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Cotton Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky Smith Willis
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis
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Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Gogol Busch
Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato Scott
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Winter Evening Tales

Amelia Edith Huddleston Barr

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PREFACE.

In these "Winter Evening Tales," Mrs. Barr has spread before her readers a feast that will afford the rarest enjoyment for many a leisure hour. There are few writers of the present day whose genius has such a luminous quality, and the spell of whose fancy carries us along so delightfully on its magic current. In these "Tales"—each a perfect gem of romance, in an artistic setting—the author has touched many phases of human nature. Some of the stories in the collection sparkle with the spirit of mirth; others give glimpses of the sadder side of life. Throughout all, there are found that broad sympathy and intense humanity that characterize every page that comes from her pen. Her men and women are creatures of real flesh and blood, not deftly-handled puppets; they move, act and speak spontaneously, with the full vigor of life and the strong purpose of persons who are participating in a real drama, and not a make-believe.

Mrs. Barr has the rare gift of writing from heart to heart. She unconsciously infuses into her readers a liberal share of the enthusiasm that moves the people of her creative imagination. One cannot read any of her books without feeling more than a spectator's interest; we are, for the moment, actual sharers in the joys and the sorrows, the misfortunes and the triumphs of the men and women to whom she introduces us. Our sympathy, our love, our admiration, are kindled by their noble and attractive qualities; our mirth is excited by the absurd and incongruous aspects of some characters, and our hearts are thrilled by the frequent revelation of such goodness and true human feeling as can only come from pure and noble souls.

In these "Tales," as in many of her other works, humble life has held a strong attraction for Mrs. Barr's pen. Her mind and heart naturally turn in this direction; and although her wonderful talent, within its wide range, deals with all stations and conditions of life, she has but little relish for the gilded artificialities of society, and a strong love for those whose condition makes life for them something real and earnest and definite of purpose. For this reason, among many others, the Christian people of America have a hearty

admiration for Mrs. Barr and her work, knowing it to be not only of surpassing human interest, but spiritually helpful and inspiring, with an influence that makes for morality and good living, in the highest sense in which a Christian understands the term.

G.H. Sandison.

New York, 1896.

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Winter Evening Tales.

CASH.

A problem of profit and loss, worked by David Lockerby.

Part I.

"Gold may be dear bought."

A narrow street with dreadful "wynds" and "vennels" running back from it was the High street of Glasgow at the time my story opens. And yet, though dirty, noisy and overcrowded with sin and suffering, a flavor of old time royalty and romance lingered amid its vulgar surroundings; and midway of its squalid length a quaint brown frontage kept behind it noble halls of learning, and pleasant old courts full of the "air of still delightful studies."

From this building came out two young men in academic costume. One of them set his face dourly against the clammy fog and drizzling rain, breathing it boldly, as if it was the balmiest oxygen; the other, shuddering, drew his scarlet toga around him and said, mournfully, "Ech, Davie, the High street is an ill furlong on the de'il's road! I never tread it, but I think o' the weary, weary miles atween it and Eden."

"There is no road without its bad league, Willie, and the High street has its compensations; its prison for ill-doers, its learned college, and its holy High Kirk. I am one of St. Mungo's bairns, and I'm not above preaching for my saint."

"And St. Mungo will be proud of your birthday yet, Davie. With such a head and such a tongue, with knowledge behind, and wit to the fore, there is a broad road and an open door for David Lockerby. You may come even to be the Lord Rector o' Glasgow College yet."

"Wisdom is praised and starves; I am thinking it would set me better to be Lord Provost of Glasgow city."

"The man who buried his one talent did not go scatheless, Davie; and what now if he had had ten?"

"You are aye preaching, Willie, and whiles it is very untimeous. Are you going to Mary Moir's to-night?"

"Why should I? The only victory over love is through running away."

David looked sharply at his companion but as they were at the Trongate there was no time for further remark. Willie Caird turned eastward toward Glasgow Green, David hailed a passing omnibus and was soon set down before a handsome house on the Sauchiehall Road. He went in by the back door, winning from old Janet, in spite of herself, the grimmest shadow of a smile.

