

CONTINUED FROM TENTH PAGE.  
best of my power, when—when she is free again."

He flushed on muttering the last words, and turned away in the direction of Mr. Barnes' office without any more ado.

The vicar of St. Cuthbert's was granted privileges, denied by the prison authorities to ordinary outsiders.

He was known to both governor and chaplain at the gaol, and found little difficulty in obtaining permission to see Gwynneth Naylor two or three times a week.

He meant to see her that very afternoon, but he went first to Church Road for news of Mrs. Naylor, guessing the girl might be anxious about her stepmother, even though she had behaved in a manner calculated to pain and shame her, almost beyond forgiveness.

"Mother is quite conscious, and would like to see you, Mr. Sterne," said Maude, admitting him herself when he called.

Mrs. Naylor lay on a sofa at the foot of her bed, looking so broken down with grief and shame, that Clarence could not find it in his heart to speak to her as he proposed doing concerning her treatment of the child who had now disgraced her.

"I won't offer you my hand, Mr. Sterne; I cannot expect you or anyone else ever to take it again. That wicked has ruined us all."

"She is as unhappy as you are yourself, Mrs. Naylor; more so, I think. If you won't shake hands I shall not sit down. You must not let your trouble make you morbid."

"Morbid! If I were only morbid! I think the shame will kill me."

She allowed him to take her limp fingers in his for a moment, and she did not interrupt when he spoke words of comfort and of hope for the future, telling her of his determination not to be beaten by even the adverse circumstance of committal for theft in his resolve to win Gwynneth to better things.

But Mrs. Naylor listened merely out of courtesy, and all the encouragement she gave to proceed in the task Clarence had set himself, was the information that "he didn't know Gwynneth, or he would not expect anything good of her."

#### CHAPTER III.

"But I did take the money! I am guilty!" Gwynneth stood in her cell, her back against the wall, answering defiantly with eyes and tongue Clarence Sterne's command that she should clear herself, to him, of the theft to which she pleaded guilty.

"Last night, he said, with slow gravity 'you told me that all your sins were big ones—that you told only big falsehoods; I think you have told me one now.'"

"No; I have not. I saw, in court, that you believed me to be innocent. That did me good for the moment, and made me wish I had not done it; for I could have been different, if only someone had cared long ago, about my being—good." She spoke haltingly. "But it does not alter the fact of my guilt. I took that note from Edmund's desk, and I changed it at Hunter's. I am telling you the truth, Mr. Sterne."

He felt compelled to believe her, and his heart sank curiously.

"Why did you do it?" he asked. "Maude told you the reason. I wanted to show mother how wicked I could be; she seemed always to expect something dreadful of me—and now it has happened!"

Clarence was quick to note that, though the reply came readily, her clear eyes drooped before his.

Ignoring the fact of her having answered him at all, he repeated his question—

"Why did you do it?"

"Have I not just told you why?"

"No."

She shrugged her shoulders, and remained silent.

"Child, don't you know it is as wicked to tell untruths as it is to steal? Don't add to your sin."

The flush died away, leaving her very white, and the anguished look stole into her eyes again.

"Please go away, and leave me alone Mr. Sterne. I am too wicked for you to trouble about, and I shall never be any better now. When I get out of prison, you know no one will speak to me. I don't suppose mother will ever look at me again. I shall have to go away from King'slea. I shall go to London, and earn enough to keep me alive by selling flowers in the street or matches. I think I'll go to Chelsea. Wouldn't Aunt Gertrude be pleased with her handiwork? Why don't you go? I am a thief, you know; don't fit company for a clergyman!"

His heart ached as he listened to her wild words.

"Come and sit here, Gwynneth," he said, suddenly. "I want to tell you a story."

She obeyed wonderingly.

He took her hand—a sunburnt, plump little hand—and looked at it curiously.

"These fingers have stolen—actually stolen; no, don't draw them away for a moment. What do you think this hand of mine has done—this hand now holding yours—which you think unworthy for me to take?"

The lines deepened about his mouth, and a haggard look stole into his eyes.

He was going to unearth his buried past in the hope of saving Gwynneth from herself—her fallen despairing self.

"This hand"—he loosened it, leaving her free to withdraw her's when she wished—"this hand once struck a fellow creature with the intention of killing him."

