

# **The Convict Laundress**

**Vidal, Mary Theresa (1815-1873)**

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All unambiguous end-of-line hyphens have been removed, and the trailing part of a word has been joined to the preceding line.

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## **The Convict Laundress**

**From: Tales for the Bush (1852)**

**London**

**Francis and Rivington**

**1852**

## The Convict Laundress

It was a bright, clear day — how bright, how blue, and how clear, none but those who have been out of the British isles can understand. It was Christmas day; but instead of frost and snow, and cold, and leafless trees, and blazing fires, there was intense heat, and the trees looked, as they always do in Australia, a dingy blueish tint, but still full of leaf and blossom: and here and there, where marks of cultivation peeped through the interminable forest or bush, there were strips of the brightest green maize, refreshing indeed to the eye, and contrasting pleasantly with the brown grass, and the tall white trunks of the gums. The house, or rather weather-boarded cottage, was four or five miles from the settlement, where there was a wooden church. Thither the family had repaired on this morning. There was but one service, for the clergyman proceeded to another congregation eight miles beyond. There had been beef and plum pudding for dinner, the government men, or convicts, partaking in the Christmas fare; and there were thoughts of those far away, and many a lingering regret for the old associations of the season. Yet as the evening breeze sprung up, and stirred the gums and acacias, and breathing through the cottage refreshingly cool, the spirits of all rose, and with one accord they went out into the forest at the back of the house. The merry voices were echoed round and round, and I could see the farm-servants and working men as they strolled under the trees. Every one being out, I went to the back, to see that all was safe. There was a large waste piece of ground with the men's huts, the stables and barn, and nearer the house stood the kitchens and store. Two or three dogs lay about, the poultry were busy picking up their food, and a pet cockatoo came jumping up to my side, begging for a bone in its peculiarly unharmonious voice. As I stood, feeling rather lonely, I heard a dull, melancholy noise; it came from the kitchen. I thought every one had been out: I listened again. Yes, it was from the kitchen, and it was certainly some one in grief: heavy sobs and a low moaning formed a strange contrast to the distant sounds of mirth and merriment!

On approaching the kitchen I found one of the servants, a convict, leaning on the table — a solitary, heart-broken creature! Hour after hour, day after day, did that woman work, and often till late at night, and never

was there more faithful or more devoted service than hers. Was there a trouble, or an ailment, or an extra job, it was, 'Go to Grace Allen.' Did the children want a string, or a stick, or a cake, or a kind word — Grace was there. Early and late she was at her washing-tub, or bestowing dainty care on all the old clothes that came from England, because she said she knew 'the Missis set more value on them than on any thing new.' There was the poultry which thrived doubly after they were given into her charge. Early in the morning, with light and gentle step, did she stand with a cup of coffee, made with the utmost care, because she knew 'the Missis was used to it at home.' Late at night she was there to see if all was right; and after an absence from home, Grace was sure to be the first to spy the horses, and to fly to the slip-rail with 'You're kindly welcome back, your reverence; you're kindly welcome home, ma'am, and the children are well, the jewels!'

Slight of figure and of graceful form was Grace, and there was every mark to show how pretty she once had been. There was a refined and graceful turn in every feature and limb; but she was no longer young, her hair was growing grey, her eyes were hollow, and her cheeks sunken; and now, as she raised her pale face on hearing steps, what a withered, crushed expression was there! She had been glad to let them all go out, and leave her to weep alone. Nor was it only the thoughts of her kindred, her children, her old home, which oppressed her heart; Grace was under a deadly bondage, worse than that of being a convict; there was sin as well as sorrow, and the bright blossoms of her love, her faithful clinging heart, were weighed down, crushed, soiled! From time to time I heard all her history, and for three years tried to save her, but in vain. The following sketch will not, I think, be without interest to others; and it is a pleasure, mingled as it is with deep pain, to recall her words and vivid descriptions, though they must lose their freshness from inability to give them in her own Irish phraseology: and while I do not hide her faults, I cannot help lingering awhile on that devoted, unselfish love which battled to the last with her infirmities, which survived the wreck of her happiness, and was permitted to comfort and interest those to whom she was assigned in that far-off land, Australia.

