

## HOPES DEFERRED

More than six years had passed since the robbery of the Elkton bank, but the people of the town had not yet ceased to discuss the affair. It is true that none of the perpetrators of the deed had been captured, yet nobody held the slightest doubt as to who they were. John Webb, James Semple and Nathan Gregory had disappeared on the night of the robbery, and none of them had been heard of since. Webb had been employed in the bank; Semple was supposed to be a travelling salesman but spent a great part of his time in the town when he was not on the road. He was not at all popular, and most everybody agreed that it was he who caused the downfall of the two younger men. Gregory was a rising business man employed by the leading firm of the town; he was much valued by his employers who promised him a partnership as soon as he could furnish the necessary capital.

That Webb and Semple should rob the bank was not so much a matter of wonder to the people of Elkton; these two men were comparatively strangers, and, as I said before, Semple was always looked upon unfavourably. But that Nathan Gregory of all men—one whom they had known from his youth, and who was loved and respected by all, should be a party in such a deed was a mystery that overwhelmed the good people of Elkton. His implication in the robbery, however was too evident. He had been much in Semple's company when the latter was in town. These two, together with Webb, had been seen together the evening previous to the robbery, and it was known for certain that they spent the earlier part of the night playing cards, likely for money in Semple's hotel; finally the simultaneous disappearance of the three men was conclusive evidence of their guilt. Nevertheless, everyone was deeply grieved to think that such a promising young man as Nathan should fall so miserably. It had always surprised them to see him associate so much with Semple; they now suspected that the interests which bound the two men together was their common vice, gambling. They grieved for Nathan's family which was one of the most honoured and esteemed in the town, but especially sincere was their sorrow when they thought of

Katie Sherwood, the girl whom Gregory was expected to marry.

It is true that there had been no formal engagement between Katie and Nat Gregory, but everyone knew that they were, as the saying is, head over heels in love with each other, and that their engagement and marriage was only a matter of course. As a matter of fact it was understood between the two young people, that they would get married as soon as Nat secured his partnership, and this he expected to take place soon, as he had already saved most of the required money.

Katie was happy in her love for Nat; he was her ideal of nobility and uprightness, and he, on his part, simply adored "his little blue-eyed Katie." A happy future seemed assured to them, when this terrible blow came to destroy her happy dreams, and turn her joy into sadness and almost despair.

Slight warnings had come to her regarding Nat's intimacy with Semple, but so great was her implicit confidence in her lover that she usually put them aside; on the morning before the robbery however, she ventured to remonstrate gently with him about the matter.

"I wish you would not associate so much with that Semple" she said, "I don't trust him, and I have a feeling that something disagreeable is going to happen."

"Nonsense" Nat replied, "Semple is not a bad sort; we have many common interests, and I can't very well cut him without reason."

Katie was piqued, Nat was not accustomed to disregard her wishes, and some wilful impulse prompted her to say: "Very well, if you think more of Jim Semple than you do of me, you can associate with him as much as you please."

"Now Katie," said Nat, putting one arm around her, "do be sensible; that is not what I meant. You understand how it is." But Katie's wilfulness had for once gotten the better of her.

"I certainly do not understand," she said, "and I tell you right here that you will have to choose between Semple and me..." and, with these words she broke away and glided swiftly towards her home.

Nat was surprised and somewhat angry at her sudden outburst; he was not going to yield to what he said to himself was a mere whim on her part. The incident



occured to his mind many times during the day, but the evening found him, as mentioned above, in the company of Semple.

Katie saw her lover no more that day, and, on the next, when the news of the bank robbery and the evidence of Nat's implication in it reached her, she experienced a twofold anguish; First the terrible thought that Nat, whom she loved and worshipped, should fall under the slightest suspicion of guilt, was unbearable; and secondly the fear that her last hasty words might have been the cause of his deed, tormented her.

As time passed on it was evident to all her friends that she suffered keenly; the sparkle left her eye, the bloom her cheek and all interest for her in life vanished. Yet she never murmured; her kindness and gentleness became more marked; she bravely performed all the duties in her home, which at this time, owing to her mother's poor health, were quite onerous.

For two years her heart never ceased to ache, nor did her interest in life ever revive, and, when her mother's health improved, she went to a hospital in a distant city, hoping that new interests and preoccupation would lighten her grief. She never expected to see Nathan again, and in fact did not wish to; for to meet him disgraced and outlawed, which she feared he might now be, after such a bad beginning at Elkton, would be more than she could bear.

It was a sultry July day, when she was despatched to the bedside of a patient, the victim of an automobile accident, whose condition was serious. As she approached her patient's bed her eyes fell on a face which, though battered and bruised, was familiar—very familiar—for it was none other than the face of her former lover. Overcome with dizziness, she stopped short; a great tide of love rushed upon her; but, with it something whispered: He "is a burglar, a crook, perhaps a murderer; he cannot be your lover now."

This man before her was her lover, and yet how different was he from the ideal man that she had once loved. It was too cruel.

Weak and despairing she felt herself going into a faint, but with professional instinct she rallied her faculties and discharged the duties of her office with outward calmness. She was not called upon to nurse this patient

after the first day, and was thus greatly relieved, for she did not wish to be recognized by him when he should become conscious, knowing that it would be too painful. From day to day, however, she inquired for his condition which began steadily to improve, until the day came when he was sent away completely cured.

Katie had resolutely determined not to see him, and to let him go away without knowing that she was in the hospital; she was sure that this was the better course, although all the instincts of her nature cried out against it. Fate, however, ordained that they should meet.

