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THE  
STARTLING CONFESSIONS  
OF  
ELEANOR BURTON;

A THRILLING TRAGEDY FROM REAL LIFE.

EXHIBITING

A DARK PAGE

IN THE MANNERS, CUSTOMS, AND CRIMES OF  
THE "UPPER TEN" OF NEW YORK CITY,

BEING

A FULL AND AUTHENTIC DISCLOSURE OF THE MYSTERIOUS  
AFFAIR IN REGARD TO WHICH SO MANY PARAGRAPHS  
HAVE APPEARED IN THE PAPERS OF LATE.

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PHILADELPHIA:

E. E. BARCLAY, 283 MARKET ST.

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THE  
CONFESSIONS

OF

ELEANOR BURTON.

At the age of eighteen I was betrothed to Eugene Burton, a young man of polished manners, elegant exterior, and connected with one of the first families of New York. I was beautiful—so the world said,—eighteen and an heiress. My father was one of the wealthiest merchants of New York, with a princely mansion in town, and as princely a mansion for summer residence in the country. I had lost my mother at an age so early, that I can but dimly remember her pallid face. At eighteen I was my father's only and idolized child.

Returning from boarding-school, where, apart from the busy world, I had passed four years of a life, which afterwards was to be marked by deeds so singular, yes, unnatural, I was invested by my father with the keys of his city mansion, and installed as its mistress. Still kept apart from the world,—for my father guarded me from its wiles and temptations with an eye of sleepless jealousy,—I was left to form ideas of my future life, from the fancies of my day-dreams, or from what knowledge I had gleaned from books. Eugene was my father's head clerk. In that capacity he frequently visited our mansion. To see him was to love him. His form was graceful and yet manly, his complexion a rich bronze, his eyes dark, penetrating, and melancholy. As for myself, a picture which, amid all my changing fortunes, I have preserved as a relic of happy and innocent days, shows a girl of eighteen, with a form

that may well be called voluptuous, and a face (shaded by masses of raven hair) which, with its clear brown complexion, large hazel eyes, and arching brows, tells the story of my descent on my mother's side,—she was a West Indian, and there is Spanish blood in my veins. My acquaintance with Eugene ripened into warm and passionate love; and one day my father surprised me as I lay upon my lover's breast, and instead of chiding us, said with a look of unmistakeable satisfaction:

"Right, Eugene! You have won my daughter's love. When you return from the West Indies you shall be married. And once married, instead of my head clerk you shall be my partner."

My father was a venerable man, with a kindly face and snow-white hair: as he spoke, the tears ran down his cheeks, for (as I afterwards ascertained) my marriage with Eugene, the orphan of one of the dearest friends of his boyhood, had been the most cherished hope of his life for years.

Eugene left for Havana, intrusted with an important and secret commission from my father. He was to be absent only a month. Why was it on the day of his departure, as he strained me to his breast, and covered my face with his passionate kisses, that a dark presentiment chilled my blood? O, had he never left my side what a world of agony, of despair,—yes, of crime,—would have been spared to me!

"Be true to me, Nell," these were his last words,—“In a month I will return."

"True to you! Can you doubt it, Eugene? True until death"—And we parted.

I was once more alone in my father's splendid mansion. One evening he came home, but not with his usual kindly smile. He was pale and troubled, and seemed to avoid my gaze. Without entering the sitting room, he went at once to his library and locked himself in, having first directed the servant to call him in case a Mr. Morton inquired for him. It was after eight when Mr. Morton called and was shown into the parlour, while the servant went to announce him to my father.

"Miss Ellen, I believe?" he said, as he beheld me by the light of the astral lamp,—and then a singular look passed over his face; a look which at that time I could not define, but which afterwards was made terribly clear to me. This Mr. Morton, who thus for the first time entered my father's house, was by no means prepossessing in his exterior. Over fifty years, corpulent in form, bald-headed, his florid face bore the undeniable traces of a life exhausted in sensual indulgence.

While I was taking a survey of this singular visiter, the servant entered the parlour,—“Mr. Morton will please walk up into the library," he said.

"Good night, dear," said Mr. Morton with a bow and a gesture that had as much of insolence as of politeness in it,—“Bye-bye,—we'll meet again."

He went up stairs, and my father and he were closeted together for at least two hours. At ten o'clock I was sent for. I entered the library, trembling I knew not why; and found my father and Mr. Morton seated on opposite sides of a table overspread with papers,—a hanging lamp, suspended over the table, gave light to the scene. My father was deathly pale.

"Sit down, Nell," he said in a voice so broken and changed, that I would not have recognised it, had I not seen his face: "Mr. Morton has something to say to you."

"Mr. Morton!" I ejaculated; "What can he have to say to me?"

"Speak to her,—speak," said my father, "speak, for I cannot," and resting his hands on the table, his head drooped on his breast.

"Sit down, my dear," exclaimed Morton, in a tone of easy familiarity; "I have a little matter of business with your father. There's no use of mincing words. Your father, my dear, is a ruined man."

I sank into a chair, and my father's groan confirmed Morton's words.

"Hopelessly involved," continued Mr. Morton. "Unless he can raise three hundred thousand dollars by to-morrow noon, he is a dishonoured man. Do you hear me, my dear? Dishonoured!"

"Dishonoured!" groaned my father, burying his head in his hands.

"And more than this," continued Morton, "your father, among his many mercantile speculations, has dabbled a little—yes, more than a little—in the African slave trade. He has relations with certain gentlemen at Havana, which, once known to our government, would consign him to the convict's cell."

The words of this man filled me with indignation and with horror. Half fainting as I was, I felt the blood boil in my veins.

"Father, rebuke this liar," I said, as I placed my hand on his shoulder; "raise your face, and tell him that he is the coiner of a falsehood as atrocious as it is foolish."

