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THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE TEMPTED PREVAILS.

Sob after she came yelling up, her heart, and fell from her quivering lips. A perfect hurricane of grief seemed to be raging in her bosom.

Presently her grief found expression in words. I heard my own name.

"Edgar, oh, Edgar, why did I ever meet you! Why did I not die before you crossed my path! To see the heart for which I would give my life, trampled beneath the feet of another, laid there, too, by you in your blind adoration! Oh! Edgar, why do you not awake from your dream of bliss, when the precipice of ruin is just before you."

Then she started up and her slight form dilated with indignation, and her blue eyes flashed defiantly, as she burst forth.

"And you, O Helen Sinclair, are among the most cruel and false-hearted, to wreck such a noble heart as that of Edgar Trent. You are wearing around him the meshes of your power, that you may tempt him to ruin. But, alas! you shall be thwarted! Yes, I will do it! He shall not part with you!"

Then she fell back upon the sofa and looked into another fit of tears. I could see by the heavings of her bosom that a fierce storm of emotion was raging within. By and by, as if exhausted by the violence of her own emotions, she fell into a gentle slumber, the tear-stains still upon her lovely face!

Then and there I registered a vow in my heart that I would forsake the divinity which I had so long worshipped, and henceforth devote my life to that dear one who had proved my guardian angel in the midst of temptation.

Noislessly I glided out of the room, and sought my own.

I almost gained my chamber, when I heard the distant sounds of mirth and music in the parlor.

I know not what evil spirit tempted me there; but I was irresistibly drawn to the sound of merry laughter that came echoing through the passage, to my ears. Oh! that I had passed on!

My mind wandered back to that one sleeping the sleep of exhaustion in the library; I thought of the confession which I had heard from her own lips; but that had no power then to keep me back.

When I entered the parlor there was a murmur of surprise at my haggard appearance.

"Why, Trent," said one "you look like you had seen a ghost."

"Come here Mr. Trent," said Helen, smiling that smile which I could not resist.

I passed over to her side, and as I caught the glance of those magnificent eyes, my heart seemed to come back and fall in submission at her feet.

"Mr. Trent, you must atone for dropping your wine to-night by drinking another glass with me. There do take this glass," and she offered me the wine with a look that dissolved all my resolutions and my vows of fidelity to Alice, as the sun melts the hoar-frost of morning.

I was under the spell!

There was no Alice Haiden, as a guardian genius, to save me now.—I was completely in the coils.

"Miss Sinclair," I replied, "I cannot resist, when you plead, I will take the wine."

The glasses oinked together and the liquid gurgled down my throat.

My first glass was greeted with applause by the company. But when I glanced at Mr. Sinclair there was a troubled expression upon his face.—However, I thought very little of that as I had seen him drink more than one glass that evening.

After the first step is taken in vice, it is easy to take the second. After the first barrier of conscience has been

broken down, the next can be destroyed almost at a blow. In a few moments from the time I drank my first glass of wine I had drunk six, all presented by the hand of Helen Sinclair, whom I could not resist. I was under the spell!

The result can easily be imagined. I soon became flushed with wine, and I fear my conduct was not so respectable.

I felt as I never felt before. I cannot describe the sensations I experienced; nor do I think such a description would interest the reader.

Glass after glass was drunk, until I became unfit to remain in the company.

How I reached my chamber, I cannot tell. I have a dim recollection of groping my way like a blind man through the long passages; and I can remember that near the library door, something met me, I know not whether a living being or ghost, the form seemed so light and ethereal to my bewildered senses, and the countenance was so deadly pale. It may have been my mother's spirit, disturbed in her eternal repose by the waywardness of her child. I saw the same deep-blue eyes, and the same long golden tresses which she possessed. But the expression of the countenance was strangely like Alice Haiden's.

The vision faded from my sight—passed away down the dim, shadowy passage and disappeared.

I know not how long I stood there gazing after the phantom. I have a faint recollection of stretching forth my arms towards the retreating figure, as tender thoughts forced their way upon my beclouded mind.