"Are my father and mother at home, Janet?"

"Deed are they, the mair by token that they hae been quarreling anent you till the peacefu' folks like mysel' could hae wished them mair sense, or further away."

"Why should they quarrel about me?"

"Why, indeed, since they'll no win past your ain makin' or marring? But the mistress is some kin to Zebedee's wife, I'm thinking, and she wad fain set you up in a pu'pit and gie you the keys o' St. Peter; while maister is for haeing you it a bank or twa in your pouch, and add Ellenmount to Lockerby, and —"

"And if I could, Janet?"

"Tut, tut, lad! If it werna for 'if' you might put auld Scotland in a bottle."

"But what was the upshot, Janet?"

"I canna tell. God alone understan's quarreling folk."

Then David went upstairs to his own room, and when he came down again his face was set as dourly against the coming interview as it had been against the mist and rain. The point at issue was quite familiar to him; his mother wished him to continue his studies and prepare for the ministry. In her opinion the greatest of all men were the servants of the King, and a part of the spiritual power and social influence which they enjoyed in St. Mungo's ancient city she earnestly coveted for her son. "Didn't the Bailies and the Lord Provost

wait for them? And were not even the landed gentry and nobles obligated to walk behind a minister in his gown and bands?"

Old Andrew Lockerby thought the honor good enough, but money was better. All the twenty years that his wife had been dreaming of David ruling his flock from the very throne of a pulpit, Andrew had been dreaming of him becoming a great merchant or banker, and winning back the fair lands of Ellenmount, once the patrimonial estate of the house of Lockerby. During these twenty years both husband and wife had clung tenaciously to their several intentions.

Now David's teachers—without any knowledge of these diverse influences—had urged on him the duty of cultivating the unusual talents confided to him, and of consecrating them to some noble service of God and humanity. But David was ruled by many opposite feelings, and had with all his book-learning the very smallest intimate acquaintance with himself. He knew neither his strong points nor his weak ones, and had not even a suspicion of the mighty potency of that mysterious love for gold which really was the ruling passion in his breast.

The argument so long pending he knew was now to be finally settled, and he was by no means unprepared for the discussion. He came slowly down stairs, counting the points he wished to make on his fingers, and quite resolved neither to be coaxed nor bullied out of his own individual opinion. He was a handsome, stalwart fellow, as Scotchmen of two-and-twenty go, for it takes about thirty-five years to fill up and perfect the massive frames of "the men of old Gaul." About his thirty-fifth year David would doubtless be a man of noble presence; but even now there was a sense of youth and power about him that was very attractive, as with a grave smile he lifted a book, and comfortably disposed himself in an easy chair by the window. For David knew better than begin the conversation; any advantages the defendant might have he determined to retain.

After a few minutes' silence his father said, "What are you reading, Davie? It ought to be a guid book that puts guid company in the background."

David leisurely turned to the title page. "Selections from the Latin Poets," father."

"A fool is never a great fool until he kens Latin. Adam Smith or some book o' commercial economics wad set ye better, Davie."

"Adam Smith is good company for them that are going his way, father: but there is no way a man may take and not find the humanities good road-fellows."

"Dinna beat around the bush, guidman; tell Davie at once that you want him to go 'prentice to Mammon. He kens well enough whether he can serve him or no."

"I want Davie to go 'prentice to your ain brither, guid wife—it's nane o' my doing if you ca' your ain kin ill names—and, Davie, your uncle maks you a fair offer, an' you'll just be a born fool to refuse it."

"What is it, father?"

"Twa years you are to serve him for £200 a year; and at the end, if both are satisfied, he will gie you sich a share in the business as I can buy you—and, Davie, I'se no be scrimping for such an end. It's the auldest bank in Soho, an' there's nane atween you and the head o' it. Dinna fling awa' good fortune—dinna do it, Davie, my dear lad. I hae look it to you for twenty years to finish what I hae begun—for twenty years I hae been telling mysel' 'my Davie will win again the bonnie braes o' Ellenmount.'"

There were tears in old Andrew's eyes, and David's heart thrilled and warmed to the old man's words; in that one flash of sympathy they came nearer to each other than they had ever done before.