My father did not reply.

"And more than this," Morton went on as though he had not heard me, "I have it in my power, either to relieve your father from his financial embarrassments, or,"—he paused and surveyed

me from head to foot,—“or to denounce him to the Government as one guilty of something which it calls *piracy*, to wit, an intimate relationship with the African slave trade.”

Again my father groaned, but did not raise his face.

The full truth burst upon me. My father was ruined, and in this man's power. Confused, half maddened, I flung myself upon my knees, and clasped Morton by the hands.

“O! you will not ruin my father,” I shrieked; “you will save him!”

Morton took my hands within his own, and bent down until I felt his breath upon my cheeks—

“Yes, I will save him,” he whispered; “that is, for a price—your hand, my dear.”

His look could not be mistaken. At the same moment, my father raised his face from his hands; it was pallid, distorted, stamped with despair.

“It is the only way, Nell,” he said in a broken voice; “otherwise your father must rot in a felon's cell.”

Amid all the misfortunes of a varied and changeful life, the agony of that moment has never once been forgotten. I felt the blood rush to my head—“Be it so,” I cried, and fell like a dead woman on the floor at Morton's feet.

The next day we were married. In the dusk of the evening four figures stood in the spacious parlour of my father's mansion, by the light of a single waxen candle. There was the clergyman, gazing in dumb surprise upon the parties to this ill-assorted marriage; there was my father, his countenance vacant almost to imbecility—for the blow had stricken his intellect; there was the bridegroom, his countenance glowing with sensual triumph;—and there the bride, pale as the bridal dress which enveloped her form, about to be sacrificed on the altar of an unholy marriage. We were married, and between the parlour and the bridal-chamber one hope remained. Rather than submit to the embraces of the unworthy sensualist, I had determined to die even upon the threshold of the bridal chamber. I had provided myself with a poniard. But alas! a glass of wine, drugged by my husband's hand, benumbed my reason, and when morning light broke upon me again, I found myself in his arms.

The history of the next three months may be rapidly told, for they were months of agony and shame.

“I have directed Eugene, by letter, to proceed from Havana to the city of Mexico,” said my father to me, the second day after

the marriage. “He will not return for six months, and certainly until his return shall not hear of this—this—marriage.”

My father's mind was broken, and from that hour he surrendered himself to Morton's control. Morton took charge of his business, made our house his home—he was my father's master and mine. The course which he pursued to blunt my feelings and deaden every faculty of my better nature, by rousing all that was sensual within me, was worthy of him. He gave parties at our home, to the profligate of both sexes, selected from a certain class of the so-called “fashionables” of New York. Revels prolonged from midnight until dawn, disturbed the quiet of our mansion; and in the wine-cup and amid the excitement of these fashionable but unholy orgies, I soon learned to forget the pure hopes of my maidenhood. Three months passed, and no word of Eugene. My father meanwhile was sinking deeper every day into hopeless imbecility. At length, the early part of summer, my husband gathered together a party of his fashionable friends, and we departed on a tour to Niagara Falls, the lakes, then along the St. Lawrence, and to Montreal. At

Niagara Falls we put up at the — Hotel, and the orgies which had disgraced my father's mansion were again resumed. My father we had left at home in charge of a well-tried and faithful servant. One summer evening, tired of the scenes which took place in our parlours, at the Hotel, I put on a bonnet and veil and alone pursued my way across the bridge to Goat Island, and from Goat to Luna Island. The night was beautiful; from a clear sky the moon shone over the falls; and the roar of waters alone disturbed the silence of the scene. Crossing the narrow bridge, which separates Goat Island from Luna Island, I took my way through the deep shadows of the thicket, until I emerged in the moonlight, upon the verge of the Falls. Leaning against a small beech tree which stands there, I clasped my hands upon my bosom and wept. That scene, full of the grandeur and purity of nature, awoke the memory of my pure and happier days.

“One plunge and all is over!” the thought flashed over me, and I measured with a rapid glance the distance between myself and the brink of the cataract. But at this moment I discovered that I was not alone upon Luna Island. A stranger was leaning against a tree, which was nearer to the brink of the falls than the one against which I leaned. His face was in profile, the lower part of it, covered with a thick moustache and beard; and his gaze was lifted absently to the moonlight sky. As I dropped my veil over my face, and gazed at him freely, myself unperceived, I felt my limbs bend beneath me, and the blood rush in a torrent to my head.

I had only strength to frame one word,—“Eugene!” and fell fainting on his heart.

When I recovered my consciousness, I found myself resting in his arms, while he covered my face with burning kisses.

“You here, Eleanor!” he cried. “This is indeed an unexpected pleasure!”

He had not heard of my marriage!

“I am here—with some friends,” I faltered. “My father could not come with me, and”——

Between the kisses which he planted upon the lips of his betrothed (so he thought), he explained his unexpected appearance at Niagara. At Havana he had received the letter from my father, desiring him to hasten on important business to the city of Mexico. He had obeyed, and accomplishing his mission sooner than he anticipated, had left Vera Cruz for New Orleans, taken steamboat for Cincinnati, and from thence to Cleveland, and across the Lake to Buffalo and Niagara Falls. “And now I’m on my way home, Eleanor,” he concluded. “What a pleasant surprise it will be for father!”

“I am married, Eugene!” the words were on my lips, but I could not speak them. We rose and, arm in arm, wandered over the bridge up the steep and through the winding walks of Goat Island. Leaning on the arm of Eugene, I forgot everything but that he loved me, and that he was with me. I did not dare to think that to-morrow’s light would disclose to him the truth,—that I was married, and to another. At length as we approached the bridge, which leads from the island to the shore, I said, “Leave me, Eugene. We must not be seen to return together. To-morrow you can call upon me, when I am in presence of my—friends.”

