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A BLACK DIAMOND



by

EDWARD
GARRETT



As we were coming back, we found him walking to meet us. (Page 95.)

A BLACK DIAMOND

OR

The Best and the Worst of It

BY

EDWARD GARRETT

AUTHOR OF "NOT BY BREAD ALONE" "JOHN WINTER" ETC

"God hath made of one blood all nations of men"

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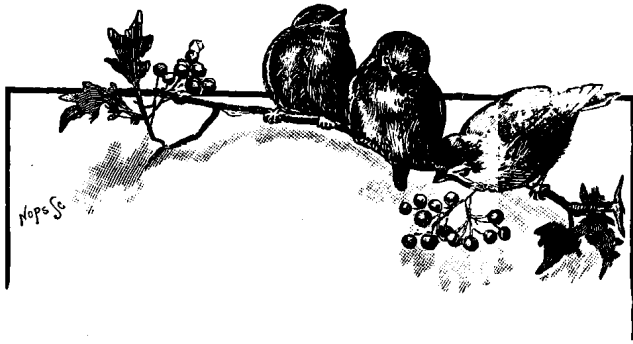
Preface



“A BLACK DIAMOND” was written because the author’s attention was specially directed to the evil results which the great Sin of Slavery has left behind it in the United States of America. The facts relating to this, which are embodied in the narrative, are all derived from the best authorities or from personal knowledge. The author wishes to add that similar evils, less or greater, will always arise wherever race prejudice is allowed to

spring up. We can be saved from race prejudice only by faithful practice of the great Christian doctrine of the Brotherhood of Man.



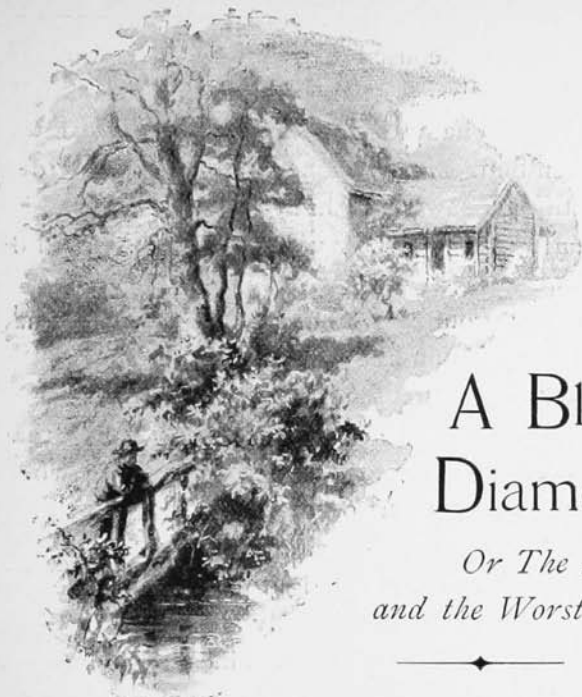


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A Black Diamond

*Or The Best
and the Worst of It*



Chapter 1

OUR HOME IN CANADA

I WAS brought up here, in Baskerville, Ontario, Canada. It is not my birthplace, but we came here when I was little more than an infant, so that I remember nothing earlier. The place had been settled, in a fashion, long before my people arrived ; and it had grown rapidly.

“What you would like done at all, always begin at once,” was one of my mother’s favourite sayings.

For illustration she used to point to the garden of one of the earliest settlers in Baskerville. On his first arrival he had set a yew hedge about a bit of land which he meant to make into a flower garden. By the time I saw it, it had grown tall and thick and strong, so that mother used to say, "It would do credit to any laird's garden at home." (She always called the old country "home.") The old man had lived to enjoy his forethought.

Our farm—Sherlett's place, as it is called—is a nice sixty-acre lot, a little nearer to Baskerville than to the town of Clitheroe, on the other side, where the railway is. No part of the road between the two places is lonely, for whenever they can the Canadian farmers build their houses right upon the highway. There is a plank side walk nearly all the way, it being everybody's business to keep this in order in front of his own property. Father used to say one could read a man's steadiness and industry by the state of his side walk, just as King Solomon could detect the sluggard by the thorns and thistles.

My father and mother had begun their Canadian life in a four-roomed wooden shanty. That was all we had when I was a tiny girl—a big kitchen, with a tiny place off it (where mother kept her wedding gifts, and some china, and a bookshelf) and two little bedrooms. But before my brother was born, they were able to add an eight-roomed brick house to the front. The rooms in the new division were used

as best parlour and bedchambers. The old kitchen remained in its original use. It always stands for "home" to me. We lived our real lives out there, and though visitors—especially the minister—might be first shown into the prim "best parlour," those whom we most loved and honoured were sure to find their way very quickly to the dear old kitchen.

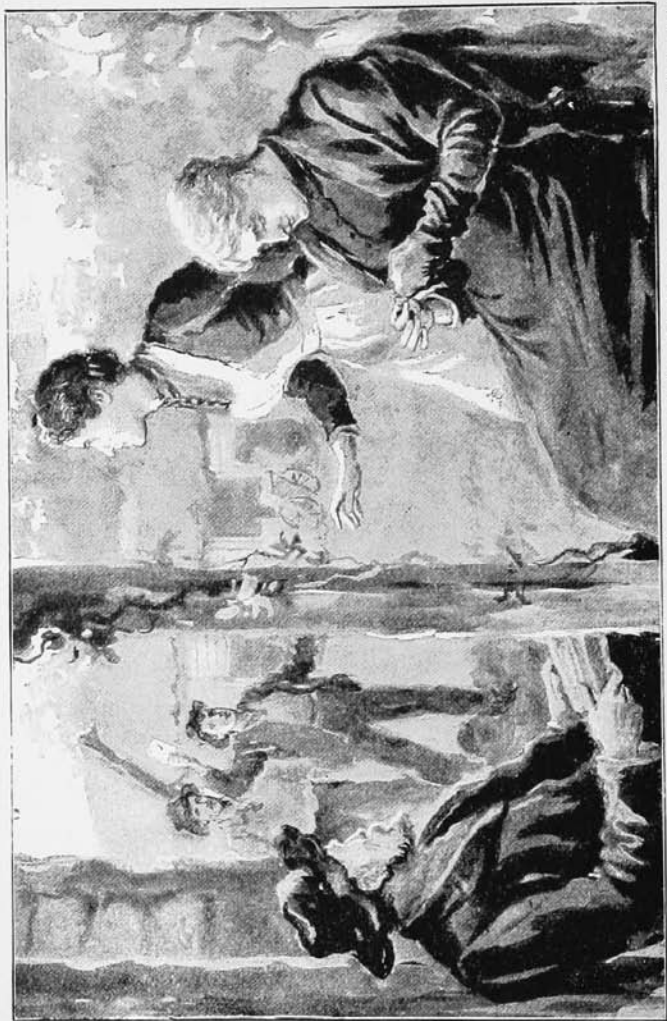
Dear old kitchen! The windows were always filled with flowers, growing in pots upon the sill or in hanging baskets. Whenever a household crock was broken, mother got some soil and put a root in it, and there it was! That's the way that beauty grew on Sherlett's farm!

The old kitchen is the background of all my most sacred memories. There it was that mother sat in what she called her "leisure," busy working comfortable and pretty rag mats to make snug the bare floor, which father painted every year with a coat of rich amber. There, in the long nights of winter, we used to gather round the lamp, which sufficed to brighten the table, but left the rest of the room in restful shadows; and I would learn my own lessons, or afterwards, as I grew up, would help brother Will with his, or join my mother in darning stockings or planning a quilt. It was about the kitchen door, too, in the verandah facing the barns, that we used to gather every Sunday, to wait till the buggy was ready to take us to church. Everything always seemed so specially bright and sweet on those Sunday mornings!

But I think the picture which rises oftenest is of the long summer evenings which we used to spend out in the verandah, mother and I in our rocking-chairs, and father and Will seated on the steps which led down to the garden plot. Our hired man, Otto Hermann, was generally there too: for besides that he was, of course, treated in everything as one of ourselves, father always said he was a fine young fellow, and we had all liked him from the first of his coming to us. So did all the beasts about the place, and the old house dog always went with him when, after the day's work was done, he generally made an errand down to Baskerville, and got the newspaper and any letters which might be lying at the post-office. Therefore by the time mother and I had cleared away the supper things, he would come back with some fresh subject for the family talk in the verandah.

How well I remember the evening when he brought father the letter about our second-cousin, Norman Padgett.

It had been such a hot day! And even after the sun had gone down it was still airless, with a constant low rumble of distant thunder. Mother was never quite herself when there was much thunder in the air, and I think father noticed how pale and fagged she looked: for he said cheerily, that he thought there would be quite a plump of rain by-and-by,—and it would do a great deal of good—only he hoped it



(Page 15.)

Will came round the corner of the house, crying, "An English letter!"

would hold up till Otto and Will got in from Baskerville. (They had gone together that night.)

"I reckon there's always somebody out to be caught in the rain," said mother, with her smile.

"Ay, there's somebody that gets the bane or the blessing of whatever's going in this world," rejoined father; "and the least the rest of us can do is to remember them."

"If they don't dawdle about talking, they won't be very long now," I remarked; and sure enough just as I spoke the gate clanged, and they both came round the corner of the house, Will holding something high in the air, and crying,—

"An English letter!"

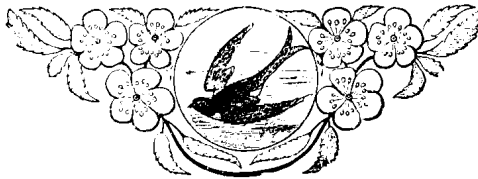
Father and mother both had relations in the old country. Mother's were in Scotland, and she heard from them regularly once a month. Father's people were in Surrey, and they never wrote at all unless there was some particular family event, like a death or a marriage; so father was grave and intent as he held out his hand for the missive.

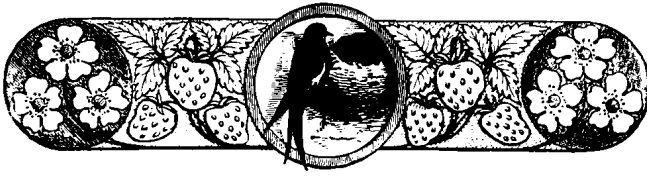
"Thank God, there's no black edge," said mother.

"Ay,—though death isn't always the worst news," answered father, turning the letter over. "But I don't know this handwriting, and it hasn't the Dorking postmark."

"Open it, and you will soon find out all about it," advised mother. Father did so, put on his spectacles, looked first at the signature at the end of the letter,

and then read it all through, slowly and carefully, before he said another word. Mother went on with her knitting, and Otto whittled a bit of wood into a clothes-peg, but Will and I sat idle and impatient.





Chapter 2

NORMAN PADGETT

"IT'S from my cousin Madge," said my father at last, almost reluctantly—putting the letter down before him.

"What! the poor soul who lost her husband two years ago?" asked my mother.

"Yes," father answered. "But she's a well-to-do widow, you know. At least, she would be, if she lived in any reasonable place."

"A widow's a widow, whether she's rich or poor," returned my mother; "but where does your cousin live?"

"In the middle of London," said my father; "in a part they call Bloomsbury, where they pay twice as much as they should for everything,—rent, and taxes, and help,—and where the best things are not to be had for love or money!"

"Such as——?" questioned Otto, in his brief, simple way.

"Why, real fresh air, and downright sweet cleanliness," answered father.

"But I suppose the people in London do have a great deal of money?" remarked Will.

"Some of 'em do," said father. "But they're little better off for that. Money is only worth what it will buy. If you can get good things without it, you don't want it. We want very little here—just a trifle for taxes, and tea, and clothing. We don't have to pay for every egg or vegetable we eat, and for the use of the roof over our heads, or——"

"Well, but your cousin has not written to you to complain about prices, surely," interrupted mother, growing curious at last.

"No, she hasn't," father admitted. "She has written about her boy Norman." He hesitated for a moment. "She wants us to have him here."

"Why, isn't he the only child?" exclaimed mother, surprised.

"He's the only boy," said father; "there are two girls. Well—well—I scarcely know what to think. But if the lad is to come here, it will concern us all; so we had better all know about the matter from the beginning. And if we make up our minds he's not to come, why, we shan't have hurt him by talking him over; so, either way, it's best to have it all above board among ourselves. The fact is, Madge wants to get the young fellow out of London. She thinks it will be better for him."

“Doesn't it suit his health? Is he delicate?” said mother, instantly concerned. “This isn't in a general way a climate for weakly folk; but I have heard that some do better in our out-door ways than in sedentary life at home.”

“It's the health of his soul Madge is thinking of—leastways, I hope so; for Madge wasn't one to think much about souls at all,” answered my father, rather grimly. “The lad has not been doing well—was sent to college and wasted his time—doesn't care about books or study, Madge says.”

Otto Hermann exclaimed, under his breath. I don't think anybody else noticed it, but I heard it, for I knew what it signified. Books had scarcely come in Otto's way, but he loved them dearly, and he treasured every bit of information he could get, especially about natural things, such as birds, and butterflies, and plants. His little moan was for the waste of advantages for which he had vainly longed.

“But not caring for books doesn't prove that he'll care for farming,” said mother shrewdly.

“No,” answered my father; “and yet there's something to say for the chance of it. There's those who don't make much of the printed page who can see a lot in the book of Nature. The worst of it is, there is no clear understanding of such a letter as poor Madge writes. The lad may either be an honest enough lad who has just been put to tasks he isn't fit for, or he may be a young scapegrace, far down in all sorts of

bad ways ; for by the time a young fellow is twenty—which is Norman's age—if he has taken a wrong turning he has had time to go pretty far."

"Somehow, however bad he is, if he thinks we could give him a chance, I should not like not to try," said mother softly. "Only, to be sure, Willie," and she turned to my brother, "we shouldn't wish to bring into the house a bad example for you."

"Willie will have to meet some of all sorts in his day," observed father. "A man or a boy either is never worth much till bad examples don't hurt him. There are always plenty of them about. They're like some diseases that only catch on you when you are low down yourself."

"I'll stick to Otto," said Willie sturdily ; "if the chap isn't inclined to go our ways he can go alone."

"Madge wants to pay a big board to us if we take the youth," mused my father. "But that isn't to be thought of. Nobody need come to Canada who isn't fit to earn his way from the first. There's room here on this very farm for another who will work, but nothing would pay me to have an idler loafing round. If the boy comes, Madge can keep her money to stock a homestead for him, when he's fit to have one."

"Doesn't she tell you any more about him?" asked my mother.

"She says he's very good-looking and well-bred, and very popular socially—whatever that stands for,"

said my father. "All very good in its way, no doubt, but if there's nothing behind, what is it? I'd rather hear a lad was hard-working, and rough, and down-right. All the rest might come in good time."

"Ay," said my mother, "there's nothing takes on a finer polish than granite, but a bit of shining glass goes to shivers with the first thing one throws at it."

"I daresay you will find the young Englishman very pleasant in the house," remarked Otto, and I could hear that his voice was a little forced and hard.

"Oh, I'm not so sure about that," said my father. "We've a proverb at home that 'fine words butter no parsnips,' and even women-folks—when there's work going—like a water-bucket carried for them better than a compliment. And Norman Padgett may not bring his manners out with him."

"Well, to wind up, do you mean to say he can come out here or not?" asked my mother.

My father looked rather foolish.

"To tell you the truth," said he, "I've got no chance to ask more questions before he starts. He's on his way. Madge has just sent her letter by a quicker line of steamers than that he's taken. He'll land at Montreal in about three days' time after I receive this letter; that's Madge's calculation."

"Well, I must say it is rather cool of her to send her boy straight here without a word of——" began my mother.

"No, no," said my father; "let us be fair. Madge made up her mind to send Norman to Canada, whether we take him or not. All she asks is, that if we consent to take him, we will send a letter to the care of the shipping agent, to be handed to Norman before he leaves the steamer. Then he will come here."

"And if we didn't do so, has he any money to help himself?" asked my mother.

"Yes," said father; "she says she has given him enough to pay for one year's board, if we should take him. And she names a good round sum. Too much for her to have put loose into his hands. I'll not touch a penny of it, mind; but I'll take it as if I meant to, and I'll bank it for him. If you're going to deal with young folks, you often have to deal with 'em as God mostly does with us when He wants us to come His way—strip 'em pretty bare and keep 'em on spare diet."

"I'm afraid your cousin Madge has had her sorrows to go through," said my mother, with a sigh.

"Yes, I'm afraid there's something behind," said father; "but we'll face it, and do our best. This isn't work we've sought—that's the last thing we'd have done. So it may be the Lord's sending. I'll write to the youth, and I'll tell him I'll give him a chance. But I'll not deceive him as to the sort of it. He shall know before he comes,—hard work, plain fare, and putting up quietly with our ways till he sees the

good of them. And now it's time for our Bible reading."

As we passed into the kitchen Otto contrived to say to me,—

"I suppose it will be much livelier for you when this smart young Englishman comes. I know I'm but a dull sort of fellow."

"I know you are very silly," I whispered.

It did not sound like a compliment on the face of it. But it seemed to gratify Otto.

Just then the rain began to fall, with a few heavy drops which rattled on the verandah like stones, and presently with a great pouring forth of waters.





Chapter 3

A TELEGRAM

FATHER wrote his letter to Norman Padgett before he went to bed, because he did not like his morning work to be interrupted, and because he always said one rested the better if one had cleared off all possible scores of duty. No mail went out before next forenoon, so Willie carried the letter to the post as he went to school.

“We had better get everything ready for Norman at once,” said my mother; “for the steamer may come in well up to time, and, of course, he will come straight here as quickly as he can. I wonder which room he should have?” she added musingly, for three still stood unappropriated and half-dismantled in the eight-chambered brick block. “I think I’ll get ready the one whose window looks into the orchard. I always think that’s the most old-country-like room we have. And I’ll spread out the patchwork quilt, and hang up a curtain of the chintz I brought from



"We don't know what we have prepared for." (Page 27.)

home. That room will be snugget in winter too, because it's right behind this big kitchen stove, and yet it has neither stove nor pipe in sight, and I know British people don't care for the sight of them. I did not like it when I came, though I'm used to it now."