Gwynneth started violently, but her hand remained in his.

"That the blow failed in its work was no credit to me. I was that day a murderer at heart."

The sunburnt fingers crept round his, and Gwynneth's eyes swept his face as she whispered—

"Tell me all the story."

"He was my friend," resumed Clarence, feeling strangely comforted, and keenly in

## COVERED WITH SORES.

B.B.B. cured little Harvey Deline nine years ago and he has never had a spot on him since.

It is practically impossible to heal up sores or ulcers, especially the old chronic kind, with ordinary remedies. No matter how large or of how long standing they may be, however, they heal up readily and stay healed permanently when Burdock Blood Bitters is used.



HARVEY DELINE.

Mrs. E. Deline, Arden, Ont., proves this in the following account she gave of her little boy's case: "When my little son Harvey was one year old he broke out in sores all over his body. They would heal up for a time, then break out again about twice a year, till he was past four; then he seemed to get worse and was completely prostrated. When doctors failed to cure him I gave him Burdock Blood Bitters, and besides bathed the sores with it."

"It is nine years ago since this happened and I must say that in all this time he has never had a spot on his body or any sign of the old trouble returning."

sympathy with this girl-thief, who would not own to having repented her sin. "We were boys at school, Frank Jessop and I. He was cool and not easily roused; I had a temper like a fiend. One day we had a serious quarrel as boys will sometimes have, and Frank was sufficiently angry to say many things he knew most calculated to wound and irritate me."

"At last I grew furious and rushed at him with my pocket-knife open at its largest blade, meaning to kill him if I could. At that moment the door opened, and his sister entered. She was a year or two our senior, but she was lame, and not able to move quickly. She managed, however, to arrest my hand and spoil the full effect of the murderous blow. Frank was wounded, but not mortally. Had the knife gone a quarter of an inch deeper, it would have found his heart. Katharine Jessop was just in time to save me from being a murderer in act as well as in intention. We made up our quarrel, and I have never—thank God!—lost my temper so thoroughly since that day. It was the turning point in my life. Frank was going to enter the church. When he died abroad of fever, in the following year, I felt impelled to take his place, and offer myself as a candidate for Holy Orders, feeling no desire so strong in me as the hope of saving many from sin, as Katharine Jessop had saved me. She has been my true friend all these years—the truest, most helpful friend a man could have."

The last remnant of childhood left Gwynneth as her undisciplined heart filled with jealousy of the good woman to whom Clarence Sterne owed so much.

She pictured her as a protecting angel watching over his life, helping him in all temptations and trials, and giving him sweetest counsel.

But she forced back the jealousy for the moment, in her longing to give sympathy to this man who had given so much to her.

"You did it in a passion," she said, looking at him; "that was nothing. I could have killed people joyfully over and over again when I have been in a passion, if only I had the chance. What I did, I did deliberately. It is for you to take your hand away; mine will never move."

"Will it not?" He held up her fingers and looked at them, interlacing them with his own. "Mine look like clinging, you'll confess. So you'll have to be careful, Gwynneth. I have undertaken your cure, you know, and though you may refuse to take my remedies yet awhile, you can't get rid of me. I hold a free pass to this cell."

"I am so glad!"

"You like me to come and see you?"

"It will be one thing to make life worth living," she said, impulsively. "I will try and be good; I will try and conquer my temper; I will do all I can to show you—"

"To show me what?"

She hardly knew; her frankness deserted her, and her head drooped with the first consciousness of real embarrassment she had ever felt.

Not quite knowing what to make of her, but anxious to set her at her ease, Clarence said—

"I can only come on one condition, though, and that is, that you promise, sooner or later, to tell me why you took that money."

Her face hardened into obstinacy, and was quickly raised again.

"I have told you."

He rose at once, and said good-bye, adding—

"I gave you all my confidence. Is it fair to me that you should withhold yours?"

He had struck the right chord at last.

She drew away her hand, and covered her face, turning from him as she murmured—

"I cannot tell you now, or ever."

He looked at the slight, bowed form, his thoughts going back to the evening before, when he had noticed her for the first time. Had he only known her those few hours?

interviews, such as theirs had been, ripen acquaintance to intimacy very speedily.

