

The Servant of Weston.

THE day was nearly done and the last rays of the sinking sun lit up the western windows of the little county jail at Brandywine. Here, behind the prison bars sat Col. Maxwell Warfield awaiting the entry of the jailer to announce that the death-warrant had been received and upon what day he would be led forth to die upon the scaffold. His family and friends had been to say a long, last farewell. But there was yet one whom he loved, who acted the part of a maid in his mansion, "Weston," who had not been to say adieu. He sat with tears in his eyes and a prayer upon his lips that his favorite servant, Emily Curtis, would reach him this night. Darkness was casting even a deeper gloom about the prison walls, and the uncertain rustling of the leaves in the wind filled the very atmosphere with desolation. Thoughts of his past life crowded into his heated brain, and to cool the burning fever he pressed his brow against the cold, damp wall whilst down his furrowed cheeks rolled burning tears. A faint sound of footsteps fell upon his ear. He straightened up, brushed the tears from his eyes, and gazed toward the door.

"'Tis Emily. Thank God: 'Tis really she, I know," he said with joy.

The jailer slowly pushed the door open on its creaking hinges. Before him stood the form of a woman, he thought, as he peered into the dimly lighted hall.

"Emily," he exclaimed with much expectancy. Emily is it really you at last?"

The form moved slowly to him but spoke not. The guard closed the door behind him, with the words, "Let your visit be short." The faint light from the flickering candle, which had been placed on the chair at his bedside, revealed to him the countenance of the aged monk, Father Joseph.

"God bless you, dear man," said the holy man as he took the Colonel's hand into his own. "I came

hither directed by a servant of your house who seems much concerned about you. She thought perchance you had something you wished to say to me."

"Col. Warfield, overcome with emotion, could not speak, but with sobs, fell at the feet of the pious old man. After a few moments he raised his head and looking into the eyes of the monk asked with child-like simplicity if he had not the power to forgive sins.

"I was once a good Catholic," he added. "My wife died and left me a daughter. Soon I fell in love with a very beautiful woman and wanted to marry her. The child was the only barrier. It worried me to know what I should do with her. This drove me to drink. One night I came home drunk and I—O Merciful Heaven. I can't tell you. No, no, I can't. God will never forgive me. Suffice it to say that I remarried without delay, but with all my wealth and new family I have never been happy. O wretched me! The day star of hope has faded from my sight. Nothing is left to me but the vanities and deceits of fame and honors. The grave is open ready to receive my bones."

"My dear man despair not. Be of good heart. My lips are sealed and I have the power of keys," whispered the holy father.

With confidence and sorrow the penitent man whispered his dreadful confession into the old monk's ear. The sign of absolution was made. At this moment the door of the cell was again flung open, and Emily beheld what her heart had long desired—her master at the feet of a confessor pleading for pardon.

"My Emily, good girl!" he exclaimed as she fell upon his bosom.

"My master, what a blessing!" sobbed the maiden as she dashed away the tears from her bright blue eyes.

The good old monk had done his work and now withdrew, contented that he had brought one more soul nearer God.

"God has this day smiled upon thee and me?" said the converted sinner. "I grew anxious. I was disheartened. I felt that I should die without seeing

you again. I wished you to have the last blessing of thy— —”

“Oh! no! no!—not your last blessing!” cried the girl. “You shall not die. Have you not been brought back from the jaws of hell? And I ask you, is it not easier to stay the human hand than this?”

“Close to my breast, would that I could send Heaven’s comforting unction into thy bleeding heart. This very week shall close upon my tomb. Even now I hear the angels singing sweetest anthems and softly calling me home with them,” spoke the Colonel with the assurance of a just man.

“Ah! Speak not thus. You shall—shall not die! Father Joseph has great influence with the Governor. He will seek your pardon and gain it I know,” said the girl with courage.

“It cannot be, my girl. The warrant has been signed and sealed and may reach here tomorrow. You must leave now. My blessing strengthen you,” faltered the disheartened man.

The next day about sunset, a young man passed through Brandywine on his way to Chalkpoint. His attire was that of a man in poor circumstances. He stopped at the old tavern called “Warfield Inn,” asked to be served a meal, but was refused on account of his appearance. A glass of ale and a sandwich, however were served him at the door. When this was eaten he started on his way.

The day has been unbearably hot and now a storm was threatening and the traveller seemed much fatigued. Yet he plodded slowly on up Berry’s hill, down the Devil’s Lane, and on till he reached a grove that he thought would protect him from the approaching storm. Here he threw himself on the grass. The heaven’s grew wondrous black, the distant peals of thunder rolled, the wind sprang up and a mighty wind swept down. Large drops of rain began to fall and soon fell in torrents. In this half-protected place he lay for a long while. The storm grew worse and worse. The jagged lightning darted before him like shots on a battlefield. Suddenly after a clap of thunder he thought he caught the distant sound of horse’s hoofs. “‘Tis so,” he thought. Nearer and nearer the

rider came at breakneck speed. Both man and beast with heads bent low braved the fiercest storm they'd ever met before. Without warning the bridle rein was grasped, the steed halted abruptly. The rider beheld the stranger before him with pistol pressed against his breast.

"This leathern sack or your life," the robber cried.

Scared and trembling, but with sense of duty, the rider feebly resisted. The robber seized the mail bag and made escape into the dense forest to the right.

The mailman, upon recovery, staggered on until he reached Brandywine. It was midnight but the village was roused to track the robber. Search was made even till noon the following day, but not a sign of the thief could be found.