"I believe a woman is never so happy as when she is getting ready a room for somebody," said father, in a playfully sarcastic tone. "But I'm afraid your patchwork and chintz won't be very home-like to Madge's boy. She was always one of the sort that goes in for damask and gilding and fal-de-rals."

'Don't forget the pins in the pincushions, Mrs. Sherlett," observed Otto, with his quiet smile. "The night I came, I said to myself, 'This is the right sort of place, where they remember to give a fellow pins.'"

"That was Sophy's doing," said my mother. "She had made pincushions for every room, and she liked to put them to use."

Before evening the room stood trim and ready. Mother and I lingered at the door, looking at it. She shook her head wistfully.

"We don't know what we have prepared for," she said; "nor whether he is to bring a blessing or a curse. I used to think that sometimes, as I sat sewing for you babies before you were born. It would come to me that the mothers of some who have lived to be criminals and heart-breaks had once sat work-

ing for them just like me. And so had the mothers of great men."

"And your babies are turning out neither the one nor the other," I said, laughing, "but just something betwixt and between. Well, I do hope Cousin Norman will be easy to get on with."

Mother looked at me seriously, so that I blushed to the eyes, for I knew her thoughts had turned where Otto's had gone.

"I hope so," she answered slowly. "But to be easy to get on with is not everything. I don't think either father or I would be willing that Norman should come inside our home if we could not trust that our children would never think of letting anybody into the inside of their own lives who did not bring God in along with them. I'm sure, Sophy, that your father's daughter ought to know the value of a real good man, and to have no favour for any other sort."

So a day or two went by, and we began to look for Norman by every train that came into Clitheroe. Willie even walked in to meet one or two. But instead of Norman himself a letter arrived—a very smart letter, with a gilt monogram on the flap, the like of which I had never seen before. I had gone to the post that day, so I had plenty of time to admire it as I walked home from Baskerville. I guessed it was from Cousin Norman, because of the postmark. It was addressed to father, of course. So we called

him in from the barn to read it and give us the news, —we, standing round, watching him. As he read his face grew troubled and dark.

“I hope the lad’s not taken ill in the strange place,” said my mother anxiously; “or one of us must go to him at once.”

“Oh no, never fear! he’s well enough in body,” answered my father, rather sternly. “But he says he had a nasty voyage, and as he expects he’s to have a pretty hard, rough time with us, he thinks he’ll take a week or two of holiday before he attempts to settle down. I’m afraid he’s a bad lot. Maria, I think I’ll write and tell him that if that’s his spirit he’d better not come here at all.”

“No, no, don’t do that!” said my mother; “he may quite deserve it, and it might teach him a lesson; but if you did it, you’d wish afterwards that you hadn’t — you’d blame yourself. I know you would be the first to do so. Just like a doctor who cuts off a limb to save a patient, and then thinks he ought to have been able to save the patient and the limb too.”

“He’s staying at the River House, the young spendthrift!” observed my father, looking at the heading of the letter. “The lowest charge there is two dollars a day.”

“Well, at least it’s a respectable, high-class place,” pleaded my mother. “Likely he has been recommended to it by some passenger whom he felt he could

trust. Looking about for cheapness, the boy might have got into some disreputable hotel."

"Not if he'd a head screwed on his shoulders," observed my father; "for he could have got advices—at least as good as any passenger's—from the steamer's engineer or head steward."

"Now I think of it," said my mother, "it is rather a pity that you or I did not go down to meet the steamer, for that would have saved him from meeting this temptation and yielding to it."

My father reflected for a moment, silently shaking his head. Then he answered,—

"No, it is best as it is. He did not arrive a friendless lad, with no way open to him. My letter made his path straight. It's his own will that has turned aside. There's no fencing in a soul. When the prodigal wanted to leave his father's house, the father did not lock him in. The father did not even fetch him home. The father had the patient love that would wait and watch till the son came back of his own accord."

I think mother felt that Norman's foolish behaviour hurt my father more than it did her. All that day my father looked very stern, and spoke in short sentences, like a commander on a battlefield. Whenever father got that look and manner, mother always spoke to him in a gentle, cheery way we would take with one who had met with some cruel accident. She knew his heart was wounded. He cared so much

for people that it cut him like a knife when he found them foolish or wicked.

Father occupied himself planning and preparing work to put Norman upon the moment he should arrive.

"It's plain he has got the idle hands which Satan always finds work for," said father; "and Satan is in Baskerville as well as in all the rest of the world."

Day after day passed by—a whole week was gone. I had had again to sweep out and rub up the bedroom which had never yet been occupied. And still no Norman came. At last, early one Monday morning, a boy walked over from the post-office with a telegram for father.

"I suppose it is Norman sending word he is to put in his appearance to-day," said father. But he pondered over the telegram a great deal longer than it could have taken to read it, and then he gave a kind of groan and handed it to mother.

The telegram did not come from Norman. It came from the proprietor of the River House. It said,—

"Is your relative Padgett with you? Been gone from here two days. Luggage remains. Alarmed."

We all looked at each other.

"What can have happened?" whispered mother.

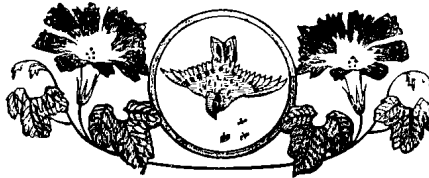
"A man of twenty can't lose himself in Montreal," said Otto Hermann.

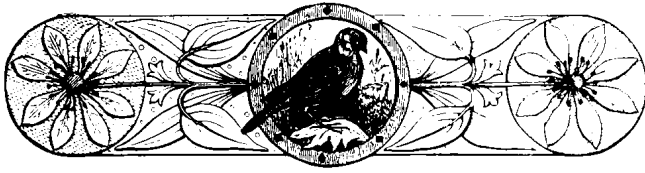
“Not unless he wants to,” put in brother Will, who had once played truant.

“People don’t run away from their luggage,” I remarked.

There was a strange look on father’s face—what was it? Something we had never seen before—a look of horror!

“Idle people get into bad company,” he said. “And to those who are in bad company anything may happen! Maria, I must go to Montreal at once. I shall be in time to catch the first train up.”





Chapter 4

A STEP AT MIDNIGHT

FATHER could only catch his train by a great scramble. While he put on his Sunday clothes, mother and I gathered a few necessaries in case he should be detained,—and Otto got out the horse and buggy. Mother put on her bonnet to accompany him. I think she had some last words to say, for which there had been no time during the hurried preparations. Father told Willie he might stay from school and walk down the road and meet mother coming back. Not that she could not drive as well as anybody, and often did so. But I fancy that day father did not like to think of her as left alone. It was a great matter for him to leave her at all. Father and mother were stay-at-home folks, who did not go about pleasuring, but found enough pleasure at home. As I watched them drive away, I could not help thinking that it would be long indeed ere

they would have dreamed of giving themselves such an outing. That's the way of it. Those who don't go out to see the world for their amusement often see as much of it from the path of duty.

In less than two hours mother came driving back with Willie. Yet somehow it seemed as if she had been gone a long while, and to a great distance; something quite different from those other occasions, when she drove in to Clitheroe to do some shopping, or to call on our member's wife. I suppose this was because her thoughts had really been so very far from our home and all its interests. It seems as if souls have a distance and a time of their own. I welcomed her as I might have done had she been across the Atlantic.

Father had told mother to what his fears pointed, and she confided this to me in the evening, as she sat resting in the rocking-chair. Father said that by Mrs. Padgett's letter it seemed as if Norman had at least sixty or seventy sovereigns with him, a very foolish way of travelling. Father thought that he might have let some of his fellow-travellers on the steamer know of this treasure, and that it was possible they had kept their eye on him after his landing, and had found some way of enticing him among them, and had perhaps murdered him, if they failed to rob him otherwise.

"But Norman travelled first-class," I exclaimed.

"So I said to your father," mother answered.

“But father said, so much the worse: that the worst human hawks generally go first-class, because the plumpest human pigeons are there too. He says he has heard there are people who actually go to and fro on some of these ocean steamers for the sake of what they can get on the voyage. There is terrible drinking, and betting, and gambling, and all sorts of wicked talk in the steamer smoking-rooms. Father said he once met a head-steward who told him a great deal about all this.”

“But ought not the captains and officers to put a stop to such things?” I asked.

Mother shook her head sadly.

“The steward said that some of them try to use a good influence, and to warn the silly and overawe the evil. But most of them take no notice, thinking their only business is to bring all safe to port. And a few are bad enough themselves.”

“It might have actually been better if Norman had been in the steerage,” I said.

Mother still shook her head.

“Father says that the steward said, that anybody who has not seen the steerage of a big line steamer can never imagine what it is like: and that he was always filled with great pity for the decent folk who were there, mixed up with the vilest riff-raff, and unable to get any seclusion from them by day or by night. The steward said that the first-class is all right for those who want to be right; but in the

steerage one just has to live among corruption and yet strive to keep oneself pure. As for the second-class, it is generally very limited, and the steward said there was no averaging it. Sometimes it was, as regarded company, better than the first-class, and at other times it was even worse than the steerage.

“Father says that if he was sending a boy from the old country to travel alone out here,” mother continued, “he should try to get a personal introduction to the skipper of some good sailing ship, and persuade him to take him in his cabin. Where time’s of value, folks must go in steamers, but such lad’s time is seldom worth much! Norman Padgett had better have been still tossing on the ocean than getting himself lost in Montreal!”

How ghastly it all seemed. Of course I had read in the newspapers of murders and deeds of wickedness, but what a difference it makes when somebody belonging to ourselves might be their victim! We never talked much of such things in our house, because mother always said we should keep the good side of life uppermost; but we had sometimes taken a little interest in cases where the mystery was great, or there might be some doubt of the guilt of the accused. But then the people concerned had always seemed to belong to a different order of beings from ourselves, and to live in another sort of world. There was little of the kind of sin which is public crime, even in Clitheroe, none in Baskerville. We had no tragedies

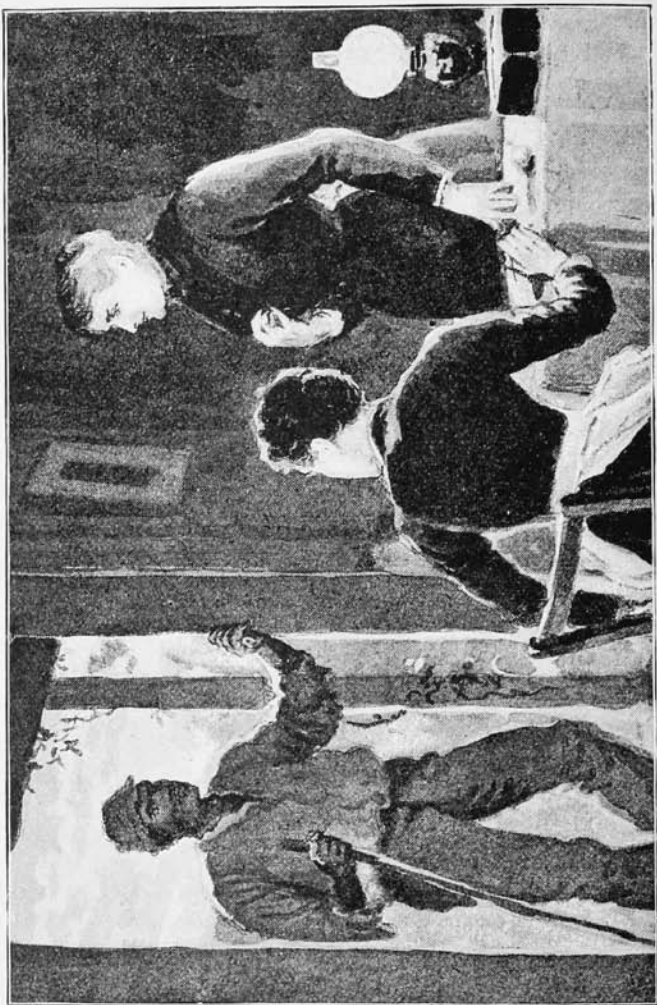
—a crazy woman had once tried to throw herself off the bridge—that was all. And the most dangerous people we knew were some of the tramps who came along and begged for a meal or a night's lodging. We sometimes worked ourselves up into a little fear of these people, repeating a story we had heard of one who, having been refused his request for shelter, had asked only "for a box of matches, that he might light a fire for himself," and had presently left a burning barn behind him. Long ago, when I was a tiny child, two men had arrived late one night, and of appearance so sinister, that father, who would not refuse them a bed, had loaded his old horse pistol and watched all night in the kitchen. But next morning they had proved to be decent fellows, willing to give a day's work for what they had received. So with most of these tramps; indeed we looked for some on their regular round: an old German who carried a peep-show, and a widow woman who was clever at making and mending men's clothes. And now we, the respected family at Sherlett's farm, might presently find ourselves on the edge of a horror which might ring across the world! The thought made my flesh creep! I stole up to mother's chair and put my hand upon it. She understood the gesture, for she looked up at once with the sort of smile folks give when they resolutely shake off an anxiety, and she said:—

"I can't believe anything very bad has happened!

We won't think so till we must. I've so often noticed that just when people take alarm things come right and get explained. By the time your father reaches the River House I should not wonder if he finds Norman there before him. And he'll bring him here right away. Father said he wouldn't stop for anything. If he can catch the cars that pass through Clitheroe soon after midnight, he'll do it, and walk on here."

Otto and Willie both felt sure that everything would be all right. The day wore away wearily enough, though it was a great help that the cows had to be milked and the garden watered. How people who have no work to do get through their times of trouble I never can understand. We had supper later than usual, and sat longer over it. Indeed Willie fell asleep in his chair. Then mother insisted that he and Otto should both go to bed, because they should be fresh in the morning, as the next day's work would all fall upon them. She and I would sit up; at least, she would rest herself on the big kitchen settle, where father sometimes took an afternoon nap, and I could occupy myself with the crochet strip I was working for the fine white aprons I wore on high occasions.

The day had been sultry, and the kitchen was still so warm that we fearlessly set one of the doors wide open. It was a glorious night, the barns and the trees stood forth clearly in the flood of moonlight



(Page 41.)

A stumbling step on the verandah, and a figure with a darkened face stood in the doorway.

The posts of the verandah cast sharp shadows on its floor, where Shag lay with his nose resting on his outstretched paws. The moonbeams stole among the plants in the windows, and crept up the kitchen wall. The little lamp on the table made a circle of soft yellow light, by which I worked. Mother uttered a few sleepy remarks. Then there was silence for a long while.

Suddenly mother started up, wide awake. There was a sound. What was it?

It seemed like weary feet dragging themselves somewhat uncertainly along the plank walk towards the house.

Could that be father? There was not more than one person. Shag started up and gave a low growl. He would have barked welcome to his master. Ah, and it was not yet time for the cars to have reached Clitheroe!

"Shag, come here," I cried, and the good dog came; for if we needed his protection it was best to keep him near us. Otto and Willie in their room upstairs already seemed so far away!

A stumbling step on the verandah, and a figure with a darkened face stood in the doorway.





Chapter 5

THE DARKENED FACE

SHAG'S growl lowered. For one moment there was a dead silence, while mother and I gazed at the mysterious apparition with this face which we could not clearly discern!

Then the figure in the doorway spoke.

It said, "Will you give me some water to drink, and will you tell me if there is anywhere I may lie down?"

The accents had something strange about them. But the voice was youthful, and would have been pleasant only that it was faint and worn with seeming weakness and weariness.

Canadian women never resist such an appeal as this, let what may be hidden behind it. That must be faced afterwards. Otto and Willie did not seem so *very* far off now.

Mother had risen from her couch.

"Come forward into the room," she said, quite

kindly. It might have been the invitation of sheer hospitality, or the desire to see more of that darkened face—the kindest word and the wisest word are so often one and the same !

The stranger came forward at once, but slowly, as if the feet could be scarcely dragged across the floor. As he came into the radius of the lamp-light, we saw he was a tall, slight boy of about sixteen, clad in a blue cotton shirt and grey trousers. As he advanced he hastily removed a shapeless hat with little brim, and the shadowy face stood revealed as that of a young mulatto.

Now we seldom saw negroes in our neighbourhood. There was one, a simple, honest soul, who made his dwelling in Clitheroe, and dealt in old iron, so that most of our farmers did business with him when they disposed of their worn implements. He was a widower, and had a clever little daughter, whom he had brought up carefully and who now kept his house for him, and kept it neat and bright as a new pin, and owned such a beautiful voice that she was in much request at Clitheroe concerts, and at church social meetings all down the line. I had heard father say how wonderfully Mr. Setebos had got on, considering that he had been born a slave, for he was now as far ahead as most folks. We must have seen other negroes sometimes, carters and labouring men going about their work. Certainly we had no fear of them. The “tramp” of our household stories

was always an idle white vagabond, who had left the "old country" for its good, and come out to Canada greatly to its injury. When I saw that the stranger's black face was of God's own making, I softened to it at once. ("Uncle Tom's Cabin" was the first tale I had ever read. We had it on the corner shelf, with its back rubbed away by much usage.)

I stepped aside into the cook-kitchen (that's what we call the room where we do kitchen-work), and I brought back a tin can.

"It has been such a hot day," I said, "that I reckon the water standing in the house isn't of much account. You'll find a well among the trees by the gate. You can take this and draw some water fresh for yourself."

"When you bring in the can you'll hear about the sleeping-place," said mother. "You'll have to give a hard tug at the well, for the water's pretty low."

