

none in her dress at the ball on New Year's Day. The Amhurst diamonds shall sparkle bravely. Not that they are brighter than your bright eyes: You need fear no rival amid all the fair dames and damsels.'

'With these words he rose to leave the room, pausing to bestow an unwonted kiss upon Margaret's cheek as she passed her chair.'

Poor Sir Percival! if he had but known the thoughts and hopes that surged up in her breast at the bare mention of the proposed journey, his pleasure would have quickly disappeared. Since Tunstall's execution, and owing doubtless to his prayers on her behalf, Margaret's conscience, so long dormant, had begun to waken from its sleep. She remembered her early days! she reflected how easily she had surrendered, for the sake of worldly advantages, that Faith for which many had been willing to give up all they possessed and to die a cruel death. She longed to unburden her soul, and she rejoiced in going to town solely because she hoped that she might there find the opportunity for which, in her own neighborhood, she was well aware she would seek in vain.

The winter was mild, and all went well with the travellers, who took up their quarters in the finest and most commodious hostelry in the City of London. Sir Percival Amhurst was a consummate horseman, and sat his steed with as much ease and grace as any younger man could have done.

He was the cynosure of many admiring eyes as, mounted on a magnificent chestnut horse, he rode forth to join the meet one sunny January morning. His wife knew he would be absent some hours, and she seized the opportunity of executing her long-cherished project. Dreading lest she should be recognised, watched, and betrayed, in spite of having taken the precaution of putting on garments she had never worn before, she hastened with trembling steps to the house of a Catholic friend where she knew she could obtain access to a priest. This friend was at the time seriously ill, and Margaret's ostensible reason was to inquire after her. She knew that she could confide in her; and before long she found herself in the presence of the minister of God.

Here her long pent-up feelings found vent; her grief, her remorse, were poured out with sobs and tears. The listener was deeply touched. Her self-abasement was evidently genuine, her sorrow poignant and sincere.

'But, my child,' the good Father said, as soon as the torrent of words ceased for a moment, 'you had no evil intention in describing your patient so as to enable your husband to identify him?'

'Oh, no, no!' was the prompt reply. 'I never had in my heart one thought that was not kindness concerning him.'

'In this case your remorse appears to be somewhat exaggerated. You grieve so bitterly on account of your heedless words and their result; but do you never reflect how terrible a sin you committed when, for the sake of a brilliant marriage and a life of worldly happiness, you abandoned your Faith?'

Margaret crimsoned, and burst into a fresh fit of weeping.

'It is too late, Father!' she said. 'As I have sown, so I must reap. But I have conformed only outwardly: my heart has ever been true, to the proscribed Faith.'

'We can always retrace our steps while we live,' replied the priest. 'The path for you would be rugged indeed, yet I hope and believe you will have grace to walk in it one day. Farewell, my child! May God bless you!'

Margaret knelt to receive the priest's blessing; then, without another word, silently left the house, soothed in a certain way, but humbled as well. The words she had heard were well chosen, and had produced the very effect which the speaker intended.

Sir Percival returned to the hotel in the highest spirits, full of delight in his favorite exercise, eager to relate many pleasant meetings with old friends.

'I had only one mishap, Maggie,' he concluded, 'and that is a mere trifle. In leaping a hedge, a great thorn tore my right hand a little; it is only a surface wound, but it smarted a good deal. See here,' he continued, marching across to where she sat.

Margaret grew white to the very lips and remained rooted to her seat like a marble statue. Her husband stared. No association was connected in his mind with the apparently slight injury: he did not know that, by a singular coincidence, he had torn open the very same part of the hand which had been grazed by the rope in Tunstall's case.

'There is nothing to be alarmed at, Maggie,' he said: 'Your ointment will soon make it well again.'

But it did not do so: on the contrary, as the days went by, the wounded finger festered and defied Margaret's skill. She very naturally feared that her husband would never recover from his wound; she thought that a just retribution had overtaken him, and that he would lose the hand that had worked so much evil.

A doctor was called in. Percival was laid up for several weeks. But his splendid constitution triumphed; the wound healed, and in the early part of February he was able to return home.

Again the months slipped by in an uneventful course at Chislehampton Hall. The summer had come round, and the June sun shone upon a world that was full of beauty. Sir Percival, whose tastes were thoroughly rural, and who loved to spend his time in outdoor occupations, was accustomed to lend a helping hand to his men when the hay or corn had to be gathered in.

One day, when he was busily assisting in making a rick, a blade of coarse grass in the bundle he was handling cut the wound open. This time neither his wife's ointment nor the doctor's skill availed anything. Sir Percival's hour had come. Blood-poisoning set in, and in less than a week he died.

He remained in an unconscious state for some hours before his death, and was believed to have lost the power of speech. Throughout his illness he had manifested no interest in religion or the slightest fear for the future. A few moments, however, before he actually expired, a glimpse of eternity appeared to have been revealed to him. Raising himself upon his pillows, he exclaimed three times, in a voice so piercing as to wake the slumbering echoes of the old house and fill every heart with dismay:

'Too late! Too late! Too late!'

And so he passed into the presence of his Judge.

For Lady Margaret a more merciful fate was reserved. She had given up her religion in order to marry Sir Percival, and now his sad end gave her courage to return to it. The property was made over to a brother of Sir Percival (a Protestant like himself), in consequence of his having denounced his widowed sister-in-law as a recusant. She had always been a great favorite of his, and he might perhaps have hesitated to take this step had he not been instigated to it by his wife, who, herself a very plain woman, married only for the sake of her fortune, was jealous of Lady Margaret's beauty and attractiveness.

Thus the late mistress of Chislehampton Hall found herself penniless. For some time she subsisted by selling her jewels; but ultimately she made her escape to France, where she lived in poverty and obscurity for many years, her sole source of income being a meagre pittance doled out to her by her brother-in-law. Her life was pious and austere; no one could have recognised in the white-haired woman, aged beyond her years, and uniformly clad in a black serge gown, with cloak and bonnet to match, the brilliant and vivacious Lady Amhurst of former years.—*Ave Maria.*

HIRAM'S LUCKY AUCTION

With a whoop the Caldwell children rushed out to greet their father, and Mrs. Caldwell hurried after them to head off any raids on the green bob sled.

'Got everything, father?' she called, as she peered out of the storm door.

'Got a plenty,' he called back, with an attempt at heartiness that caused her to glance quickly at the sled. She had heard those half-apologetic tones before and knew what they meant.

Back in the sled covered by a blanket, was a square package. It was not the right shape for cracker boxes nor tall enough for a barrel.

She drove the children into the house, and shrouding her head in an old wool fascinator, she followed out to the barn, where Hiram was already unhitching the tired team.

She made straight for the sled and threw aside the blanket, disclosing a small soda fountain.

'What did you pay for this?' she demanded, indicating the square of stained marble with its tarnished spigots.

'Six dollars and thirty cents,' he said, the red surging into his face. 'The man said the metal is worth more than that.'

'Then you didn't have anything left for the presents?' she asked reproachfully. 'Oh, Hiram! And after you promised.'

'But, look here,' he argued. 'There's bound to be another store set up. Maybe they'll want a fountain, and I can sell this at a big profit.'

There was no use in arguing. Ever since they had been married she had tried to persuade Hiram to stop buying things