Emily was to the prison chamber early to tell her master the fate the mail, bearing his warrant, had met. They embraced with joy to think that even a few hours had been added to his life.

"Master," she exclaimed, "did I not say that you should not be hanged. Father Joe will yet intercede for you, and as he saved your soul, so also will he save your life. Believe me you shall not die on the scaffold."

"Your love seems indeed deeper than that of either of my daughters, Emily."

"Do not servants love masters that are good to them?" sighed the maiden.

At this the jailer notified her that her time was up and that she should depart.

"Good-bye till to-morrow. I will come to let you know if the good old monk was successful in his appeal to the governor;" said Emily as she was leaving.

The holy monk returned. His intercession had been of no avail. Emily and the family of Warfields were all filled with sorrow upon learning this. The little hope that Col. Warfield had enjoyed now turned into despair when he heard of the fruitless intercession of the priest. Yet, Emily assured him that he should not pass to death.

Eight days had passed. The Governor had again

signed a death warrant and mailed it to Brandywine. The prisoner patiently awaited its arrival.

This time the mailman armed himself with a pistol and rode at full speed beneath the star-lit heavens. Every bush and post seemed to him to take on a human form. Once the horse stumbled. This gave the rider a fright but he regained himself and spurred on. No sooner had he collected his thoughts than a shot was fired in front of his horse. The animal stood still. The mail man returned the shot. The robber repeated his volley three times.

"This sack, or one step and the next thy grave," cried the fierce stranger, as he wrested the bag from the government servant. "Take this gold and go thy way. Truly thou art fortunate at this, lest I leave the dead."

At this both parted in different directions.

News again reached Brandywine that the mail had been robbed. The whole village was on fire with excitement. Bloodhounds were sent out to hunt down the robber. 'Twas in vain. Nothing could be seen or heard that gave any clue to the robbery. Visits were again made to the jail to inform the Colonel that his life would be prolonged a few more days at least. Days passed and Emily grew more than courageous now. She said the angels had told her that her master would not meet death, but that by the aid of a powerful hand he would be spared. All this encouraged the Colonel and he was forced to exclaim. "Heaven has stayed the hand of death, and God has called back the dreaded angel twice."

While he spoke wide flung the door and he beheld his son Robert with a document in his hand.

"See, father, see"—gasped the breathless boy. Father Joseph has saved your life. 'Tis the governor's pardon."

"Thank God. Thank the holy monk. And five thousand dollars to him besides," shouted the overjoyed Colonel.

By this time every Warfield and servant of Weston was at the jail. Among them the aged monk also stood.

"Kneel, my loved ones," said the glad hearted soldier; "receive the blessing of my——"

He was here interrupted by the jailer, who said that a servant begged entrance. "Admit him," came the quick reply from half a dozen. The jailer turned away as if not quite certain whether he should obey the command.

It was here noticed to the surprise of all that Emily was not present. This gave everyone much concern.

The jailer now stood before the door and at his side was the young man who had passed through the town a few days before and who had been refused admittance to the tavern. He held two letters in his hand.

"Colonel, take these and read the contents," he said. "I am the robber who held up the mail and helped to save your life."

"Give me your hand friend. What return can I make you for this kindness? My all is yours. Your name?"

The stranger stood still with his hat pulled low, revealing but little of his countenance. The grateful crowd was willing to lavish any amount of wealth on the hero, if he would but name it.

"That which you ask me is that which I desire most. Something more precious than gold, more attractive than dazzling jewels," said the young man.

"Out with it—out with," they shouted.

"'Tis simply this;—"

Here the jailer interrupted and said, "I know —"
"'Tis thy fair daughter, Rosalind's hand."

Rosalind blushed, but felt that if she could pay the price of her father's life with any sacrifice of hers she was ready and willing. With a heart full of tender love for her father, Rosalind came forward and grasped the young man's hand, saying, "If this be all thou wilt, thou shalt have it"

A smile of joy and content crept over the face of the brave man. All were breathless to hear what he would say.

"I do wish this hand, but not in holy wedlock.

Only as a simple sister. Are you all content?" asked the stranger.

"In the presence of my family and this venerable old monk, if it be in my power. You shall have all you ask, responded the Colonel.

The young hero's heart leaped with joy. The hat was raised. "It is Emily Curtis!" they all exclaimed. "Joy! Joy!"

"More than this," cried Emily, as falling on her knees she drew from her bosom her mother's locket and picture, together with her own picture at the age when her father put her out into the cold bleak world on a winter's night.

"Great heavens! My own child! 'Tis truly my own flesh and blood. Yes, no longer the servant of my house, but my own sweet daughter, Mary Emily Warfield;" exclaimed the Colonel with joy.

Emily then related to her astonished listeners the story of her life from the time her father drove her penniless and friendless out into the cold world to the day she became a servant in his house. It was heart-rending. Such a tale of misery! But the happiness of being received once again in her father's home as one of the family was sufficient to pay for all she had suffered. Even though rejected she had lived a holy and pious life, returning with true filial devotion good for evil. "There is One, she said, "that loves the lowly and humble as well as the high and noble."

T. H. GREENE, 13.



Never make an enemy; you cannot have too many friends. Opinions expressed too freely may get you into trouble in time.



Success makes enemies. Pay no heed to criticism; forge ahead. Don't be sensitive; success means slander; failure, sympathy.