Thus, still with perfect kindness, mother gained a moment to reflect and reconnoitre. The lad thanked us, took the can and went off. We followed him to the door, and watched from the verandah. There was nobody lurking in ambush outside. The barn and the stables lay in the moonlight, their fronts offering no shadowy corners in which mischief might be hidden. The moonbeams penetrated to the rough grass under the maples and poplars about the gate. There was nobody there but the stranger

himself, and we could see him quite distinctly, labouring along, as if he moved only with great difficulty. His was no "tramp's limp," which disappears when watching eyes are unsuspected.

"It's likely he is as hungry as he's thirsty," remarked mother.

At that moment we heard the sound of the night train rushing on its onward way, after its pause at Clitheroe Station.

"Father himself will be here soon now," said mother; adding, with a little sigh, "that is, if he's coming home to-night."

We watched the boy fill the can and drink long. As he approached, on his return, we went into the house. He followed, but paused on the verandah, outside the door, as at his first arrival.

"Come in," said my mother; "you had better sit down a while; you look as if you had travelled a long way."

"I have come from Toronto since daybreak," he answered.

We both exclaimed! It seemed almost incredible to us, who seldom went on foot even as far as Clitheroe! Toronto was a trip to serve for a lifetime! I had not been there yet.

"Couldn't you get a lift by the way?" asked my mother.

He looked at us with a sort of surprise. "I did not ask for one," he replied.

"Where are you going?" inquired my mother.

He seemed confused. "I am looking for work," he said forlornly.

"Well, I should have thought you need not have come so far," observed my mother. "At this season, hands are few and work is plenty. Where did you reckon to arrive to-night?"

"I thought I'd walk as far as I could," he said; which was no answer, if one comes to think of it. But indeed mother answered herself by remarking,—

"I suppose when you saw our light you thought you might as well stop where folks are sitting up? Well, it's a good thing for you that we happen to be waiting for father, and you'd better get some of the supper we're keeping for him. Father likes hot coffee after a hard day, and I reckon you'll be none the worse for a share of it, and there's some cold meat."

At these words I went again into the cook-kitchen, and brought out a plate of food and a mug of coffee. Mother always says that our coffee is not half so strong as what people drink in the old country, but Otto Hermann (whose people came from Germany three generations back) says that mother is very extravagant in coffee, and in tea also. Otherwise, he says, she's as thrifty as his own mother, and very like her in her old-fashioned ways. Otto means that for the highest praise.

Mother bade me bring another cup and saucer, and

poured out a tiny share of coffee for herself. So she sat at table with the stranger and talked to him, getting only monosyllabic answers. His thoughts seemed elsewhere, and so I knew were hers, for each passing moment bore away a hope of father's immediate return. If he did not come, it meant that he had not found Norman Padgett, and that there was trouble ahead.

"Have you been staying in Toronto?" asked mother.

"No, oh no," he answered, in a strange, scared way. "I only got there last night in the boat from Niagara."

"Oh, so you belong to that quarter?" said mother. I think the same thought came to her and to me. It was that he might have been one of the waiters in the big hotels there; for I had heard many negroes were so employed. And this boy did not look as if he had done rough field labour. As he took his food, I noticed that his hands were small and neat, and, hungry as he was, he ate carefully.

He did not answer at once. He seemed to consider whether he should let this question pass also. Then he said, with a kind of jerk,—

"No, I belong down in Tennessee."

"Tennessee!" exclaimed my mother; "now you haven't walked from there?" There was a note of mistrust in her voice, and I think he too caught its sound.

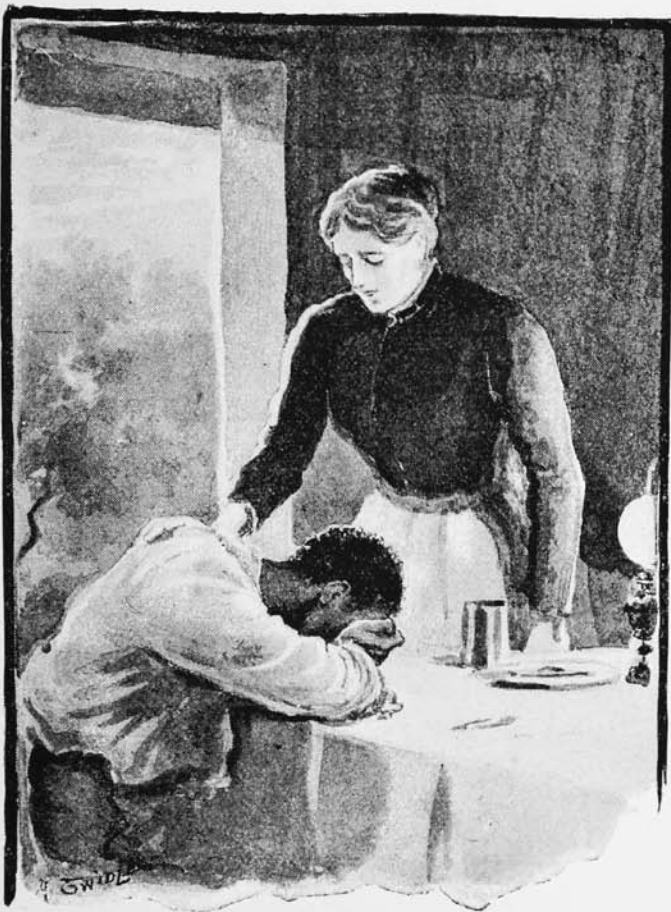
“No,” he answered promptly. “I took the cars as long as my money held out.”

Then suddenly, as if he could bear up no longer, he dropped his head on his hands, and broke into a terrible quiet weeping. It frightened me. I had never seen such a thing before. Tears never overflowed father’s eyes, and as for Willie, he never cried, he only sometimes roared!

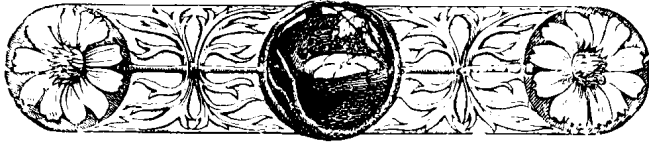
Mother got up and went over to the lad, and put her hand on his shoulder.

“You’ve got some sort of a sad story in your heart,” she said. “There’s a good deal of sin mixed up in most sad stories; but the sufferers aren’t always the wrongdoers. I’m not going to ask you what it is; you’ve got no sort of call to tell anything; you’ll tell me when you choose. You’ve had food, and now you must get some rest, and maybe, to-morrow——”





"You've got some sort of a sad story in your heart." (Page 48.)



Chapter 6

A TERRIBLE STORY

“ I’LL tell you now—at once !” cried the stranger-lad, looking up at mother with streaming eyes. “ The white folks down our way have hanged my brother on a lamp-post because they said he fired at a man who abused and insulted him every day. I know Jem didn’t do it, for he was at home, working, and I was in the house with him when that shot was fired.”

“ Was the man killed ?” asked mother, with her hand still on the boy’s shoulder.

“ No, he wasn’t even touched. Nobody was a bit the worse ; but that didn’t matter,” said the boy bitterly. “ Why ! Jem never had firearms !”

“ Didn’t the man see who fired at him ?” mother inquired.

“ The man himself swore it was Jem,” returned the boy. “ He said he knew my brother had a spite at him ! And the white folks would have it it was my

brother, because they knew the good reason Jem had to hate the man !”

“ Wouldn’t they believe you ? ” questioned mother.

“ They never asked me. I’d gone out to the creek to fish before the mob came after Jem,” he said. “ Neither Jem nor me had even heard of the shooting. While I was down by the water, I heard a riot in the town—yelling, and pistols firing. But there are often such rows at the low drinking dives. I did not suppose it had anything to do with us till I saw two friends of mine running towards me ; and they said I mustn’t go back, for my brother’s body was swinging in front of our house, and the mob were ready to do the same to me.”

“ How did you get a start ahead from them ? ” asked mother.

“ We three went as far down into the swamp as we could, and waited there till nightfall. I had a little money with me, and they gave me all they had, and one of them was taking home a scholarship ! Then they went back and I came away, and after walking two days I got on a crowded Jim-Crow car, and then came on and on till I got to Niagara.”

“ But this is a terrible story ! ” cried mother.

“ I said to my friends I’d come right away to Canada,” the boy went on. “ I don’t feel like wanting to see any more Americans.”

“ I cannot be astonished at that,” said mother. “ But dear, dear ! I know I’ve read some terrible

things in the papers lately, which have made me wonder. Only the people who were killed in this summary way always seemed to be guilty of horrid crimes."

"Ah, that's the worst wickedness of all!" cried the boy, with a sudden vehemence. "They report the poor wretches whom they lynch as if they were really proved guilty of whatever crime they see fit to accuse them of. Why, anybody may be accused of anything, without any reason! If they believed my brother Jem to be guilty of attempted murder, why could not they wait for a proper trial to prove his guilt? They knew it could not have been done. No fear of the law letting a 'nigger' escape the worst punishment that he really deserves!"

"Why, by what you say, it seems as if matters down there are not much better than in the old slavery days!" said mother.

"They don't think we black folks are men now any more than they did then," answered the boy, his scared, subdued manner lost in a strange, white-heat fierceness, his thin brown fingers spreading and clenching nervously as he spoke. "They don't think we've got souls nor feelings like white folk. They reckon we've no right to live but as their beasts of burden. They taunt us because so many of us are poor and low. But if any of us rise and do well, they hate us worst of all."

"What is your name?" asked mother.

“Lewis Tynson,” he answered simply.

“Have you parents living?” she questioned.

“No, they’re both dead,” said the boy. “I scarcely remember them. It was Jem who brought me up,” he added pitifully. “Jem was as good a brother as —as there can be. He gave me the best schooling he could get, though he’d had little himself. He meant me for a teacher among our folks. He was sort of set on me. But that’s all over, and I’ll do anything now to earn a dollar, so I can keep away from those Southern hoodlums. I’d get real wicked if I stayed there.”

“You must rest now,” observed my mother. She looked towards me, as if she half wished we could consult together. But she came to her own conclusion. “It’s plain father isn’t to get home to-night,” she said. “He might have brought somebody else with him. So we’d got a room ready, and you may as well have it.”

I lit one of the little kerosene lamps, and mother took him to the room. As she opened the door it looked such a sweet little nest. We had thought how strange it was to prepare it for Norman Padgett, whom we had never seen. But we had verily prepared it for a stranger indeed!

“I’ve not been in a bedroom since the last night Jem and I shared ours,” said the boy wistfully.

“Well,” answered my mother, in her gentle, even tones, “may God give you a sound sleep and peace-

ful dreams. Do you see that picture on the wall?" she asked rather suddenly, as a thought struck her. "When you have closed your door, go and look at it and read what is printed under it. Good-night. God bless you!"

I knew what that picture was. It was an old-fashioned print of the death of Abel, with Cain standing over the dead body, and under it were these words:—

"It is better to be Abel than Cain."





Chapter 7

THE UNEXPECTED

MOTHER came back to the kitchen and put her arm about me.

“Let me sleep with you to-night,” I pleaded ; “ I know you’ll be lonely. You made so sure father would come.”

“ I’m grieved because father must be having more trouble about Norman,” she said.

She let me have my way, and I was glad ; for I did not think either of us would go to sleep very soon, and I had a girl’s longing to talk over the adventure of the last hour. I rather wondered at my mother letting this travel-stained, footsore stranger into that pretty bedroom with its pillow shams, embroidered with cherubs’ heads, and its white knitted quilts. I could not help thinking that a clean blanket and a shakedown in the cook-kitchen, or on the verandah, was as much as he could have expected.

“ I should not wonder if he never slept in such a nice place before,” were my opening words.

“All the more reason that he should sleep in it now,” said my mother.

“But we don’t know anything about him ; we can’t be sure that what he says is true ; he may be an idle scamp, or even a thief, after all,” I went on.

“Nothing we know of Norman Padgett is to his credit. Indeed, we can be sure that he is idle and troublesome, yet we got that room ready for him,” answered my mother, with an emphasis on her pronouns.

“But Norman is father’s nephew, anyhow,” I said.

“And, anyhow, this lad is one of our Father’s children,” returned mother. “It is strange how most of us think that it is meet to offer softer treatment to a relation of our own, whom we know to be unworthy, than to others for whom God cares and whom we might help, against whom we know nothing.”

“Well, that is true enough, I can see,” I admitted ; “but this boy seems to have been through so much that he would have surely been thankful for very little.”

“Ah, child,” said my mother, “that’s the world’s reasoning all over. Dear, dear, it’s strange how human nature is the same everywhere. For I mind of somebody saying to my mother just what you’re saying to me now, and she answered with the old Scot’s proverb, ‘Wee Jock gets the wee dish, and that keeps him lang wee.’ And if you begin there, Sophy, by giving but little to those who expect but little, you

may end, as the world often does, by wronging and hurting them, because that won't much surprise them, since they've been wronged and hurt so often."

I took my reproof, and remarked,—

"It is so strange that this boy should come here just when we were expecting Norman."

"Sometimes the one who comes unexpected is the one who is sent," observed mother.

"Can you really believe this story about the brother's hanging?" I asked.

"I've seen stories in the papers not unlike it," mother answered. "Only things take such little hold of us while they come to us only in words and not in real folks. And, seems to me, if one comes to think a little, that this state of things is only likely. It just brings home God's old complaint against us, 'My people will not consider.' For, don't you see, Sophy, the poor negroes, when they were freed, were left, penniless and helpless, among their former masters, who, according to the workings of the old Adam in the human heart, would be very likely to hate them, both as the cause of their ruin and defeat, and because they could be no longer used solely for the white folks' profit."

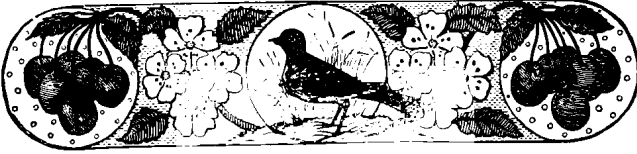
"Then is it of no use that slavery was done away with?" I asked.

"Ah!" said mother, "that's where the trouble is, child. One may think one can put an end to any evil under the sun, but until it is really got out of the

human heart by the grace of God, it will spring up again rank as ever, only perhaps under a new name, and with a new lease of life."

Now, if that be so, it shows plainly that better work is done by those who win even one heart to let God right into it for ever, than by those other good folks of whom we hear so much more—who get a bad law altered or a good new law brought in. Yet we do hear so much more about these than about those! Indeed, I think we seldom hear of the former at all. I suppose they themselves don't always know what they have done. Perhaps they find out in the long years of eternity. They may get their reward then. It seems as if God's ways are generally so quiet and gradual. Is that the meaning of the text which says, "One day with Him is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"? I notice mother always repeats that text when she is disappointed or puzzled. She seems to find a heap of strength and soothing in it.

I lay thinking out this till mother said suddenly, "Now we must go to sleep, for we've kept late hours, but we've got to be up in the morning bright and early. I don't suppose that poor lad will wake too soon; and we should be astir first to let Otto and Willie understand who he is and all about him before they see him."



Chapter 8

OTTO IS MYSTERIOUS

I WAS so tired out that when I woke next morning it was quite late. Without my hearing her, mother had already risen and left the bedroom. I could hear her voice speaking in the verandah to somebody, who answered briefly and in a low tone, and whom I rightly supposed to be the stranger.

Ashamed to be such a lie-abed, I dressed as quickly as possible, and went into the kitchen. Breakfast was already set, with cups and plates for five. Willie was washing his hands at the sink in the cook-kitchen. Mother came in from the verandah, the stranger following her.

“Though Lewis Tynson came so unexpected last night he is going to stay with us a bit,” she said, in her easy, pleasant manner; “for he wants work, and with father away we are short-handed enough. Take



I walked down the verandah to an opening in the garden trees. (Page 63.)

your seat with us, Lewis. Ring the bell for Otto," she directed me.*

I went into the verandah, and swung the bell sharply many times. No Otto appeared. I walked down the verandah to an opening in the garden trees, through which I could see far across our fields. There was Otto in the distance. I swung the bell again, more vigorously than ever. Otto turned and waved his hand towards me, signifying that he heard ; but he went on with whatever he was doing, and showed no sign of obeying the summons. So there was nothing more for me to do but leave him where he was, and return into the house.

Lewis Tynson was very silent during our meal: yet he seemed to notice everything that went on, and he helped mother and me in our little offices so quickly that Willie had no chance. This struck me especially because, though Willie and Otto Hermann

* It may be necessary to explain that in Canadian farmhouses the custom is that the hired men and the women household-helpers sit at table with the farmer's family. These hired men and helps are usually the sons and daughters of other farmers, who have not enough work for all their family at home. In any difference in manners or education which may exist between these people and their employers, the advantage is as often on the one side as on the other. There being no "second table," any casual helper is naturally invited to join the general meal, during which he finds his own level, according to his personal and social graces and capacities. The same rule prevailed in England in the olden time.

are always ready enough to be useful at home, yet if they were away among strangers, as this boy was, I knew they would be so shy and awkward as to seem quite rude. I've often noticed it so, and have scolded Willie and laughed at Otto.

Just as breakfast was over, Otto came in. But he sat down beside the door, and said his food could wait till we had had our Bible reading. Mother opened the Book where father's marker was put, at the chapter which came in the regular course. But if she had chosen it for the occasion it could not have been more apt. I've often seen that in things which are taken just in their ordinary place. Sometimes they are only too pat to the purpose—far more pat than one would care to make them—so that one may be thought too personal when really one has not meddled in the matter!

To-day it did not go too near to what must have been in the thoughts of some of us: yet it went just near enough. It was the fifth chapter of Nehemiah, showing how a people may be redeemed from one kind of captivity only to fall into another. The great beauty of it lies in the light in which it sets the character of Nehemiah. How swift he was to see new evils and to denounce them, and to practise himself all that he preached to others. When the troubles and puzzles of life darken one's faith in God, I suppose there's nothing so good for one as the sight of a true man or woman; I've heard father say

so. It is as if a person got suddenly shut in a room, with no window except one high above his head, so that he may be tempted to say there is no sun and no beautiful country outside! Then all of a sudden a looking-glass is held up in front of him, in such a way as to reflect the sunshine and a bit of the fields or sea. Then he can't deny them any more, but he begins to think it may be worth while to try and climb up to the window, and get a look at the real thing.

