

# A MODEL'S FATAL SCRUPLES.

**Mrs. Hattie Monroe, Well Known to the Artists of New York, Dead at the Morgue.**

**She Was a Proud, Good Woman and Starved in an Attic Rather Than Thrive by the Favors of Others— Will She Be Allowed to Go to Potter's Field?**

It is a very old story and one that can be heard too often here in New York, but it is none the less interesting for all that. And perhaps the dead woman who lies at the Morgue this morning would be glad to have it told, would be glad to have people know that she was not always poor and friendless

and wretched, that she made a brave fight and, to a certain extent, ~~by~~ victorious even in death.

There is a little attic room high up in the building No. 117 East Twelfth street. If you stepped in to-day you would find it unoccupied, save by a lonely cat that moves

restlessly along and listens for a familiar foot-step that never comes. But in glancing round the little place, bare and unfurnished as it is, you would somehow form the impression that the former occupant had been a gentlewoman. There is cleanliness and brightness everywhere. There are fluttering white curtains at the window, a few tiny flowers on the sill, books on all sides and pictures that cover the walls from ceiling to floor. The books are old, torn, paper-covered volumes, that would not bring two cents at a sale; that is why they have been retained. But it is a strange collection for a little attic room. The poets, the great novelists, the essayists are here, and in several languages.

The unframed pictures are cheap, too—illustrations which have been cut from magazines and journals and pinned or tacked to the wall. You will notice two peculiarities about them: they are copies of the work of good artists, and there is a woman's draped figure in each one—always the same—and a remarkably beautiful, graceful figure. Then it would occur to you that perhaps the occupant of the room had been an artist's model, and you would be right.

Aside from the books and the pictures there is an atmosphere of poverty about the place. There is a rickety sofa-bed, a solitary chair, and the most primitive dishes on the little table. There is a needle in a bit

of sewing—a book turned face downward to mark a certain place and a tiny kettle which looks as if it would bubble over at the slightest encouragement. And if you are at all sympathetic, there is sadness in the thought that the sewing will never be finished, the book never read, and that strange hands will pack away the few household goods, while the owner of them lies at the Morgue, unwatched, uncared for and unmourned.

Almost all the artists in the city know Mrs. Hattie Monroe. She had posed for them every Winter for several years. She was a regular visitor to the studios; she knew as much about the work and their plans as they did, and to some of them, by virtue of her sympathy and her fifty-four years of age, she was almost a mother.

They knew little about her past. They only knew that she was a cultivated, well-read, well-bred woman of the world; that she was charming in appearance and manner; that she had travelled all over the world; that her character was above reproach.

They surmised that she was poor—how poor they did not dream—so they had her fit whenever they could and recommended her to their friends. During the Winter she was kept fairly busy; how she got on in the Summer when they were out of the city they did not know. No one knew but herself, and it was only a few weeks before her

death that her condition was discovered by a friend, who, unfortunately, was almost as helpless as the model herself.

Twelve years ago Mrs. Monroe was a very happy woman. She had no near relatives, but she had a devoted husband, a comfortable income and a more than pleasant home. Mr. Monroe's health failed, however, and after two years of travel and treatment he died. His income had stopped with his illness; the principal was eaten into before his death. Five years ago Mrs. Monroe found herself absolutely penniless, and her life since then has been one constant struggle for the barest necessities of life.

It is not easy for those who are well-dressed, well-sheltered and well-fed to put themselves in the place of such a woman as this. Loving beautiful things as she did life itself, she yet lived in attic rooms amid the barest surroundings. Music and books were almost a necessity to such a nature as hers, yet she never heard a note except the dreary wheezing of some hand-organ and never saw a volume save those that are and had page had made valueless. Night after night she went to bed hungry and week after week she paid her pittance for rent, feeling that the coming of the next week would see her in the streets homeless.

No one suspected this. She always looked well-dressed, for she sewed and darned and mended far into the night. In the Winter

she was fairly comfortable. She had several engagements a week in the studios, and she managed to keep sheltered and warmed and fed. But in the Summer! When the long, warm days came the pictures were finished, her friends, the artists, left for the seaside and the mountains, and the studios were closed. Then came the days of agony. No body seemed to need the services of a woman fifty-four, who only asked to be allowed to help herself. No avenue opened, nobody was interested, all were full of their own affairs. For a time she collected bills that were due the artists and received a small commission. But it is not easy to collect money from some people, and after one or two fruitless calls and talks she found the doors closed and the people who owed the money "not at home." She directed envelopes, acted as nurse, did canvassing, mending, everything her hands could find to do—and yet many a night she went to bed hungry. "She was a good woman." They all say that about her. If she had not been a good woman, and a conscientious woman, she would have found less difficulty in gaining her bread and butter. She could not bring herself to do many things which might not be prong in themselves, but which gave the appearance of wrong. She had ideas of honor, and she lived up to them, they say, until the end. It was her scruples, "her absurd scruples," one individual re-

marked, which kept her in her little attic room, living on a diet of crackers.

The past few winters she has posed frequently in the Cooper Institute studio and in those of the Metropolitan Art Museum, where she is well known.

For two years she has felt that the end was not far off, knowing that she could not much longer fight against such heavy odds. But still she kept the secret, and only by one bar piece of furniture, her bric-a-brac, her dishes disappeared. It was characteristic of the woman that when she had a little extra money (25 or 50 cents) she spent it for a tiny vase, a book or something similar, which she could keep with her and enjoy. Then, when the grind came again, she sold or pawned these things.

Last Summer was a long-drawn nightmare to Mrs. Minna. Everything went, even the little stove, and she confessed before her death that for days at a time she had lived on crackers and water. Bread and milk were a luxury which she rarely enjoyed. A few weeks ago she fell ill with the grip. She had no physician, no medicine, no money, no care, no food. The rent was due and she dragged herself out of bed, scrubbed floors for some more fortunate women, earned enough to keep a roof over her head a few days longer and went to bed again.

Last Wednesday she went to the house of

the one friend before mentioned. To this friend Mrs. Minna told the whole story of her struggles for the first time.

"I am starving to-day," she added, "and I see nothing but a repetition of last Summer's experience stretching before me. Rather than endure it I would die this minute, if I only could."

The friend had exactly 50 cents in the world. Twenty-five of this was given to the caller, and they parted.

On Monday afternoon at 5 o'clock two policemen saw a woman fall in the street, at St. Mark's place near Cooper Institute. When they reached her she was unconscious. She was taken to the station at First avenue and Fifth street, and revived temporarily, but before she could give her name, her address or any facts which would help identification she lapsed once more into the unconsciousness which ends in death.

"A mighty fine-looking woman," said the Sergeant. "I wonder who she is."

"She's been drinking," observed an officer.

Then the wagon came, and she was taken to the Morgue, where she lies until Friday. It remains with those who never knew her to decide whether she will bury her or let her be lost forever among the city's unknown dead.