One passionate embrace was exchanged; and I watched him, as he crossed the bridge alone, until he was out of sight. Why, I knew not, but an impulse for which I could not account, induced me to retrace my steps to Luna Island. In a few moments I had crossed the bridge (connecting Goat with Luna Island), and stood once more on the cataract’s brink, under the same tree, where an hour before I had discovered Eugene. O! the agony of that moment, as gazing over the falls, I called up my whole life, my blighted prospects, and my future without one ray of hope! Should I advance but a simple step and bury my shame and my sorrows beneath the cataract? Once dead, Eugene would at least respect my memory, while living he could only despise and abhor me.

While thoughts like these flashed over my brain, my ear was saluted with the chorus of a drinking-song, hummed in an uneven

and tremulous voice; and in a moment my husband passed before me, with an unsteady step. He was confused and excited by the fumes of champagne. Approaching the verge of the island—but a few feet from the verge of the cataract—where the waters look smooth and glassy, as they are about to take the last plunge, he stood gazing now at the torrent, now at the moon, with a vague half-drunken stare.

That moment decided my life!

His attitude, the cataract so near, my own lost and hopeless condition; all rushed upon me. Veiling my face, I darted forward and uttered a shriek. Startled by the unexpected sound, he turned, lost his balance, and fell backwards into the torrent. But as he fell, he clutched a branch which overhung the water. Thus scarcely two yards from the brink, he struggled madly for his life, his face upturned to the moon. I advanced and uncovered my face. He knew me, for the shock had sobered him.

“Eleanor, save me—save me!” he cried.

I gazed upon him without a word, my arms folded on my breast, and saw him struggle, and heard the branch snap, and, heard his death howl as he was swept over the falls. Then, pale as death, and shuddering as with mortal cold, I dragged my steps from the island, over the bridge, shrieking madly for help. Soon I heard footsteps and voices. “Help! help!” I shrieked, as I was surrounded by a group of faces, men and women,—“My husband! My husband! The falls!” and sank fainting in their midst.

Morning came, and no suspicion attached to me. A murderess, if not in deed, in thought certainly, I was looked upon as the inconsolable widow. Eugene left Niagara without seeing me. How did he regard me? I could not tell. The death of Morton broke up our travelling party, and we returned to New York. I returned in time to attend my father’s funeral, and found myself the heiress, in my own right, of three hundred thousand dollars. An heiress and a widow, certainly life began to brighten! Morton removed, the incubus which sat upon my father’s wealth was gone; and I was beautiful and free, and—rich, immensely rich.

But where was Eugene? Months passed, and I did not see him. As he was the head clerk of my father, I hoped to see him, in company with the legal gentlemen engaged in closing up my father’s estate. But he settled his accounts, closed all connexion with my father’s estate and business, but did not come near me. At length, weary of suspense and heart-sick of the loneliness of my desolate mansion, I wrote to him, begging an interview. He called in the dusk of the evening, when a single candle lighted up the spacious



and gloomy parlour. He was dressed in deep mourning, and very pale.

"Madam, you wished to see me," he began.

His cold and formal manner cut me to the heart.

"Eugene!" I cried, and flung myself upon his breast, and passionately, but in broken accents, told him how my father's anticipated ruin had forced me to marry Morton.

Eugene was melted—"Eleanor! Eleanor! I love you, and always shall love you, but,—but—"

He paused: in an agony of suspense I hung upon his words.

"But—"

"But you are so rich, and I—I—am poor!"

I drowned all further words with kisses, and in a moment we were betrothed again.

We were married. Eugene was the master of my fortune, my person, and my future. We lived happily together, content with each other's society, and seeking in the endearments of a pure marriage to blot out the memory of an unholy one. My husband, truly my husband, was all that I could desire; and by me, he became the possessor of a princely revenue, free to gratify his taste for all that is beautiful in the arts—in painting and sculpture—without hindrance or control. Devoted to me, always kind, eager to gratify my slightest wish, Eugene was all that I could desire. We lived to ourselves, and forgot the miserable mockery called "the fashionable world," into which Morton had introduced me. Thus a year passed away, and present happiness banished the memory of a gloomy past. After a year, Eugene began to have important engagements, on pressing business, in Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Washington. His absence was death to me, but having full confidence in him, and aware that his business must be of vital importance—or assuredly he would not leave me—I saw him depart, time and again, with grief too deep for words; and always hailed his return—the very echo of his step—with a joy as deep. On one occasion, when he left me, for a day, on a business visit to Philadelphia, I determined, I scarcely knew why, to follow him, and greet him, on his arrival in Philadelphia, with the unexpected but welcome surprise of my presence. Clothing myself in black—black velvet bonnet, and black velvet mantilla, and with a dark veil over my face—I followed him to the ferry-boat, crossed to Jersey City, and took my seat near him in the cars. We arrived in Philadelphia late at night. To my surprise he did not put up at one of the prominent hotels, but bent his way