Mother gave Willie the chapter to read. I've heard father say that all good people are God's missionaries, and I could not help thinking that Nehemiah, dead all those centuries ago, was one of God's missionaries to Lewis Tynson; for while he was listening to that reading (though Willie did not read with much expression) Lewis' face lost its hunted, suspicious look, though I own it came back again afterwards.

Mother asked Otto to offer prayer. That's mother's way. There's few things she can't do as well as any man, but she always gives place to a man if there's one to the fore. I think one may carry this too far. I've said so to mother. She says there's no fear of that now-a-days. Women are only too inclined to go too far the other way!

I'd heard Otto pray before—once when father had gone to bed with a headache, and once when father was kept late out at an election. There had been nothing strange then about Otto's praying. He had

done it just as most people do, asking forgiveness for all our sins generally, and returning thanks for all mercies, and putting in a petition for the good guidance of the Government.

But to-day something was different. I knew it the moment I heard Otto's voice. Between every sentence he hesitated, as if he feared to say one word he did not mean. Two or three times he faltered. And one felt all the while as if he was talking to Somebody really in the room, Somebody whom he loved and whose love he trusted, yet whom he felt that he had somehow offended and hurt. He prayed that we might know ourselves ; that our secret sins might be brought into our sight ; and that even in our repentance we might be kept humble, lest it grow partly from other motives than the fear and love of God. He thanked God for good friends, and for all influences that set for us higher standards than those we had had before. He prayed for those gone astray, and for the troubled and the wronged. I fear he actually forgot all about the Government.

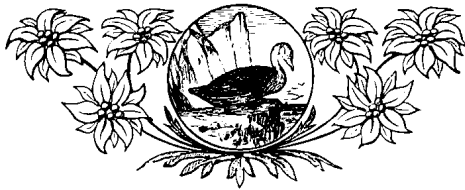
He snatched his belated breakfast very hastily, and then he and Willie and Lewis went off together. Lewis owned that he did not know anything about farm work. Till the last few weeks he had been nothing but a schoolboy ; and his poor dead brother having been a carpenter in that cruel little southern city, he had not even picked up anything of agriculture in the holidays. But Otto said he did not doubt he

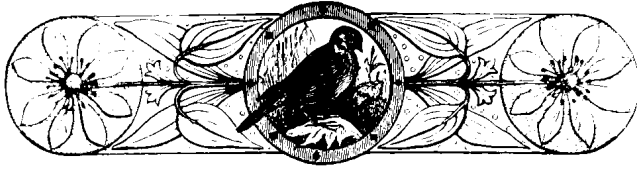
could take up the easy work father had got planned, and besides, among the duties of two or three people there are sure to be plenty of odd jobs for any hands that are willing.

As they went away, Otto, who had lingered a minute behind the others, said something to me which puzzled me very much. Somehow I felt as if he meant it for my ears only, so I did not at once repeat it to mother.

Said he, "To-day I know how the born and bred cannibals feel, when they first discover it is not the right thing to eat human flesh!"

What he could possibly mean by that speech I could not imagine. It gave me something to think of while I walked to the post. That duty fell to my share to-day. The morning train had come in, and still no father: so we were quite sure there would be a letter waiting for us.





Chapter 9

OUR NEIGHBOURS

IT was a very pleasant walk into Baskerville. I think I liked it only the better because I knew it so well. For the way to the post was also the way to church and to the blacksmith's and the store. Indeed this was the direction which I took nearly every time I walked out. For Clitheroe, lying the opposite way, was a longer journey off, and we generally drove there.

Almost the whole length of the road was flanked by trees, and the little plank footway ran between tall grasses and wild flowers. I knew the dwellers in most of the scattered wayside houses, so that one could pause and exchange a few friendly words if anybody was in sight. At nearly all the houses I occasionally stepped in to borrow a pattern, or to ask after an old grandmother, or to see the new baby.

Between Sherlett's farm and our church there were

only two houses where I did not visit. These were both under the same ban, though in quite a different way. For the one was the untidy, tumble-down shanty of Tom Magrath, our local drunkard and loafer, and the other was the grand house—the grandest in the place—belonging to the Gossetts, who had made their money in a drinking saloon in Toronto. The folk in our neighbourhood were mostly temperance people, and looked askance at the Gossetts' gay dresses and smart buggy, and they held rather aloof from the family. The Gossetts possibly thought, on their side, that their idleness and luxury raised them above plainer and hard-working people. They did not attend the little church at Baskerville, but occasionally (folks said when they had new dresses) they drove over to service at Clitheroe.

The Gossett and Magrath houses were within sight of each other, but on different sides of the road. It was said that old Gossett always wanted to buy the Magrath lot, because it was such an eyesore. Truly enough it was a forlorn place. The wooden path in front was broken, so that one had to step carefully over gaps. The fence was repaired with an old rope: the garden was overrun with weeds: and, worst of all, Magrath himself lolled over the gate with a pipe in his mouth, looking as if he had been neither clean nor sober for a month past.

There would often have been lack of bread in that house, but that the poor, miserable-looking wife was

ready to turn her hand to anything. As I went on, past the Gossett mansion, where the daughters were lolling in their verandah in stylish morning wraps, I could see Mrs. Magrath grubbing in the Gossett potato patch. The Gossetts often hired her on such chores for a few cents—less than other people would have taken. She was glad of what she could get. As father says, that's the way in which men like Tom Magrath injure other working folk. Their sins create the bitter poverty that is easily ground down, and always tends to drag others to its own level of misery.

I was not disappointed in getting the expected letter from father. Of course, all the neighbours had heard that we were looking for a young relative from England, but now the postmaster's simple remark, "I suppose your father's gone to Montreal to meet his nephew?" somewhat disconcerted me. What was I to answer? What if father never found Norman? What if we were on the eve of some terrible discovery? Or what, on the other hand, if there proved to be some simple explanation of the present mystery? What could I say that should be quite true and yet that should not divulge more than was necessary? I could only stammer out,—

"Father has had to go to Montreal; we don't know whether he will be kept there long."

I felt the colour hot in my face, and the postmaster looked at me shrewdly. But he was too busy and too public a man to pursue the subject; and this



The postmaster's simple remark somewhat disconcerted me. (Page 70.)

escape warned me to beware of falling into the power of more pressing and personal acquaintances.

So all the way home I had to dodge to and fro across the road to keep on the side farthest from those houses where I was most intimate. It brought to my heart what a terrible thing a family "skeleton" must be; how it must shut off friendship and neighbourliness, and breed slyness and suspicion. Oh, dear, dear, when anything goes wrong anywhere, how much it has to be answerable for!

There was Louisa Van Droot waving to me from the verandah of the little house where she lived with her old mother—one of our earliest settlers. We Sherletts have a great respect for the Van Droots. The old lady has been through so much. She came here with her husband when wolves used to gather howling round their shanty, and she brought up fourteen children and never had any hired help. She lives in great comfort now on the interest of small mortgages which Van Droot gave her before his death on the farms in which he had started their sons. Louisa is the one unmarried child, and will never leave her mother. They are very kind, good people, and, having no cares or troubles of their own, take a great deal of real interest in their acquaintances. I knew that if I stopped to speak to Louisa she would be sure to make all sorts of inquiries about the cousin's coming, with the hospitable view of getting up a little party to meet him! Therefore I would not be

tempted to pause and cross over even when she made gestures to attract my attention to a stand of geraniums in a perfect blaze of blossom. I made responsive gestures that I was in a great hurry. So Louisa kissed her hand to me and went into the house. It is not to be wondered at if she said to her mother that the little Sherlett girl was a saucy monkey, making herself of so much importance! That is the way one gets misunderstood.

I got back to the farm without having to speak to anybody, and there mother and I read father's letter.





Chapter 10

TWO POSSIBILITIES

DOESN'T it seem an odd thing to say?—but this was the very first letter from father which I had ever seen!—I, a grown-up young woman! You see, he had never been far away from home,—and neither had I.

Father began his letter by writing that now he distinctly saw he could not possibly return home yet. He and the master of the River House had judged it best to put the matter of Norman's disappearance into the hands of the police. With them he had looked through the young man's luggage, which was all in good order, looking as if little of it had ever been touched since it had been packed, probably by his poor mother, on the other side. Only they found no traces of money, and no papers of any kind—only clothing ("a great deal too fine, and far too much of it," wrote father), and two or three books, among them a new Bible.

The police considered that these signs meant that Norman's absence was voluntary. Yet, on the other hand, they admitted that it was quite possible he had been in the habit of carrying his cash and valuables with him, and that this might have been the very cause of his destruction.

Father added that he was sorry to have proved that Norman had not kept the best of company. The hotel people had noticed that one or two young men of very fast speech and manners had called for him once or twice, and he had gone out with them. On one occasion they had thought he was the worse for drink when he returned.

Father had found that the steamer in which Norman had come over was still in dock, and inquiries had been made there. It was thought that the description of one of the men who had called for Norman at the hotel tallied with that of one of his fellow-travellers, who had attracted unfavourable notice on shipboard owing to the especially bad quality of his language and habits. Nothing was known of this man except the name John Wright, which the stewards had believed to be an alias. They said this John Wright seemed to have plenty of money and grand luggage. An old lady, weeping bitterly, had seen him on board at Liverpool. The special efforts of the police were directed to trace this man, who seemed to have disappeared along with Norman! All this mere suspicion still left the two possibilities open,—Norman

might have gone away, being in bad company, or, being in bad company, he might have been made away with. The thing that was troubling father most of all was the thought of having to write to his cousin Madge, and tell her that her son was lost.

Father added in a postscript that the police were going to advertise Norman as missing.

Then that put an end to any possibility of keeping our trouble to ourselves! I must say this almost seemed a relief!

“And if after all Norman is found?” I asked; “what will he do then? Surely he will be ashamed to show his face.”

Mother drew a long breath. “Well,” she said, “I’ve noticed that the people who do this kind of thing are seldom half so ashamed of it as the people who only suffer for it.”

“Don’t you notice how all that has been found out about Norman is exactly like what father said to you, mother?” I remarked eagerly, adding, with daughterly pride, “Why, father might set up for a prophet!”

Mother smiled sadly. “Ah, Sophy,” she said, “has it never yet struck you that the book of Proverbs—oh, and many other proverbs too, outside Scripture, are just prophecies—telling you the end from the beginning, and even a good deal, too, about the way between! There’s a deadly sameness in bad ways. For you see, Sophy, all evil has to be made out of

self, and self is a poor little narrow thing, uncommonly the same all the world over! Goodness, now, is made out of God; and where is the end of Him? His ways are as varied as His works."

Of course, mother and I told Otto and Willie all the news from father's letter. That is to say, we told them there was no news at all, but only more bewilderment. I remembered afterwards that we did not say much about it before Lewis. Not that our silence was intentional, but we had a family habit of trying to keep any worries away from our meals. That was one of mother's ways. She said we did not let dead flies get into our dishes. Her favourite pun was that the best digestive sauce was made out of "merry thoughts." And all those following days we women saw very little of Lewis, except at table. He went a good deal to his room, and after work was done he hurried out alone. But he heard from Otto that "the boss" was likely to be away longer than we had thought. Mother said it was well for us that Lewis had come to help us. He was still in the clothes he had tramped with, except that mother had given him a clean shirt.

He had brushed himself up, and repaired his shoes, and made himself wonderfully neat, but mother said to him pleasantly "that we must think about some sort of rig-out for him for Sundays."

Lewis looked up with a strange expression on his face, which one could not easily describe—it seemed

half pride, part defiance and part deprecation. "If you will lend me half a dollar for a telegram," he said, "I will soon get my box up here. I've got a box with some clothes and other things which happened to be left with a friend with whom I'd stayed. I'd plenty more at Jem's home, but they told me the mob got in there, and had a mock auction, and threw the things about, and destroyed what they didn't choose to carry off. I don't wonder you mistake me for a beggar," he said, with a slightly softened tone.

"But we know you are no beggar, anyway," answered my mother briskly, "for you are earning all you get. Yes, I'll certainly advance you the half-dollar."

"Thank you—thank you very much indeed," he replied. I felt sure that he thanked her more cordially than he would if she had given him the money. Her words gave him the best gift—his own conscious independence.

Otto drew up his chair at table next to the stranger ; we all talked about indifferent trifles, as people do when each mind is full of its own deep interest. At that meal Otto persistently kept Lewis Tynson in the talk, in which he seldom joined much. It seemed to me that mother herself took very little notice of him. I feared he might think so, and I observed that directly the meal was over he went out, despite all Otto's geniality, and resumed working. Otto and Willie stayed behind a while. And while mother

and Willie were doing something in the cook-kitchen, I seized a chance to ask Otto, in a half whisper,—

“What did you mean by what you said about knowing now how the cannibal must have felt? Surely you can’t associate heathen cannibals with this well-behaved, well-taught boy, merely because he is black. He might as well associate you with a cruel slave-trader, because you are white!”

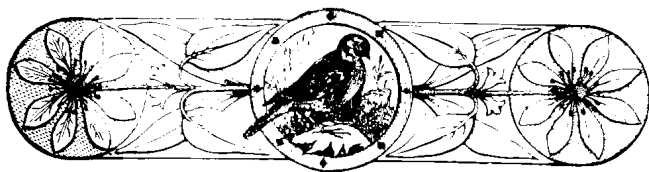
Otto gave me a peculiar look. Then he burst out laughing, and cried,—

“Well, I never would have believed that a fellow could be taken up so wrongly.”

“I suppose I’m very stupid,” I said, piqued. “But unless you were cruel enough to mean him, who else could you possibly have compared to a converted cannibal?”

“*Myself*,” said he; “who else indeed?” And he laughed,—and went off, still laughing,—leaving me more puzzled than ever.





Chapter 11

THE TRUNK ARRIVES

WHEN mother and I were talking that evening, I actually said to her,—

“Don’t you think you ought to take a little more notice of that poor boy Lewis? He doesn’t know you, and I’m afraid he’ll think you stiff and cold. Though of course we know how kindly you feel towards him.” (I had the grace to add that!)

“Thank you, child,” answered mother, a little sarcastically; “but after all I’ve lived longer than you—and may be, though I know I’ve had little hard trouble, I may still have known a sorer heart than you have had yet. There’s a time when anything hurts if it looks like pity. Why, Sophy, don’t you know, we don’t keep handling wounds or burns. First, we bind ’em up gently in something soft, and then we leave ’em to themselves for a bit to heal over. There’s a deal of good medicine both for mind and body in letting alone at the right time.”

“Well, you must know best, mother,” I owned handsomely. (How conceited youth generally is!) “But for my own part,” I said, “when anything goes wrong with me, I do like to be comforted and made much of, and it does me good, however little it may remove the real trouble.”

“Ah,” replied mother, “but that’s because you’ve always been among those whom you know love you. It’s the love that does the good. Your troubles are theirs too.”

“Oughtn’t that to be the way with all our fellow-creatures?” I asked.

“Ay,” said mother; “but then it isn’t yet, and won’t be for a while—not till God’s kingdom comes.”

“I’m sure it’s the way with you, mother,” I persisted.

“I’d like it to be the way with me, Sophy,” mother answered, smiling, “but I don’t expect strangers to accept that on trust. I’m willing to wait a while. Remember, too, child, there’s some woes and troubles which seem to pull us low and trample on us. They make us feel as if we were down in the mud, and then, though we may be thankful for a helping hand to pick us up, we wouldn’t thank anybody, spick and span and clean, to stand watching us while we shake off the dust and get rid of the mire. I think that’s how Lewis feels—and no wonder!”

I lay in my bed thinking over mother’s words, and I saw the truth in them. For instance, there was this

miserable business about Cousin Norman. It was not just the thing to fill one with family pride and satisfaction. And I felt that the people who would make it hardest to bear were those among the neighbours who would ask all sorts of questions, and profess much sympathy, and shake their heads, all the while letting us know that they looked at it as a chastisement and humiliation which might well be blessed to us. Now one would not mind telling the story to such as old Mrs. Van Droot, who had seen a good deal of "come and go" in the course of rearing her fourteen children (though they'd all turned out fairly well in the end). Mrs. Van Droot wouldn't say much. Probably she wouldn't ask one question. Nor would she throw her arms round your neck, or call you "poor dear darling." She'd most likely give a turn to the conversation and speak of ordinary things in her usual austere way. Then, likely, she'd suddenly tell you of some experience she'd been through herself, years before, and how she'd come out of it, and what she had learned by it. And looking at her, so sensible and well set up, one would feel that one could get through many queer experiences, without breaking into bits! So then one would pluck up heart and go on!

I'd noticed all this in Mrs. Van Droot, among the neighbours. The very people who were apt to say she "hadn't much sympathy" were yet always the better for her visits! "The proof of the pudding is

in the eating." I like that proverb : it gives practical experience such a pull over grand cookery books !

Then I told mother what Otto had said in the morning, "that now he knew how cannibals felt when they found it was not the right thing to eat human flesh," and how he had mystified me still more when I asked who he compared with cannibals, by answering that he meant himself! What could he be driving at?

Mother lay silently for some minutes. Then she said, with a little laugh, "I think I can guess. I believe that now I can understand Otto's face on the morning when he first saw Lewis Tynson. Don't you see," she explained, "Otto is a Pennsylvania German? His people have lived in the Northern States ever since they came from Germany. They've got all the common American ideas. He's been brought up so that he would not think of eating at the same table with a negro."

"Ah," said I, "then now I understand too! So when he noticed that we had no such feeling, he turned it over in his mind, until he found that it was not the right thing to despise and condemn any of God's children, just as the cannibals learned that they ought not to eat human flesh! But what a strange thing that Otto should have ever had such ideas—and he calling himself a Christian!"