One evening, just before sunset, a young woman was seen leaning on a stile; she was dressed after the manner of an Irish household servant, and there was a certain air of coquettish pleasure as she glanced at her well-turned fair arm, and neat foot and ankle, then looked anxiously over the fields, or timidly back towards the house — a handsome building, standing on beautiful ground, surrounded with every thing that denotes the residence

of a wealthy squire. The substantial chimneys sent up their columns of smoke, while lights might be seen glancing in the long row of windows in front. General Montgomery had company that day; and full of fear lest she should be wanted, had Grace M'Lean stolen out, after giving a final polish to the spare beds and tables, in the hope of meeting her English lover. A long sigh escaped her as the moments flew by and he did not appear. At last there was a whistle, which made her blush and smile, and in another moment he was at her side; and passing his arm round her waist, he led her on by the hedgerow, for a stroll, as he said, in the lovely evening.

“Well then, Grace, when I return you'll consent to the marriage, I suppose? I've spoken for the cottage, and I have some planks seasoning, to knock up as neat a table as I'll answer for it will please even your particular fancy.”

Grace smiled, then said, “No, William I am only come to say good bye and it can't be. You must just forget me, for it can't be.”

“Did you speak to your lady?”

“And that I did, ashamed as I was about it; and you know I told you what she would say, good lady as she is. She says I have no right to marry a heretic; and I should work on, as my mother did before me, and not give up to fancies, young as I am. That's what she said, William; and you know my brother Michael is all against it; so indeed, William, I just came to tell you so, and I'm waiting at the house, so I can only have a word or so with you.”

“That's what she said, is it? Then you may tell her, Grace, my darling, that you have no occasion to work on till you're old, for that I have enough to marry decently upon, and can work as well as any one; and as for your religion, can't you be a Catholic, and go to mass and confession all the same? Never a word will I say against it, though I see no sense in it at all. For that matter, I hope I'm honest, and never did any thing to be ashamed of, and I go to church sometimes, because my parents, good souls, did so before me. But I'll never hinder you from doing what you like. And the priest, Grace, Father Donaghan, sure he didn't forbid it?”

“Ah, no, William! because he had the hope I should be the means of bringing you round; and that's why he let Katie marry a Protestant: but you know, William, there's small chance of that with you and me. I'm not the one to lead you, and you're not the one to be led.”

“Led, Grace! I'll promise to go to your chapel two or three times a year. As to being a Catholic, that I shouldn't like; because, as I said before, my father was Protestant, and his father and his father's father; but I can't see the great difference not I! and if you were to pray to all the saints in the calendar, I wouldn't complain. So give up your arguments, Grace, which you will never get me to agree to. Ah, Grace! think of the nice little cottage

and the regular work I've got, and the old mother nigh at hand.”

Grace did think of it; and she thought too of him, the handsome English carpenter, about whom every girl in the village was talking; and as she thought, as she listened, her mistress's warning and advice fell away, like snow in sunshine. Grace had left the house, undecided what answer to give him; wishing to do right, but willing to be reasoned out of it; so after a few turns up and down, with drooping head and blushing face, she gave her promise to be William's wife, and it was settled that when “the family” went over to Bath for the lady's health, then should be the wedding. William was going to Dublin on business, and was to be absent some weeks, so this was a farewell meeting. They lingered on, till the large clock at the Hall made Grace start, and then they parted. She ran swiftly to the shrubbery, hoping she had not been called for — and from that hour the balance was struck.

Heavily it weighed downwards, and its weight was the world. From that time Grace thought more of pleasing William Allen than her mistress whom she had served from a child, more than God!