to an obscure and distant part of the city. I followed him to a remote part of Kensington, and saw him knock at the door of an isolated two-story house. After a pause, it was opened, and he entered. I waited from the hour of twelve until three, but he did not re-appear. Sadly, and with heavy steps, I bent my way to the city, and took lodgings at a respectable but third-rate tavern, representing myself as a widow from the interior, and taking great care to conceal my face from the gaze of the landlord and servants. Next morning it was my first care to procure a male dress—it matters not how or with what caution and trouble—and tying it up in a compact bundle, I made my way to the open country and entered a wood. It was the first of autumn, and already the leaves were tinted with rainbow dyes. In the thickest part of the wood I disposed of my female attire, and assumed the male dress—blue frock, buttoned to the throat, dark pantaloons, and gaiter boots. My dark hair I arranged beneath a glazed cap with military buttons. Cutting a switch, I twirled it jauntily in my hand, and, anxious to test my disguise, entered a wayside cottage, near the Second street road, and asked for a glass of water. While the back of the tenant of the cottage—an aged woman—was turned, I gazed in the looking-glass and beheld myself, to all appearance, a young man of medium stature, with brown complexion of exceeding richness, lips of cherry red, arched brows, eyes of unusual brilliancy, and black hair, arranged in a glossy mass beneath a glazed cap. It was the image of a handsome boy of nineteen, with no down on the lip and no beard on the chin. Satisfied with my disguise, and with a half-formed idea floating through my brain, I bent my steps to the isolated house, which I had seen my husband enter the night before. I knocked; the door was opened by a young girl, plainly clad, but of surpassing beauty—evidently, not more than sixteen years old. A sunny complexion, blue eyes, masses of glossy brown hair, combined with an expression which mingled voluptuous warmth with stainless innocence—such was her face. As to her form, although not so tall as mine, it mingled the graceful outlines of the maiden, with the ripeness of the woman.

She gazed upon me with surprise; obeying a sudden impulse I said—"Excuse me, Miss, but I promised to meet *him* here. You know," with a polite bow and smile, "you know whom I mean?"

"Mr. Crawford," she hesitated.

"Exactly so—Mr. Crawford, my intimate friend, who has confided *all* to me, and who desired me to meet him here at this hour."

"My mother is not at home," hesitated the young girl, "and in her absence I do not like to—"

"Receive *strangers*, you were about to add? Well, Miss, I am not a stranger. As the intimate friend of Mr. Crawford, who especially desired him to meet me here——"

These words seemed to resolve her doubts. She motioned me to enter, and we passed into a small room, neatly furnished, with the light, which came through the curtained windows, shining upon a picture—the portrait of *Eugene Burton, my husband*.

"Capital likeness of Crawford?" I said, carelessly tapping my switch against my boot.

"Yes—yes"—she replied, as she took a seat at the opposite end of the sofa, "but not so handsome."

In the course of two hours, in which with a maddened pulse, and heaving breast, I waited for the appearance of my husband, I learned from the young girl the following facts: She was a poor girl, and her mother with whom she lived, a widow in very moderate circumstances. Her name was Ada Bulwer. Mr. Lawrence Crawford (this of course was the assumed name of my husband) was a wealthy gentleman of a noble heart—he had saved her life in a railroad accident, some months before. He had been unhappy however in marriage; was now divorced from a wicked and unfaithful woman; and—here was the climax—"And next week we are to be married, and mother, Lawrence, and myself will proceed to Europe directly after our marriage."

This was Ada's story, which I heard with emotions that can scarcely be imagined. Every word planted a hell in my heart. At length, towards nightfall, a knock was heard, and Ada hastened to the door. Presently I heard my husband's step in the entry, and then his voice——

"Dearest"—there was the sound of a kiss—"I have got rid of that infamous woman, who killed her first husband, and have turned all my property into ready money. On Monday we start for Europe."

He entered, and as he entered I glided behind the door. Thus his back was towards me, while his face was towards Ada, and his arms about her waist.

"On Monday, dearest, we will be married, and then——"

I was white with rage, but calm as death. Drawing the poignard (which I had never parted with since I first procured it), I advanced and struck him, once, twice, thrice in the back. He never beheld me, but fell upon Ada's breast, bathed in blood. She uttered a shriek, but laying my hand upon her shoulder, I said sternly——

"Not a word! This villain seduced *my only sister*, as he would have seduced you!"

I tore him from her arms, and laid him on the sofa; he was speechless; the blood flowed from his mouth and nostrils, but, by his glance, I saw that he knew me. Ada, white as a shroud, tottered towards him.

"Seducer of my sister, have we met at last?" I said aloud, and then bending my face to his, and my bosom close to his heart, I whispered—"The *wicked woman* who killed her first husband gives you this"—and in my rage buried the poignard in his breast. Ada fell fainting to the floor, and I hurried from the house. It was a dark night, enlivened only by the rays of the stars, but I gained the wood, washed the blood from my hands, and resumed my female attire. In less than an hour I reached the Depot at Kensington, entered the cars, and before twelve, crossed the threshold of my own house in New York.

How I passed the night—with what emotions of agony, remorse, jealousy—matters not. And for three days afterwards, as I awaited further developments, I was many times near raving madness. The account of my husband's death filled the papers; and it was supposed that he had been killed by some unknown man, in revenge for the seduction of his sister. My wild demeanour was attributed to natural grief at his untimely end. On the fourth day I had his body brought on from Philadelphia; and on the fifth, celebrated his funeral, following his corpse to the family vault, draped in widow's weeds and blended with tears of grief, or of—despair. Ada Bulwer I never saw again, but believe she died within a year, of consumption, or a broken heart.

Alone in my mansion, secluded from the world, I passed many months in harrowing meditations on the past. Oftentime I saw the face of Eugene dabbled in blood, and both awake and in my dreams I saw, O, how vividly, his *last look*! I was still rich (although Eugene, as I discovered after his death, had recklessly squandered more than one-half of my fortune), but what mattered riches to one devoured, like myself, by an ever gnawing remorse? What might I have been had not Morton forced me into that unholy marriage? This question was never out of my mind for a long year, during which I wore the weeds of widowhood, and kept almost entirely within the limits of my mansion.

