

BROTHER AND SISTER.

"Will they punish him?"
"Can they do otherwise?"
"Oh! then judged. Who can tell what they will sentence? I know of a case in which—"

"Do you think they could blame this man?"

"If there is any justice in the world, he will be liberated."

"Justice! Where is there such a thing?"

So turned the eager eyes of the spectators in the court room, from which the jury had retired, to make up a verdict in the case just tried.

Suddenly—as if every tongue had been stilled with pain—the voices ceased, and total silence ensued. The jury were returning to their places. The great assembly was breathlessly waiting the verdict of the jury.

Then the quiet voice of the foreman announced: "The defendant is not guilty."

The terrible suspense was over. Every face beamed with gratification.

"Thank God! I know it would be so."

"Look how pale he is."

"He is trying."

The prisoner had seated himself, trembling in every joint of his body. A sudden weakness came over him. His face was buried in his hands and he was sobbing convulsively.

The sympathy for him must have been great, for there was hardly an eye in that great room that did not glint with moisture. Many drew their handkerchiefs and burst into joyful tears. In the mind of this eminence the judge of the court declared the accused to be free. Then a young, fair and delicate girl arose from the witness box and stepped slowly and hesitatingly toward the young man, her hands clasped in the air, showing her to be blind, and her face beaming with happiness. But now her coming and going up, hastening to meet her, with unuttered name. With a glad cry she sank into his arms.

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On the fourth floor of a large suburban building they lived. A family of swallows had sought the protection of the gables and of the roof above them; or they would have been the highest refuge in the house. The birds, however, were good neighbors. Early of morning they showed their friendliness by tapping with their bills upon the window panes. And they did not long to wait for the windows to be opened and to have these beautiful sparrow birds on them on the offing of the poor bird girl. Each time she stood while they were fluttering over the roof—and raised her face to heaven, whose light her eyes seemed to feel, though they could not receive it or reflect it again.

She was a lovely creature. With wonderful distinctness were the outlines of her features drawn, and from the golden locks, that fell in silken waves over her shoulder, shone a peculiar brilliancy as if to make amends for the exhausted springs of her eyes. When she walked along the street with her head bowed down on the arm of her brother, no one would suspect her to be blind, for she walked firmly and confidently at his side. He was her staff, her eyes, the very six sin lengthened. She lived for him alone, and only valued life to make him happy. She was 15 years old when a spell of mortal fever maimed her of her sight. The father, an humble laborer, died long ago, and the mother quickly followed. Father and mother both dead and the world a starting sea of darkness.

She prayed earnestly then to God to take her all, but a strong, steady arm was thrown around her neck, and an earnest, loving voice said: "Don't trouble, Marie; I am with you and will never forsake you." And he had kept his word. No mother could have guarded her child more carefully, tenderly and carefully than did this, while brother his charge. To assure her, as bright smiles to her sad face was the joy of his life. Years ago he thought of marrying; but when he thought of Marie, in her sad affliction, he gave up the thought entirely, for in his love for his sister he had found his aim and happiness. His chief pleasure was to sit in his easy chair of evenings, after his day's work was done, and listen to her prattling voice or the music of her piano, which was the only luxury in the modest apartment. She had learned to play from the fingers of her mother, whom she often imitated, and with an almost superhuman effort she now herself from the dead and staggered through the crowd, her poor sightless eyes rolling in her bright and her hands held out before her toward the entrance.

The second evening passed like the first. The soft, sweet, rippling notes seemed to fall from the tips of her flying fingers, and the sweet, strange music sounded with the tumult of the frightened, disconcerted song of a bird in a stormy forest. Again she received payment for her exertion; which, inexperienced in the ways of the world as she was, seemed a fortune to her.

"Give me a kiss, little treasure."

Almost paralyzed with terror, she sprang up and attempted to tear herself from the brother's embrace, but the arm only closed more tightly around her.

"Hold her fast, Thomas."

"Let her go," roared the hideous crowd.

"Help! Help!" she cried at the top of her voice, and with an almost superhuman effort she tore herself from the dead and staggered through the crowd, her poor sightless eyes rolling in her bright and her hands held out before her toward the entrance.

Attracted by the disturbance, the handmaid hastened to the spot. Comprehending the situation at a glance, she grasped the girl, who in her fright, trembled like an aspen leaf, and hurried her through the door to the foot of the stairs, where she began to climb, stumbling at every step, so full of terror was she roughly to his arms.

In the restaurant the crowd tried to restrain the frenzied man who was attempting to follow her. A fearful struggle ensued in which the demon was victorious. Throwing the revolting right left in his madness, like straws in a gust of wind, he plunged through the door. Not seeing the blind girl, he followed her as a enraged beast. Then attracted by the disturbance, the handmaid hastened to the spot.

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"Hold! Hold!" she shrieked, and the terrible cry sounded through the building from the ground to the roof. A noise was heard above, some one was bounding—almost bounding—down the flights of steps.

"Marie!" cried an anxious, apprehensive voice, and a hand, thrust from a dark closet, clutched the thread of the assassin in a vice-like grip—a howl of rage from the nervous bosom; a mighty roar from a clenched fist between the flaxen eyes.

The nervous, nervous body of the maiden fell to the steps between the struggling men.

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