marvellous. For who of them all could say what was in the room and what was not? This was—Pentecost!

The miracle was worked. There, kneeling, it was all made plain. He saw—he believed. The light came—as to Saul of Tarsus. It was childishly simple, securely true; superb, eternal. He understood, he trusted; he knew that this was to be no moment of hectic, brief emotion. Somewhere surely Mary was also praying—and for him—as she would until she died.

A hand fluttered on his shoulder; it was a woman's this time. When he looked up—haggard, glad, subtly illumined, a changed man, born again, as the devout fishermen would have phrased it—he saw that Janet was dead. And every one of them in the room stared solemnly from the new, superb placidity of her face to the calm, high joy on his.

Next morning—Monday—the sun shone, the ships danced, and very early he wired to Mary the whirling word 'Come!'

There was only one possible train that would bring her, and that came twisting into St. Brigid, between the deep mountains, about dusky time, when sea and sky were crimson, when little sandy coves were pallid, and you only saw the wan shadows of blue stars.

Would she come? For it was two years—nearly three. All sorts of cruel and stupid things may block the way in three years, even between those who deeply, deeply love. The tide of Circumstance is very strong; moreover, Death may come up quietly with his scythe.

He watched the train—a serpent out of the tunnel. He could see strings of lights in the winking old fishing town; he marked the tremor of the beautiful waters. His insistent heart was certainly strangling him; he dared not look.

Then, taking courage, he turned his head. And he saw her. She was looking eagerly out of the window, not changed a bit. She had come. She was alive and true and free—Mary! He hurried along the platform.

The little train stood still. The small station, crazy, Lillipulian, delightful, was all bustle; barbarous shoutings, smell of pilchards—for always there were, at this time of the year, sending off pilchards!

She was here—close; head wreathed in violet, the salt air already blowing her dark locks loose.

They held hands, they gave one mutual, floating breath, they could not say one word—not yet. It was devouring her, curve by curve, tint by tint. The crimson sun was on her. Oh, the glad glory of her face!

It was nothing—a mere formula. Then why

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