And then spoke his mother: "Davie, my son, you'll no listen to ony sich temptation. My brither is my brither, and there are few folk o' the Gordon line a'thegither wrang, but Alexander Gordon is a dour man, and I trow weel you'll serve hard for ony share in his money bags. You'll just gang your ways back to college and tak' up your Greek and Hebrew and serve in the Lord's temple instead of Alexander Gordon's Soho Bank; and, Davie, if you'll do right in this matter you'll win my blessing and every plack and bawbee o' my money." Then, seeing no change in David's face, she made her last, great concession—"And, Davie, you may marry Mary Moir, an' it please you, and I'll like the lassie as weel as may be."

"Your mither, like a' women, has sought you wi' a bribe in her hand, Davie. You ken whether she has bid your price or not. When you hae served your twa years I'se buy you a £20,000 share in the Gordon Bank, and a man wi' £20,000 can pick and choose the wife he likes best. But I'm aboon bribing you—a fair offer isna a bribe."

The concession as to Mary Moir was the one which Davie had resolved to make his turning point, and now both father and mother had virtually granted it. He had told himself that no lot in life would be worth having without Mary, and that with her any lot would be happy. Now that he had been left free in this matter he knew his own mind as little as ever.

"The first step binds to the next," he answered, thoughtfully. "Mary may have something to say. Night brings counsel. I will e'en think over things until the morn."

A little later he was talking both offers over with Mary Moir, and though it took four hours to discuss them they did not find the subject tedious. It was very late when he returned home, but he knew by the light in the house-place that Janet was waiting up for him. Coming out of the wet, dark night, it was pleasant to see the blazing ingle, the white-sanded floor, and the little round table holding some cold moor-cock and the pastry that he particularly liked.

"Love is but cauldribe cheer, my lad," said Janet, "an' the breast o' a bird an' a raspberry tartlet will be nane out o' the way." David was of the same opinion. He was very willing to enjoy Janet's good things and the pleasant light and warmth. Besides, Janet was his oldest confidant and friend—a friend that had never failed him in any of his boyish troubles or youthful scrapes.

It gave her pleasure enough for a while to watch him eat, but when he pushed aside the bird and stretched out his hand for the raspberry dainties, she said, "Now talk a bit, my lad. If others hae wared money on you, I hae wared love, an' I want to ken whether you are going to college, or whether you are going to Lunnon among the proud, fause Englishers?"

"I am going to London, Janet."

"Whatna for?"

"I am not sure that I have any call to be a minister, Janet—it is a solemn charge."

"Then why not ask for a sure call? There is nae key to God's council chamber that I ken of."

"Mary wants me to go to London."

"Ech, sirs! Sets Deacon Moir's dochter to send a lad a wrang road. I wouldna hae thocht wi' her bringing up she could hae swithered for a moment—but it's the auld, auld story; where the deil canna go by himsel' he sends a woman. And David Lockerby will tyne his inheritance for a pair o' blue e'en and a handfu' o' gowden curls. Waly! waly! but the children o' Esau live for ever."

"Mary said,"—

"I dinna want to hear what Mary said. It would hae been nae loss if she'd ne'er spoken on the matter; but if you think makin' money, an' hoarding money is the measure o' your capacity you ken yousel', sir, dootless. Howsomever you'll go to your ain room now; I'm no going to keep my auld e'en waking just for a common business body."

Thus in spite of his father's support, David did not find his road to London as fair and straight as he could have wished. Janet was deeply offended at him, and she made him feel it in a score of little ways very annoying to a man fond of creature comforts and human sympathy. His mother went about the necessary preparations in a tearful mood that was a constant reproach, and his friend Willie did not scruple to tell him that "he was clean out o' the way o' duty."

"God has given you a measure o' St. Paul's power o' argument, Davie, and the verra tongue o' Apollos—weapons wherewith to reason against all unrighteousness and to win the souls o' men."

"Special pleading, Willie."