Towards the close of the year an incident occurred which had an important bearing on my fate. Near my home stood a church, in which a young and eloquent preacher held forth to the admiration of a fashionable congregation, every sabbath day. On one occasion I occupied a seat near the pulpit, and was much struck by his



FRANCIS WITH JEALOUSY AT SEEING HER HUSBAND IN THE EMBRACE OF ANOTHER WOMAN, SHE RUSHED FORWARD AND STRUCK HIM TO THE HEART!



youthful appearance, combined with eloquence so touching and enthusiastic. His eagle eye shone from his pallid face, with all the fire of an earnest—a heartfelt sincerity. I was struck by the entire manner of the man, and more than once in his sermon he seemed to address me in especial, for our eyes met, as though there was a mutual magnetism in our gaze. When I returned home, I could not banish his face nor his accents from my memory; I felt myself devoured by opposing emotions. Remorse for the past, mingled with a sensation of interest in the youthful preacher. At length, after much thought, I sent him this note by the hands of a servant in livery:—

“Reverend Sir—

“A lady who heard your eloquent sermon, on ‘Conscience,’ on sabbath last, desires to ask your advice in a matter touching the peace of her soul. She resides at No. ———, and will be glad to receive you to-morrow evening.  
E. B.”

This singular note was despatched, and the servant directed to inform the Rev. Herbert Lansing of my full name. As the appointed hour drew nigh, I felt nervous and restless. Will he come? Shall I unbosom myself to him, and obtain at least a portion of mental peace, by confessing the deeds and thoughts which rest so heavy on my soul? At last dusk came, two candles stood lighted on the mantel of the front parlour, and, seated on the sofa, I nervously awaited the coming of the preacher.

“I will confess all!” I thought, and, raising my eyes, surveyed myself in the mirror which hung opposite. The past year with all its sorrow had rather added to, than detracted from my personal appearance. My form was more matured and womanly. And the sorrow which I had endured had given a grave earnestness to my look, which, in the eyes of some, would have been more winning than the glance of voluptuous languor. Dressed in deep black, my bust covered to the throat, and my hair gathered plainly aside from my face, I looked the grave, serious—and I may add without vanity—the beautiful widow. The Rev. Herbert Lansing was announced at last—how I trembled as I heard his step in the hall! He entered, and greeting him with an extended hand, I thanked him warmly for calling in answer to my informal note, and motioned him to a chair. There was surprise and constraint in his manner, but he never once took his eyes from my face. He stammered, and even blushed, as he spoke to me.

“You spoke, madam, of a case of conscience,” he began.

“A case of conscience, about which I wished to speak to you——”

“Surely,” he said, fixing his gaze earnestly upon me, and his words seemed to be forced from him, even against his will, “surely one so beautiful and so good, cannot have anything like sin upon her soul.”

Our gaze met, and from that moment, we talked of everything but the case of conscience. All his restraint vanished. His eye flashed, his voice rolled deep and full; he was eloquent, and he was at home. We seemed to have been acquainted for years. We talked of history, poetry, the beautiful in nature, the wonderful in art; and we talked without effort, as though our minds mingled together, without even the aid of voice and eyes. Time sped noiselessly—it was twelve o’clock before we thought it nine. He rose to go——

“I shall do myself the pleasure to call again,” he said, and his voice faltered.

I extended my hand. His hand met it in a gentle pressure. That touch decided our fate. As though my very being and his had rushed together and melted into one, in that slight pressure of hand to hand, we stood silent and confused, one feeling in our gaze, blushing and pale by turns.

“Woman!” he said, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, “you will drive me mad,” and sank half fainting on his knees.

I bent down and drew him to my breast, and covered his forehead with kisses. Pale, half fainting, he lay almost helplessly in my arms. “Not mad, Herbert,” I whispered. “But I will be your good angel. I will cheer you in your mission of good. I will watch over you as you ascend, step by step, the difficult steep of fame. And, Herbert, I will love you!”

It was the first time that young brow had trembled to a woman’s kiss.

“Nay—nay—tempt me not!” he murmured, and unwound my arms from his neck, and staggered to the door.

But as he reached the threshold he turned, our gaze met, he rushed forward with outspread arms——

“I love you!” he cried, and his face was buried on my bosom.

\* \* \* \* \*

From that hour, the Rev. Herbert Lansing was the constant visitant at my house. He lived in my presence. His sermons, formerly lofty and sombre in their enthusiasm, now became coloured

with a passionate warmth. I felt a strange interest in the beautiful boy: a feeling compounded of pure love, of passion, of voluptuousness, the most intense and refined.

"O, Eleanor, do you not think that if I act aright in all other respects, that this *one sin* will be forgiven me?" said Herbert, as one sabbath evening, after the service was over, we sat side by side, in my home. It was in a quiet room, the curtain down, a light shining in front of a mirror, and a couch dimly seen through the shadows of an alcove.

"One sin? What mean you, Herbert?"

"The sin of loving you," and he blushed as his earnest gaze met mine.

"And is it a sin to love me?" I answered in a low voice, suffering my hand to rest upon his forehead.

"Yes!" he stammered, "to love you thus unlawfully."

"Why unlawfully?"

He buried his head on my breast, as he replied—"I love you as a husband, and I am not your husband."

"And why," I exclaimed, seizing him in my arms and gently raising his head, so that our gaze met, "and why can you not be my husband? I am rich; you have genius. My wealth—enough for us both—shall be linked with your genius, and both shall the more firmly cement our love. Say, Herbert, why can you not be my husband?"

He turned pale and avoided my gaze.

"You are ashamed of me—ashamed, because I have given you the last proof which a woman can give to the man she loves."

"Ashamed! O, no—no—by all that is sacred, no! But, Eleanor——"

And bending nearer to me, in faltering accents he whispered the secret to my ears. He was betrothed to Mary Somers, daughter of the wealthiest and most influential member of his congregation. He had been betrothed long before he met me. To Mr. Somers, the father, he owed all that he had acquired in life, both in position and fame. That gentleman had taken him when a friendless orphan boy, had educated him, and after his ordination, had obtained for him the pastoral charge of his large and wealthy congregation. Thus he was bound to the father by every tie of gratitude; to the daughter, by an engagement that he could not break without ingratitude and disgrace. My heart died within me at this revelation. At once I saw that Herbert could never be lawfully mine. Between him and myself stood Mary Somers, and every tie of gratitude, every emotion of self-respect and honour.

