

Bent Twig and Broken Tree

by James S. Brisbin

THE village of L—— was and still is one of the most beautiful towns of New England. Nestled among the cool hills, the white cottages overshadowed by wide-spreading boughs of green trees, its quiet homes presented a scene of peace and comfort rarely surpassed on this earth, and its numerous tall church-spires pointed constantly to heaven as emblems of the piety and goodness of the people who came to worship beneath them.

In one of the prettiest cottages at the end of the village lived Minnie Morgan, a young girl of rare and astonishing beauty, and who was the acknowledged belle not only of the town but of all the surrounding country. Minnie was a little wild, but such was her goodness of heart and beauty that even the bitter jealousies of a small inland town never reached her, and everyone said, “When Minnie grows older, she will become steadier and make a good and sober wife.” Minnie's father was a small merchant, and much engrossed with the cares of business, so that he saw little of his wayward daughter. Mrs. Morgan was a handsome dressy woman of little education, and had the reputation of not being a very agreeable wife. Her husband toiled late and early to make money, and Mrs. Morgan's chief occupation seemed to be to get as much money as possible and spend it in dress and entertainment. Still, she was a good housekeeper, and an apparently affectionate wife and mother. Minnie was the only child, and at eleven years of age was sent away to school. Her father, who loved her dearly, went in two weeks to the boarding-school to see how she got on, and Minnie cried so when he came to leave, and was so homesick, that the good old gentleman brought her away with him. This was the last attempt ever made to really educate Minnie, and she grew up with such learning and accomplishments as she could pick up at the public and day schools in the village.

At the time when we first knew her (1860) she was just sixteen, and a more gloriously beautiful creature could not be imagined. Tall for her age, lithe as a snake, her fair face crowned with a wealth of brown hair, it seemed as if all the graces had met in her person to form a perfect woman. Remarkably developed for a girl of sixteen, she was no longer a child, wore dresses with trails, and occasionally attended parties and balls. Minnie was of course the favorite of the young men, and much sought after and courted. She had numerous invitations to parties and places of public amusement, and was constantly seen in company with some of the young bloods of the town. Many of the older citizens shook their heads gravely, and more than one matron said Mr. and Mrs. Morgan were spoiling their daughter, and that it was a great pity, for Minnie was a fine girl, with all her natural impulses right and her heart warm and good.

Near the village lived a farmer named Robert Roland, who was a hard-working man, and had a large family to support. He and his wife were quiet, respectable, sensible people, and Mrs. Roland was known all over the county as the best butter-maker in it, while Robert was reckoned an excellent farmer. Their oldest son, Nathaniel, was a slender thoughtful boy, fond of study and a great reader. He had a wonderfully retentive memory, and could repeat accurately whole pages of matter by simply reading it over once or twice. Natty stood at the head of his classes, and was

as generous and brave as he was clever. Farmer Rowland had intended to make of his boy an honest tiller of the soil like himself, but one day Natty said to him:

“Father, I am not stout, and I fear I shall be unable to earn my living at physical work. The school-master says I am the best scholar in his school, and if Squire Townley's boy, who the master says is dull, is to be a lawyer and earn his bread by his head, why can't I do it?”

“My son,” replied the farmer, “you must remember Squire Townley is a rich man, while we are but poor people. I know Tom Townley is not as smart as my boy, but the Squire can send him to college, and there he will learn everything, and likely make a good-enough lawyer in time. I have but little education myself, and I only wish I were able to educate one of my boys; but we are poor, my son, and we must be contented with our lot in life.”

Natty said no more, but turned to his plow, and all day walked the furrow, thinking what a blessed thing an education was, and how hard it was to be too poor to obtain one.

That night, when Natty had gone to bed and all was quiet about the house, farmer Rowland repeated faithfully to his wife what Natty had said in the field. The good woman wept, and placing her arm about her husband's neck, said:

“O, Robert, I do wish we could send Natty to the academy this winter. Believe me, husband, he is no common boy, and indeed, indeed, he is not strong.”

The farmer's eyes filled with tears, and patting his wife on the head, he answered:

“Well, well, wife, if your heart is set upon it, he shall go.” He added, after a moment's silence and with a sigh: “Though, if Natty is to be kept at the academy, it's precious few new gowns you or the girls will get next winter.”

“No matter, Robert; so Natty but gets his schooling, we can do without new dresses.”