But the spectre was gone! The next sensation which I experienced was a terrible aching and throbbing in my head, and I awoke to find myself in my own chamber, stretched on the couch with all my clothes on, where I must have crept, after meeting the strange figure in the passage. I looked at my watch and found it to be long after office hours. I saw none of the family when I appeared at the breakfast table, which had been kept waiting for me.—I asked the servant where the members of the family were, and was told that Mr. Sinclair had gone to the store, Mrs. Sinclair and Helen were gone out for a morning drive, and Alice Haiden had not left her room that morning.

Mr. Sinclair said nothing but a simple "good morning" when I entered the office, and during all the morning kept a profound silence. I fear I should not have received his rebukes with that meekness which my guilt would have prompted under other circumstances.—*Trent had not his own child caused my doings!* I think it was this circumstance that kept him silent upon the subject. I felt sure that he was troubled; but he had not the courage to ensure me for an office of which his own daughter had been the cause!

At the dinner-table, I met all the family. Mrs. Sinclair was quiet and reserved; Helen said very little, and seemed to be suffering, if I may judge from her flushed countenance and restless, agitated manner. Miss Haiden said nothing, ate nothing; and I could perceive traces of tears upon her pale cheeks. The meal was eaten in silent embarrassment, and I went back to the store, glad to escape from the society of those who had witnessed my humiliation. In the afternoon the same scene of silence between myself and Mr. Sinclair was enacted. He seemed to be suffering mentally, and was in no way inclined to talk; and I was glad to escape conversation.

It is needless to say that I was unhappy! I was wretched! My mother's sad face was constantly before me, and in imagination I could hear her voice ringing out from the long Past: "Edgar, my child, never touch a drop of ardent spirits!"

CHAPTER V.

SAVED BY THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

I was now upon the very threshold of ruin. I stood, as it were, with two paths before me, one of which I had already begun to tread. The one lay upward along the thorny way of abstinence, where bowers of ease invite to repose at every step, on either hand,

and where the syren song of pleasure is wafted upon every passing breeze.

The other was the path of dissipation, lying in the very heart of these enchanted regions, with no formidable wall of prohibition to scale in order to participate in all the forbidden delights.

One led through toil and danger, to honor and peace; the other, through ease and pleasure, to degradation and intamy.

Which should I choose? Oh! the terrible struggle which I had with my own heart, ere I could deliberately renounce the smiles of pleasure and the hollow rewards of dissipation, and accept the nobler rewards of a peaceful conscience!

There was but one way by which I could abide by the resolutions of reformation which I had formed; and that was by re-awakening from the influence of Helen Sinclair. This I resolved to do. It was with great pleasure, therefore, that I received intelligence of a legacy bequeathed me by a dying relative, that would place me at once beyond the reach of want. But what must I do? Must I lead an aimless life? Must I bury myself in seclusion from the world, to avoid its snares?

No! I would buy the old homestead, refit it, and ask Alice Haiden, my guardian angel, to share life with me. I was convinced of a tender affection for her, infinitely greater than I had ever experienced towards any other human being.

The reader may charge me with inconsistency, in so readily yielding homage to Helen Sinclair, and at the same time professing love for Alice Haiden.

But, I beg you to remember that I did not love Helen Sinclair. I was only fascinated. My feelings when in her presence were experienced by one under the spell of a snake. While the poor wretch has no power to flee from the charm, his heart was filled with a sense of his peril.

So it was with me. Helen Sinclair could sway me by her mysterious power. She could fascinate me by her irresistible charms. But she could never enthroned herself in my heart as the queen of its most tender and sacred affections.

On the other hand, Alice Haiden's quiet unobtrusive beauty, her reserve and maidenly modesty, together with the interest which she manifested in my welfare, and which led me to believe that she was not indifferent to me, all attracted me irresistibly towards her.

My conclusion was formed. I would seek to win this fair girl—my guardian genius. Far away from the scene of my temptation, fall and humiliation, I would seek in her society that happiness which springs from a life of sobriety surrounded by the pleasures of domestic life.