Not long after this interview, I saw Mary Somers at church, made the acquaintance of her father, a grave citizen, who regarded me as a sincere devotee, and induced Mary to become a frequent visitor at my house. She confided all to me. She loved Herbert devotedly, and looked forward to their marriage as the most certain event in the world. She was a very pretty child, with clear blue eyes and brown hair, and a look of bewitching archness. I do not stop aside from the truth, when I state that I sincerely loved her; although, it is also true, that I never suffered myself to think of her marriage with Herbert, as anything but an impossible dream. An incident took place one summer evening—about a year after Herbert's first visit to my house—which, slight as it was, it is just as well to relate. It is such slight incidents which often decide the fate of a lifetime, and strike down the barrier between virtue and crime.

I was sitting on the sofa at the back window of the parlour, and Mary sat on the stool at my feet. The light of the setting sun shone over my shoulders, and lighted up her face, as her clasped hands rested on my knees, and her happy guileless look was centred on my countenance. As I gazed upon that innocent face, full of youth and hope, I was reminded of my own early days, and at the memory, a tear rolled down my cheek.

"Yes, you shall marry Herbert," the thought flashed over my mind, "and I will aid you, Mary—yes, I will resign Herbert to you."

At this moment Herbert entered noiselessly, and took his place by my shoulder, and, without a word, gazed first into my face and then into the face of Mary. O, that look! It was never forgotten. It was fate. For it said, as plainly as a soul speaking through eyes can say—"Thou, Eleanor, art my mistress, the companion of my illicit and sensual love, but thou Mary, art my wife, the pure partner of my lawful love!"

After that look, Herbert bade us good evening, in a tone of evident agitation, and hurried from the room.

From that hour, Herbert avoided me. Weeks passed, and he was not seen at my house. At church he never seemed to be conscious of my presence, and the service over, hurried at once from the place, without a single glance or sign of recognition. At length, Mary's visits became less frequent; and when she did come to see me, her manner manifested a conflict of confidence and suspicion. That this wounded me, that the absence of Herbert cut me to the soul, will easily be imagined. I passed my time between

alternations of hope and despair, now listening—and in vain—for the echo of Herbert's step, and now bathed in unavailing tears. Conscious that my passion for Herbert was the last link that bound me to purity—to life itself—I did not give up the hope of seeing him at my feet, as in former days, until months had elapsed. Finally, grown desperate, and anxious to avoid the stings of wounded love, the perpetual presence of harrowing memories, I sought the society of that class of fashionables, to whom my first husband—Morton—had introduced me. I kept open house for them. Revels, from midnight until dawn, in which men and women of the first class mingled, served for a time to banish reflection, and sap, tie by tie, every thread of hope which held me to a purer state of life. The kennel has its orgies, and the hovel, in which ignorance and squalor join in their uncouth debauch; but the orgies of the parlour, in which beauty, intellect, fashion, and refinement are mingled, far surpass, in unutterable vulgarity, the lowest orgies of the kennel. Amid the uproar of scenes like these, news reached me that the Rev. Herbert Lansing and Miss Mary Somers were shortly to be united in marriage.

One evening I was sitting alone, in the back parlour, near a table on which stood a lighted candle and a wineglass (for I now, at times, began to seek oblivion in wine), when Mr. Dudley Haskins was announced. Dudley was one of my fashionable friends, over forty in years, tall in stature, with a florid face, short curling brown hair, and sandy whiskers. He was a *roué*, and a gambler, and—save the mark—one of the first fashionables of New York. Dudley entered, dressed in a showy style—blue coat, red velvet vest, plaid pants, brimstone coloured gloves, and a profusion of rings and other jewellery—a style indicative of the man. Seating himself on the sofa, he began chatting, in his easy way, about passing events of fashionable life, and of the world at large.

“By-the-bye, the popular preacher, young Lansing, is to be married—and to such a love of a girl—daughter of old Somers, the *millionaire*. Lucky fellow! Do you know that I've often noticed her at church—a perfect *Hebe*—and followed her home, once or twice, and that I should not mind marrying her myself if I could get a chance.”

And he laughed a laugh, which showed his white teeth. “Bah! But that's it—I can't get a chance.”

Perhaps I blushed at the mention of this marriage, but he immediately continued—

“*On dit*, my pretty widow, that this girl Somers has cut you

out. Lansing once was sadly taken with you—so I've heard. How is it? All talk, I suppose?”

I felt myself growing pale, although the blood was boiling in my veins. But, before I could reply, there was a ring at the front door, followed by the sound of a hasty footstep, and the next moment, to my utter surprise, Mary Somers rushed into the room. Without seeming to notice the presence of Haskins, she rushed forward and fell on her knees before me, her bonnet hanging on her neck, her hair floating about her face, and that face bathed in blushes and tears.

“O, Eleanor! Eleanor!” she gasped, “some slanderer has told father a story about you and Herbert—a vile wicked story—which you can refute, and which I am sure you will! For—for——”

She fell fainting on my knee; the violence of her emotions, for the time, deprived her of all appearance of life. Her head was on my lap, one hand sought mine, and was joined to it in a convulsive clasp.

O! who shall say, that those crimes which make the world shudder, but to hear told, are the result of long and skilful planning, of careful and intricate scheming? No—no—the worst crimes, those which it would seem might make even the heart of a devil contract with horror, are not the result of long and deliberate purpose, but of the temptation of a moment, of the fatal opportunity!

As her head rested on my lap, a voice whispered in my ear—

“Your rival!—retire for a few moments in search of hartshorn or some such restorative—and leave the fainting one in my care.”