She loved him with a fond, proud, devoted love, and she sacrificed all for him. Her mistress's displeasure — her mother's sorrow — her brother's anger — it failed to touch her; her heart was shielded from all and every thing; there was but one thing in the world for her. Her eye was bright, her steps firm, her voice clear and merry.

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Grace made an excellent managing wife. No cottage was cleaner or more tasty, no meals so well cooked. No man turned out so neat and well dressed as William. The rent was always paid, and all things prospered. Grace worked hard; but as evening came, she never failed to be at the garden paling to catch the first look, and if it was fine, they had their evening stroll.

No woman, as she afterwards said, was ever half so happy; alas for the blossom which had no root, and which the first wintry storm crushed to the ground for ever!

The M'Leans were a proud family. The mother had been in General Montgomery's service from childhood, and to the last day of her life considered their word as law to her and hers. Her family turned out well, and all were prosperously settled — the eldest, Michael, was established as a pork butcher, and had a large business, chiefly in salting pork down for shipping. M'Lean's mark on a cask was considered sure warrant that the meat was good. Many a sailor drank his health on the broad seas, while enjoying the well-cured pork which was branded in Michael's name.

Michael was “well to do” in the world, and looked up to as the head of the family. He was wont to boast, with a satisfied smile, that none of their stock had ever been known to darken a jail door for generations back, and they were one and all a thriving, “rent-paying family.” When his youngest sister, Grace, bestowed her heart and hand on “handsome Willie,” as he was often called, Michael frowned. He did not like her marrying an Englishman or a Protestant; he knew nothing of William, except that once, on some rejoicing, he had been the worse for liquor and got into an Orange row; and this was a bad prospect, as Michael sagely observed, for whiskey was the curse of Ireland, and as *his* family had always held up their heads and kept out of this bad habit, he did not like the match.

It was with no little pride that Grace, as years passed on, could tell her brother that they were still above the world; that the pig and the garden paid the rent, and that William's earnings were counted into her own hand every week; and even Michael could not forbear smiling at the curly-headed, pretty boy, whom Grace always brought with her. Her eldest child, “her jewel,” who, as she in after years said, with quivering lips and tearful eyes, “had something above common in his airs, and any one would have taken him for a real gentleman.” The old mother's cottage was very near Grace; she was skilful in growing and drying herbs for the use of chemists and doctors, she lived to a great age, and on her death-bed she solemnly warned her daughter not to give up her religion, or be slack in her prayers: she said God had prospered her, and she hoped this would bind her the more to Him in gratitude. Grace trembled, for something whispered at her heart that she had forgotten the Giver in the gifts bestowed. She shed a few tears of sorrow by her mother's side, but they were hastily wiped away, and all her best attention was devoted to smoothing her mother's last hours; and never was there a gentler nurse than Grace! But alas! her mother's instructions in the best way of plaiting frills, and in the use of herbs for medicinal purposes, were more remembered and practised than all her other advice. Perhaps old Mrs. M'Lean's own example had tended to this. Of what avail are good words, unless we practise what we advise? However it was, Grace went on her way, making a devoted wife and mother. She set up her household gods and worshipped them, and they fell at last, and then there was none to help, none to answer!

Several years of bright prosperity had Grace; her wedded life was as little marred by clouds as is possible in a world of trial. One of her girls was taken into a respectable family, to be brought up as a servant; the other was apprenticed to a dressmaker; her son was still at home, and it was her pride and delight to give him “learning;” he was quick and clever, and wrote as “fair a hand as any one in all Ireland.”

There was the comfortable, pretty little cottage, furnished by William's own handy work, its clean sanded floor, white window curtain, its bright kitchen utensils, and its cheerful old clock; there was the cow, and the pigs, and the poultry all thriving. Roses, and honeysuckles, and jasmine covered the walls, the garden beds had no weeds, and furnished many a dish of vegetables for their own eating, besides bringing in many a penny from market. "Vanity of vanities! all is vanity!"