Gently he removed the shielding hands, and made her eyes meet his.

"Cannot, or will not?" he asked, briefly.

"Cannot," she replied, with a heavy sigh. "Very good; then, what you cannot tell me someone else shall. Farewell, child, for the present."

"You will come again? It will be so horribly lonely."

"Yes; I will come again. I retract my condition."

He felt that there was a mystery concerning the theft, of which he could no longer doubt Gwynneth guilty, though he was convinced that she had been urged to it from a very different motive than the despicable one to which she confessed—of desiring to prove her utter unworthiness to her step-mother.

Clarence turned homewards, deep in thought, his heart aching with something stronger than pity for the young prisoner in her lonely cell.

"Poor child! She is more sinned against than sinning. If I mistake not, there is the making of a grand woman in her, even yet; and, if so—"

He broke off as hurriedly as Gwynneth had done when promising amendment: the coincidence struck him, and he smiled with quick tenderness.

"What was she going to say? Is she child or woman, I wonder? This trial is enough to rob her of childhood, surely, if not of youth. I wonder if it will be given to me to atone to her for all she has suffered, when I have led her to true penitence for what she has done. Poor child! Poor little Gwynneth! Innocent, I am certain, in spite of having taken that money."

The long July day was drawing to a close as Clarence passed a public-house standing at the corner of the road leading to the vicarage, for St. Cuthbert's was not a wholly aristocratic parish.

A man came out of the open door, reeling slightly as he walked along.

It was Gwynneth's brother.

The vicar's first feeling was one of disgust that Edmund Naylor should seek pleasure of any sort—even the doubtful pleasure of semi-intoxication—while his sister was suffering for her rash act; but pity quickly overcame the disgust; the young fellow was very fond of Gwynneth.

Maude had said that he often took her part against their mother.

Doubtless he was overcome with sorrow and shame, and had gone to the public house only in order to try and forget his misery.

Clarence's charity did not permit him to reflect that it would have been more respectable for Mrs. Naylor's son to visit hotels than low public houses.

It thus thought occurred to him at all, he forced it into the background of his mind, as he watched Edmund out of sight before entering the vicarage gate.

He was conscious of a new excitement—a keen joy in his heart—a joy strangely tinged with pain.

Without any attempt at self-deception, he took this new feeling in hand, as he sat alone in his study, and talked to it and to himself as though both were arraigned in a court of justice where by some curious arrangement, he had to be judged as well as prison at the bar.

"This sweet, wild flower—threatening to become a weed, a useless, perhaps harmful weed—has won your heart, Clarence Sterne. What do you propose to do?"

"The matter wants thinking out," replied Clarence the prisoner. "I shall, of course, do nothing in a hurry."

"You will not forget the exact facts of the case," observed Clarence the judge, dispassionately. "You are a priest in holy orders, dedicated to the service of the Church. She whom you choose to love is a felon, undergoing punishment for theft. Do you intend disgracing your office, and bringing it into disrepute by marrying a thief?"

"In the first place," responded the prisoner, "I do not choose to love her. I cannot help myself. In the second place I know she is no thief. She is wild, headstrong, untamed; but it is ridiculous to imagine for a moment that she is dishonest; and not being dishonest, how can she be a thief?"

"She has taken this money for some foolish, childish reason. I do not believe she was prompted by the wicked desire to disgrace her family out of revenge for her mother's neglect. Their is a mystery underlying the supposed theft, and I will get to the bottom of it before I am many days older."

"That's all very well; but does it affect the issue at stake? Gwynneth Naylor is in prison. The world is not likely to forget that she has been there. If you marry her, how will you and she be received by those who look to you for example, for—"

Clarence, the just judge, was interrupted by a groan of deep agony from Clarence the wretched prisoner, as he buried his face in his arms resting on the blank sheets of sermon-paper, which should have been covered that night with beautiful thoughts and words of counsel to many a doubting heart.

There was a long silence, broken only by the man's deep breathing.

Then—judge and prisoner merged into one—Clarence Sterne raised a determined face, and stared out of the window into the summer darkness.