I raised my head and caught the eye of Haskins. Only a single look, and the fiend was in my heart. I rose—the fainting girl fell upon the floor—I hurried from the room, and did not pause, until I had reached my own chamber and locked the door. Pressing my hands now on my burning temples, now on my breast, I paced the floor, while perchance fifteen minutes—they seemed an eternity—passed away.

Then I went slowly down stairs and entered the back parlour. Haskins was there, standing near the sofa, his face wearing an insolent scowl of triumph. The girl was stretched upon the sofa, still insensible, but—I dare not write it. Opposite Haskins stood Herbert Lansing who had followed Mary to the house and arrived—too late. His face was bloodless.

“O, villain!” he groaned, as his maddened gaze was fixed on Haskins, “you shall pay for this with your blood!”

"Softly, reverend sir—softly! One word of this, and the world shall know of your amours with the handsome widow."

Herbert's gaze rested on my face——

"You—knew—of—this," he began, with a look that can never be forgotten.

"Pardon, Herbert, pardon—I was mad," I shrieked, flinging myself at his feet, and clutching his knees.

For a moment he gazed upon me, and then lifting his clenched right hand, he struck me on the forehead, and I fell insensible on the floor. The curse which he spoke as I fell, rings even yet in my ears.

\* \* \* \* \*

Three days have passed since then. Such days as I will never pass again! I have just learned that Haskins has fled the city; his purpose to obtain Mary's hand in marriage, by first accomplishing her shame, has utterly failed. Her father knows all, and is now using every engine of his wealth to connect my name with the crime, which has damned every hope of his idolized child. And he will succeed! I feel it—I know it—my presentiment cannot prove false. What shall I do? Whither turn? And Herbert is a raving lunatic. This too is my work. Yes—yes—I am resolved. I *am* resolved.

\* \* \* \* \*

To-morrow's dawn will bring disgrace and shame to me, and in the future I see the crowded court-house, the mob eager to drink in the story of my guilt and the felon's cell. But the morrow's dawn I shall never see!

I am alone in my chamber—the very chamber in which I became Morton's in an unholy marriage; Eugene's in the marriage of a stainless love; Herbert's in the mad embrace of passion. And now, O, death, upon that marriage couch I am about to wed thee!

The brazier stands in the centre of the bridal chamber, its contents were ignited half an hour ago, every avenue to my chamber is carefully closed—already the fumes of the burning charcoal begin to smite my temples and my heart.

This record, written from time to time, and now concluded by a hand chilled by death—I leave to my only living relative, not

as an apology for my crimes, but as an explanation of the causes which led me to the brink of this awful abyss.

Air! Air! Morton, for thee I have no remorse—let the branch snap—over the cataract with thy accursed face! Thou wert the cause of all—thou! But, Eugene, thy last look kills my soul! Herbert, thy curse is on me! And poor Mary! Air! Light! It is so dark—dark—O, for one breath of prayer!

## CONCLUSION.

THE preceding Confession, signed by the tremulous hand of the poor suicide, was found in her room with the senseless corse, by the Relative, to whom she addressed it. For days after the event, the papers were filled with paragraphs in regard to the melancholy affair. A single one, extracted from a prominent paper, will give some idea of the tone of the public mind:—

*(Extract from a New York paper.)*

"TRAGEDY IN HIGH LIFE.—The town is full of rumours, in regard to a mysterious event or series of events, implicating a member of one of the first families of New York. These rumours are singularly startling, and although they have not yet assumed a definite shape, certainly call for a judicial investigation. As far as we have been able to sift the stories now afloat, the plain truth, reduced to the briefest possible shape, appears to be as follows: Some years since Miss E——, daughter of old Mr. ——, one of our first merchants, was, while under an engagement of marriage to Eugene B——, forced into a marriage with Mr. M——, a man old enough to be her father, but who, it is stated, had the father absolutely in his power. The marriage took place, but not long afterwards, M——, while on a visit to Niagara, was precipitated over the Falls, at dead of night, in a manner not yet satisfactorily explained.

(30)

Soon afterward the young widow, then immensely rich, encountered her former betrothed, and the fashionable world were soon afterwards informed of their marriage. A year passed, and B——, the husband of the former widow, was found in Philadelphia, mysteriously murdered, it was not known by whom, although it was rumoured at the time, that the brother of a wronged sister was, on that occasion, the avenger of his sister's shame. The beautiful Mrs. B—— was once more a widow. Here it might seem that her adventures, connected so strangely with the death of two husbands, had reached their termination. But it seems she was soon fascinated by the eloquence of a young and popular divine, Rev. H—— L——. While betrothed to Miss M—— S——, daughter of a wealthy member of his congregation, the eloquent preacher became a visiter at the house of the rich widow, and finally his affections became entangled, and he was forced to choose between said widow and his betrothed. He sacrificed his affection for the former, to his solemn engagement with the latter. The 'slighted' widow endured the usual pangs of 'despised love' coupled with something very much like Italian jealousy, or rather jealousy after the Italian school. The betrothed was inveigled into a certain house, and her honour sacrificed by a gentleman of fashion, known for thirty years as a constant promenader on the west side of Broadway, Mr. D—— H——. The widow (strangest freak of a slighted and vindictive woman!) is said to have been the planner and instigator of this crime. We have now arrived at the sequel of the story. Unable to obtain the hand of the Rev. H—— L——, and stung by remorse, for her share in the dishonour of his betrothed, the widow put a period to her own existence, in what manner is not exactly known, although conflicting rumours state the knife or the poison phial was the instrument of her death. No coroner's investigation took place. The body gave no signs of a violent death. 'Disease of the heart,' was stated in the certificate of the physician (how *compliant* he was to the wishes of rich survivors we will not say) as the cause of her unexpected decease. She was quietly buried in the family vault, and her immense estate descends to a Relative, who was especially careful in cloaking over the fact of the suicide. The tragedy involved in the affair will be complete, when we inform the reader, that Mr. D—— H—— has fled the city, while his poor victim, M—— S——, tenants the cell of an Asylum for the Insane. Altogether this affair is one of the wildest exaggerations, or one of the most painful tragedies, that ever fell to the lot



of the press to record. Can it be believed, that a young lady, honourably reared, would put a period to the lives of two husbands, then procure the dishonour of a rival who interposed between her and a *third* husband? Verily, 'fact is stranger than fiction,' and every-day reality more improbable than the wildest dreams of romance. The truth will not be known until the *CONFESSION, said to be left by the young widow, makes its appearance.* But will it appear? We shall see."

