

# A SAD BUT TRUE STORY



**CHARACTER BUILDING STORIES**



It was in the large parlors of a mansion in Missouri, where, on a pleasant October evening, ten or twelve young people were gathered from the wealthiest homes of the elite of the city.

Among them was a young woman who, though always genial and social with the young, was ever clad in mourning garb, and bore the name of Mara,



chosen by herself to express the grief and bitterness of her life, since the time when she, seven or eight years before, had been bereft of all her family.

The pleasant hours flew fast till about half past ten in the evening, when one of the company pulled out a pack of cards and flung it on the table where Mara



Moor was sitting. The effect was startling. Her face took on a deathly pallor; she trembled, arose from her seat, staggered across the room, and took a chair in the remotest corner. So

great was her agitation that every one saw it, but none was aware of the cause.

One of the party, who had been reading law for some time, not imagining the seriousness of her anguish, went to her, and in a bantering way threatened her with a legal prosecution before an impaneled jury in case she refused to return to her place at the table,

and submit to the regulations of the evening. While the lawyer was urging her to this, a thoughtless young man of the company stepped up to them and placed a few cards in her hand. She jerked her hand away, and gave it a sling as if to rid it of the contaminating filth of the cards; and, with an agonizing scream, she began weeping and sobbing as if her heart would break.



Surprised at this new outburst, the lawyer sought to soothe the wounded spirit; and when she had become somewhat quiet, he, with the rest, entreated her to give them the reason for her terrible agitation. This she at first refused to do, but being urged very strongly by all the company, she at length

consented. At the first word a shudder passed over her whole frame; but pausing to regain her self-control, she began:—

"When I was nineteen years old, I was living in an Eastern city, in one of the happiest homes within its limits. A rich and tender father, with a loving and gentle mother, and as bright and true a brother as ever a sister could want, were my companions in the delightful home of my childhood. Wealth and comfort smiled upon us, and prophesied of future happiness,

until, with my own hand, I plucked down upon us all the greatest curse imaginable.

"Two of our cousins, a brother and sister, came to visit us, and we spent the evening in pleasant conversation, as we did this evening; and just as those cards were thrown upon the table, and at about the same hour, my parents having retired, our cousin threw a deck upon our table. They two and I sat down to play, while my dear and tenderly loved brother, not liking the idea of playing cards, turned to his music, which he was composing as a graduating exercise for examination day, and went to work at that. We three needed a fourth one to make the game go properly, and we began trying to persuade my brother to come and take part with us; but he declared he thought it was not right to spend time in card-playing—that it was an amusement of

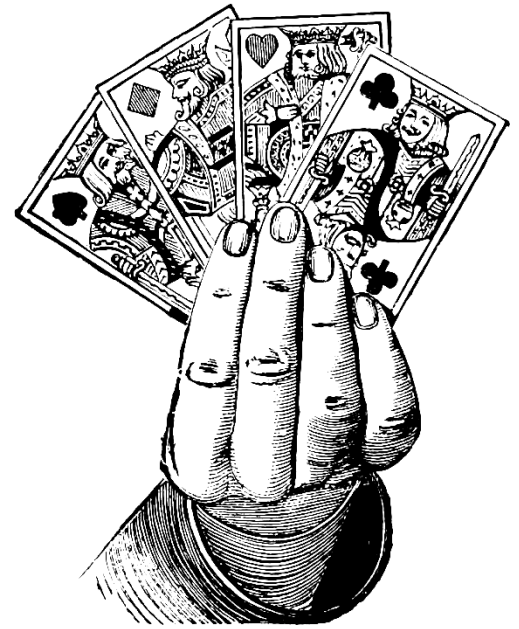


the lowest character, and he did not want to get into it.

"After using all our arguments to induce him to assist us, but to no purpose, I went to him, put my arm around his neck, and told him that I was a Christian, and was trying to get to heaven, and thought it no harm to play cards just for



amusement; that I thought he ought to lay aside his scruples, and come and help us, as we could have no fun without his help; that he was too fastidious, anyway. With this he arose from his seat very reluctantly, and came, protesting that he knew nothing about it. We told him he could soon learn, and he did, only too quickly; for, in a little time, he was enough for any of us; and when we three had become tired of the sport, he was so delighted with it that he sat for an hour studying the cards and shuffling them.



"We laughed heartily at him for his interest in the matter, and finally retired for the night, leaving him with the cards. Next morning he took them up again, and tried to induce us to play with him; but our cousins had to go home, and soon left us, taking the deck with them. But the fatal act had been done. That night my brother was in the city until a late hour, which was a thing that had never occurred before. When he came home, he seemed morose; and to our inquiries for the cause, his replies were evasive.

"The next night he was out again; and this continued for some nights, until his money—two hundred dollars—was all gone. He then went to father for more, and, as he had unbounded confidence in my

brother, father very readily gave him quite a little sum, without asking what he was going to do with it. This was soon gone. When he asked for more, father desired him to tell what he was doing with so much money. Not receiving a direct answer, father gave him a small sum, and told him he could get no more unless he would give a clear report of the use he made of his money. This money was soon spent, and when he went for more, but was unwilling to account for what he had received, father refused to give him



more. With this refusal he became angry, and told father he would make him willing to let him have the money. My brother then went into the city again, and, as usual, into a gambling-den, where he managed to get money for gaming, or sat and looked on. He was absent for nearly a week.

"During this time my mother neither ate nor slept, as I might say; and when my brother was brought home drunk, she took her bed, and never got up again, but died of a broken heart, within a few days.

"We hoped this would stop my brother's course, but it did so only for a short time. He soon began

gambling and drinking again; and, being young and rather delicate, it was not long until he was brought home in delirium tremens. Upon this father took his bed, languished, sank, and died, leaving myself and my brother alone in the world. O, how I wished I could die, too! But it seemed that God determined that I should see the end of my work in wrecking our family, and I was compelled to still remain, and reap the harvest of my own doings.



"Every influence that could be brought to bear on my poor brother I made use of, but to no avail; and, O, how I prayed for him! But it was of no use! He went even more rapidly down the way of ruin, now that father was dead and out of his way. Only a few weeks after I had followed my father to his resting-place in



the silent grave, my brother was brought home with delirium tremens again, and, after suffering for a short time the most terrible agony, the poor boy died, and was laid in a drunkard's grave. O my



God! Why was I ever born? Why cannot I die, too? But what will my eternity be for having thus ruined my own brother, the bright and beautiful boy? This is why I spell my name Mara."

Soon after the lady commenced her sad story, the ladies in the company began weeping; and when it was finished, they were all sobbing as if their hearts would break; and the eyes of the men also were moist. The cards had disappeared, and vows were solemnly expressed by the entire company that never again would one of them be guilty of engaging in that sport, but that they would ever do their best to endeavor to put the practice out of society.

## Word Glossary

**Bereft**--*deprived, loss of*

**Delirium Tremens**--*severe form of alcohol withdrawal*

**Elite**--*a class of people considered to be superior because of wealth, education, or social standing*

**Evasive**--*answering in a way that is not direct and clear*

**Fastidious**--*acting with careful attention to little details*

**Genial**--*pleasant and friendly*

**Languished**-- *became weak and feeble*

**Morose**--*gloomy*

**Pallor**--*paleness*

**Scruples**--*feelings that prevent you from doing something you believe is wrong*