"Well," remarked mother, "I daresay we all have some queer notions and prejudices. What signifies

is, when once we do notice them, do we own that they are just our follies and our sins, to be got rid of at any cost, or do we think they are marks of our superiority and fine taste ? ”

“ But oughtn’t Christian people to know that such notions are not Christian ? ” I persisted.

“ My dear,” said mother, “ it is not for us to judge. We ourselves may be doing something which others see to be wrong, though we don’t see it yet.”

“ Then are we not to tell others when we see how wrong they are ? ” I asked.

“ That’s another thing,” answered mother ; “ though it isn’t for us to judge and condemn, yet it is for us to try to lead our fellow Christians into any light they have not caught sight of, even as we would wish them to do the same for us. God won’t condemn any of us for doing what we don’t know to be wrong ; but He will condemn us once we have seen it to be wrong, and yet go on with it, because we fancy it is ‘ expedient,’ or ‘ for our interest,’ or because we don’t wish to be ‘ unlike other folk ’ ! And the beginning of God’s condemnation is that we get so blind that we call wrong right, to justify ourselves for doing it ! You see, child, whoever wishes to do right must never leave off ‘ considering.’ One must not think that things always stay in the same place. The world’s ever on the move, and fresh light may open our eyes to marvel at the folly or sin which at one time of our lives we would have readily excused in ourselves.

It is only God Himself who is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!'

"Why!" went on mother, "didn't you see the mistake I made through not 'considering'? I ought to have remembered that this lad is not like any general tramp who comes along. If his story is true, as we take it to be, why, I might have known he'd been used to decent things, and must have some somewhere. Then I should have put my question this way: 'If you are to stay here a while, Lewis Tynson, how are you to get at your belongings, or how do you mean to manage?' There's a bit of imagination and lots of consideration go to the making of a real lady or gentleman. And because we don't use those words over much out on the farms in these parts, we've the more need to remember that a true Christian is made of the same stuff."

Father's following letters did not tell us much more news. He said that he had now written to his cousin, Mrs. Padgett, Norman's mother, telling her that her son was missing. This would break the blow to her, if there was something dreadful to come out in the end. "And, anyhow, it will let her know the truth," said father, "which is always the best preparation for whatever comes next." "Poor Madge!" father added; "it's pitiful to realize Madge in a great trial. It's like seeing a butterfly beaten down in the rain."

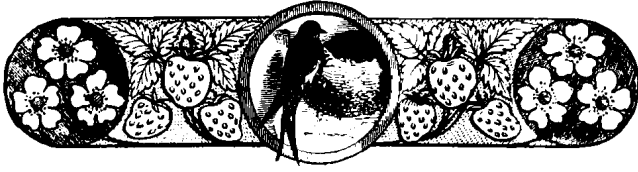
"Ah," said mother, when she read that, "Mrs.

Padgett has had her life since your father knew her. A woman who has been wife, mother, and widow isn't like a butterfly any more, unless, indeed, she's like an artificial one, set on wires, and rain won't hurt that! No, no, by the time any woman has lived out more than half her life, she is either strengthened, or she is hardened."

The days went by quietly. The city newspaper, with the advertisements about Norman, did not seem speedily to penetrate to our quiet neighbourhood. One or two farmers, from a little distance, looked in to see father on business, and mother saw them and told them father was away in Montreal, having trouble about a nephew who had come from the old country. They stayed to dinner with us, and talked over farming matters with Otto. We had no other visitors all that week. It was a busy season. Also the weather was bad.

On Saturday morning Lewis Tynson's trunk arrived. He and Willie took the cart to the station to fetch it. It was a good-looking trunk, fairly big, exactly like what the minister had when he came from college. It was taken into Lewis' bedroom, which seemed already to belong to him. Lewis shut himself in with it. Work was over, and we did not see him again till supper-time.

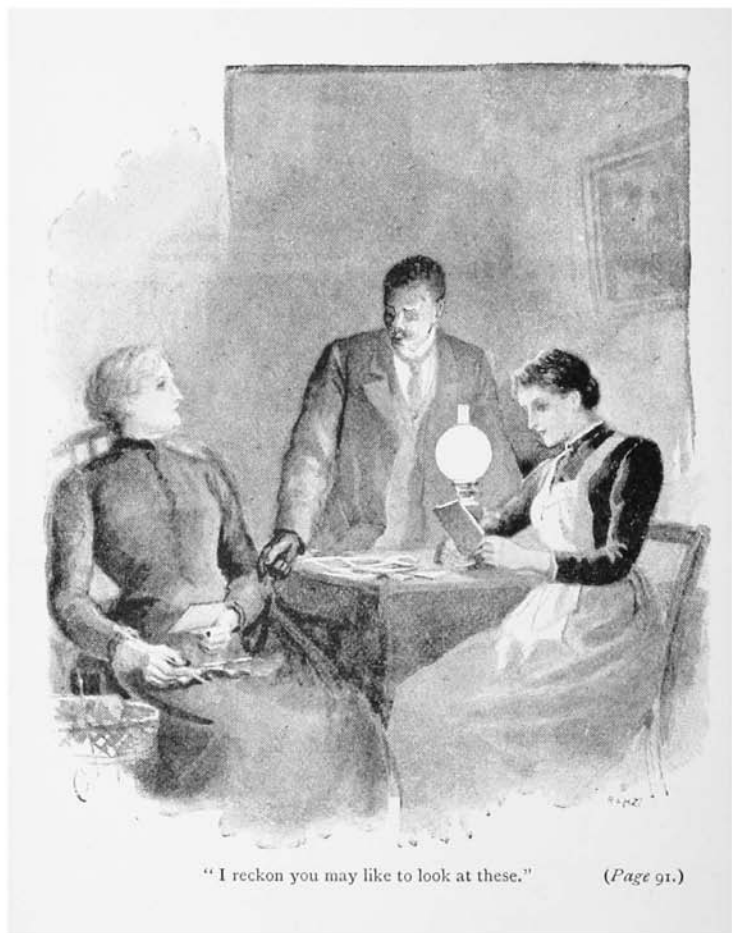




Chapter 12

“CARROTS” AND “THE DARKEY”

WHEN Lewis came out of his room he looked pale and excited. Yet his face had a brighter expression than it had ever yet worn. He had lost the hunted look. He seemed as if “he was his own man again,” to use a phrase I have heard father employ. Do you know, these sort of phrases always let us know whether a person has been brought up in the old country or in Canada. I know what this means, coming from father ; it means, looking as if one had one’s own business to mind and was held under no other body’s orders. A born Canadian would not think of such a thing—a hired man here is as much “his own man” as his employer, because there is more work to do than there are people to do it. This sometimes makes low people insolent, just as when work is scarce and labourers plentiful bad employers grow oppressive. But there isn’t any queer state of things which doesn’t work well enough



"I reckon you may like to look at these."

(Page 91.)

if everybody is good,—and if everybody is bad, why, as Otto says, they would turn Paradise into desolation in less than a week!

Lewis carried some loose photographs in his hand. He spread them out before mother, saying,—

“I reckon you may like to look at these. I guess you have not seen many of my folks.”

He told us who and what the people were, as we looked at their portraits. There were some family groups, with children in pretty white dresses. “This one,” said Lewis, “is a bishop and his household.” It was the bishop’s eldest son who had forwarded Lewis’ trunk,—he and Lewis had been fellow-students at the Seminary. Another group, he informed us, consisted of an editor and his wife and baby.

“What newspaper does he edit?” asked my mother, looking attentively at the grave, dark face. The wife had pathetic eyes, and was tall and slight, like a willow tree. The baby was a darling.

“Oh, the *Western Signal*,” Lewis answered. “An Afro-American paper, of course. Nobody reads it but our folks. The wife is very bright, too. She teaches school and writes well, and helps her husband.”

Mother and I were silent, as I think sensible people generally are when their minds are being suddenly opened to new ideas.

He went on showing us single portraits. One, of a sweet, serious-looking dark woman, who he said had taken a good medical degree, and had a large

practice among her own folks. Another, a clever, good-looking man, an "Afro-American lawyer." One, two pleasant-faced ministers. Two or three intelligent youths and girls,—one a teacher, one a typewriter, one in a counting-house.

So these are the kind of people to be found among the negroes now-a-days! I suppose I had never thought much about the subject: but I think I had fancied that the negroes in the States were still only field-hands and house-servants, good-humoured folks in pink cotton shirts or yellow turbans, full of fun and simple piety of the "Bress de Lord" kind. I had possibly conjured up a few gloomier figures, the outcome of original savagery, maddened and corrupted by the oppressions of vice and cruelty.

I suppose I had thought of Mr. Setebos, in Clitheroe, as somebody who had "got on so well" because he was in Canada, "among ourselves."

But among the negroes there were evidently many well-to-do people, well-taught, and well-dressed—in short, exactly "like ourselves." Oh dear, as I came to this conclusion I recognised my own conceit and impertinence! "Exactly like ourselves, indeed!" What else had I thought? And why? It would not bear looking into. Yet I had been brisk at "judging" Otto for having once been just a little more benighted than myself. Is there much to choose between refusing to join a dark brother at meals, and sitting down with him as an act of condescension?—between

despising him as an inferior and accepting him as equal merely as an act of kindness ?

I saw at once that I need not be vexed with Otto. Rather, I might well take example from the readiness with which he had corrected himself, as soon as he saw himself to be wrong.

Well—I liked to be in the same box with Otto !

In the end, father was actually away from us for two Sundays !

On neither of those days did Lewis Tynson accompany us to church. Each Sunday morning he came to breakfast nicely dressed, and looking exactly like what he had been—a student in an institute. It was hard to believe he was the same boy as the foot-sore, travel-stained stranger who had appeared at our door at midnight.

I remarked to mother that many people would be civil and kind to Lewis now who would have been gruff and surly to the poor tramp.

“Where there’s rags and wretchedness folks think there is sin,” said mother. “But anyhow it is not *always* the sin of those who wear the rags or feel the wretchedness ! It was no fault in poor Lewis that brought him to his sore strait, but other folks’ cruelty and badness. I reckon evil doing turns to fine clothes and trim appearances quite as often as to tatters and dirt ! And it’s the worst sort of evil doing which injures others more than itself and gets rich by others’ loss.

Yes, I can see how foolish it is to judge by appearances one way or the other. There is Tom Magrath : he drinks, and has many low ways, and he is poor and miserable,—but there's old Gossett ; he drinks too, and has grown rich by selling drink, and in other doubtful ways : yet he lives in our best house, and none are so fine as all his family !

On the first Sunday Lewis asked " If there were any of his folks in our congregation ? "

" No," mother replied ; " there are none of your folks settled near here, except Mr. Setebos, at Clitheroe, and he goes to a church there."

Lewis made no further remark at the moment. So we began arranging how we were to get to church. Father and mother and I generally drove there, because mother could not walk so far. Mother said that to-day Otto would drive us, and Willie could show Lewis the road.

It was then that Lewis said suddenly that he was not going to church.

Mother looked grave. I thought she would urge him to go. But she did not. I almost thought she had not heard what he had said. But on the verandah she turned and told him where he would find some books to occupy his time. He thanked her. When we came home, we found he had been reading them.

During the second week that he stayed with us, we thought he grew less shy and wild, though he still held himself apart from us as much as he could. One or

two letters came for him. He grew so much softer and more friendly in manner that we rather expected he would go to church with us on the second Sunday.

But no. He stayed at home again. Only as we were coming back, we found him walking to meet us, and he turned back and helped us out of the buggy. It seemed to me that he was in good spirits, but one often thinks that of others when one is in good spirits one's self. And that day we were all cheery with the knowledge that father was coming back to-morrow. True, there was still no news of Cousin Norman. He might be either a living disgrace or a dead sorrow. But father had now done all that could be done. And it meant so much to us to get him home again!

In the course of that Sunday afternoon I heard Lewis Tynson laugh for the first time. He and Willie were sitting on the verandah while mother and I cleared away the dinner dishes.

He laughed out quite merrily at something which Willie said.

Somehow the sound startled me.

"Why," said I, speaking to mother in a low tone, "if I had been through what he has—and so lately too!—I don't think I should ever have laughed again."

Mother answered: "You don't know anything about it. I've sometimes thought that there's a hollow sound in the laughter of those who have not been through something pretty heavy. The heartiest

laughs I've known have come from folks who have had the hardest trials. When I used to hear of the negro slaves in the old days being so cheerful, I never thought it was because they didn't feel—and feel badly enough too! I thought rather it was the good Lord's way of picking them up between the hard blows men gave them, so that they shouldn't be flatted down altogether!"

In the afternoon Lewis said he was going to walk into Clitheroe. Mother said "very well," without a single question such as she might have put to Otto or Willie.

So mother and I and Otto and Willie had supper by ourselves.

Willie was brimming over about his conversation with Lewis.

"He's gone ahead," said Willie. "Why, he says he was doing the sixth book of Euclid. He's going to help me with mine. He's a clever sort of darkey!"

"You are not to speak of him as a darkey, Will," observed mother quietly.

Will stared. "Why not?" he asked. "I don't mean any harm. He *is* a darkey."

"So you *are* red-headed," answered mother. "Yet I think you fought a boy who called you 'Carrots.'"

"Well, that's different, somehow."

"I think the chief difference is that you are Carrots' and Lewis is 'the Darkey,'" said mother pleasantly."

“Well, if I was a darkey, I’d be sorry to be ashamed of it!” declared Will.

“So you own you’re ashamed of having red hair?” returned mother. “Then I’m sorry for you! For my father had red hair, and I liked to see you take after him.”

“No, I’m not, but I mean this—a darkey is a darkey, and I suppose many of them are good-looking enough. Lewis is, himself. Nobody could deny it.” Willie was rather mixed up in his eager excuses.

“And I’ve read that great painters were often fond of red hair,—and I know I love it,—when it is neat,” said mother, smiling. “I still think the cases are on all fours.”

Will blushed and giggled. “Oh come, mother,” he cried. “I’m not good at explaining; but I mean this—you know—don’t you know?—fellows with red hair are thought deceitful or hot-tempered or something bad, don’t you see? And that is such a shame!”

“So when the boy called you ‘Carrots,’ you fought him to prove your mildness,” answered mother. “Well, well, let that pass! But do you think that people say ‘darkey’ out of kindness and reverence for the black man? There was that Hindoo prince who stopped in Clitheroe to visit the gentleman who had once been his tutor,—would you have called him ‘darkey’ to his face?”

Will fidgeted. “Well, I didn’t call Lewis ‘dar-

key' to his face," he defended himself. "I'm not sure that we fellows did not speak of the Hindoo chap so."

"Then you speak of people behind their backs as you wouldn't before their faces," said mother, quite severely.

"Well," persisted Will, "you don't scold me for calling the prince 'a chap' now, and I guess I shouldn't have done so to his face."

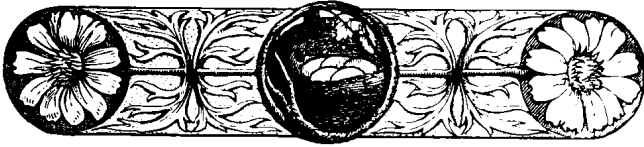
"You call Otto 'old chap,'" I observed.

"Yes," said mother, "and there would be no harm in your calling the prince the same if you could be as familiar with him as you are with Otto. The long and the short of it is, Will, no well-bred person dwells on outside looks. And to call 'darkey' in a country where there are so many more white faces than dark ones is just as bad as to say 'squint-eye,' 'crook-back,' 'carrots,' or anything else that marks one out from the many."

"Well, I'm sure I didn't mean it unkindly," said Will, "for I like Lewis. He's a jolly chap, and I hope he'll stop here for good."

Poor Will hadn't a great stock of words! "Jolly" did for praise of everything, from our old work-horse up to a new hymn-tune!





Chapter 13

HOME AGAIN

FATHER came home. Willie drove the buggy into Clitheroe to fetch him. I'd never in my life seen any sight so welcome as his dear figure coming up the verandah steps!

But he looked so tired! And surely he had grown greyer and older—I had never thought about father's age before. It gives one such a blow when one first realizes that one's dear ones stand within certain measurable distance of the end!

That was the shadow that for me fell across our joy that sunshiny morning.

There's an end to every earthly thing! What an old truth that is! But it comes new and startling to each of us while the shelter of our childhood and youth is still over us. We have felt as if the level ways of life were never to end, almost getting impatient lest change should never come! But only too soon some sudden turn of life brings us in sight of

plenty of ups and downs, and maybe of a chasm that looks as if there was no bridge across it.

Otto came in from the fields "to see the boss," and we all hung about father. Lewis himself came, rather doubtfully, into the room, and father shook hands with him, and said that he'd heard all about him from us, and he was welcome to stay as long as it suited his views,—that father was real glad he was here,—for here was the busy season just on us, and no help hired beforehand, and he, not so young as he had been, worrying round, and wasting time up in the city.

It seemed quite enough just to see father again, and indeed that almost had to suffice us for the first few hours. For we could not get him to ourselves straight away. Now we counted Otto quite as one of ourselves, and as for Lewis, he certainly kept himself out of everybody's road. But we had somebody else in the house that morning—even poor Mrs. Magrath. Mother and I generally managed the household washing between us. What with wringing machines and every other appliance, and our nice sunny green just beyond the verandah, it was not very hard work, and rather pretty and pleasant than otherwise. But Mrs. Magrath had looked in at the end of the week, with a woeful face, saying she did not know what she was to do : for there was Tom, not bringing in a penny, and there was the postmaster's family at Baskerville, where she used to help, all off to the lakes. Mother tried to

cheer her up, telling her one door always opens when another shuts,—and before she went away mother bade her come here on Monday, as we should want a hand with father coming home, taking us off our work, and bringing in his own soiled things too. That was like mother,—to show a hope and then to fulfil it.