Grace had gone to market, and had brought home a good round sum, which she smiled over as she thought of showing it off to William when he came home. She looked at the clock, and almost wondered he had not returned, then she prepared supper, and strolled about the garden, and found her seeds had made a great spring: there was something else to show William! Why does he tarry?

Grace is laughing and joking with her boy in the garden, little dreaming of what goes on a mile away.

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William was engaged in building a house; he had climbed to the top to place something, when one of his fellow-workmen called out, "have a care there, Allen, steady!" But before the last word of caution was uttered, there was a tottering of the beam on which William stood, then a crash, a heavy fall, a suppressed groan from the bystanders — Grace was a widow!

The body was raised and carried into a neighbouring house, but no medical aid, no care could bring back life. Every one knew Grace, and every one knew what she would feel. No one was willing to be the bearer of such news. At length one of the men, one of William's comrades, said he would step down and prepare her. He had been a constant visitor at the cottage; none knew better than he did what this blow would be, and as he walked along, he considered what he could do to help and comfort the widow, and long did he meditate as to how he should break the truth to her.

When he had reached half-way, and was crossing the road towards a stile which led to a short cut, he saw Grace herself coming towards him.

She called out, "Where's William?" but he stood still and made no answer. Presently she was close to him, repeating her questions.

"God help you, Grace!" was all he could utter, and she staggered against the stile, and held it, for she saw something dreadful in his face.

"Speak man, if you wouldn't kill me!" — and he did speak! — What happened after that Grace never knew. It was all a blank — a frightful dark blank. When she became conscious she found herself in her own bed, with an old woman, a kind neighbour, sitting by her. This woman, Patty as she was called, now rose and brought something in a glass to Grace, begging

her “to take a sup, 'twould comfort her,” and Grace did so, and then she asked questions, and Patty answered. Grace heard that the funeral was then taking place; that her brother Michael, and her son, and a great many others were there, and Patty assured her that no one could have a more decent funeral or any thing nicer, and then added such scraps of comfort and condolence as she could think of, and begged Grace to “take heart and rouse herself.” This Grace could not do for a long time, and, at last, when she left her bed a wasted, stricken woman, she wandered about her home and little garden more like a ghost than a human being, or she sat in a corner, with eyes fixed on vacancy, and moaned, and said she was “a desolate, forlorn, creature; she had nothing to live for.” She tried to pray, but could not, it was all confusion and misery, and not one thought of comfort was there, turn which way she would. It was then that her son stood before her, and spoke gentle words, which, as she afterwards said, “was the first relief she had, and she cried, which seemed to cure the deadly pain at her heart.” Her son, and he was like his father in form and face, bade her be comforted, for that he was now old enough to do something for himself, and that he dearly loved her, and she must keep up for his sake.

Grace stroked his curly hair, and, still weeping, looked at him, and at last said, “Sure, and you're your own father's son, and your very words are his.” And from that hour all her energy and love was given to him. To work and toil to get him into a creditable situation was her one object.

She strove to banish thoughts of the past, she put away any vague and dreamy ideas which had arisen in the dark hour for “a more convenient season.” She must work now!

It seemed indeed as if the poor mother's trouble was repaid; her son was steady, good, and clever, and through Michael's interest he got a situation with some shipping agents at Belfast.

It was with pride, yet with heart-sorrow that Grace saw him dressed in his best, a good suit of clothes which she had got for him; his little box packed, and with a stick in his hand, ready to commence his journey. Long did the last bright smile live in her heart, and the last wave of his hat as he left the garden, and his “God bless you, mother.” How often did it return in the lonely nights, and the weary days; and in after years, in a foreign land, she would wake out of sleep and listen, for that voice seemed to speak to her by night and day.

