

The Storyteller

MY LADY HOPE

(Concluded from last week.)

'My good woman,' he began.

'My good sir!' she retorted gaily, and as she spoke she linked her arm in his. 'Let us have a little chat, dear. You are late to-day; it is almost time to go home, and then grandfather will want you to play dominoes with him, and I shan't have a chance to say another word to you. Let us talk of when you and I shall be married—yes, dear—and of how we shall travel. All through Europe, remember, you have promised me. And you are going to be famous, oh, so famous!' She looked up into his face and laughed merrily, so that Dr. Morrison marvelled at the melody, the sweetness of it. He did not know that in the old days Herbert Satterlee had told her that her laugh was the prettiest he had ever heard. And all the time her heart was praying ('Mother of Christ, give him to me,' she pleaded. 'Just this one soul, my Mother; just this one soul. Mother of the Infant God Who sat upon your knee, give me this, give me this!')

'Famous!' her lips were saying, blithely. 'Oh, what a famous sculptor you will be! You will put me into marble, won't you, Herbert? Do you remember the last work you finished: "My Lady Hope?" Can you remember?'

'No,' he muttered, 'I cannot remember, Eleanor.'

Her heart seemed to stop beating suddenly. Dr. Morrison leaned forward, a long breath parting his lips, his intent gaze on that pathetic scene. The room swam before her dazzled sight. One moment of weakness now might spoil all, one false word. But she was a woman, therefore she was brave, a woman struggling for more than life.

'You cannot remember?' And again she laughed, and again her heart ached with its prayer: 'Oh, Mother Mary, help me now!' and her little hand trembled. 'Do you want to see it, dear? It is just behind this curtain. It is glorious, Herbert. Let us look at it together, husband mine.'

'Where is it?' he asked. 'Where is it, Eleanor?'

He was trembling and his eyes were shining and his breath came in hot gasps. She moved quickly to the alcove, and drew aside the red curtains. The electric light was turned on full, bathing in its brilliant brightness the magnificent figure he had created. The dazzling light after the semi-darkness of the room startled him. He bent forward, fascinated. The marble image seemed to Eleanor's straining sight as if it were endowed with feeling. Her lips were moving piteously. And the patient, beautiful, sculptured face looked down on the man who had fashioned it, and on the woman who was fighting for so much. Just a second they stood so, but to that living, loving woman the moment seemed almost like eternity; it was a whole century of torture, agony inexpressible, anguish and fear. Then a shout ran through the room. Herbert Satterlee rushed forward, falling on his knees at the base of his statue, sobbing like a little child.

'My statue!' he cried. 'My hope—my Lady Hope! Eleanor! Eleanor! Where are you, Eleanor? O God, Eleanor, where are you?'

She was there, kneeling beside him, clasping his dark head to her breast, soothing him as its mother would a frightened infant. Clothed in his right mind she clasped him to her, and he looked up at her, questioning her in piteous silence.

'You have been ill, sweetheart,' she answered faintly. 'Very, very ill. But it is all right now, dear; it is all right now. Here is the doctor coming. Dr. Morrison, my husband is much better. We are going home.'

And oh, the joy, the proud, exultant happiness that looked up at the physician from the woman's eyes!

'Home!' said Herbert Satterlee. 'It seems so long since we were home, Eleanor. Let us go home now.'

'Allow me to accompany you to call a carriage,' said Dr. Morrison, courteously. 'A little wine, perhaps; you look rather shaky, my dear madam.' He smiled, bending gentle eyes upon her. 'You feel better, Mr. Satterlee?'

'I am quite well, I thank you,' he returned with fine dignity. 'You will tell me all about it, Eleanor.'

'Yes, dear,' she answered. Her heart was singing, throbbing, almost bursting with its gratitude and joy. Dr. Morrison, alarmed by the pallor of her face, went swiftly into the inner room, returning almost instantly with the wine.

'Every drop,' he said, peremptorily, and she obeyed him. Her eyes clung to his face, and he shook his head two or three times reassuringly. 'Everything is well—everything,' he said. 'Very soon, you will not have long to wait.'

She understood him and smiled happily. They passed out, the doctor preceding them. He had to push hard to open the door. The little dwarf had followed is only friend, and now when the door swung in, started forward with a joyous grunt. Eleanor heard his guttural 'yap, yap' of pleasure, and her nervous grasp upon her husband's arm tightened. She hurried him on fast, and he, unconscious, in his newly-regained senses, of the creature who had been his share, went with her undisturbed. Dr. Morrison laid his strong but not unkindly hand on the shoulders of the hapless being, and drew him aside.

'Poor little Prank!' he said, looking down at him, for his heart was very tender just then. 'Poor little chap, you have lost your only friend!'

And in his heart, his somewhat hardened, worldly heart, he said, 'Thank God!'

But Prank did not understand. He was staring, open-mouthed as usual, after his protector. The cry died on his lips. A blank, puzzled look shut down over his face. He struggled a little to free himself, but finding the struggle vain, gave up, and watched the form of Herbert Satterlee disappear. When he had gone, Dr. Morrison released him. He fell to the floor, inert and helpless, moaning like a stricken thing wounded to the heart.

'Whatever became of that handsome young sculptor?' asked an interested visitor some six months later. 'Did he die?'

'Indeed, no,' answered Dr. Morrison. He is as sound as ever he was. 'Splendid fellow, bright as a diamond. We always expected it, more or less, but his wife finally accomplished it. She—well, she is a superb woman.'

Dr. Morrison was a warm friend of both by this time. It was Eleanor Satterlee's simple trust that led him afterwards to the true faith, but that occurred a good many years subsequently, and it is not within the province of this little tale. He was apt though, ever and always, to wax enthusiastic when he spoke of her.

'And the little dwarf, is he still here?' went on the questioner.

'No,' said Dr. Morrison, and the pleasant light faded out of his eyes. 'No, he isn't here. He died a week after the young man left.'

'Died?' queried the visitor, sympathetically. 'Poor little fellow!'

'Poor little fellow!' echoed the physician.—'Rosary Magazine.'

THE WAY DOWN HILL

A wife sat sleeping before the library fire. She was dressed for the opera, the white of her neck and shoulders gleaming through the scarf which she had thrown about her, the ivory sheen of her trained skirt tinted by the firelight. Her cheeks and eyes were red and swollen with weeping and her lips quivered in her sleep.

And as she slept the wife dreamed that she stood upon a hill in the golden light of a summer day. All about her lay the roughness and wildness of a new country, but above her head the sky was clear and the sun hung in the blue. Away at the bottom of the hill the sky lowered black and threatening, shutting out every trace of sunlight, and the giant trees were bending to the earth in a mighty wind storm. A petulant laughing boy was tugging at her hand trying to drag her down hill.

'Come, come,' he cried impatiently, and pulled her toward him.

The wife awoke with a start. The front door had banged and someone was stumbling along the hall. She waited, tense and breathless, her whole face reddening with shame. Presently her husband lurched into the doorway and seated himself there, clinging to the case-ment. His clothes were dishevelled, his eyes bloodshot.

'Isn't it rather late for you to be up?' he demanded, thickly. He stood clutching the framework of the door, his face bent upon her in a maudlin scowl.

'I don't know,' the woman answered dully. She got up nervously and walked slowly, wearily away from him toward the other door. 'John will help you to bed,' she said. She lifted her silken train in fingers that were shaking and dragged herself from the room.

She prayed so long and so hopefully with all the faith of a pure young Catholic heart, and was this to be the end of it? Her married life had started in with happiness and prosperity. Was it perhaps that in her joy of life and love she had forgotten her God and