I must say it was no particular pleasure to have Mrs. Magrath around at any time. She was always sighing and taking low views of things in general. She had to put up with her own husband's bad ways, and it seemed to comfort her to try to believe other folks were not much better than Tom. What struck me as so odd about Mrs. Magrath was, that for all drink had made her suffer, she had not only an undisguised contempt for what she called "Teetotaling," but also a profound respect for the Gossetts! It was quite tiresome to hear her perpetual talk about their fine furniture and new clothes, and to bear with her endless suggestions that we ought to do this or to have that—like the Gossetts. But then, as mother said to me, "If Mrs. Magrath had been a wise woman by nature, she would never have been Mrs. Magrath," and so we must have patience with her.

I could not help being sorry for her that morning,—I thought she must feel it so hard to see father welcomed with such joy, and making so much of all of us, walking in and out of each of the rooms as if it was a real pleasure to see them' again, while she knew her children cowered in a corner at their father's

step. But when I followed her into the cook-kitchen, she said to me,—

“It’s a great fuss with you, your father having been away: he goes so seldom. It’s different with Mr. Gossett, who takes a week here and a week there, as a matter of course. An’ your father’s had such a terrible errand, too! Ah, she knew! Tom had seen the newspaper advertisement for the poor, dear young gentleman. Tom was a great man for reading the papers. Ah, she could feel for us all! But Mr. Gossett goes away on his own pleasure.”

I gave no more sympathy to Mrs. Magrath! I could have been quite cross! Wasn’t I silly? For I ought to have been more sorry for her if she was stupid than if she was only unhappy.

We all sat down to dinner together. It was such a treat to hear father once more asking the blessing! Mrs. Magrath inquired a great deal about Montreal. She supposed the River House was a very good hotel, but it wasn’t quite the grand one, was it? She’d heard Tom name another. She supposed they had “nigger” waiters? (I felt that we all blushed with shame before Lewis, but she went on calmly.) No? It was a pity; “niggers” were first-rate at that sort of thing out West. Tom had been at hotels where they were; he said it made one feel grand to have them standing behind one’s chair. An’ “niggers” are very obliging and good-natured.

“Some of them, like some white people,” remarked

my father, with a quiet emphasis which anybody wiser than Mrs. Magrath would have understood.

"But Tom said they were lazy and lying," she persisted. "Tom said you couldn't trust 'em."

"Some of them are lazy and untrustworthy, like some white people," answered my father, in the same voice. "I'm also told drink does plenty of harm among them, as among us."

She did understand that. I think father had felt that she must be silenced on this subject, and that this was the only indirect way to do it.

She began to talk about Norman next, perhaps by way of revenge. She wanted to know all about his disappearance. She took care to drop remarks which let us know that the matter had been well talked over in the neighbourhood, though so few comments had reached our ears. She spoke as if everybody had implied some blame on us,—only that she had always taken our part.

"Folks said it was a pity the poor young man had not been properly met at the steamer, but I said Squire Sherlett had something else to do than to run about after other folks, an' it couldn't be expected of Mrs. Sherlett, an' she so little used to travellin'. You don't really think the dear young gentleman has been made away with, do you?"

I got a strange impression of somebody listening with strained attention to the conversation, and, looking up, I was struck by the startled, intense expression

on Lewis Tynson's face. Yet it did not surprise me, for I, too, was eager for father's reply, which did not come without a pause.

"No, I do not," he answered, with a forcible slowness.

"Ah, well, Mr. Sherlett, it'll be a blessing for his poor mother if you can make her as hopeful as you are."

"I don't know," said father, with a sternness quite unusual with him. "Maybe it is better for her if she can think he is dead. And if he isn't, why, I can't help saying I hope he'll never turn up again unless he gets changed into something very different from what he has been."

I've noticed that when grave, calm people do suddenly speak with severity, there is something solemn about it, and it makes a deeper impression than any amount of violence from those who are constantly scolding and passing severe judgments.

Father's manner actually awed even Mrs. Magrath. When she did speak again, she did nothing worse than remark about the beauty of some new table china Mr. Gossett had brought back from his last visit to Toronto.

Mother let Mrs. Magrath away quite early that she might have time to tidy up her house and get her husband's supper ready, whether or not he was likely to come home and be sober enough to eat it. She paid Mrs. Magrath for her day's work, and said she

could come over next day and finish up anything that was left, and get her dinner. She gave her, also, two or three things for the children—a shirt of Willie's, quite good, but which he had outgrown. Mother took the money and the gifts out into the cook-kitchen, where she always carried on all her money dealings with any household help she ever hired. Once they were in the big kitchen or any other part of the house, they were just as guests, or as ourselves.

I could hear mother having a little talk with Mrs. Magrath, and from a word here and there I could gather its purport. "Not right"—"not Christian."—"God was the Father of us all."—"Mr. Sherlett, had his English nephew come, would not have let him air sneers at the Irish."—"The Irish, who had known cruel persecution in past days, and still had to encounter some stupid prejudice, should be the very last to indulge in such talk." Mother spoke in quite a friendly way. I heard her use the pronoun "we" very often. Mrs. Magrath did not reply, save by a rather emphatic "Good-afternoon, Mrs. Sherlett"; and as she went down the walk her skirt gave that peculiar swing by which the tails of cats—and some women—express irritation and a sense of injury.





Chapter 14

THE HANDKERCHIEF MARKED "*N.P.*"

FATHER was rather tired after his long journey. So, when he had wandered round the farm and seen how things were looking, he came into the house, and saying to mother and me that "Otto Hermann reported young Tynson to be a bright one, with brains in his hands," he laid himself down on the kitchen-settle and soon fell fast asleep.

Mother went out into the garden to potter over her little flower-beds, and I thought I could not do better than put through the ironing of some of the light things which were all ready. There's nothing like finishing what you can, out of hand. Then you are ready for what may come next. So I set my folding ironing-board almost in the doorway between the kitchens, that I might not be out of the talk if mother returned and father woke up.

Suddenly, Lewis Tynson came in with a great bunch

of daisies and grasses, beautifully arranged, so that I exclaimed with delight, and left my work to get a jug to put the flowers in.

Lewis stood watching me.



Lewis Tynson came in with a great bunch of daisies and grasses. (Page 106.)

Then he said, in a low tone of his soft voice,—

“Miss Sophia, I never understood till to-day that you actually do not know what has become of the cousin.”

“Did you not?” I asked, surprised, but only for a moment. “Well, I suppose we didn’t talk much about it. Yet the neighbours seem to know it well enough. And small wonder! for he has been advertised for.”

“I haven’t talked to the neighbours,” he said, with a curious emphasis. “No,—I had no idea of it. I thought the cousin didn’t want to come here, and that Mr. Sherlett had gone after him. I thought he’d likely bring him to reason and fetch him back, and then I’d have had to go.”

“I don’t think father would let Norman come here now, even if he did turn up.”

“And you are sure Mr. Sherlett does not think he is dead?” Lewis reiterated. “He isn’t grieving over him?”

“He’s grieving over him because he believes him to be wicked,” I answered. “Father is afraid Norman has taken all the money he had and gone off, not caring what his mother wished nor how she feels. And I think father would speak about him even more severely than he does, only that there is a possibility—just a bare chance—that the bad companions he got among have made away with him, so that it isn’t his fault that he does not come now, though of course it was his own fault at the beginning.”

Lewis stood beside my ironing-board, gazing through the doorway as if he was intently watching Shag, who lay half in the kitchen, half on the verandah, and occasionally snapped at a buzzing

mosquito. Lewis stood still as a statue while I spoke : then, without turning his face towards me, he said,—

“If Mr. Sherlett could be quite sure his nephew is alive and has run off after bad ways of his own, what do you think he would do?”

“Just as he is doing now, I guess,” I replied. “I don’t think he’d use any kind of force to bring him back. He’d wait. If Norman is alive, he knows where to come when he wants to. You know the father in the parable waited. I’ve heard father say that the Good Shepherd does not tether His sheep,—they hear His voice and come.”

Lewis turned and looked at me with a strange, flashing glance, and then, without a word, went through the door, across the verandah, and down the garden.

Nearly an hour passed before mother came in.

“Well,” said she brightly, “I’ve had a good time. Lewis has been helping me with my beds. We’ve had a nice talk. He’s been telling me that he went up to Clitheroe on Sunday just to see Mr. Setebos. He spent the evening at his house, and went with him to church. I told Lewis I was glad, because we weren’t to forsake the assembling of ourselves together before the Lord, however we may feel. And he says, ‘No, he reckons it’s best not,—though he’ll own he has sometimes felt as if he’d like to hang religion up behind the door for a while, and take

down a real wicked rage instead.' He has a quaint tongue, the laddie! I guess the worst's over with him, when he can put it out into speech, and look at it."

"It is a wonder that he's so ready to be friendly with us this afternoon," I said. "I was afraid Mrs. Magrath's talk would make him stiffer and shyer than ever."

"It might,"—pondered mother,—“and yet again, he found out that we stood up for him and his to others.”

"That wasn't much of a discovery, surely!" I observed. "He might have expected it of us."

"I don't know that," said mother. "There's many people who will be kind to a body on the sly, as it were, who will turn cold and offish when they're in sight of somebody else who will sneer! There's not much comfort in the Nicodemuses who only venture near one in the dark, or after one is dead!"

"Well," I remarked, "for my own part it seems very hard that we should have to put up with Mrs. Magrath's perpetually saying things which she means to rub us the wrong way, while we are paying more for her work than do her dear Gossetts, and trying to help her in all sorts of little ways besides."

Mother laughed outright.

"Why, it's just that which makes it easy," said she. "The hard bit would be to endure her if she was employing us and showing us favours."

Just then I noticed on the handkerchief I was ironing a pretty little sewn mark of "N.P."

"Dear me!" I cried; "here's surely a bit of Norman Padgett's property! How did it get here?"

"Father must have picked it up at the hotel and dropped it among his own clothes," said mother, peering at it. "You know I gave them over to Mrs. Magrath the minute father came home this morning."

"Eh, what?" exclaimed father, rousing himself. "What am I accused of?"

"Only of having one of poor Norman's handkerchiefs among yours," replied mother. "That's not very serious."

"But it's not the case," said father, rising and coming towards the ironing-board. "There wasn't a thing of his lying loose in the hotel room, and I took nothing from his boxes—not one article."

"Ah, it's very easy to feel quite sure," observed mother; "but it's not so easy to be sure. It would be a simple enough mistake for you to make, and there's the explanation to your hand! Would you rather think it was a conjuring trick?"

"Well, I suppose you're right," father admitted. But he looked dubious. He was not fully convinced. "I could have been as sure that I lifted nothing as I can be of anything. But I suppose when we're worried—and getting old—we mustn't be too sure of anything."

And father sighed.

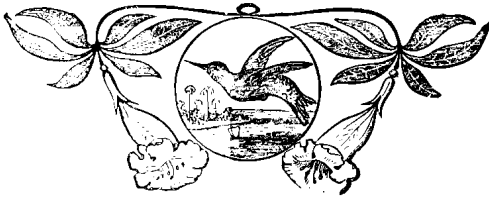
Shall I tell you what happened next day? It's a mere trifle ; but I must tell it here or not at all, for I must hurry on with my story.

Mrs. Magrath came to work, not very early. She was very huffy, and seemed like somebody keeping something back. And just before dinner she said to mother,—

“ You'll excuse me, Mrs. Sherlett, but I'll not come in to dinner to-day. My Tom—he's a poor man, but a proud one, and he has his feelings,—he says no wife of his is to sit down with a nigger.”

“ Very well, Mrs. Magrath ; of course there is no compulsion in the matter,” answered mother, in a calm, even way. “ I have often wondered that Mr. Magrath allows his wife to earn day-wages at all.”

But if Mrs. Magrath thought she would get her own dinner sent to her in the cook-kitchen, she was mistaken. She had to go without it !





Chapter 15

MR. SETEBOS

AFTER that, life went on again as it always had, except that Lewis Tynson was settled down amongst us, and that we had a sort of constant behind-thought about Norman Padgett. It used to start to the front if we heard a strange step on the verandah, or if father got a letter in an unfamiliar handwriting.

Norman Padgett's mother, father's cousin Madge, wrote to father once or twice, wild, miserable letters. Yet it was marvellous how little those letters told us. We had not wondered at the brevity and baldness of her earlier ones, when she had supposed that we would soon learn all about Norman from himself. But now we did think she would tell us something more—such as what sort of temper Norman had—whether he was clever or dull, if he had liked the thought of coming to Canada, and so on.

It was strange, too, how she never answered father's

inquiry as to whether Norman had ever written to her after his landing on our side. Father asked that twice in two different letters, but she took no notice of the question. Father excused her, saying that she would put his letter aside, and write hers without reference to it, and that knowing so well herself what Norman had done in this matter, she might forget that we were utterly in the dark, and so not notice much significance in father's questions. Mother seemed doubtful. I think she felt that Mrs. Padgett would weigh every word which was sent to her about her son, and so could not accidentally overlook anything. But then why didn't she reply? Was it because Norman had not written to her, and she didn't like to admit this undutifulness, or to cast its shadow on the memory of the boy who might be dead? Or was it because he had written, and she feared that if she said so, further inquiries might be pressed as to the substance of his communication?

Lewis Tynson was as good as his promise, and helped Willie a great deal with his lessons. In fact, when harvest was over, and the long dark evenings began, Otto actually brought down some books of his own, and it turned out that Lewis had promised to help him too. It came to be part of the evening scene in our kitchen,—the three lads with their papers and books before them; and then they would break off for a while and discuss some point, and father and mother would join in.

It struck me sometimes that though it was mother who had taken Lewis in, and though he had been quite settled among us (I will not say "quite at home," for he did not seem *that* for a long while) before father came back, yet it was to father that he really attached himself.

Lewis presently went with us to our church in the morning, though he still continued to walk to Clitheroe in the afternoon, where he visited Mr. Setebos, and went with him and his daughter to the evening service. It leaked out by-and-by that while on the first Sunday he was with us he had refused to accompany us, because, as he frankly owned, he had then "felt like hanging his religion up behind the door," and "going in for vengeance," yet by the second Sunday he had regained calmness to acknowledge that "all white people are not equally bad." Still he had hesitated to come with us, because to attend the same church with white people was a thing unknown to his experience in the South, and having ascertained from us that there were no Afro-Americans in our congregation, it had occurred to him that the white folk might rise in protest if one appeared, or at least that some "unpleasantness" might follow, which he did not wish to bring on our heads for his sake.

So he had gone off to Clitheroe, and introduced himself to Mr. Setebos, and under his friendly wing had got somewhat acclimatised to finding "white folks" fairly civil and friendly.

“We thought it quite natural that you should like to go with your own people,” said mother.

Lewis laughed, joylessly and grimly. “That’s what they say in the South,” he said, “when they’re talking to anybody to whom they want to make out that we like to have our own churches, and our own quarters, and our own schools. Well, so we do. So would anybody who finds himself jostled and sniffed at—if not something a great deal worse—when he goes among the other kind. Those who are not wanted naturally keep away.”

“Why, certainly nobody likes to be booed at,” remarked Willie (who had had some private experiences of his own).

“But I did notice in one of your own papers that there’s quite an agitation among some of your people against a proposal for mixed schools,” observed mother. (She had taken to reading the newspapers which the black bishop’s son regularly sent to Lewis.) “That looks as if your folks were holding off and keeping themselves to themselves, doesn’t it?”

“Ah, don’t you understand about that?” cried Lewis, quite eagerly. “Don’t you see what some of us think it means? Why, that in ‘mixed’ schools all the teachers would be white, and so one branch of employment for the educated of our folks would be shut up. No, I think we won’t go in for mixed schools till they mean mixed teachers as well as mixed scholars!”

“Dear, dear!” said mother; “things need lots of looking into before one knows the rights and the wrongs of them.”

We found that Mr. Setebos hadn't painted matters for Lewis in too roseate hues. Mr. Setebos had a good house and business of his own, and had saved money, and was always smiling and good-natured—the last man to be suspected of having any grievance, except by those who caused it to him. But though the iron had not entered into his soul, it had chafed it.

He had told Lewis that he knew well enough that among some of his neighbours in Clitheroe things weren't quite the same with him as if he was a white man—that boys were often very rude to him and his pretty Julia, and the parents would not expect him to take their correction into his own hand, as they would in the case of other townsmen, and yet if he made complaint to them, they ignored him with a sneer. He was now the oldest member of the congregation, and though there was no other distinction made between him and the rest of the members, yet no office or function of any kind had ever been offered to him; he had been repeatedly passed over for younger men, for men of inferior standing, and even for men of somewhat blemished moral record in the past.

“It seems it is ‘charity’ not to set a man aside because he had once been a drunkard or a free liver,” Mr. Setebos had said. “But the same folks’ ‘charity’

can't pass over a man's having been born black. I suppose they can't forgive God for making him so."

Mr. Setebos had explained to Lewis that while generally all went smoothly enough with him, one had to be prepared for sudden "rubbings the wrong way." "We're near the States," he had said; "and one fine day some man comes up from the States,—perhaps he was but a poor, low 'cracker' in his own State,—and he says to our folks, 'What! do you let niggers set up for gentlemen and ladies? Why don't you keep them in their place?—and that's at the bottom,' says he. Now there's few that holds to their ideas strong enough to wear them if they look out of fashion, and also there's few so sure of their own footing as not to like to stand on the top of a fellow-creature, so that poor 'cracker's' words will work on the evil that's in human nature, and then you're let feel it for a bit."

I think Lewis had let fly some strong remarks about mean, white "crackers," attributing his brother's cruel end to such hands as theirs; for Mr. Setebos had then put in a word for them, saying,—

"I'm not too hard on those 'crackers.' Our own slavery made them what they are. They're fellow-sufferers with us. The grand, sweet-spoken Southern gentlefolks wouldn't employ and pay their own kind when they could have our work for nothing. And so the poor whites grew up lazy and low and treacherous.