"If I shun her, if I desert her now, who is there to save her from herself, and the result of this great mistake she has made? My work on earth is to show sinful souls the path of safety. If I lead a hundred the right way and leave one to wander into the darkness because I am afraid of soiling my hands by touching that one—and that one the dearest of all! Ah! I am a priest, it is true, but I am also a man."

"I will guard my wandering lamb, and save her by the power of love; she is only to be saved by love, for it is love she yearns for—love only can satisfy her poor aching heart. Let Heaven be my judge

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not man. If man condemns then I will resign my priesthood, and do my work in some humbler guise!"

Such was the resolution to which Clarence Sterne forced himself, and the innate integrity of the man was so great that there was little fear of his not carrying it out.

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#### THE RETIRED BURGLAR.

A Disturbing Experience With a Restless and Nervous Blind Man.

"I have told you," said the retired burglar, "of one little experience with a blind man—this is another. I had gone into a not very big but comfortable-looking farmhouse and looking around below without finding anything, and got upstairs. I hadn't more'n struck the upper floor before I realized that there wasn't many people in the house, funny about that, but when there's a lot of people it fills it up with a king of electricity that you can feel, and when there isn't it feels dull and dead."

"Well, I got into a front room on one side of this house and found nobody there, and I might remark, nothing besides; in the back room on that side, a big room with a big bed, I found a small boy fast asleep. I didn't dare put the bullseye on him, but I could see well enough by a dim light that was burning on a table in a little alcove on one side of this room to guess that he was maybe, nine or ten years old, and of course I could see that he was sleeping in his mother's bed; mother away somewhere, and he sleeping there because he'd feel easier and safer there while she was gone."

"Nothing in that room, and I went out and across the hall into a room on the other side opposite the room the boy was in. The first step I took into that room made the floor creak, just the least little bit in the world, but I halted, right where I stood; and the next instant I heard a bed in this room snap a little and I knew there was somebody sitting up in it and listening. It was still for half a minute and then I heard whoever it was in the bed and it was a man's voice, saying: 'Willie?'

"Of course there wasn't any answer to this, because Willie was fast asleep; I'd just seen him in bed a minute before myself; but the man that was sitting up in bed and listening called again: 'Willie?'

"When he got no answer this time, he started to get up, as I expected he would, and when he made the bed creak in getting out of it I stepped back a step and around the door jamb and hugged the wall in the hall, and in a minute the man came through the doorway. He was as blind as a bat. I couldn't see that, in that light in his eyes but I could see it in his manner and way of moving, in the way he carried his head and

his hands; but he made straight for Willie's room, just as well as though he could see perfectly; the blind man was going to look after Willie."

"And he got in there all right and found the boy all right—I don't know how he told it. I couldn't see from where I was, but maybe he touched the boy's head, or stood and listened to his breathing, but anyhow he satisfied himself that the boy was all right—and then he started back for his own room. I suppose I might have got out when he was in the youngster's room, but it would have been a sort of clumsy thing to do, he'd have been almost certain to hear me, and, though, I could have got away all right, I didn't like to go in that bungling way, and thought I'd let him come out and get back into his own room and go to sleep before I started; but he gave me a great shake up before he did that."

"The door to his own room was almost directly opposite the door of the room where the boy was. A little toward the front of the house from his own door was the head of the stairs leading to the floor below. When he came out of the boy's room he didn't make straight across to his own door, but he took a diagonal course toward the head of the stairs and I thought he'd lost his way, but the distance was short and he was there before I could realize it."

"It made my heart go down to think of being found there in the house with a blind man with a broken neck, or a broken leg, or something of that sort, but he didn't go over. He went plumb to the verge of the stairs and halted there as though it had been broad daylight and he could see, and stood there for a minute and listened. It wasn't Willie—what could it have been? He didn't hear anything; and he turned and went back into his own room and got into bed and sat up in it again for a minute as he had done before he got up, and then lay down."

"And I waited for him, and when he'd got to sleep again, I skipped, very gently, going down the stairs so as not to make 'em creak under my weight, and got out and glad to get away. I don't want any run-in with a blind man."

#### A CARD.

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Paw—Well, what is it?  
Bobby—Do cows ever get drunk?  
Paw—What makes you ask that?  
Bobby—O, I thought me be corned beef meant that 'the bovine got a jig on the way to the slaughter house."

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