“Nay, Susan, I know your good heart and the love you bear the boy; but remember our daughter Charlotte is twenty-three, and it is time she were going out more. You were married, dame, before her age, and had the Lord only knows how many beaus. Well, well, I will do my best to not only send Natty to school, but also to give Lotty a new dress or two. Young Townley comes here pretty often—and who knows? Well, well, our Lottie would make a good-enough wife for any man, be he lawyer, doctor, or parson.”

So Natty was sent to school, and soon took the lead in everything. At debating he was wonderfully ready and well informed, and before the winter was half over had reached the presidency of his society. A public exhibition was given, and Natty appeared as the champion debater of the “Phrenokosmians,” and at every point beat the “Delphians.” The boyish victory was complete, and the honors were unhesitatingly given to Natty and his society. Farmer Roland, who was in the crowded audience, listened with astonishment to his eloquent boy, and as he rode home by the side of his wife, he said, thoughtfully:

“You were right, Susan, Natty is no common boy. It was a splendid speech, dame; and did you notice how quickly he laid out young Townley? By my soul, wife, I do not believe there is a lawyer in the shire-town who could have done better.”

Natty wore his honors modestly, and continued at school, walking home every day to help his father with the farmstock in the mornings and evenings. He worked very hard the next summer, and the winter found him again at the academy. In the following year he taught school, and thus earned enough money to begin his college course. It is unnecessary to follow up his career: suffice it to say, that in two years Natty was reckoned the best Latin, Greek, and historical student at K——.

It was in the fall of 1859, while at home on a visit, that Natty first saw Minnie Morgan. His father had gone down to trade with Mr. Morgan, as was his custom, and his son accompanied him. While at the store of the rich merchant, Minnie came in, and Natty thought he had never in all his life seen so beautiful a creature. He was twenty-one and she fifteen. Mr. Morgan, who was always polite, introduced Roland and his son to Minnie, and there was a strange confusion and coloring of the young people as they looked into each other's faces.

That night Natty could not sleep. Turn what way he would, he saw only the face of Minnie Morgan. He tossed about in his bed until the gray streaks of dawn began to steal into the room, and then fell asleep only to dream Minnie Morgan was floating down a broad river and he tied to the shore where he could not reach or save her from drowning. Springing from the bed, the sweat streaming from every pore of his body, Natty dressed himself and went out to walk in the orchard behind the house, to think and think of Minnie Morgan.

Reader, you who have been in love know the thousand extravagances of the human imagination under such circumstances. Now Natty was a simple farmer, and Minnie was his little wife; then he lived alone on a far-off island, and Minnie was his only companion; again, he was at sea, and Minnie sailed the blue waves by his side; and last of all, he was a great man, and Minnie his beautiful bride, worshiped and looked up to by all who knew her. On this picture he dwelt long, for, with instinctive appreciation of his own powers, he felt that he was born for a high position among men. But whatever he was, or wherever he was, Minnie was by his side, and he who had not known her twenty-four hours, found it impossible to separate his life for a single moment from that of the beautiful girl. So he dreamed on until the sun was high and he heard the voice of his mother calling him to come to his breakfast.

Natty Roland was now a changed being. All idea of returning to college was given up, and he thought only of living in the town where lived Minnie Morgan, that he might be near her and see her every day. He taught school during the winter, and the following spring entered himself as a law-student in the shire-town. He had only seen Minnie twice since the fall, but each time she seemed to him more and more beautiful, and he thought and dreamed of her by day and by night. Now he saw Minnie each day, and he used to sit for hours by the office window and watch for her as she came up to her father's store. His law examiners, who had heard of Natty's smartness and remarkable memory, found in him but a dull student, and wondered how the lad could have been so overestimated. Little did they know of the tempest raging in that poor brain, paralyzing every faculty of the mind except the one idea of love.

Occasionally Natty met Mr. Morgan on the street or at the store, and the rich merchant was always kind and patronizing to the young man, and once invited him to call at the house. Mrs. Morgan was also known to Natty, but she was a proud woman, and took little notice of the poor farmer's boy. Minnie walked with Natty on the street, and talked pleasantly enough to him, but somehow always avoided bringing him to her home, or being with him where she thought her mother would see her. The love-sick youth felt himself unworthy of the rich merchant's daughter, and instinctively kept away from her gaudily furnished home. Natty's time was coming, however, and he speedily had a triumph that put his name in everyone's mouth, and opened wide to him the doors of the most opulent citizens of L——.