"The worst evil of slavery wasn't in the whipping

and starving and cruelty: it was in the darkening of the souls both of those who inflicted and those who bore it. And the poor 'cracker' outside it got his full share of that. We must hope the Lord will soon raise up powers to help him out of his cruelty and coarseness, even as He raised up powers to set us free from our chains."

I fear Lewis must have said that he hoped the worst of dooms might overtake his brother's murderers, for Mr. Setebos had reminded him solemnly:—

"Lad, the kingdom of heaven is within us, and so is the kingdom of hell; and those who delight in hatred and injustice and cruelty are in hell already: but *we've got to try to get them out.* Where hell is inside folks it soon comes outside, too, and makes burnings and bloodshed and blasphemy."

One thought that Mr. Setebos uttered Lewis repeated, without a word of comment, but with deep respect. (Lewis had a wonderful memory, and a curious faculty for repeating what people said, so that you thought you heard themselves saying it.)

"Don't you go to thinking I've not often enough felt bitter enough," said Mr. Setebos. "Many a time I've said to myself, 'Why did God make black folks, if they are to be looked down upon? And why did all my folks have to slave for others, instead of working for themselves: so that when we did get our freedom, we had not stick nor stone nor dollar of our own?' And those of us who have made our nice homes and

our little piles since then (and it's scarcely thirty years ago) all started as bare as the pauper white emigrants that the States are frightened to let land in New York now! And the rest of us have just to hear, 'See how poor they are!' cried by men who never earned a cent for themselves, and would likely not own one now if some of their folk hadn't left it to them—maybe after working it out of us! And why am I not to know where my brothers and sisters are? nor where my mother is buried, nor who my father's father was, just because we were sold apart like the cattle are? Ah, sonny, I've asked those questions many a time. But I've lived on and seen much, and learned something. I've learned that there's nothing in life so good as having friends among the right sort of folks,—true friends. And there's nothing finds them out for you like having a bit of adversity. Those who are on the sunny side-walk can't ever be quite sure who is walking with them, because everybody likes walking there. Why, we negroes found that out a bit after the war, when we first got votes, and they told us all sorts of lies to get us to give them! Let's thank the Lord for making us so that the nasty folks despise us. It saves our wasting time in finding them out. Let us negroes make the most of this privilege while we have it, for the sunshine is creeping over to our side-walk, and then all the creeping things will follow it."

There was something else, too, that in late years had hurt Mr. Setebos and Julia. Lewis did not tell us about

that then: we only heard it long afterwards. And this was actually their own name, which I had always thought rather pretty! It had never struck me where it came from. Don't you know where it comes from? It is the name of the god adjured by the ugly monster Caliban in Shakespeare's "Tempest." Mr. Setebos had not known anything about it, except that his father had been called by it in slavery. It seemed to have been the old man's only name. But our Mr. Setebos was baptized after the great abolitionist, Lloyd Garrison, and so he was always called Lloyd Garrison Setebos. But when Julia went to school, and read a great deal, she found this name in Shakespeare's play, and showed it to her father. They read the play, and readily understood that the poor slave had received his cognomen from the heartless mockery of some jesting Southern "master."

Julia Setebos told Lewis that when her father fully took in this, he stood straight up, with a look on his face that she had scarcely ever seen. But presently he said,—

"Well, well, never mind! Anyhow, that name of mine isn't going about the world at the top of any bill that hasn't got a receipt at the bottom. It's well for that mas'r's son if he can say the same; for some of those Southern folk fell on hard times, and maybe they're the better for 'em. We'll hope the best."



Chapter 16

THE STORY OF THE TYNSONS

OF course, as time passed on, we heard piece after piece of Lewis' history, until at last we got a fairly defined picture of his past life.

I don't think people tell about themselves in the way they are sometimes made to do in story-books. At least, I have never heard it. I don't see how it could be. I can't easily understand how anybody could sit down to tell the story of his life in a long, connected narrative. I think it would be a miserable failure—just a few dates, and three or four "events": none of those vivid little strokes which can only be brought out when memory of the past is suddenly touched by present feeling, as the colour of the pebbles on a shingly shore appear under the wash of the rising wave.

Therefore I shall tell Lewis' story much as we heard it, in fragments, merely detaching them from

the background of the more general talk on which they were thrown.

Lewis' father and mother had been born and brought up as slaves. But Lewis' brother Jem, who was only twenty-six when he was so unjustly and cruelly done to death, had been free born, because the father and mother were married in the very year of emancipation.

Lewis did not seem to know much about his mother's people. Very likely she herself had not known who her parents were. In her slave days she had changed owners once or twice, but had been always what might be thought favoured in them—being a maid, living in the house with "the family," and having everything comfortable in the way of dress and food.

Lewis' father was the son of his master. His father's mother was a slave woman on the master's estate. This master had been considered kind to his slaves. He distinguished his own children among them by sending them to be taught trades, such as those of carpenter or blacksmith, which they were afterwards intended to practise on his estate; and on these, and towards the poor ignorant black bondswomen their mothers, he never allowed the whip to be used.

Lewis' father was away from the estate, apprenticed to a carpenter, when the war came. The old master and his estate got involved in the troubles,

and in the midst of them the old master died. The day after his funeral his widow found some pretext for whipping Lewis' grandmother—hating her for the wrongful favours the poor slave had been forced to receive from the dead man.

I recollect something Otto observed when Lewis told us about this whipping of his father's mother by the "ole missus."

"Ah," said Otto, "I remember once listening to an old negro preacher, and hearing him say, 'They paint the devil black, but I think he ought to be white; they speak of him as a man, but I think he is a woman—a white woman! For I know what ole missus was!'"

As the war ended in negro freedom, Lewis' father never returned to the estate, which all went to ruin. His poor whipped mother came into the city, and lived with him and his young wife. But she quite forgave "ole missus," and was grieved to think her son harboured indignant thoughts towards that person. She used to say, "Poor ole missus! she's got hard times now; you ought ter go an' see her and try to cheer her up." But Lewis' father always answered: "Mother, it may be easy for you to forgive her, but it's not so easy for me to forget what she did to you. You can go and see her, but I never will." And he never did. But the old woman went off on these strange duty-visits, and even carried things, a few eggs or apples, as an offering.

We all wondered from what point of view the "ole missus" herself had regarded these attentions; but Lewis could throw no light on this, these things having happened while he was quite a little child.

Neither Lewis' father or mother could read when they were married. But when things settled down a little after the war, and schools were opened for the freed people, his mother had attended one, taking her eldest child Jem with her. Mother and son, the one aged twenty-five and the other four, had learned to read side by side. Jem had laughingly told Lewis that this arrangement "had spoiled his schooldays for him,"—"mother's eye was always on him,"—"and when discipline had been needed at school, then more discipline was ready for him at home!"

The father had not gone to school. He had the little home to toil for. But his thirst for knowledge had not been the less keen. As soon as Jem could read a little, he had been constantly taken off by his father to the workshop, and set up on a bench to read aloud to his father, and to any others who came along.

Lewis could just remember the days when father and mother were both living. Mother had had everything very nice. She had been so particular about her little daughter Lucy.

For Lewis had a sister! a sister still living, though we did not hear a word about her till he had been with us for some time. Lucy had come next to Jem.

The mother had taken such pains with Lucy. She had dressed her so neatly, and been so strict with her manners. She had scarcely allowed Lucy beyond the door-yard. She had seemed always frightened lest something should happen to her. Lucy had worshipped her father; she had always been trying to do something "all her own self" to win his praises.

Where was Lucy now? She was a teacher in an Afro-American school in a Southern city, but not in that where Jem had lived. Had Lewis no photograph of her? Well, yes. And he had not shown that to us? He went off to his room, and brought it back with him.

A girl with a handsome face, and a strange expression of curbed pride and repressed indignation, simply dressed in a plain gown, with delicate ruffles at the throat, and no ornament except a tiny brooch. We had nothing so aristocratic looking in all Baskerville.

We gazed at it in silence. I believe we all shared in the feeling I know I had—the sense of strangeness that this lady-like dainty girl belonged to Lewis' own real life—the life with which we had had nothing to do. It was so hard to throw our imaginations behind that midnight when he arrived, dragged and footsore, at our door! We felt (although, of course, we knew better) as if what he was now was somehow our doing! But this photograph made us realize, better than any-

thing else had done, to what order of things he had belonged before he had ever heard of our existence.

Yes, Lewis said, Lucy always wrote to him. It was her letter which came regularly every week. Lucy was well pleased that he was in Canada. She wrote that she wanted to feel that she had one brother safe from false accusations and mob law.

The father and mother had died, nearly together when Jem and Lucy were about sixteen and fourteen years of age. The poor old granny had lived a little longer. Jem had learned something of his father's trade, and had gone on with it. Lucy got employed in one of the "coloured schools." The authorities winked at her age, which was beneath the standard fixed; but at that time teachers were badly wanted. She had told Lewis that she had used to sit up very severe and strict, the more so because she really felt inclined to join in her pupils' sports and freaks, and was constantly afraid lest her juvenility should be unfavourably noticed.

So the boy and girl kept up the humble home, and fed and reared Lewis and another little brother, who presently died, just before the grandmother. Thenceforth Lucy had had to be cleaner and washer, and cook and mender, as well as bread-winner. She had no time for girlish arts and graces, no opportunity to acquire little feminine handicrafts in which her mother and grandmother had excelled, but possibly the more time for snatching up a book or a magazine. One

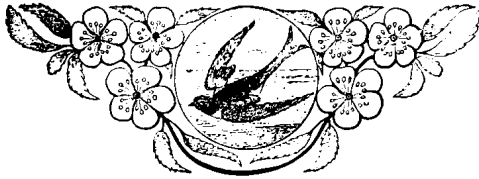
can do that while one watches a pot boil, or when one rests after scrubbing a floor.

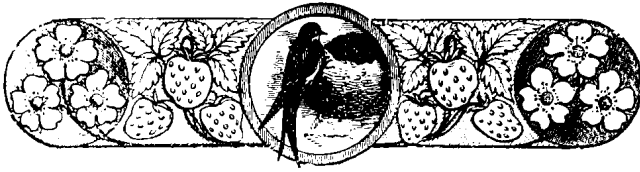
Lucy got known as a clever girl. Lewis said that some of the best Afro-Americans, elderly men, liked to talk to her ; and he had heard some of the younger ones say that it was a pity more of their girls were not like Lucy Tynson, who cared for better things than gadding about and finery.

Lucy had had her own little share of martyrdom. She had been dragged from an ordinary railway-car, and thrust into one for "coloured people." This had happened in a state where the white and dark races are made to travel separately ; but she was journeying daily to and from her school, on a little branch line, where there were but few passengers, and she had thought she might spare herself the evil smells and coarse words of the "coloured car," where low white men are allowed to smoke and lounge. She had taken this privilege with impunity for some days, when one morning a "white lady" of the neighbourhood entered the car, and remarked, apparently playfully, "Why, you have no business here." It is to be presumed that this lady afterwards called the conductor's attention to the matter, for next day he ejected Lucy, seizing her arm and marching her down the car, amid the giggles and stares of the other passengers, none of whom made any sign of sympathy or protest !

"But the Afro-Americans ride with the whites in

some of the Southern states, don't they?" asked Otto. "I've surely seen them." (Since Otto has begun to call the negroes "Afro-Americans," he is apt to call the Americans "the whites." Isn't it funny?)





Chapter 17

WRONGS AND RIGHTS

HOW well do I remember our talk that day! It was Sunday afternoon—the very last of the Indian summer : and though it had been an unusually warm day for the season, and we were all in the verandah, there was still a mist in the atmosphere, and mother and I wore shawls. The few leaves left on the maple trees were brilliant, and the sun was setting gorgeously.

“Yes, here and there, the Afro-Americans are allowed to ride with the Americans,” said Lewis, replying to Otto. “But not in many of the States. Where they do so, nothing happens. The heavens do not fall, as from some folks’ talk one might suppose they would, when black and white sit together. So in some few places there are ‘mixed’ schools, but not in others. Where there are such, still the seasons come regularly, nature is not a bit upset,

and in some of the States anybody may even marry anybody else, both being agreeable. But in others they mayn't. Afro-Americans, children and grandchildren of white men, and some of them with fair hair and blue eyes, are put in jail if white people fall in love with them and marry them. 'It's well for them if they don't have to go up the lynching-tree!'"

"Well," said my mother, "it must be quite an education for your folks to read up the laws concerning themselves, and find out where they are, and what's right and what's wrong at the particular moment."

"Man-made right and man-made wrong are like all that is his, always changing," corrected my father. "In God's way of holiness, the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err."

"The new white churches don't expect 'niggers' at all," said Lewis, in his bitterer style. "Some of the old ones kept special back seats for 'em, and as the 'niggers' didn't care for those, they said the 'niggers' preferred their own separate churches, and so got rid of them altogether."

"And you don't think your people do prefer to have their own churches?" asked mother.

"Our people are just like other people," said Lewis. "It's quite natural for most of them to keep together, just as the Germans generally do." He turned towards Otto. "It's natural, because they've

got the same interests, and they look at things in the same way."

"The Germans have services in their own language," observed mother: "that's why they keep apart."

"But there's another sort of language that people have in common, besides the dictionary-language," explained Lewis. "Those of us who had been in slavery and had had no education had their own sort of worship and preaching, which suited them better than anything they were likely to get in white churches. But it's not so with all of us,—it's not so with many of us—with more and more of us every day."

"Just like the Germans," observed Otto, who was sitting leaning back in that curious fashion of his, as if he was not listening at all, while all the time he is following everything closely. "When the young people begin to speak English better than their own tongue, they leave our churches,—and some of our churches try to prevent it by having one English service every Sunday."

"Just so. But you are free to follow what suits you best," said Lewis; "but we are not. And it comes very hard sometimes, in districts where most of the negroes are very ignorant and behindhand; but there are two or three educated families, who want a different sort of preaching and teaching—the same as what is enjoyed by the more educated whites. The

idea of such a want is thrown back in their teeth as showing that they are getting 'too bumptious for their own folk and wanting to stick up to white people.' There are some of us who don't want anything at all to do with white Americans. Why, I've heard Lucy say that she'd die happier if she had first killed a white man!"

"Hush, hush!" said my mother. She didn't add further reproof. Perhaps she remembered how in God's Holy Book He has permitted some psalms written under burning wrong, which give utterance to righteous indignation against workers of iniquity. That was what I thought of. It is well that cruel oppressors should now and then catch a glimpse of the feelings they awake in the breasts of those whom they wrong—feelings which nothing but words and ways of justice and mercy will avert from, sooner or later, pouring down retribution, which may overwhelm both guilty and innocent.

Mother's gentle reserve did its work at once.

"Lucy did not mean it!" Lewis said, in a softer tone. "No; if she was ever driven to do such a thing, there is nobody would be more sorry afterwards."

"Lucy has had to bear a great deal. Why, she had a great friend, Marcus Perera—his folks had formerly belonged to great creole planters. I think Marcus was the finest-looking man I ever saw. And he was clever too. He was set on getting a first-class educa-

tion for himself. He earned money every way he could, some by being janitor at a great white church. There's nothing unpleasant about a negro's being among white men, mind you, while he's waiting on them. They don't discover he's dirty while he's cooking for them, nor that the negress is immoral while she is nursing their babies. Oh no! Well, Marcus saved up his money, and got to college, and earned a medical degree. He was engaged to Lucy," Lewis added, in a lower voice, "though she doesn't speak about it. Marcus was one of the light-hearted sort who think the best of everybody. He used to hold that white folks are not as bad as they seem: that our folks had just got into certain ways, and fancied they were kept in them, but that if they made a bold move, they'd find there was nothing against them."

Lewis paused.

"Well, when Marcus had got his doctor's degree, he just overflowed with delight and pride."

"Well he might!" said my father. "If more people had to earn education before they got it, there would be fewer to waste or disgrace it!" (He was thinking of Norman.)

"And he thought he would like to go to the church where he had served as janitor," continued Lewis. "I really believe he thought they'd be proud of him, too, and proud of him for trusting them. So he went in, and sat down in a pew in one of the aisles.

We were all listening intently.

“They came round him and told him to go out,” said Lewis; “and when he was not ready to believe that they meant it, they seized him by the collar, and dragged him out of the church.”

“Oh, they must be mad!” exclaimed mother.

“What happened next?—what did he do?” I asked.

“Well, it had a strange effect on Marcus; it changed him,” said Lewis. “You know our folks are just like others—no worse, no better. You know how most folks behave. Some jeered, thinking he had wanted to ‘stick up to white people.’ Some scoffed, saying he ought to have known beforehand what he’d get. (Perhaps he ought, but it’s a pity when evil thoughts are the correct ones!) Some of them said, ‘Submit.’ A few spoke as Lucy did when she said what I told you (it was then she said so). Marcus himself grew very grave and solemn. He never laughed or joked afterwards. But he had to do something—he had to earn bread, for one thing. I think he felt like Lucy did. Perhaps he thought it was best to get out of temptation. He saw he couldn’t live in strife and scorn. He made up his mind to go to Africa. There’s some of our people looking that way. Jem didn’t believe in it, nor do I. Marcus had not been in Africa two months before he died of malarial fever. The climate did not suit the two-thirds of white man that was in poor Marcus!”

“Or maybe he went to the wrong part,” said Willie; “went where he didn’t belong. Africa is bigger than Europe. An Italian is a European, and Lapland is in Europe. Would an Italian like to go ‘home’ to Lapland? Would he be likely to thrive there?”

“Poor Lucy!” said Lewis, with more softness than I had ever seen him show; “I oughtn’t to have told you what she said. If you take a snap-judgment of her through those words, you’re wrong. She never said a bitter word about Marcus’ death. I don’t know if she has since they have killed Jem too.”

“And I don’t see why she shouldn’t!” Otto broke out suddenly. “It’s all the relief poor women have; let them take it! But for the men to stand it—well, if I was one” (he grew quite incoherent)—“it makes me despise them, it does, their taking this treatment so quietly.”