These resolutions formed I went about my business with fresh alacrity, resolving not to tell Mr. Sinclair of my expected departure, until my fate should be decided.

I found, however, that Alice tried to avoid me more than ever before. Every advance which I made seemed to produce an effect the very opposite of that which I had intended.

One evening as I was passing the library door, I caught the low sound of some one sobbing inside. The thought flashed upon me that it was she and, I could not resist the impulse to go to her.

I opened the door, and closed it lightly behind me, as I stepped into the apartment.

In her grief, she seemed not to have noticed the opening of the door, but continued to weep.

"Miss Haiden!"

She sprang from her recumbent posture upon the sofa, and stood before me her cheeks alternately paling and flushing, and her form quivering with agitation.

"Mr. Trent, please suffer me to pass," said she, as I stood directly in her way.

"Pardon my intrusion, Miss Haiden," said I, "and do not let my presence drive you from the room. Pray, be seated, as I have something to say to you."

She sat down in a hesitating manner.

"I see, Miss Haiden, that my society is distasteful to you. The reason for it I must attribute to my shameful conduct. But I trust that I shall never be so humiliated again. I have resolved to quit my dissipation, so recently commenced, and never more to degrade my manhood by re-enacting the scene of the other night."

"But what is all this to me, Mr. Trent," said she in an agitated manner. "I am sure, I am very glad of your resolution to reform; but I cannot imagine why you should seek to inform me of it."

"It is because I desire you to assist me to keep that resolution, Alice," said I looking into her deep blue eyes uplifted to my own.

I will draw the veil over that sacred interview. I will not speak of the outpouring of my heart's affection in her ears; of the doubts which she entertained because of my worship of Helen; as she called it; of the manner in which those doubts were removed; of the blissful commingling of two loving hearts, and the interchange of love's sacred vows. Of these things I will not give a detailed account.

In a few months more Alice Haiden became my bride. The ceremony was performed in a quiet manner, with no one present but the family and the officiating clergyman.

Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair bade us an affectionate good bye when we left; Helen took leave of us with averted eyes, and hurried from the room before we left.

We are now installed in the old homestead, and have been for many long, delightful months.

Alice has indeed proven my guardian angel. Her gentle influence has hour of temptation.

I am supremely happy. The wine-cup and the tempter are unknown in our peaceful home.

One evening, Alice and myself were sitting in our vine-clad porch admiring the beauties of the setting sun.

A holy calm seemed to have settled over the busy scenes of Nature. The landscape stretched out before us in all the varied beauties of autumn, and the golden sun was gilding the peaceful scene with gorgeous hues.

"Alice," said I, drawing her lovingly to my bosom, "you have never told me the cause of your strange aversion to the drinking habits of society. Tell me now love."

A crimson flush overspread her countenance; but it was quickly succeeded by a look of peace and confidence as she nestled more closely in my arms.

"Dear Edgar," she replied at last, "I will tell you. I will keep nothing from you."

So, there while the twilight shades were deepening about us, she told me the story of her short, but eventful, life, and gave the reasons which prompted her to set her face so firmly against dissipation in all its forms.

This narrative will be laid before the readers of the Friend, if nothing shall prevent at no distant day.

When her story was finished, we both arose with hearts too full for utterance, and passed into the parlor.

There as if by mutual consent we passed before two pictures that hung side by side in a conspicuous place.

One represented a pale, golden-haired woman reclining upon a couch, with her thin hand upon the curls of a kneeling boy.

The other was wondrously like her who lies upon the couch, the same blue eyes and sunny hair, but the expression is that of Alice Haiden—now Alice Trent, THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

THE END.

A Senator from one of the mountain districts of Tennessee, on his arrival at Nashville to take his seat, put up at a first class hotel, when the following occurred on taking his seat at the table: Senator of servant—"What is your victuals?" Servant—"What will you have, sir, tea or coffee?" Senator—"Tea." Servant—"What kind of tea?" Senator—"Store tea, do you suppose I come here to drink sassafras?"

Selections.

OUT OF WORK.

"It is no use, Maria, I've tried everywhere."