There was to be a great political meeting in the place, and a lawyer who had once heard Natty debate proposed he should be put on at the bottom of the list of speakers. There were a dozen prominent names on the list above his, and no one expected he would be given an opportunity to be heard; still he was honored by printing his name on the bills which announced the great meeting. Natty felt, however, that this was somehow to be a great occasion for him, and he began preparing his speech with much care, thinking only of how he should appear in *her* eyes, and how grandly he should speak as *her* orator.

The day came, and with it thousands of people from all parts of the country. At noon arrived a dispatch saying the train on which the invited speakers were was unavoidably delayed, and would not get in until late in the afternoon. Of the three local speakers on the bills, one was sick, and another absent attending the funeral of his father, so that of all announced to speak only Natty was present at the opening of the meeting. In the presence of thousands he ascended the platform, and as he turned his still-beardless face to the multitude a shout of encouragement went up for the courageous boy who dared address grayheaded men on the abstruse political questions of the hour. Slowly and in tremulous tones the young orator began, and warming with his subject soon showed a familiarity with the past history of political parties and their acts that amazed his hearers. The rostrum was near the residence of Mr. Morgan, and looking over at the house Natty saw Minnie and her mother seated at one of the upper windows, apparently interested listeners to his discourse. Thrilling as if touched by an electric wire, Natty lifted up his voice, and for one hour and a half spoke with a terseness, eloquence, and logic such as had never before been heard on any political occasion in that county. It seemed as though he could remember everything he had ever read on the subjects under discussion, and argument, sarcasm, and pathos were alike at his command, until his audience became thoroughly moved and excited. When he closed, cheer after cheer rent the air, and one of the first to congratulate him was Mr. Morgan, who said heartily:

“Young man, you have done honor to your party, and made the best political speech I ever heard in this town. You will be a great man some day, if you take care of yourself.”

Other speeches were made, but somehow the people said Natty's was the best, and his name and fame were in the mouth of everyone. When the meeting adjourned, Natty hastened away to his room, to dream of Minnie and wonder what she would think of his great speech. Late in the afternoon his father came hunting for him, and, taking Natty's hand in his, said solemnly:

“Lad, the people praise you, and I, too, am astonished at your power. I am proud of you, boy, and I pray God to keep your heart and mind pure and strong for the great usefulness that is in store for you.”

This was high praise, but Natty felt it not so much as what Mr. Morgan had said. Would the father tell Minnie he would some day be a great man? Would he praise him to Minnie's mother? Natty believed he would, and his flesh tingled with pleasure at the thought.

The town was still crowded with people, when in the evening it suddenly occurred to Natty that he might go and call on Minnie. Why not? The door of the rich merchant would be open to him on such an occasion, and even the haughty wife and mother would be glad to receive under her roof the hero of the hour. Dressed in his best, the young orator wended his way to Mr. Morgan's house, and with a palpitating heart rung the door-bell. There was a sound of music and of voices in the parlor, and when Natty was ushered in he found Minnie surrounded by a number of young men who scented their hair and lisped when they talked. Natty was cordially received, and Mrs. Morgan, who was courteous in her own house, spoke kindly to him and praised his speech. The young men declared, “by gwacious, it was perfectly splendid.”

Natty was most anxious to learn what Minnie had to say, but for a long time he evaded her and kept as much as possible out of the way. At last, finding himself by her side, he ventured to timidly ask how she had enjoyed the meeting?

“O! it was a great crowd, and some of the funniest people I ever saw. Those Ridgers are an odd-looking set—don't you think so? and how outlandishly they do dress—don't you think so, Mr. Roland?”

Natty stammered a reply, feeling hurt and disappointed at what she said, for the Ridgers were the poorest people in the county, but honest, and had contributed largely to her father's wealth, most of them dealing with him. Anxious to give the giddy girl a chance to show herself to better advantage, Natty inquired how she liked the speaking.

“O! I did not pay much attention to it, I was so busy watching the Ridgers and those country-girls with their great awkward farmer beaus; but father says you made a very good speech.”

Natty's heart sunk like lead in his bosom, and he seriously asked himself if this could be his idol? Could it be possible this empty-headed creature was the girl he had dreamed of for a year, and whom he had invested with all wisdom and every grace, virtue, and kindliness of heart?

