

**The Project Gutenberg eBook of  
Rathfelder's Hotel  
, by Annie E. Bosworth**

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: Rathfelder's Hotel

Author: Annie E. Bosworth

Release date: November 2, 2014 [EBook #47270]

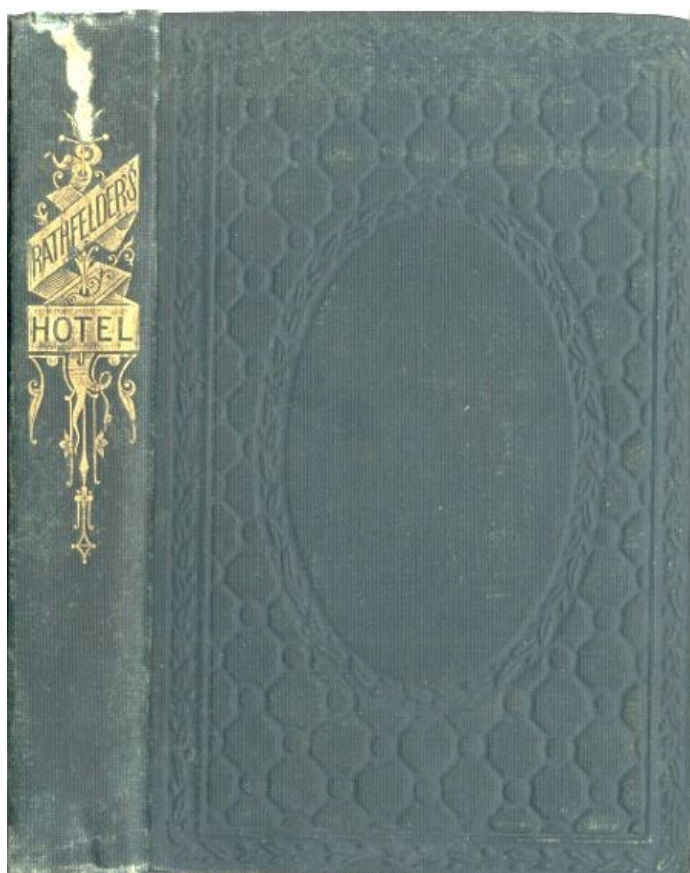
Language: English

Credits: Produced by Juliet Sutherland, Martin Pettit and the Online  
Distributed Proofreading Team at <http://www.pgdp.net>

\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK RATHFELDER'S HOTEL \*\*\*

Transcriber's Note:

A Table of Contents has been added.





"LOOK THERE!"

page 43

---

## RATHFELDER'S HOTEL.

[Pg 1]

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"THE FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER."

---

PHILADELPHIA:  
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,  
1334 CHESTNUT STREET.

---

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	<a href="#">3</a>
CHAPTER II.	<a href="#">12</a>
CHAPTER III.	<a href="#">20</a>
CHAPTER IV.	<a href="#">25</a>
CHAPTER V.	<a href="#">34</a>
CHAPTER VI.	<a href="#">49</a>
CHAPTER VII.	<a href="#">58</a>
CHAPTER VIII.	<a href="#">62</a>
CHAPTER IX.	<a href="#">74</a>
CHAPTER X.	<a href="#">86</a>
CHAPTER XI.	<a href="#">95</a>
CHAPTER XII.	<a href="#">108</a>

CHAPTER XIII.	<a href="#">121</a>
CHAPTER XIV.	<a href="#">132</a>
CHAPTER XV.	<a href="#">140</a>
CHAPTER XVI.	<a href="#">154</a>
CHAPTER XVII.	<a href="#">166</a>
UNCLE JOHN'S GIFT.	<a href="#">183</a>
A GIRL WHO COULDN'T BE TRUSTED.	<a href="#">193</a>
THE MOTHER'S LAST GIFT.	<a href="#">202</a>
NOT THE BEST WAY.	<a href="#">209</a>

---

## RATHFELDER'S HOTEL.

[Pg 3]

---

### CHAPTER I.

Standing back beside the picturesque road encircling Windburg hill, near Cape Town, was a large, handsome house, rather long and high, however, according to the style of architecture usual in that stormy region of the world. The front windows on the ground floor opened out upon a broad terrace, or "stoop," as it is termed by the Dutch, shaded by a wide projecting trellised roof, which roof was so thickly interlaced by vines of the rich Constantia grape, the branches being then clustered over with massive bunches of the golden and purple fruit, that it was with difficulty the sun obtained a peep here and there down upon the persons beneath.

