

What Might have been Expected.

BY MARY A. WHITE.

From N. Y. Ledger:

"Sit down; sit down. I guess it's a bad business. You see he's an old offender, this Newton, and he's evaded the law for years, so they are glad enough to have proof now to convict fifty men, if need be. And he's got a wife here in Albany, that he quarreled with years ago and left. But, woman-like, as soon as she heard he was in trouble, she came here to him, and has been every day. But to day, a young girl, a country girl, came to see him, and his wife was in the cell. There was a row, of course, for Number Two had her certificate, and Number One was furious, and they both went off."

"But where? Where did Lucy go?"

"Lucy that was the name, sure enough. I can't tell you any more than that she left here."

But, even as the warden spoke, a policeman sauntered up, and lounging in the doorway, said:

"Remember the country party, Tomkins?"

"Yes. Where is she?"

"Where she won't trouble Newton any more. Mrs. Newton the first has the coast clear."

"You don't mean she has—"

"Yes, I do! Walked from here straight down to the river and hung about till dusk. One of the steam-boat hands saw her when she jumped from the dock, and gave an alarm. But, bless you, when they found her she was dead. Hullo, who is the old man?"

For the farmer with one awful groan had dropped senseless to the floor.

"Her father!" answered the warden, stooping over the prostrate figure. "Was inquiring for her as you came up. Nice pill, that Newton, take him all round."

"Yes! He's coming to himself! Here old man, you must not give way like that! There, take a sip of this!"

Rough men both and accustomed to scenes of misery, but they were tender as women in their touch, as they lifted the farmer to a bench, bathed his face and put spirit to his lips.

"Can you take me to her?"

Those were his first words as he looked up in the policeman's face. "To-morrow. You see it is a coroner's case, and we couldn't get at her to-night. I'll take you the first thing in the morning. Tomkins, can't you let him lie there to-night?"

"Yes, yes. I will see to him."

And he was kind and sympathizing. But, oh, the long, long night, the weary stretch of time before morning. What could he say to Jane, the farmer thought; how tell the waiting mother that he had kept his promise and brought her child home, dead, never again to smile upon her, never again to speak a loving word.

Then a wild desire for revenge upon the villain who had wrought all this misery seized the old man, and he paced up and down the small room, his hands clenched, his eyes burning, calling for the vengeance of Heaven upon his child's destroyer, and the warden looking on, whispered:

"Better so than moaning like a girl."

But the day broke at last, and the policeman came to keep his promise. All through the weary, bitter day, Mr. Merriment had to wait with all the patience he could command, till the coroner gave his verdict, and the law allowed the heart-broken father to claim his child.

Another interval was spent in necessary preparation, before she could be taken to the home she had made desolate, and there was unutterable pathos in the farmer's tone as he said to the undertaker:

"You must arrange for me to have an hour or two before the coffin is sent to the farm, to tell her mother. I cannot send her word, for Jane can't read writing."

But she could read the stricken face for which she was watching, and it needed no spoken word to tell her why Lucy was not with her father.

"She is dead!" she cried, "she is dead!"

And then waiting for a denial that never came. It needed not the time the father had asked for to break the dreadful news, but the mother went with a strange, apathetic calmness to prepare the house for funeral rites.

Very fair and beautiful was the face that was pillowed in Lucy Merriment's coffin, and very sincere was the sympathy extended to the sorrowing parents. But, with the deep mourning, the sincere pity, was ever the bitter truth that comes to so many sorrowing hearts, that at the root of all the desolation and grief was the one act of deception, the one lie, that was the parents' reward for years of devoted love.

The is much written of true love, of parental tyranny, but thousands of tales could be told where the love is but a glamour of youth, and the tyranny only tenderest of fatherly love; where the pain of opposition is as keenly felt by the father as by the wayward child. Many a home tragedy that will remain forever unwritten is founded upon one such hasty act of deceit, one such living lie as desolated the home of Lucy Merriment, and brought her in her first youth and loveliness to fill a suicide's grave.

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