All that evening Natty felt vexed and restless, and soon rose to go, Minnie following him to the door, and when they were alone for a moment on the porch she said:

“Indeed, Mr. Roland, you must call soon again; and O! you don't know how glad I am of your success to-day.”

Natty grasped her hand, and wringing it until she almost cried out with pain, hurried away.

He now saw Minnie quite often, and, while her mother gave him no welcome, Mr. Morgan was very cordial, and Minnie showed by her look and manner, as only a woman can, that his visits gave her great pleasure. Minnie went to parties, balls, and picnics with other young men; flirted, danced, and took evening buggy-rides with gentlemen who, if report spoke truly, were rather unfit associates for a young girl; but still Natty loved her with all the fervor of a morbid nature, and as only a youth of his years and disposition can love. He was never seen in the company of any other young ladies, and gave to Minnie his whole thoughts and heart. Though he could ill afford to do so, he sometimes hired a buggy and took her out to ride. One evening he told her all, expecting she would laugh at him or refuse him outright, but to his delight she frankly said she had *always* loved him, and if she ever married anyone he would be the man. Almost beside himself with joy, he pressed the beautiful girl again and again to his heart, and when he returned to his little room he lay awake all night reciting over and over in his mind the scene of his betrothal. A new world seemed opening up before him, and Minnie Morgan was the central figure of his world. He felt he could now endure all, suffer all, and conquer all, for the sake of the dear girl who had promised to be his bride. He knew Minnie did not suit him, that they had nothing in common, but he loved her so he would not permit a thought of her unworthiness to linger for a moment in his mind.

Minnie continued to receive the attentions of young men, to go out riding, and did a thousand things which vexed Natty; but he held his peace, and when finally he spoke to her about it, she seemed much hurt, and reminded him that their engagement was not yet announced, and that she could not be rude to young gentlemen who were polite to her, and who were still under the impression her heart and hand were free to bestow on whom she pleased. Natty was satisfied, and said no more.

So matters stood in the spring of 1861, when the telegraphic wires flashed over the country the intelligence that the great rebellion had begun, and the President was about to call out 75,000 volunteers. There was great excitement in L——, and a company for the war was at once raised, Natty being one of the first to enroll. He hastened from the enlistment-table to Minnie, and told her what he had done. She cried a little, but said she approved of his act, and would make him a havelock if she could get the pattern from Mrs. Snyder, which she made him promise to do for her that very evening. Natty sought out Mr. Morgan, and asked for a private interview in the counting-room, where with much stammering and many misgivings he related his attachment to Minnie and their mutual affection and engagement to each other. He said he was now going away to the war, might never return, and before he went desired Mr. Morgan's approval of his suit. The old gentleman was a good deal surprised, but said frankly he knew of no objections to Natty, only Minnie was yet a child, and they must not think of marrying for some years.

“Only say, Mr. Morgan, you do not object to my suit, and I will not ask more at this time. I am poor, but may I not win wealth as others have done? We can not all be born rich, but I have health and courage; and O! sir, if you will only give me a chance, I will show you I am not unworthy of your daughter, whom I love more than words can express,” cried Natty, with a burst of enthusiasm.

“Very well, young man; you can talk with Minnie's mother about it. I make no objection. I was poor once myself, and all I require of anyone to command my confidence is that he shall be honest and honorable, and these qualities, Natty, I have long known you to possess.”

Natty grasped the old man's hand and pressed it, while tears of joy streamed down his cheeks.

“God bless you, sir, for your generous words. I shall always love you, and always respect you, come what may,” said the youth, as he hurried from the room.

Natty next sought Mrs. Morgan, and told her of his great love for Minnie, but she was cold and haughty, and bade him give up all idea of an alliance with *her* family.

“We shall always be glad to reckon you as one of our friends, but nothing more, Mr. Roland, positively nothing more. You could not maintain my daughter in the position she has been accustomed to occupy, and I should be sorry to see her brought to poverty, as I know would be the case—rather as I fear would be the case—”

“O! madam, madam,” cried Natty, interrupting, “I am young; I can work, and who knows—”

“Young man,” said Mrs. Morgan, interrupting him in her turn, “you will some day thank me for all I am saying. Think no more of Minnie; indeed, if I must be plain, seek a wife in your own sphere of life—one who is your equal in condition.”