Cheerful letters reached Grace very often from her son, saying that he was a favourite with his employer, and should soon be promoted, and receive wages enough to support her as well as himself; and he always ended with entreating her not to “slave and toil,” for his only wish was to

do every thing for her. But it was not Grace's nature to be any thing but busy. Hers was an active, energetic mind, and she was very clever at many things. No one could excel Grace at mending china, or glass, or even saucepans; no one understood how to manage fowls and turkeys like her; no one contrived to make so much butter from one cow, or get so much from their garden. Her daughters were doing very well, but she always owned that her chief love was bestowed upon the son. One day Michael brought word that William had been trusted with some important business, and had been sent to England by the agents.

“What, across the water!” said Grace.

Michael laughed, and told her not to look so frightened, that he was all right, and she ought to take it as an honour, and a great compliment, his being chosen, young as he was.

“Very true,” Grace said; yet she sighed, and all that night, as the wind rolled in the chimney, she thought of the stormy sea, and all she had ever heard of shipwrecks, and she tried to pray for a safe return. Very uneasily Grace passed the next few days; she could not go on with her usual employments steadily, but was restless and anxious. She always declared that she had a foreboding that misfortune was at hand, — and yet it came like a shock! Michael brought a letter from the merchant's head clerk — he was drowned — fell overboard when engaged in some frolic, and was drowned! This time Grace did not lose her senses. She sat upright in her chair, she did not shed a tear; but she shrieked aloud in her agony, and her own wild voice startled her. Michael was alarmed, and called in Patty, and they strove to reason with her, they entreated her to calm herself, but she said that it was as if she had a raging spirit within her, and for many days “the breeze among the trees sounded in her ears like a hideous howl, and the blessed sunshine was worse than the darkness.” There was not a shadow of comfort any where; they spoke of God and resignation, but she shook her head; the pain was more than she could bear, and when she lay down in bed, she fancied that she saw her son's body floating on the waves, calling her to come; then she would rush out into the air with throbbing head, and nothing relieved her; she could not cry, she could not sleep. Patty at last persuaded her to swallow a cordial and lie down, and then a heaviness came of her, though it was not sleep, but it seemed to quiet her, and she called for more;— it drowned the grief.

And this was the first coil of the rope which afterwards so tightly bound Grace.

Days passed in alternate agony and stupefaction; and then one morning, when she was all alone, and Patty was gone back to her own home, Grace determined to go to Belfast herself, for she craved for further tidings, and

she wished to get everything that belonged to her son. She was glad. Patty was away — she wished to go secretly, why she did not know, but she made up a small bundle of linen, locked up the cottage, hanging the key in a particular spot over the door; and, looking on all sides to see if any one were in sight, she set forth for her long journey. Weak and worn as she was, excitement kept her up. She staid at night at a small pot-house on the road, and by the afternoon of the second day she reached Belfast.

When she was fairly in the streets, a stranger not knowing where to go, faint and tired, her heart failed her, and she wished she had never come. She stopped to look about her, and seeing a woman standing outside a small shop-door, she asked her what was the name of the street, and then where Messrs. Panton and Co. lived. The woman said, ‘Oh! a great way off,’ and proceeded to describe the way; but poor Grace felt she could not take many steps more. ‘Could you tell me of a decent and quiet lodging to be had any where near?’ said she. The woman said there were several. She herself had a tidy little bed which she often let, and charged low for it: she was a widow, she added, and glad to do anything to turn a penny, for she had four small children to maintain.

Grace sighed. ‘You’re tired: come, step in, and take a cup of tea; sure you’ve come a long way seemingly.’ Grace followed, and agreed to take the small room which was to let, while her business kept her in Belfast.

Mrs. Cady was active and civil, and very talkative. She told Grace that she sold cotton and lace, and tapes, and pins, and such like things; and sometimes she got a little washing, but it was hard work to make both ends meet, and she had found it a world of trouble, whatever others did. Grace’s miserable looks struck Mrs. Cady, and when she heard she could not sleep, she advised her to take the least ‘drop of whiskey’ just as she stepped into bed: she had found from experience how good it was for sorrow. Grace did not refuse, and she too found that it ‘drove off the pain and brought sleep.’

