

ning flashes. The stranger sat in the hut, seeking shelter. The door of the sick room was partly open, so that he could clearly see the dying man without being observed by him.

'I am abandoned by God and man!' lamented the sufferer. After a pause he composed himself in the bed, looking out with fixed eyes. 'I am truly sorry,' he groaned, 'that I have done this . . . and that . . . and that Thus he began to count up his sins.

Teresa looked shyly at the stranger, and tried to comfort the cowerd with the thought of God's mercy.

Franz Helwart drank in the solemn scene with all his mind, with every fibre of his heart. It was this that had been burned into his very being for the last twenty years. In all climes, in the great cities, and now on this homely height, was the same miserable story: 'No faith, no love.' In the stable near at hand he could hear a cow lowing for her calf that had been taken from her; but the consecrated, appointed shepherd was leaving his sheep to die all helpless. The very heaven, with this blustering storm, was making it harder. Could the old pastor really not come? That was a poor excuse to make to the dying lad in the next room.

Two hours after the brother's departure the thunder ceased, but the rain and stormy wind still continued. About 6 o'clock the sick man said:

'Vincent could surely have been back long ago. I am nearly at the end.'

The twilight began to gather within the hut, and the girl lighted the lamp before the crucifix; its long, ghostly shadows, and those of a consecrated branch of palm, stole across the wall and the bed where the sufferer lay.

'God help me!' groaned the dying man. 'Let me not die without the holy sacraments.' His hair stood on end, and his wide-open eyes seemed starting out of their sockets.

The stranger could scarcely bear the sight any longer. If it had not been for the darkness, he would have left the mountain. Little by little the rain ceased, but it was very dark. It seemed to him like passing from uproar to calm; from bondage to freedom; but there, in the poverty-stricken hut, was wrestling one to whom there could be no deliverance.

The deep stillness was suddenly broken by distant footsteps, probably those of the brother coming home after his vain endeavor. He was right; the man was not hurrying. Unpleasant news always travels quickly enough. So thought the embittered traveller.

But—that was not the footstep of one single pedestrian; it was the regular tramp of a whole group of men. It came from the direction of the village down in the valley. Franz could now hear lowered voices, like a far-off chorus of prayer. Across the rocky steep, along the narrow path that wound up the mountain-side, long shadows were stretching. The stranger went a hundred paces to meet the newcomers. Then he saw that they carried a stretcher, and heard clearly the once familiar words of the rosary. 'Another accident already!' he thought. 'That is the shady side of these Alpine regions.'

The same moment he was observed by one of the bearers, who called to him.

'Tell them at the Rieder-Alm that the Pfarrer is coming.'

The Pfarrer! As if his own soul were in question, the stranger flew back to the hut.

'Tonerl, the Pfarrer from St. Martin will be here directly!'

The dying man could scarcely raise himself to hear the approaching procession—the firm, even step, and the men's prayers. They stopped in front of the hut. The stranger had come outside, and saw them set down the stretcher before the lower door.

Was it the light of the moon on the Pfarrer's face, as he lay there with closed eyes, his hands crossed over the Pyx upon his heart, or had the bearers brought a dead body hither? A shiver ran through the man who had broken alike with God and with his fellow-men. But, no; the priest opened his eyes and looked calmly around. His gaze fell on Franz Helwart. It was an indescribable look, which the stranger never forgot—a look in which were mingled pain, resignation, love, and, above all, an unspeakable joy that he was come there.

They placed the stretcher close to Tonerl's bed, under the shadow of the crucifix. The two men lay side by side—the shepherd, who had toiled even to death, beside his dying sheep.

And while the cow herd breathed his last confession into the ear of the sick Pfarrer, the men stood aside, and Vincent related to Teresa how it had all happened. When the Pfarrer heard how urgently Tonerl longed for him, he had painfully dressed himself; they had carried him into the church for the Blessed Sacrament, and had brought the old priest hither through wind and storm, praying that he might not die on the way.