So much for the public press.

The reader can contrast its *rumours*, with the *facts* of the case as plainly set forth in the previous Confession, penned by the hand of the unfortunate and guilty Eleanor.

How this Confession passed from the hands of the Relative to whom it was addressed, into the hand of the one who writes these lines, is a matter which may excite the reader's curiosity, but which the present writer is not at liberty to explain. It passed honourably from one hand to the other, at all events.

A few words more will close this painful narrative. Eleanor was quietly and honourably buried. Her relatives were wealthy and powerful. The 'physician's certificate' enabled them to avoid the painful formality of a coroner's inquest. She sleeps beside her husband, Eugene Burton, in Greenwood Cemetery.

Soon after her decease, Mr. Somers sold all his property in New York, and with his daughter disappeared completely from public view.

Herbert Lansing remained in the Lunatic Asylum for more than a year, when he was released, his intellect restored, but his health (it is stated) irretrievably broken. After his release he left New York, and his name was soon forgotten, or if mentioned at all, only as that of a person long since dead.

Dudley Haskins, after various adventures in Texas and Mexico, "turned up" at last in California. His last exploit appears in a San Francisco paper—

"Among the numerous black-legs who infest our otherwise peaceful community, none has been so prominent for months past, as one Dudley Haskins, formerly well known as a man of fashion and professed *roué* in New York, but latterly only known as a professed black-leg, up to any desperate act, living by his wits, and as reckless as he was poor. The last exploit of Dudley, undertaken by him with a view to retrieve his desperate fortunes, took place near Sonora, and ended rather disastrously. John Hawkins, a poor

fellow from the States, who had achieved a little fortune in the mines, was on his way home with his well earned store. He was found near Sonora barbarously murdered. Unfortunately for Dudley, the knife with which the deed was done was indentified, the property of the murdered man found on Dudley, and Dudley himself strung up by Judge Lynch, after an hour's trial. A pitiful end for the once brilliant *roué* of New York city!"

And that was the end of Dudley Haskins.

A single incident more, and this narrative is at an end.

About a year after the death of Eleanor Burton, a young man in moderate circumstances, accompanied by his wife (a pale, faded, although interesting woman) and her aged father, took up his residence in C—, a pleasant village in south-western Pennsylvania. They were secluded in their habits, and held but little intercourse with the other villagers. The husband passed by the name of Wilton, which (for all that the villagers knew to the contrary) was his real name.

One winter evening, as the family were gathered about the open wood fire, a sleigh halted at the door, and a visitor appeared in the person of a middle aged man, who came unbidden into the room, shaking the snow from his great coat, and seating himself in the midst of the family. Regarding for a moment the face of the aged father, and then the countenance of the young husband and wife, which alike, in their pallor, seemed to bear the traces of an irrevocable calamity, the visitor said quietly,—

"Herbert Lansing, I am the Relative, to whom Eleanor Burton addressed her Confessions, and whom she invested with the trusteeship of her estate."

Had a thunderbolt fallen into the midst of the party, it would not have created so much consternation, as these few words from the lips of the visitor. The young wife shrieked, the old man started from his chair, Herbert Lansing (otherwise called Mr. Wilton), with the blood rushing to his pale face, said simply, "That accursed woman!"

"I hold her last will and testament in my hand," continued the visitor; "I am her nearest relative, and would inherit her estate but for this will, by which she names *you and your wife Mary, as the sole heirs of her immense property.*"

Herbert took the will from the visitor's hands.

"As administrator of her estate, I am here to surrender it into

your hands. The will was made as a small atonement for the injury she caused you."

Herbert quietly dropped the parchment into the fire:

"Her money and her memory are alike accursed. I will have nothing to do with either."

That night the Relative turned his face eastward, to take possession of the estate of Eleanor Burton.

THE END.



SHE CUTS THE TWIG, AND HER HUSBAND IS PRECIPITATED OVER THE FALLS OF NIAGARA.

**A CONFESSION**  
**OF THE**  
**AWFUL AND BLOODY TRANSACTIONS**

**CHARLES WALLACE,**

**THE**  
**FIEND-LIKE MURDERER OF MISS MARY ROGERS,**  
THE BEAUTIFUL CIGAR WIFE OF BROADWAY, NEW YORK, WHOSE  
FATE HAS FOR SEVERAL YEARS BEEN WRAPT IN  
THE MOST PROFOUND MYSTERY.



MISS MARY ROGERS.

TOGETHER WITH A THRILLING NARRATIVE OF  
**THE BROWN MURDERESS! EVELINE MORET!!**  
WHO, AT THE INSTIGATION OF WALLACE, ASSASSINATED HER MASTER AND MISTRESS,  
AND THEIR FOUR HELPLESS CHILDREN, WITH AN AXE, FOR WHICH ATROCIOUS  
ACT THEY WERE BURNED ALIVE BY A MOB OF INFLAMED LYON-  
NERS, ON THE BANKS OF THE MISSISSIPPI, ON THE 11TH DAY  
OF AUGUST, 1860. FROM HIS OWN MEMORANDA.

Given at the Burning Stake, to the Rev. HENRY TRACY.

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