Mrs. Cady’s girl shewed Grace the next day to Messrs. Panton and Co., where she heard many particulars about her son. As she said, they were very kind, and gave her all that was due to him and his clothes, and spoke very handsomely of the lad.

How her fingers trembled and her heart beat as she folded and unfolded the shirts, the waist-coats and neck-cloths; but very few new things were added to this old stock. ‘No,’ as she said afterwards with glistening eyes but quivering lips, ‘he was saving money for his mother; he never thought of himself, it was for me, — for me!’

Could her brother or any of her old friends have seen Grace at this time, they would scarcely have recognized her to be the same person. All her activity, her spirit was gone. She sat staring vacantly out of window, or

moved about the room in feverish restlessness: her person was uncared for and neglected, she did not mend her clothes, she sat in dirt rather than sweep a room or dust a table.

Mere animal energy, even long practised habits, will fail us under a stunning blow. The most buoyant spirit will sink at last, and woe to us, if, like poor Grace, we have no other support at hand. The tempter, it is said, lurks in glittering scenes, in prosperity, in wealth, in fulfilled happiness. He also hovers over the dim room of agony. He has his weights with which he seeks to crush the bleeding heart.

Mrs. Cady persuaded Grace to remain on where she was for a while: she coaxed and flattered her, and tried to tempt her to eat and to drink; her cordials and her drops were often offered and accepted to still the beating and aching of the heart. She was not pressed to pay for her lodging, but by degrees she was persuaded into investing a small sum in the shop, and at last to take a passive share in the concern. Mrs. Cady was sharp and talkative; Grace doubted her, as she afterwards said, yet she was glad to be led. She shrank from returning home, or from any exertion, and she looked for the evening, the unlocking the corner cupboard, the long-necked bottle, and the dead, heavy sleep which followed, as she had once looked for an approving smile from her husband.

One morning, heart-sick, miserable, feverish and heavy-eyed, Grace stood at the door leaning over that part of it which was shut. Many persons passed;— carriages and beggars, nurses and children, and men going to their work. Shrill cries, laughter, buzzing and rattling, all mingled in confusion, and she looked out on the bright sunshine, and thought of her forsaken home — the little garden. No one had sought her, no one cared a pin for her, she thought. Did they think she had drowned herself in the river! what, if she were to return and find the cottage occupied? The thought roused her. ‘I wouldn't like to give it up to ruin — but I hav'n't the strength; if I had, I could pay the bit of rent by washing, and I'd like to die in the old place!’ And she shuddered as she thought of a last illness and Mrs. Cady's sharp face over her pillow. She remembered one night feeling a hand under her head, and seeing in the dim light Mrs. Cady's confused face; from that hour Grace placed her money elsewhere. ‘She has been kind to me to be sure, but I can pay her now: I've a great mind to go, but I am weak!’ and she looked down at her worn shoes. For the first time she felt ashamed at her untidy state. ‘Oh ma'am,’ she said in after years, ‘it was fate, I was doomed for destruction. Just as I was thinking this way, Mrs. Cady called out from in the back room: “Mrs. Allen, here's some cheap, illegant shoes, jist your very pattern, a rare bargain.” I went in and fitted them on, and paid the money, just half-price. I felt glad, for I thought,

“now I can walk home when I like.” Not three hours afterwards in came some constables. Mrs. Cady and I were seized for buying stolen goods; we were put into jail.’

Mrs. Cady was known as a very doubtful character, which told against Grace. Grace was tried and found guilty. It was clear and just, as she said, she knew she could'nt deny it: she heard her sentence, seven years' transportation, with scarcely a sigh, and with no effort to save herself. She did not write to her friends; she scorned the notion of being the one to bring disgrace to the M'Leans. ‘Her daughters,’ she said, ‘should never know what their mother was, till the broad ocean rolled betwixt them.’