Teresa now glanced through the closed window, and saw Tonerl beckoning with his hand. They went into the

chamber of death—first the brother, then the young girl, and the stranger immediately behind her.

'It has cost him his life,' said Tonerl, with a motion of his hands towards the Pfarrer lying beside him.

As the sun rose, red with the joyful glow of morning, they bore the two, the shepherd and the rescued sheep, down into the valley. And behind the double bier walked one who had come from afar and yet was no stranger, one who had strayed outside the fold and, like the dead cowerd, had been brought home upon the shoulders of the true Shepherd.—*Ave Maria.*

EVELYN'S LAST CUSTOMER

Evelyn was a shop girl. But she could count the days since stern necessity had forced her shoulders to the wheel to help support a brave young brother and herself, both orphans, whom an ill-tempered, capricious uncle had educated, giving them also a luxurious home, and then, on a slight provocation, had driven them forth to seek their living. George had procured a situation as book-keeper through the influence of a friend in Kansas. Evelyn accompanied him, and had overcome her pride sufficiently to stand behind a counter in a jeweller's store, and thereby contribute her quota to the rent of modest apartments, where brother and sister enjoyed the pleasure and consolation of each other's company after working hours.

Evelyn was convent-bred. She had been educated under the strict, yet maternal, influence of the nuns. She realised now that the lessons of self-restraint, courtesy, uprightness, and high principle and, above all, the influence of daily prayer were to be brought to bear on her life. She did not repine, she did not chafe at the change in her condition; she only gathered together all her reserve power, took up her burden and brought all her energies to bear on the one aim—of brightening her brother's life and giving him a home, with an angel to guard it.

George was more rebellious. He stormed at the crankiness and cruelty of his uncle. He fumed against fate, and although his youthful ambition was fired by the fact of having his sister to look after, her sensible example and wholesome brightness did more than anything else to keep bitterness from his soul and hold him to his religion.

A year had passed since they were exiled from their uncle's stately house in New York. They were growing used to their lot, for they quickly made friends and kept their secret. But their thoughts often wandered to their native city and the friends they had left there. The irascible old uncle, quickly regretting his temper and its sequel, gave out that they were travelling.

One evening, alone in the store, Evelyn was arranging new goods in a case. Her employers had learned to trust her implicitly and depend on her taste in details. Her eyes lingered on a little frame heart-shaped and edged with pearls. She was thinking how glad she would be if it were hers, for she had a weakness for jewels, for pearls in particular.

As she held the frame, a young man entered. He looked at her with a surprised gaze, which brought the blood to her cheek, and then politely apologised.

'Pardon me, miss,' he said, 'but you look so strikingly like an old college chum of mine that the likeness startled me. I want a frame,' he added, 'a small affair, like the one you are putting away.'

Evelyn recovered herself and handed him the frame.

'Pearls,' he remarked. 'They signify tears, don't they?'

'They never did to me,' said Evelyn, with a smile. 'I think pearls are the loveliest gems. I am not superstitious.'

'Somehow I think you are voicing the opinion of the young lady for whom I want this gift. I fancy she would like pearls.'

'Why not ask her?' said Evelyn.

'I don't know where she is now; and, to tell the truth, I have never seen her. She is simply a dream to me,' said the buyer.

Evelyn looked her surprise. He was quite in earnest, and naturally she was curious; but, with well-bred self-possession, she gave no further sign of her feelings. But the explanation was volunteered.

'You see, miss, the college chum whom you resemble so much roomed with me at old Fordham for three years. He had a pearl of a sister, who wrote him letters that any fellow on earth would swear came from a sweetheart. I used to envy him, for I have no sister, and whenever his sister's birthday came round he and I went about town getting into all the jewellery stores to find her a present. He always got her something nice, too, and I added a ring or locket or pencil, labelled "From George's chum." I did that for two years at college, and even after I left,