

**THE WOMAN WHO
STOOD BETWEEN**

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The Woman Who Stood Between by Minnie Gilmore

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BY
MINNIE GILMORE

AUTHOR OF
"A SON OF ESAU," "PIPES FROM PRAIRIE-LAND," ETC.

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THE WOMAN WHO STOOD BETWEEN.

I.

I WILL begin by confessing the truth. *I did it.*

Messrs. Kane, Joyce, and Mulford, my lawyers; Mr. Dwight, of the *Daily Luminary*; Mr. Ward, of the *Evening Eye*.

Two, three more chairs, if you please. Thank you.

39X695 The condemned cell has its privileges, you see, like the condemned man. You flinch, gentlemen. Face to face with the condemned, you realize that you, who justify the law of capital punishment, are his condemners. I, in my youth and strength, I,

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your brother-freeman, am to be gagged and bound by brute force, dragged to my death like a beast, condemned by the jury that represents you, murdered by the coward-blow of the law you uphold!

There are thoughts burning my brain, there are words scorching my lips, white-hot flames from the yawning hell called the grave. Let them pass! *I did it!* and "An eye for an eye!" "A tooth for a tooth!" cries the Old Law, deafening Christian ears to the "Vengeance is Mine" of the New.

Another visitor? Ah, you, Father! The Catholic chaplain, gentlemen; may God bless him!

Now I will tell my story. But I must begin at the beginning, and tell it in my own way.

... Y N

II.

I AM thirty years old. My name is Von Vost. My father was of German birth; my mother an Irishwoman and a Catholic. I loved my father best. There was that sympathy between us which coexists, I think, with striking physical resemblance. He was strong and fair, like his father before him. Both had eyes like the blue *Rheinwasser*, and hair like the sun on the *Bieberich* vinelands. I, as you see, am of slightly darker type, owing to my Celtic mother. She had the Irish-gray eyes that go with black hair and lashes, "stars set in midnight skies," my father called them. Her cheeks and lips had the flush of Killarney's rose upon them. In her way, she was as hand-

some as my father in his; otherwise he had never loved her. For generations the Vost women have been famous for their beauty. "*As beautiful as a Von Vost's wife*" is still a proverb in the *Bieberich* district of the *Vaterland*.

My mother was my father's second wife. His first wife died—no matter how. She was beautiful—and light. She betrayed my father. One morning she was found face-downward in the rushes where the Rhine-waves lap the *Bieberich* vinelands, her beautiful hair unbound, her beautiful white breast bare, her hand still clutched on the hilt of the dagger sheathed in her pulseless heart. She had slain herself in an hour of emotional delirium, the wise world said. So let it be.

But thereafter, for my father, the *Vaterland* was haunted. In every place, at every

turn, her dead face confronted him. Every familiar scene became a thing of dread and horror. At last he fled, meeting my mother on the passage out. She was simple, healthful, innocent; magnetically attractive, I think, to my father's shattered nerves and morbid mind. Truth shone in her clear eyes, purity blushed on her lips. Soon, love glowed in her warm heart. When the time was ripe, he told her enough of his story to make her pity him; not, unhappily for her, enough to make her fear and flee him. In Castle Garden, on the day they reached shore, they were married.

"For richer, for poorer," "for better, for worse," read the marriage-service.

"For poorer," "for worse," it proved for both. It is a mistake for a man to hamper himself with a wife at the outset of his career, as my father learned to his cost.