[Pg 4]

It was early in February, a late summer month in Africa, as some of my young readers may know. The grounds surrounding the house were extensive and varied, and laid out in the Cape fashion—that is to say, they owed considerably more to Southern nature's luxuriant hand for their attractiveness and abundance than to art. Such a state of things was not, however, so much the result of choice or taste of the inhabitants, as because gardeners, and indeed working hands of every kind, were sometimes impossible to obtain at any price. One advantage, and a very decided one in fresh English eyes, accrues from this style of semi-cultivation. Flowers alike rare and prized in our costly green-houses, but regarded by the Cape inhabitants as valueless, display a richness of bloom and splendour little conceived of by the natives of colder climes.

On a bright and beautiful morning (though indeed the reverse of that is the exception during the summer season at the Cape) a girl of between fifteen and sixteen years of age was ascending the broad staircase which half encircled the spacious hall within the above-mentioned house. The sunshine streamed in softened rays through the coloured panes of a high arched window, surrounding her form as an island in golden light as she passed. It was a charming face and figure, and a thoughtful yet bright expression seemed to pervade her whole person, filling it with love and intelligence.

[Pg 5]

"Oh how pleasant! all day long! how glad Lotty will be! I am sure she will. Dear, kind uncle! he always thinks of something good and delightful for every one," she ejaculated half aloud while speeding up the stairs, then along a wide passage, and finally opening the door of a bedroom at the farther end. Seated on the side of a bed was a fine but rather heavy-looking girl some two years senior of the first. Judging from her appearance, she had but just risen, for she was still clad only in a wrapper, while an abundant growth of fair hair, released from the cap which lay on the floor beside her stockingless feet, fell dishevelled upon her shoulders. Altogether, she presented a very impersonation of youthful indolence as she sat there, one hand supporting her elbow, while lazily she passed the other over her still sleepy-looking face.

[Pg 6]

"Oh, you are not up yet!" exclaimed her visitor, stopping short inside the door and eyeing the drowsy form before her with a disappointed expression.

"If I am not up, what am I?" she retorted, yawning audibly.

"I mean, you are not dressed yet."

"Have you come up here for the express purpose of giving me that undeniable piece of information?"

"Oh no," answered the other, quickly, as suddenly she bethought herself again of her pleasant news, and with recovered cheerfulness came close to her sister. "Uncle is going to take us with aunty to spend all to-day at Rathfelder's Hotel!—won't that be charming?—and all night, too, returning home to-morrow morning! Oh, isn't that nice?"

[Pg 7]

"Well, I don't see anything so particularly nice or charming in it," answered Charlotte in a wet-blanket sort of tone that very considerably quenched the light in the sweet, bright face before her.

"Don't you, Lotty? why not?"

"Oh, you will find out fast enough for yourself when there; do not tease me about it now, but go

and send Susan here at once; I have been wanting her this last half hour or more."

"Last half hour? Why didn't you ring for her?"

"There! don't ask any more questions, Mechie, you are such a tiresome girl at that!" exclaimed Charlotte, impatiently; "go—do—and tell Susan to come to me; if you delay any longer it will be your fault if I'm late, and I shall get a scolding in consequence." So away went the young girl, wearing a very different aspect from that she presented when first we introduced her amidst sunbeams and smiles on the stairs.

[Pg 8]

In a pleasant room, the folding windows of which allowed egress upon the vine-covered stoop—and which windows were now wide open, admitting the fresh breeze from the in-coming ocean tide, the waters of the great Pacific, whose sparkling waves were tumbling and leaping toward the base of the Windburg far beneath—three persons sat at breakfast, Mr. and Mrs. Rossiter, middle-aged and of benevolent aspect, and our little friend Maria Marlow, or Mechie, as that name is given by the Dutch. Uncle and, aunt were mere nominal appellations, adopted by the two girls according to the wish of their kind benefactors, Mr. and Mrs. Rossiter, but no relationship existed between them.

Major Marlow quitted the army and India to become a settler in Cape Colony, and with his young wife and children—Charlotte and Maria—arrived in Cape Town during what was to him the inclement season of winter. Unhappily, his constitution, already injured by long service in hot climates, gave way before the sudden change, and in one month he died of inflammation of the lungs. His equally delicate wife, who loved him tenderly, sank under her severe loss, and in a few months followed him to the grave, but not before she had, through the goodness of God, found true Christian friends in Mr. and Mrs. Rossiter, to whom she trustfully consigned the possession and care of her little girls, then two and four years of age. Being themselves childless, they willingly accepted the charge, and in time loved the poor orphans as dearly as though they were their own by birth.

[Pg 9]

Though reared with equal care and love, the two children, as they advanced in years, displayed characters and dispositions of such opposite tendencies that their noble-hearted benefactors might have experienced as much vexation and disappointment in the apparent failure of their hopes on the one hand as gratification with their success on the other, had they not based their judgment of human nature upon the unerring word of God, which tells of the strange inconsistencies, singular varieties, perversities and inborn depravity of the souls of men. Happily, however, for all those under the influence and control of these excellent, right-thinking people, they had great faith in the influence of Christian training and the power of divine grace. They remembered the promises attached to patient and prayerful sowing the seed, the fruit of which would appear in God's right time. So they kept the ancient precept: "These words shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children; and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest, down, and when thou risest up." In such a home were Charlotte and Maria Marlow reared.

