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AROUND THE CORNER
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Shannon Callahan sat on the great graystone verandah of the century-old house, which looked much as it had the day of its birth and construction but whose interior had been remodeled and brought more up to date without losing the charm of easy Colonial days and its related warmth and pleasantness.

She looked out along the raging coast; the remorseless peninsula -- all serving up an array of lunar landscapes that caused her to wonder about the breed (her ancestors; Patrick's ancestors) who had inhabited the place and who clung to it so tenaciously. What part, or how great a part, she wondered, had Patrick's brother's dogmatism, his stubbornness, played in Kelly's decision to leave the place and see what was "around the corner," as the eighteen-year-old dark-haired, blue-eyed beauty had phrased it when stating her decision to leave the sparsely-settled coastal area. Kirk had left the area years ago.

Shannon sighed, thinking of Kelly. At the same time an involuntary sob shook her slender frame. "Kelly. Kelly! My darling girl!" she cried aloud to the sea, the sun and the wind.

Kelly wasn't her daughter at all. Rather, she was Kirk's daughter. His only child, to be explicit. She was left motherless at birth. After the funeral of his lovely wife of only three years, Kirk asked his brother Patrick, and sister-in-law, to raise the child.

Shannon recalled again how Kelly's coming had brightened hers and Patrick's life and home. The tiny little bundle of love and sweetness had taken the place of the children Shannon was never able to have. Yes, Kelly was a gift from heaven. A Godsend. And the child had been happy -- so very happy -- exploring and roaming the rugged coastal area of her home and being an excellent homemaker until, more than a year ago, when she left for college. She returned home for Christmas with her head full of new ideas.

"I'm going to work, Mother," she had said one evening while helping with the dishes.

"You've never shirked responsibility anytime, dear Kelly, nor anywhere. Not when a thing needed to be done," Shannon remembered having said, laughing as she finished the statement.

"Oh, but I don't mean that kind of work: I'm getting a job. Employment. . ."

Shannon nearly dropped the dish she was holding. "But we take good care of you, dear. You have all you need. . . ."

Kelly's head dropped. "But not all I want," she added with an open candor that shocked Shannon.

"What is it that you want, Kelly? Is it in keeping with God's standards?"

The girl's face flushed and an embarrassing silence ensued. "I . . . I must get something in my room," she said, hastily leaving the kitchen and rushing upstairs. Things were different after that.

The carefree, happy, once-joyous teenager became extremely cautious and careful about everything she said, avoiding any subject which had the slightest tendency toward negativism and, upon returning to college for the second semester, she wrote a brief letter home stating her position of "total independence" and telling of her desire to explore what was "around the corner."

Shannon had written back, telling her adopted daughter that more often than not, "darkness and gloom awaits one around the corner." She urged Kelly to "return to the things of true value: spiritual things."

From that day, "around the corner" became another dead subject with Kelly -- in her letters home.

Remembering, Shannon prayed now. "Keep our darling from sin and evil," she cried aloud. "And oh, Thou Great Shepherd of the sheep, bring the straying one back to Thyself. Throw roadblocks across her path. Take the glamour and the glitter of sin away: show her the ultimate end of its seeming pleasures. Make her to see that hell is a reality for the soul that sins and violates Thy laws."

Shannon sat for a long while after she prayed, thinking many things and evaluating the enormous wealth other than physical scenery that remained in Patrick's and her surroundings: it was a wealth of soul in the gentle but dogged, unsophisticated and wise people who labored, laughed, worshipped and lived on their twenty and thirty and forty acres up and down the rugged coast.

They had struggled for years, these gentle, persevering undaunted people (just as Patrick and she had done) to make the stubborn, seeming

unyielding soil produce and, little by little and bit by slow bit, the land had responded and was beginning to bear and yield a decided increase.

And Kelly had once been an integral part of this coastal area and its people, attending faithfully the small but neatly constructed Holiness church which stood ruggedly beautiful on an arm of the peninsula that jutted out into the water.

Where had Patrick and she failed? Shannon wondered now, bringing into fond and painfully-sweet recall Kelly's upbringing. They had been God-fearing parents, Patrick and she. Bible believing and Scriptural-practicing parents on all lines; the "using the rod" line, as well. Always, though, and only with love's conditioning power, was punishment ever administered.

Love! Ah, its great enveloping, all-encompassing power may lead the erring one home even yet. And that in time for Mother's Day!

Shannon's heartbeat quickened perceptibly with the thought. Hope ran high, faith was strong, and doubt was put to flight. It was only to him that believed that the "all things are possible" was promised.

Lights came on inside the lamp posts of the homeowners and the dark waters caught up their faint gleams, reflecting the surf as it tumbled against the shore and hurled itself out in long, white-fingered breakers.

Far off in the distance, obscured partially in mist and partly in darkness, an occasional ship drifted across the now-darkening horizon on its way into or out of the distant harbor, its loud horn breaking into the otherwise peaceful and quiet serenity of the evening.

No need to hurry inside, Shannon thought, pulling the heavy shawl more tightly around her shoulders (a whistling gypsy wind was whirling upward from the sea, shredding the thick tube fog and chilling the night).

As she sat, Shannon wondered how the business meeting was progressing which Patrick had to attend that evening. He should be home by nine.

A sudden, bright light, making its way up the earth-packed lane, caught Shannon's eye and captivated her full attention. Who could be coming? she

wondered, getting to her feet and watching the approaching car with interest, if not eager anticipation.

Before fully realizing who it was, she heard a voice call her name.
"Mother. Mother?"

"Coming, darling!" she exclaimed, her voice trembling with excitement.

"Oh, you're on the verandah," Kelly said, laughing and running to the back of the house.

"Coming, Kelly. . . ."

"No. Wait, Mother dear. Stay where you are. . . ."

Mother dear! Mother dear! It was the "old" Kelly. It was, it was! The words hit Shannon with such force that she wept.

"Oh, Mother, Mother! I'm so glad to see you!" the girl cried happily, rushing into Shannon's open arms. "I was such a fool. Such a fool! Nothing satisfied but Jesus. Nothing!"

"Let's go inside. It's warmer. . . ."

"Please, let's stay here. I can talk better out here. Remember what you said one time. . . ."

"I said a great many things, my dear." Shannon's arms held the girl close to her heart.

Kelly laughed. "You did that," she conceded, "but you once told me that a Christian is a person who makes it easy for others to believe in God. Remember?"

Shannon nodded.

"Well, I fully intended to do as I told you: to explore what was around the corner, I mean. But God sent a wonderful young man and his sister across my pathway who honestly and truly reminded me of Daddy and you. I couldn't possibly doubt God. I had backslidden, but thank God, I got saved last night, and sanctified wholly this morning. May I move home? I want to be

with you for Mother's Day, and every day after that. I'm sorry for grieving you and Daddy and for causing you heartache and sorrow, but I'll make it up to you both by God's grace and His help."

"Oh, my dear Kelly, of course you may move back. We have been waiting for you, praying for you. You are all the Mother's day present I could wish for. Did you bring your belongings? If so, let's get them unpacked and put them where they belong then together we'll wait for your father. He will want something light to eat and I'm sure you're hungry."

"Oh, Mother, I'm so happy. It's so good to be home -- physical and spiritually!" Kelly exclaimed, rushing to the car for her belongings and calling over her shoulder as she ran, "And this time I'm going to explore what God has waiting for me, around His corner."

"It's a feast of spiritual things," Shannon said joyously, but the girl didn't hear: she was singing happily, "Saved to the uttermost, I am the Lord's. . . ."

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THE END