"Not at all. Every man's life bears its inscription if he will take the trouble to read it. There was James Grahame, born, as you may say, wi' a sword in his hand, and Bauldy Strang wi' a spade, and Andrew Semple took to the balances and the 'rithmetic as a duck takes to the water. Do you not mind the day you spoke anent the African missions to the young men in St. Andrews' Ha'? Your words flew

like arrows—every ane o' them to its mark; and your heart burned and your e'en glowed, till we were a' on fire with you, and there wasna a lad there that wouldna hae followed you to the vera Equator. I wouldna dare to bury such a power for good, Davie, no, not though I buried it fathoms deep in gold."

From such interviews as these Davie went home very miserable. If it had not been for Mary Moir he would certainly have gone back to his old seat by Willie Caird in the Theological Hall. But Mary had such splendid dreams of their life in London, and she looked in her hope and beauty so bewitching, that he could not bear to hint a disappointment to her. Besides, he doubted whether she was really fit for a minister's wife, even if he should take up the cross laid down before him—and as for giving up Mary, he would not admit to himself that there could be a possible duty in such a contingency.

But that even his father had doubts and hesitations was proven to David by the contradictory nature of his advice and charges. Thus on the morning he left Glasgow, and as they were riding together to the Caledonian station, the old man said, "Your uncle has given you a seat in his bank, Davie, and you'll mak' room for yoursel' to lie down, I'se warrant. But you'll no forget that when a guid man thrives a' should thrive i' him; and giving for God's sake never lessens the purse."

"I am but one in a world full, father. I hope I shall never forget to give according to my prosperings."

"Tak the world as it is, my lad, and no' as it ought to be; and never forget that money is money's brither—an' you put two pennies in a purse they'll creep thegither.

"But then Davie, I am free to say gold won't buy everything, and though rich men hae long hands, they won't reach to heaven. So, though you'll tak guid care o' yoursel', you will also gie to God the things that are God's."

"I have been brought up in the fear of God and the love of mankind, father. It would be an ill thing for me to slink out of life and leave the world no better for my living."

"God bless you, lad; and the £20,000 will be to the fore when it is called for, and you shall make it £60,000, and I'll see again Ellen-

mount in the Lockerby's keeping. But you'll walk in the ways o' your fathers, and gie without grudging of your increase."

David nodded rather impatiently. He could hardly understand the struggle going on in his father's heart—the wish to say something that might quiet his own conscience, and yet not make David's unnecessarily tender. It is hard serving God and Mammon, and Andrew Lockerby was miserable and ashamed that morning in the service.

And yet he was not selfish in the matter—that much in his favor must be admitted. He would rather have had the fine, handsome lad he loved so dearly going in and out his own house. He could have taken great interest in all his further studies, and very great pride in seeing him a successful "placed minister;" but there are few Scotsmen in whom pride of lineage and the good of the family does not strike deeper than individual pleasure. Andrew really believed that David's first duty was to the house of Lockerby.

He had sacrificed a great deal toward this end all his own life, nor were his sacrifices complete with the resignation of his only child to the same purpose. To a man of more than sixty years of age it is a great trial to have an unusual and unhappy atmosphere in his home; and though Mrs. Lockerby was now tearful and patient under her disappointment, everyone knows that tears and patience may be a miserable kind of comfort. Then, though Janet had as yet preserved a dour and angry silence, he knew that sooner or later she would begin a guerilla warfare of sharp words, which he feared he would have mainly to bear, for Janet, though his housekeeper, was also "a far-awa cousin," had been forty years in his house, and was not accustomed to withhold her opinions on any subject.

Fortunately for Andrew Lockerby, Janet finally selected Mary Moir as the Eve specially to blame in this transgression. "A proud up-head lassie," she asserted, "that cam o' a family wha would sell their share o' the sunshine for pounds sterling!"

From such texts as this the two women in the Lockerby house preached little daily sermons to each other, until comfort grew out of the very stem of their sorrow, and they began to congratulate each other that "puir Davie was at ony rate outside the glamour o' Mary Moir's temptations."

"For she just bewitched the laddie," said Janet, angrily; and, doubtless, if the old laws regarding witches had been in Janet's administration it would have gone hardly with pretty Mary Moir.