"But you are not going to give up. Give up? How can I help it?—Within four days I have been to every book bindery in the city, and not a bit of work can I get."

"But have you tried anything else?"

"What else can I try?"

"Why, anything that you can do."

"Yes; I've tried other things. I have helped to more than a dozen of my friends, and offered to help them if they would hire me."

"And what did you mean to do for them?"

"I offered to post their accounts, make out bills or attend at the counter."

Mrs. Stanwood smiled as her husband thus spoke.

"What makes you smile?" he asked.

"To think that you should have imagined that you would find work in such places. But how is Mark Leeds?"

"He is in a bad way."

"How so?"

"He has nothing in his house to eat."

It was a shudder that passed over the wife's face now.

"Why do you tremble, wife?"

"Because when we shall have eaten our breakfast to-morrow morning, we shall have nothing."

"What!" cried Peter Stanwood, half-starting from his chair. "Do you mean that?"

"I do."

"But our flour?"

"But we have pork."

"Then we must starve?" groaned the stricken man, starting across the room.

No sooner had the husband gone than Mrs. Stanwood put on her hat and shawl. Her oldest child was a girl seven years old and her youngest four. She asked her next door neighbor if she would take care of her children till noon. These children were known to be good and quiet, and they were taken cheerfully. Then Mrs. Stanwood locked up her house and went away. She returned at noon, bringing some dinner for the children, and then went away again. She got home in the evening, before her husband, carrying a heavy basket on her arm.

"Well, Peter," she asked, after the husband had entered and sat down, "what luck?"

"Nothing! nothing!" he groaned.—"I made out to squeeze out a dinner out of an old chum, but I can't find work."

"And where have you looked to-day?"

"Oh!—everywhere. I have been to a hundred places, but it is the same in every place. It is nothing but one eternal 'no! no! NO!' I'm tired and sick of it."

"But what kind of work have you offered to do?"

"Why I even went so far as to offer to tend in a liquor store downtown."

The wife smiled.

"Now, what shall we do?" uttered Peter, spasmodically.

"Why, we'll eat supper first, and then we'll talk the matter over."

"Supper! Have you got any?"

"Yes—plenty of it."

"But you told me that you had none."

"Neither had we this morning, but I've been after work to-day and found some."

"You!—You been after work?" exclaimed the husband in surprise.

"Why, first I went to Mrs. Snow's. I knew her girl was sick, and I hoped she might have work to be done. I went to her and told her my story, and she set me at work at once doing her washing. She gave me food to bring home for the children; and paid me three shillings when I got through."

"What! you been out washing for our butcher's wife?" said Peter, looking very much surprised.

"Of course I have, and have thereby earned enough to keep us in food through to-morrow, at any rate; so to-morrow you may come home to dinner."

"But how about the rent?"

"Oh! I have seen Mr. Simpson, and told him just how we were situated, and offered him my watch as a pledge for the payment of the rent within two months, with interest on all arrears up to that date. I told him I did the business because you were away looking for work."

"So he's got your gold watch?"

"No—he wouldn't take it. He said if I would become responsible for the payment he would let it rest."

"Then we've got a roof to cover us and food for to-morrow. But what next? Oh, what a curse these hard times are!"

"Don't despair, Peter, for we shall not starve. I've got work enough engaged to keep us alive."

"Ah—eh, what is it?"

"Why, Mr. Snow has engaged me to carry small packages, baskets, bundles and so forth, to his rich customers. He has had to give up one of his horses."

"What do you mean, Maria?"

"Just what I say. When Mr. Snow came home to dinner, I was there, and I asked him if he ever had any light articles which he wished to send round to customers. Never mind, all he said. He did happen to want just such work done, though he meant to call upon some of the idlers who lounge about the markets. He promised to give me all the work he could, and I am, to be there in good season in the morning."

"Well, that is a pretty go! my wife turned butcher's boy! You won't do any such thing."

"And why not?"

"Why not? Because—because—"

"Say because it will lower you in the social scale."

"Well and so it will."

(Concluded on fourth page.)