Natty rose to his feet, and, standing before Mrs. Morgan, his face ghastly pale and his thin hands clutching convulsively at his hat, said, in a voice husky with passion:

“Madam, I would not be uncivil to a lady, especially in her own house; but you are hard upon me—too hard, indeed; and you forget you were once a poor girl yourself—that your people are all still poor, and that but for the accident of your marriage with Mr. Morgan you would *now* be poor.”

There was the old fire in Natty's voice, and Mrs. Morgan sought refuge in authority, and ordered him to leave the house, and never show his face there again.

Natty saw Minnie once before he left for the war, and told her all that had happened. She said her mother was very angry, but that she still loved Natty, and would write to him sometimes.

Natty went away, and was presently commissioned a lieutenant. Then there was a great battle, Natty was wounded, and the colonel wrote to the governor of the State to say:

“Among those conspicuous for gallantry was Lieutenant Nathaniel Roland, who was shot down while leading his company into the enemy's works. His wound, though severe, is not dangerous, and I recommend, if you are raising new regiments, that you appoint him a captain.”

So Natty was made a captain, and came home to rest while his wounds healed. Just how it came about I can not tell, but Minnie and he were married, Mr. Morgan giving away the bride with a hearty good-will, and Mrs. Morgan looking as pleased as she could under the circumstances.

Natty returned to the army, and in one year was a colonel. Then another great battle was fought, and the papers said:

“Colonel Roland's regiment carried everything before it. Again and again he led it into the fight, and at last fell mortally wounded just as his men had succeeded in taking one of the rebel's strongest works.”

Minnie saw the account of the battle and fainted outright, but in the evening came a telegram over the wires, saying:

“Colonel Roland, reported mortally wounded, will recover.”

In the morning a dispatch was handed Minnie which read:

“Do not believe reports. I am wounded, but will recover without loss of limb. You can come to me at S—. Natty”

Then came the details of the battle, and lastly the news that “among the promotions for gallant conduct in this bloody battle the President has appointed Colonel Nathaniel Roland a general.” All the good people of L—— were amazed, and everyone asked his neighbor if he had heard old Roland's son Natty had been made a general in the war. Mr. Morgan rubbed his hands with delight, and showed the paper containing the news to all who called at the store.

Minnie was now little at home, spending most of her time with her distinguished husband, who had been promoted a full major-general, and was employed on important military duties in various parts of the South. Occasionally she was left alone for weeks and even months, but she said she preferred to live at the hotel to returning to the dull old town of L——, and Natty gratified her every wish. She was more beautiful than ever, fond of society, and devoted to dress and excitement. Natty was blind to all her faults; still, he sometimes felt Minnie would be better at home; but she scouted the idea of again living in L——, and he loved her too well to press the matter.

It was the fall of 1864. Natty had been on duty in the South during the summer, and Minnie was spending the heated term in the North, residing in the great city of B——, and occasionally running down to the sea-shore. Natty fell sick of fever, and the doctor peremptorily ordered him to the North. Minnie was now the mother of two beautiful children, and the great heart of the general throbbed with delight at the idea of once more rejoining his beloved wife and darling children. He did not write or telegraph his coming, but hastened on, intending to give Minnie a pleasant surprise. It was nearly dark when he arrived at the city which contained all that was dear to him in the world, and, feeling strangely oppressed, he would not ride, but set out to walk to the hotel where Minnie lodged. As he passed through a narrow court, he saw an Irishman beating a negro, and stopped to inquire the cause. While he was trying to quell the disturbance, the police came up and took both parties into custody. As Natty was turning to go away, the negro said respectfully:

“I's gwine to de jail, massa, an' I's much oblige fur yer 'sistance. I's got an ole woman, massa, a-livin' at Blank Street, an' specs she'll be mighty onsartin, 'specially ef dey keeps me all night. Ef ye want to do a poor boy a rale favor, jes' you tell my ole woman never mind, I's all right, an'll be home in de mornin'.”

Natty made a note of the street on which the colored woman lived, promising she should know all about her husband's trouble. He then went to the hotel and inquired for his wife, but the clerk said she was not there.

“Left two hours ago with friends, and said she would not return until tomorrow morning.”

Natty took the key, and went up to the rooms, where he found everything littered about the floor, indicating the haste with which the occupant had left.