Grace was sent from Belfast to Dublin; and while waiting for the ship, she gained the good will of the matron of the jail. While she was out of the reach of temptation her old habits of industry and her obliging temper showed itself. She made herself useful in the jail and on board the ship: in the latter she was appointed nurse to the sick, and she often showed a Bible, given by the surgeon, with her name written in it; a testimonial of which she was very proud.

From the ship in Sydney harbour she was sent to the female convict barracks at Paramatta, where she says it made her heart sick to hear the horrible language;— old abandoned sinners and quite young girls crowded together. Grace loathed the place. resolved to try and get assigned out, and there to work and to toil, and try to resist temptation, — any thing to be free from such a place. She begged the matron to try and get her a place. Accordingly, one day the matron called her from the work-room, and told her she had received an application for a laundress in a clergyman's family; she was desired to recommend one, and had chosen her. Grace was thankful at the prospect.

The next day a man came with a cart, received Grace's small bundle, while she herself, in her convict's dress, seated on the straw, soon left the barracks at Paramatta for a new, strange scene. The roads were edged with wattles in full bloom, their golden blossoms shedding fragrance around. The country was flat and monotonous; the sun hot and burning. The man, — he had been a convict himself, — joked her on her dress, and being sent out at the Queen's expense; and bade her hold up her head, for that ‘Government folks were not so bad.’ But Grace said her heart sank within her, so forcibly did her shame and situation press upon her. They suddenly stopped at the bottom of a lane, and then the horse slowly mounted the hilt and children's voices rang out clear from the bank, — and as one, a fair-haired boy, reminding her at once of her own child, sprang out to take the whip and reins, she sobbed outright.

The bright stars cast a clear light over the farm that night, and all was

still, save the buzzing of insects, and the croaking of frogs. Grace sat up on her little bed, and looked at the rough wooden planks which formed the walls of her room, at her marked dress. She was once more among respectable people she thought, but she was a convict! Rough were the accommodations of the place, but Grace's spirit revived as the morning breeze rose; she resolved to show that she could work. She went to collect sticks from the wood-heap, as her fellow-servant told her she must light a fire, and prepare for a 'heavy wash.' While so doing, the lady of the house came out and spoke to her; Grace never lifted her eyes from the ground as she answered the questions; the thin, blue lips quivered, the hand was often drawn hastily over the downcast eyes. 'I never forget I'm a convict, ma'am,' she often said. Grace lived long with that family, to whom she attached herself with that deep devotion which formed so strong a feature in her character; she followed them in their wanderings, was hard-working, and faithful, and gentle, and skilful in sickness and in hours of pain. It was hoped that she would end her days with them, either in that country, or 'at home.' But old recollections came thronging back. Sorrow and bereavement will be received, — it rests with us *how*. If we shut the door for a time, there will be a moment in which they find too sure entrance; we may stifle, stun, and poison them, — they do not die. They came back to Grace, and there were times when the old remedy could be procured. Then followed weeks of remorse — bitter remorse; sorrowful reproaches from her friends; taunts and sneers from those who were inclined to envy the favour shown her by her employers. Grace's bodily strength began to fail, yet she would never give up; she said working was the only way to keep down her sorrows, and work she did for every one. Then came a change from the secluded bush to the suburbs of a town, and it was no longer possible to guard her, as had been done. There were dreadful pangs as she again saw the sea, and its crested waves. She sat like one broken-hearted, gazing at it, or, flinging her arms wildly, saying her son was there, and she must go to him. None but the boy whom she idolised had power to move her; nothing but spirits or opium, which she found means to procure and hide, ever gave her sleep. A veil must be drawn over this latter part of her history.

It would be too painful to write or to read of the struggles and agony which ended in loss of reason — Grace died in a lunatic asylum! She was truly a prey to strong passionate affections, and keen sensibilities, which were unsanctified. She had turned from God to worship idols, and when they were crushed, the pain was lulled by stupifying and intoxicating draughts. May her end be a warning to any of my readers who is tempted 'to drown sorrow,' — often God's last and best gift!

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