“Why, if they resisted, they would only be killed,” said I. “What use would that be?”

“Then let them sell their lives dearly!” cried Otto, with the intense wrath of a calm nature. “If they are going to be sent out of this world, let them take care to carry a few of their murderers with them. Let them return the white men the measure that they give. Till the negroes do that, they deserve what they get.”

There was a pause. The atmosphere seemed full of battle.

“Children,” said father quietly, “do you know

what you are saying—how you are thinking? You profess to abhor revenge, to believe in patience and meekness and forgiveness: yet when you see these qualities, you despise them—you make them badges of shame. Actually, you can't believe that they come from anything but fear and meanness of nature! Do you mean that? Surely not! I don't think so. I think in this way,—that as Africa seems to be the last of the nations to be gathered in, so it is to be her part to exemplify the last Revelation of God to man,—the good news of serviceableness and sacrifice and meekness and peace and goodwill. Then the last shall be first. It is not my own notion," continued father, with honest modesty. "I got the idea from a book I picked up at the River House,—a book written by a man who is an American himself,—and one of their clever ones, I reckon, for I've often heard his name, and he has written a list of books. He put it into the mouth of one of the characters of his story, and the character was a man that had travelled, and seen a good deal."

Lewis' dark face was bright with a strong, clear light. "I know this, sir," he said, edging a little nearer father. "I feel as mad as anybody can be, sometimes. I feel as if I could go South, and set fire to towns, and shoot, and kill. But it's when I feel ready to be shot and killed if I could only get a chance of teaching the Southerners better that I feel like myself!"

“That’s it,” said mother. “There’s only one right way to make our enemies sorry, and that is to make them sorry for being our enemies. Let’s help them to be better, and leave the vengeance with God.”

“Oh, yes ; I’ll help them to be better,” said Otto. “When I meet a Southern man (or a Northerner either, for that matter), I’m going to say, ‘Will you let a decent negro come in and dine with us?’ If he won’t, I shall say, ‘Get out yourself, and stay there!’ Oh, yes ; I know,” he went on, half in soliloquy, and with whole incoherence. “There was a time when I—myself! Well, and when it was so, I got out—and stayed—till I knew better!”

Then his feelings seeming to be too much for him, he rose, and stalked away, and our little party on the verandah was broken up. Dear old Otto! Father says Otto will be always in the right, because he is always finding himself out in the wrong!





Chapter 18

A MYSTERY SOLVED

THE circle of the year went round and brought the anniversaries of Cousin Norman's mysterious disappearance and of Lewis' coming among us.

Of course it brought also the anniversary of the cruel death of Lewis' brother Jem. We knew that must have happened a few days before Lewis arrived at the farm, but we didn't know the exact date, and Lewis did not tell us. Several letters came for Lewis at that time, and the unfailing weekly missive, but thicker than usual, from the sister Lucy.

In the course of that week father got a letter from his cousin Madge, and when mother asked him if she had any news of Norman, he answered No, and did not say anything more. Only it hurt me to see how sad and careworn he looked for a whole day after he got that letter!

Lewis never told us any more particulars of his brother's death than I have set down in this story. He talked about Jem constantly, quoted his sayings, and laughed over their quaint wisdom just as he might if Jem had been still living. Thinking over it, it struck me this was the right thing; for what was permanent and pleasant was Jem himself and his real character, and why should that be smeared across by other people's horrid wickedness, which lasted but for a few minutes, and then could do no more?

The week which was full of the anniversaries which we all thought about and did not name came to an end, and Sunday brought a new week. It was such a sweet, shining day. We went to church in the morning. Nearly everybody in the congregation carried flowers. The young girls fastened them in their bosoms (Otto brought me some white rosebuds), the elder women carried them with their books, the men wore them in their buttonholes. The place was filled with the soft perfume, and when the hymn—

“I've found a joy in sorrow,
A secret balm for pain,
A beautiful to-morrow
Of sunshine after rain,”

was being sung to a real summer-day tune, it was hard to believe that there was still sin and misery in the world actually going on at that very hour!

Otto drove mother and me home when service was



We were comfortably seated on the grass, and were rather surprised to see Lewis coming along the field path.
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over. Father chose to walk with Lewis and Willie, and when we met round the dinner-table, we all cried out that he should not have done so,—he had over-tired himself,—for he looked so wan and old.

On Sunday afternoons, Otto and I generally took a walk through our fields to the little wood which had been spared when our clearing was made, because it gave shelter to the farm from the east wind. Beside that, the maple trees gave us plenty of delicious home-made sugar. Otto and I had a great deal of each other's society, yet very little of it without other people's as well, and somehow this Sunday afternoon stroll on the home-lands had grown to be regarded as our special perquisite.

Therefore, when we were comfortably seated on the grass, and the dog Shag had stretched himself out beside us, we were rather surprised to see Lewis coming along the field path. At first we thought there must be visitors, or something needed in the house ; but though Lewis came straight towards us, and, standing still, made some casual remark, evidently he had no message.

There was an awkward little silence, then Lewis said, with a kind of suddenness —

“I'm glad you noticed how poorly the squire is looking.”

(Farmers like father are in Canada generally called either the squire or the boss ; Lewis always said the squire.)

"But it wasn't his walk from church that made him tired," Lewis went on; "he's tired in his mind. He's troubling himself about that Norman Padgett."

"I thought so, after Mrs. Padgett's letter came," I said, rather resentfully. "But he's never spoken a word about him to us lately."

"No," returned Lewis, "he'll not do that, I guess. He feels it would worry all of you to know he is worrying."

"It would make me wild with the young scoundrel who has made all this trouble, whether he's dead or alive," said Otto.

Lewis shook his head gravely. "That's what the squire reckons," he answered, "and that's what the squire doesn't want. Those who really care for these troublesome folk don't badger other folk about them till they get to hate 'em. But the squire has spoken to me once or twice—looking on me, I suppose, as a sort of outsider, to whom it means no more than something read in a newspaper. He was saying to-day that the mother writing from England seems much worse about her son than she did at first. She seems to think that not having had any word from him for the whole year means something very bad. And now the squire begins to take blame to himself that he did not go to meet the boy. Norman might have refused to come with him, he says, yet he feels that whatever had happened surely Norman would have been convinced that there was an open door for

him if he ever came to his senses. Something in this morning's sermon set the squire on that tack. He says if this young man is still living he may be longing to do better now, and yet not like to turn to Sherlett's farm. He might fear he'd get no welcome."

"Let him come and take his chance," said Otto. "I don't believe in your prodigals who won't turn round unless they're quite sure it's to be all welcome and fatted calf. I never believed he was dead."

Lewis had been standing beside us, gazing out across the fields. He turned abruptly and faced us.

"I *know* he wasn't dead when he disappeared," said he emphatically.

A whole crowd of remembrances rushed through my brain,—Lewis' strange coming among us, the mysterious handkerchief marked "N.P." (which I had always kept folded up separate from the household linen, in the little drawer of the kitchen side-table), even some remarks which Lewis himself had once or twice dropped, though their significance had not struck me at the time.

"Did he send you here instead of himself?" asked Otto. "I'll think better of him if he did. There's a bit that's straight in those that will send the right sort to get good which they don't care to take themselves."

Lewis shook his head. "No," he said, "I'm sorry, but he didn't send me. I saw him at Niagara Falls.

In a saloon there. Another man was in his company. They seemed to have met a third by appointment. They were drinking and talking. They did not notice a 'nigger' who was mopping up the floor. I soon made out that the young fellow was making tracks for himself. They all roared with laughter about Sherlett's farm, where a fellow would be expected to work hard and keep good hours, and be sober. I found out whereabouts it was, because the odd one asked whether there was no fun going in its neighbourhood, and Norman's companion said, 'No; the nearest town was Clitheroe, a dull hole of a place.' Norman said he'd never meant to come here, but his pretending to do so had made it easy for him to get away from home. He said he meant to write to his mother to say he'd taken the bit between his own teeth!"

"There!" said I, "and I believe he did write to her then, for she never answered father's question at the time."

"And then," Lewis went on, "they made game of the psalm-singing old farmer expecting his new hand! It was that put it into my head to come here. Everything they said in mockery of Sherlett's farm let me see it was just the place for me."

"And did you hear anything of their own plans?" asked Otto.

"Yes, I did," said Lewis. "I made out that they were all going to Euchreville, near Chicago, where

the odd one evidently owns a gaming saloon. It was clear they were after the young English fellow's money."

"Poor foolish boy!" I sighed. "I daresay he has seen their true colours before this."

"Maybe he's wearing them himself," said Otto. "The bitten often become the biters."

I told Lewis about the handkerchief with the "N. P." on it, but he knew nothing of it. Yet it is only likely that it was dropped on the floor he was cleaning up, and that he pocketed it as his own.

"Then they talked quite freely before you?" observed Otto.

"Indeed they did,—they took no more notice of me crawling in and out under the table than if I had been a dog," returned Lewis.

"But the 'dog' took the blessing which the 'child' let fall," said I.

"Humph!" grunted Otto. "I think it was the 'dog' seated at the table—insolent young puppy!—and the 'child' under it. And the 'child' knew its own place when it heard of it, and the dog went after its garbage."

"How came you in the saloon, Lewis?" I asked.

"I'll tell you," said he. "All the while I was in the cars, I'd been half thinking to myself that I'd stop a time at Niagara Falls, and that if I could get a few dollars there—for my own would not hold out farther—I'd get my letters and things sent on to me,

and then I might find employment for a while as a waiter at one of the big hotels.”

“With your education, would you have done that?” I cried, for I own I’ve got some of the Canadian notions which draw a line between the roughest work and anything like “service.” I think it is because there are such wrong notions about “service.”

Lewis laughed. “Why not?” he said. “Doesn’t it prove that it’s a lie to say we have an evil smell, and are coarse and brutal in our manners, when they’re glad to have us help them to their food? That’s what they do for themselves, when they’re so willing to let us ‘wait,’ and so unwilling to give us other work. My education indeed!—why, many of the negro students at Harvard keep themselves there by their earnings as waiters!” Lewis forgot all about Norman for a moment.

“Far better for them to wait on the dining-tables than to hang about the bars and billiard rooms, like some of the white students!” said Otto. “I reckon you found young Padgett at that sort of work.”

“Well, I walked about the town of Niagara Falls,” resumed Lewis. “It’s nearly all hotels, and lodging places, and restaurants, and saloons, and it’s always full of strangers coming to see the famous Falls. I picked up a trifle by carrying luggage, but I had to spend that on food, and where I was to spend the night I could not think. So I sat down on a rail in

the chief street, and watched the people passing up and down. I didn't feel like myself. I felt like nobody — nobody's ghost! By-and-by the hotel dinners were over, and the negro waiters came out and walked about too, mostly in threes, one older and two younger, I believe that's how they work together. I heard one thing which did me a lot of good. A lady and a young man—like mother and son—came along, and found a seat quite near me, but just round a corner, so that they didn't see me. By the lady's speech, I think she was an English-woman, and she said to her son,—

“‘Dear me, is there a negro college near here, Harry?’

“‘Not that I know of,’ he answered; ‘what makes you think so?’

“‘There are so many gentlemanly young negroes walking about,’ said she.

“The son laughed.

“‘Why, they are the hotel waiters,’ he replied.

“‘Well—to—be—sure!’ said the lady, quite slowly, just like that. ‘Then all I can say is their appearance and manners are better bred and more gentlemanly than those of many students I have seen in the college towns at home!’

“That did me real good! My notion was to speak to some of those young waiters and ask them to do me a good turn, but while I was making up my mind, a man came out of the house behind me, and said,—

“ ‘ Here, you nigger, if you want to earn a quarter, and your supper and bed, come in and give me a hand to clean up the place, for my boy’s run away.’

“ That’s how I came to be in the saloon,—and what I heard in that saloon brought me here !

“ And now, what I’m feeling is, that we must get hold of this Norman Padgett once more, and give him another chance !”

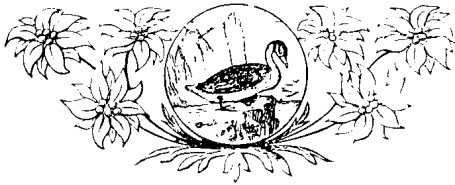
“ Yes, for the squire’s sake,” said Otto ; “ the squire must not be left to worry over such carrion.”

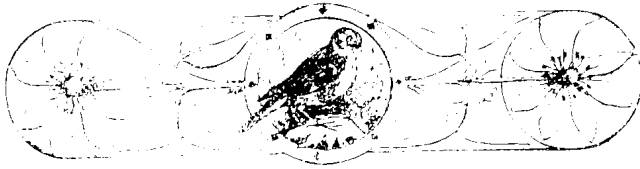
“ But how can we do it ?” asked Lewis ; “ we’d never get at him by a letter.”

“ You and I will have to take a holiday, and go after him,” said Otto. “ It’ll cost us heaps of money,” he added ruefully. (I knew what Otto was thinking about. That very afternoon, before Lewis had joined us, we two had been discussing how much it would cost to furnish a little house that stood on the high road not far from Sherlett’s farm !)

That was how they settled it. It was the slack season, and Willie’s holidays too, so that they could be spared for a fortnight. Father did not refuse them when they said they wanted to take a trip, though as they didn’t tell him their errand, I think he wondered a little. A nice pother of talk it made, all the way from Clitheroe to Baskerville ! Mrs. Magrath went to and fro shaking her head, and saying the poor Sherletts would rue the day they ever took that black cuckoo into their nest—for such

were restless and made restless—and when Otto Hermann had seen what was in the big world, and the stylish ladies he would meet on the steamers and in the cars, he would soon forget all about that little dowdy Sophy, and would never come back to Sherlett's farm !





Chapter 19

IN GOD'S HAND

I AM coming to the end of my story. I wonder what you think happened?

Perhaps some of you hope that Otto and Lewis found Norman repentant and reformed, humbly trying to earn an honest livelihood, and only too thankful to learn that forgiveness and restoration still awaited him among his own people.

Or some of you may think that they reached him just in time to see him on his death-bed, to receive the expression of his regret and remorse, and to point him to the one source of pardon and peace before he passed away from his wasted life.

Nothing of the sort!

They did not have much difficulty in finding him. They followed the clue of the names Lewis had overheard; and though Norman was no longer a frequenter of the gaming saloon in Euchreville, near

Chicago, its proprietor readily referred them to his new haunts, casually remarking at the same time that he was "a poor lot."



He came down in a dirty dressing-gown, and a smoking cap with a tarnished gilt tassel. (Page 154.)

They found Norman living in a tawdry boarding house. As soon as they had no more doubt of his identity, Lewis retired into the background, and left

Otto to carry on the business by himself. He called at the boarding house about noon, but had to wait nearly half an hour before Norman made his appearance, and then he came down in a dirty dressing-gown, and a smoking cap with a tarnished gilt tassel. Otto told him at once that he came from Sherlett's farm, and what were father's feelings about him. Norman was quite civil, and very curious to know how he had been traced, which Otto did not then reveal. He said he had been an awful ass to act as he had done: he thought it was due to the way he had been brought up; his mother had given him too much liberty and too little liberty,—and then he'd got under the influence of scoundrels. (The only person he never really blamed was himself!) Oh, his money had vanished long ago! Otto showed some interest in his means of livelihood, but Norman's confidences on that point were very vague. He told Otto a long story of woes: how hard people were; how everybody cheated him; how bad his health was; how his ventures had failed.

Otto said he could see that Norman hoped that the story of these woes might bring forth pity in the shape of a little ready cash. But when, instead, Otto asked him whether he would not reconsider his folly, and begin life again at the proper point, Norman had a thousand excuses to offer. He was not made for agricultural work, or for manual labour of any kind; the climate so far north as Sherlett's

farm would be too hard for him ; his ways would never suit Mr. Sherlett's house, and it was too late now to change his ways, more's the pity ! (People always say that when they don't wish to change their ways !) He must just do the best he could. He was sure he did any honest work that came in his way. He had a little musical engagement just now. Well, —he played the piano of an evening—at—well, at a dancing-room.

Otto felt that his embassy, so far as any immediate hope of Norman's recovery was concerned, was a failure. Norman was not quite so obdurate when he was urged to resume writing to his mother, and to keep himself at least within the ken of his kinsfolk.

"I hope God will forgive me if I am uncharitable," said Otto, "but I could not help feeling that he saw he could make capital out of having kept out of sight till he was sought for, which will give weight to his woeful stories and to his hints for dollars and money orders !"

And so Otto and Lewis came back together to Sherlett's farm. Then they told everything to father and mother. Father is satisfied to know that at least the prodigal understands that the way home is open, whenever he honestly chooses to set his feet in it. We understand Norman writes sometimes to his mother, but Mrs. Padgett never writes to father now, because father heard she was sending out doles to Norman, and then he wrote to her and said that

mere money would not save Norman from the kind of life he was in, but could only avert some of the suffering, which, if permitted to fall, might make him the sooner sick of it. She was offended. She thinks father is "hard"!

And that is all! You see, this is a story of real life, and in real life there is not a sudden knotting up of all the threads, but they are spun out, little by little, day after day.

If all is well, Otto and I will be married next year. And father and mother have made up their minds to give Sherlett's farm over to us, and it is they who are to go into the pretty little house on the high road, and rest, and have a verandah full of flowers, and Willie is to go to college, and will be among us only in the holidays.

Lewis is still working with us on Sherlett's farm, but Mr. Setebos talks of enlarging his business and going into agricultural implement selling. And he says that if Lewis will come to be his assistant, he shall be his partner by-and-by. You see, Mr. Setebos has no son of his own, nor any other child but Julia.

We all hope the best for Norman. But we must leave him in God's hands. One can't give a man a chance if he won't take it. And as for Otto, he always says he can't worry over the people who throw away their opportunities—indeed, their best opportunity may be to get left to take any they can catch!—but what he wants is to make sure that

everybody gets one opportunity in life,—and that “black diamonds” are not grudged a proper “setting.”



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