She had been waiting anxiously for Gregory's departure, feeling that she could breathe more freely when he was gone. When the moment arrived, she watched him pass along the main corridor and out the front door; then, seized, as it were, by a sudden impulse to catch one more glimpse of him, she followed hurriedly to the door only to come face to face with the man she had been avoiding; he had returned for something that he had forgotten.

With a cry of recognition he bounded towards her with outstretched hands. She trembled violently and backed away, keeping him at arms length.

"Don't you know me, Katie," he said somewhat abashed and bewildered. The pain and smothering of her heart prevented her from making a reply.

"Katie, I have never forgotten you, you have been constantly in my mind day and night for six years, and especially during these days in the hospital. Won't you speak to me, Katie?"

The latter, recovering herself somewhat, said: "I think it better for us to part at once; we have been strangers now for six years, and we had better remain so."

"Part! Why should we part? Haven't I endured six years of agony without you! Isn't that enough? Surely my offense was not so terrible that you should treat me like this."

"Nathan," said Katie, "If you have so forgotten idea of right as to think lightly of your misdeed, others cannot and will not do so."

They had now retreated to the reception room, and were free from the surprised gaze of the people in the corridor. Katie went on:



"Even if we did try to renew our friendship, do you think you could ever be to me what you were?"

"Then you are married" he said, almost in a whisper.

"Married, of course I'm not married."

"Well some one else has taken my place."

"No there is no one else."

"Why then do you say that we cannot be to each other what we were? I admit that my conduct was despicable, but, in a way, circumstances drove me to it."

Katie was becoming scornful. The idea of his trying to exonerate himself after having, as she thought, admitted his guilt made her angry.

"I'm in better circumstances now than when I was in Elkton," he continued. "We can get married right away and the past will be forgotten."

"You are in better circumstances you say; you ought to feel proud of the way you improved then. Have you no sense of shame, to talk about your wonderful circumstances. Where did you get your money? Was it not by robbing the bank?"

Nathan fell back in amazement.

"Robbing the bank! What in the name of God are you talking about?"

Katie was exasperated. "Your acting and pretence are contemptible; you might as well admit what everybody knows, that with Semple and Webb, you robbed the Union Bank and made way with all the cash, on the night of October 30, nearly seven years ago."

The truth began to dawn upon Gregory.

"I never robbed the bank," he said. "It is all a gross error."

"What did you do then, and why did you run away like a crook if you didn't."

"I'll tell you everything, Katie, so that you can judge for yourself. You remember, that the day before I went away you disapproved of Semple." Katie nodded assent.

"After I left you, or rather, after you left me, I was angry, but later I made up my mind to cut Semple. We had been playing cards, and I had lost fairly heavily, and I wanted to try once more to win back some of my money. We played that night in Semple's rooms. I lost more and more. It was that night that I saw Semple in his true colours; I saw his mean currish nature revealed in all its baseness. I played feverishly. I staked all the money

I had with me and lost; I staked all I had in the bank; finally I staked the money I had invested in Victory Bonds, which was the principal part of my partnership money. I lost all. When everything was gone, I staggered from the hotel, realizing that I was fleeced, ruined, almost disgraced. I was in despair; the loss of my money, the thought of how I had been baffled, and the cold words you spoke to me in the morning, all struck with terrible force and strung me like lashes.

"I felt that I could not tell you the story of my folly, nor could I again face my business associates. In this frame of mind a sudden impulse seized me and I acted upon it. I remembered that the vessel, Gladys M., was to sail from a port six miles away the next morning; I knew this because our firm had loaded her with produce I set out for the port, and shall never forget the tramp I had that night; I dashed along, half walking, half running; I dared not think. My mind was set on getting away.

"The captain was willing to give me a passage to the West Indies on his vessel. He was not too scrupulous or inquisitive, and asked but few questions."

"It was terrible foolish of you to do this," said Katie. "How much grief and sadness might have been avoided if you had not been so rash."

"I know it, and no sooner had the vessel set sail than I realized what I had done, and cursed again and again my foolish action. It was then too late, however to turn back. Many times afterwards I was on the verge of writing to you, but shame kept me back. I felt I could never show my face in Elkton until I had done something to make up for my error and to show that I was not altogether an asinine bonehead. I got along much better than I dared hope, and have much more than retrieved my losses in gambling."

"But will the people believe that it was Webb and Semple alone who robbed the bank? You know, Nathan, that I don't doubt your word, but, will the rest believe your story."

"Semple and Webb never robbed the bank. The deed was planned and executed by people much higher in the world who bribed these men to go away, so as to throw the officers of the law off the scent, promising to protect them if need be. I met Webb and Semple in New Orleans where I happened to be about four months



ago. They are anxious to go back right now, and told me the whole story with documents to substantiate it. Can you trust me, darling, till I get everything cleared up?"

"Trust you, Nat—I'd trust you for a million years" she said as they met once more in a loving embrace.

J. F. '27.



Reason is our soul's left hand, faith her right.

—*John Donne.*

Gravity is the ballast of the soul, which keeps the mind steady.

—*Anon.*

Full oft the longing soul goes out  
On wings of song its good to find,  
And flying far o'er flood and doubt  
Its ark of bondage leaves behind.

—*Hopkins.*

A song forbids victorious deeds to die.

—*Schiller*

I could not live in peace if I put the shadow of a wilful sin between me and my God.

—*George Eliot.*

If all the year were playing holidays, to sport would be as tedious as to work.

The purest treasure mortal times afford,  
Is spotless reputation; that away,  
Men are but gilded foam, or painted clay.

—*Shakespeare.*