“Poor girl,” he said, “she has become tired of the loneliness of this great house, and has gone away for a few hours' recreation in the country.”

Then he lit a cigar, and, having nothing else to do, walked out to find the colored woman, and deliver the message from her husband. Rapping at the door of the little white cottage, the summons was answered by a tidy middle-aged woman, who said she was the wife of the man Natty had assisted. He explained to her the situation, and seeing that she cried bitterly, kindly bade her cheer up, and promised he would see that her husband was released early in the morning.

“Bless ye, Gin'ral! De Lord am good, an' send ye heah to comfort dis poor mis'able sinner.”

“What, do you know me?” asked Natty.

“Know ye?” replied the woman—“I specs I orter, 'cause ye sot me free way down in ole Virginny. Bless ye, honey, I never forgits dat in dis born world ob trouble, an' I's got yer chil'en heah dis minit.”

“My children!” cried Natty. “How on earth could they happen to be here?”

“De missus she lef dem heah two foh hours ago, when she went off wid de strange gemmen an' de woman wid de yaller har.”

Natty was now amazed beyond measure. He questioned the woman closely, but all he could learn was, that about two hours before a carriage had come to the house with the two children and Minnie, and soon afterward another carriage had called containing two gentlemen, and a lady with yellow hair, and Minnie had gone away with them, cautioning the colored woman to take good care of the children, and saying she would call for them in the morning.

Natty went into the house, saw his two darlings, in the bloom of health, asleep in a crib, and kissed them tenderly, but would not allow them to be awakened. Then he walked back to the hotel, wondering what it could all mean, but unable even to guess at a reasonable solution. Suddenly remembering that the greatest detective of the age, his warm personal friend, was in the city—a man whom Natty had helped many times, he called a carriage and drove to that officer's quarters. Natty told his friend only enough to give him a key to the matter, and they

instantly drove to the cottage, when the following conversation ensued between the detective and the colored woman:

“Have you any children of your own?”

“No, sah.”

“Then why do you keep that crib?”

“It is for de missus' chil'en.”

“How often are they left with you, auntie?”

“Almost every week, massa, while de missus is in de country.”

“At what time did the mistress go away today?”

“Four o'clock.”

“Does she always go at that hour?”

“Yes, sah.”

“At what hour does she return?”

“Ten o'clock in de mornin'.”

“Always?”

“Yes, sah, always. De way ob it is—”

“That will do. Come, General, we will drive to the office of the chief of police. The parties have evidently gone to P——, and we can follow by the next train if you wish.”

Natty, like one walking in his sleep, followed his friend, and after a few minutes spent at the police-office found himself whirling toward P—— at the rate of thirty miles an hour. At almost every station dispatches were handed to the detective. Presently he took a seat beside Natty, and said:

“A party of four left B—— this afternoon at ten minutes after four o'clock, for P——. Two of the party are gentlemen, and the other two ladies. One man is tall and dark, with side-whiskers, and dressed in dark clothes; the other is small and fair, with light hair, mustache, and wears a gray suit. Of the ladies, one is blond, tall, and in dark dress; the other is—” and here followed a description so minute, that before it was completed Natty exclaimed:

“That's Minnie—my Minnie!”

“The party is now,” continued the detective, without noticing the interruption, “at ——, and one of my men has boarded the train, and is riding in the seat just behind them, watching them. If they leave the train we shall know it, and whatever they do or wherever they go, we shall know all.”

The train rolled on for hours, and was nearing P——, when the detective came once more to Natty, and said:

“The persons we seek are now at the K—— House, and we will follow them there.”

An hour later they drove over the rough streets of P——, and stopped at the K—— House. Natty ran his eyes over the register, and, turning to the detective, said:

“Minnie is not here.”

The detective examined the book for a moment, and then, placing his fingers on four names, looked at the clerk, who slowly nodded his head.

The detective registered his own and Natty's name, and, calling for a light, took Natty by the arm and drew him up-stairs to his room. Here he told Natty all he had discovered; and as the truth forced itself upon the miserable man, he staggered and fell with a heavy groan upon the bed, where he lay prone like one dead. When he rose there was a dangerous fire in his eyes, and the detective, who had sat in silence during all the period of his friend's agony, said:

“Come, my good friend, will you allow me to manage this unfortunate affair.”

“The world is at an end for me,” replied Natty; “do with me as you will. Would to God I were dead!”

“Don't talk so,” answered the detective. “A false wife is the bane of her husband. Men like you, Natty Roland, belong rather to their country than to an idle and wicked woman.”

“Do whatever you will, my friend. I am not myself, and must confide in your better judgment.”

The detective rung the bell, and in a few minutes a man closely muffled came in and talked in an undertone for some seconds, and then went away. In an hour he returned, and handed a slip to the detective, on which was written:

“Warrants issued; men arrested, and are now in prison.”

Natty was shown this, but he said not a word. His heart was growing cold and hard, and he felt that he could meet even death with pleasure. The detective tried to persuade him to lie down and rest; but he shook his head, and, ringing for a servant, bade him bring cigars. All night long he sat at the window, smoking, and looking out at the moonlight. Ah! who shall know the thoughts of that betrayed heart? What woman was worthy of the great love of such a man? The detective respected the mighty grief of his friend. Throwing himself on the bed, he slept soundly.

In a room scarcely a dozen steps from where Natty sat was a woman with disheveled hair and anxious face, pacing up and down, and wondering why her guilty companion did not return. An hour before he had been called out, and came not back. She was burning with suspicion, anxiety, dread, and remorse, yet she could do nothing but pace her room and wait, she knew not for what.

It was daylight, and Natty, worn out with his vigil, slept in his chair. The sun rose, but he did not awake until the detective shook him repeatedly and called him by name. It required several minutes for him to recall all the events of the day before, and, as they came back one by one, his face settled into a look of stone. The detective watched him closely, and was delighted to see his pale face harden and close upon the past, for he knew it was his friend's only refuge from a broken heart.

Natty descended and mingled with the throng in the office of the hotel, many officers and citizens gathering about him, glad to meet with so distinguished a man. As he passed in to breakfast with some friends, he saw a woman with a profusion of golden hair rise from one of the tables and precipitately leave the room. A few minutes afterward, a lady with clasped hands and marble brow peered anxiously through the open door, and, pressing her hand to her heart, exclaimed:

“It is indeed he! O God, I am punished!”

She would have fallen, but her friend caught her and assisted her up-stairs, where she lay sobbing on her bed, until a bell-boy handed in a card, on which was written the words:

“The proprietor would feel obliged if you and your friend would leave the hotel at the earliest practicable moment.”

“Disgraced, disgraced!” cried Minnie. “O, my God! that I should live to come to this! Natty, Natty, you are hard on me.”

Then she rose mechanically, and went away, and as she passed out of the door of the hotel, she heard the voice of Natty in the reading-room close by. Again she would have fallen, but her golden-haired friend assisted her tottering steps to the carriage, and they were driven rapidly away to the railway station.

More dead than alive, Minnie reached the great city of B——; but the thought of seeing her darling children once more revived her courage, and taking a carriage she ordered the coachman to drive as fast as he could to Blank Street, where lived the colored woman we have before met. She did not stop to knock, but although the knob turned in her hand the door would not open. Raising her eyes she saw this placard:

“Gone away with General Roland.”

The cunning detective had been there before her, and the house was silent and deserted. Her punishment was complete, and, with a realizing sense that her babes were gone from her forever, her brain reeled and she fell to the earth. The people found her lying cold and motionless on the ground, and it was many weeks before she could recall the scenes of that terrible day.

Little more remains to be told. Minnie Morgan was divorced; and after the war, when Natty's grief had been healed by time, he married a lady in every way worthy of him.

On one of the most fashionable streets in the city of C—— is a luxurious mansion, and the door-plate of that happy home bears the well-known name of Nathaniel Roland, one of the substantial men of the great North-west. Four children gather about his knee, and two of them have the brown eyes and fair features of Minnie Morgan, while two are dark and resemble the lady whom they all call mother.

Minnie still lives, but has only been heard of twice in ten years. One stormy night, at the close of a bitter cold day, as the light streamed from the comfortable parlor and the children were at play, a thin pale woman in tattered garments gazed intently through the plateglass of the windows, and lingered as if spell-bound until the children were put to bed and the lights extinguished. Then she stole away no one knew whither. Again, as the nurse was walking in the park with a bright boy, a poor woman caught him up in her arms, kissed him over and over again, and would not let the frightened child go until the policeman released him and ordered her to be gone. It was Minnie, and the boy was her first-born.

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