[Pg 10]

But having introduced my readers thus far to Fern Bank and its inhabitants, I will withdraw, and allow Maria Marlow to continue this little history in her own simple way.

[Pg 11]

---

## CHAPTER II.

[Pg 12]

Circumstances had prevented my going to Rathfelder's Hotel (my young readers will understand it is Maria Marlow who now speaks) when, on a former occasion, Charlotte had been taken there, and I was gleefully chatting away to uncle and aunt of the anticipated pleasure as the former at last made her appearance.

"Oh, Lotty, Lotty, my child, how comes it about that you are again so late for breakfast?" aunty said, more in a tone of kindness than reproof, as she raised her face to receive the customary kiss which we always bestowed upon both our guardians when first greeting them in the morning; "you promised that for the future you would endeavour to be earlier."

"Yes, and it's all Susan's fault that I have not kept my promise this morning, aunty. I was out of bed, waiting for her to come and get me my bath, for nearly—" Here Charlotte, meeting uncle's eyes, suddenly checked herself, remembering how greatly he and aunt disapproved of an exaggerated style of speaking. The real truth was, as Susan had told me, that about eight or ten minutes had elapsed between the time of my looking into the bed-room to see if Lotty was up, which she was not, and my sending her there; and even that time need not have been wasted had Charlotte taken the trouble to ring her bell. "For a long while, at any rate," she continued. "Mechie came and found me sitting on the bedside—didn't you, Mechie?—and stared at me as though I had been a ghost," she concluded, sinking indolently into her chair.

[Pg 13]

I was glad to take refuge in a light laugh instead of further answer, knowing how little the case admitted of any reply likely to prove satisfactory to Charlotte. To my relief, also, uncle covered my silence by saying gently:

"Do not forget your grace, my dear girl. Let us always bear in mind from whose gracious hand it is we receive every blessing we enjoy, and be grateful with our hearts and thankful with our lips." [Pg 14]

Charlotte directly stood up, and silently bent her fair head for a few seconds, and again resumed her seat. Aunt Rossiter did not at that time farther press the point on the subject of late rising. She detected, by our manner, that something was wrong, but, as was her custom on like occasions—that is, whenever the matter in hand seemed taking a zigzag course instead of the straight road of truth—she delayed speaking until such time as more favourable circumstances or a better state of feeling in the delinquent rendered it judicious to do so.

The breakfast was nearly concluded as Charlotte came in, and soon after Uncle Rossiter rose to quit the room. In passing her chair he affectionately laid his hand on her head, saying, gravely, "In being down so late, my child, mark, what are the consequences: first and principally, you have missed the prayer and chapter in the Bible; secondly, the meal is nearly over, therefore all is cold and comfortless; thirdly, you have vexed your good, kind aunt, to say nothing of myself, and now you must hasten, for the carriage will be at the door by ten, as we must not lose the cool part of the day for driving." [Pg 15]

"Oh no, we will all manage to be ready by then, I am sure," rejoined Aunt Rossiter, cheerfully.

"Yes, we are sure to be ready, dear uncle," I cried, more warmly, perhaps, than I might otherwise have spoken. But my heart longed to say something to brighten his kind face, which was just then looking unusually grave, and Charlotte's general expression did not at that moment promise much in the way of concession. She seemed altogether too greatly disconcerted by the comfortless aspect of the breakfast-table to heed anything else.

Uncle smiled affectionately upon me, his fine, benevolent eyes kindling as he did so.

"Bear in mind what I am saying to you, my dear Lotty, when Susan calls you of a morning," he continued, again looking down on Charlotte; "remember that a sluggard in body is sure to be a sluggard in soul; remember that to win that prize which is above all price you must be active and energetic; remember what St. Paul says about those that strive or run to obtain a corruptible crown, and how he speaks of incorruptible. 'So run that ye may obtain.'" [Pg 16]

Uncle then left the room without waiting for an answer, reiterating his request, however, as he went out, that we would be in time.

"Oh yes, dear uncle, depend upon it we will," I again repeated.

"Speak for yourself, Mechie, and don't undertake to answer for others," Lotty said in a quiet, half-sulky voice; "I will not promise by any means to be ready by ten, seeing I have only just begun my breakfast, and have, as you know, a very particular objection to being hurried over my meals."

"If you are not ready by the time your uncle wishes to start, my dear Lotty, we shall be under the unpleasant necessity of going without you," answered Aunt Rossiter in a tone so serious and firm that Charlotte did not attempt to dispute it, and silently continued her breakfast. Aunt then left the room. How much I wished that Charlotte would eat with a little less deliberation! At this rate of proceeding, I thought, she certainly never can or will be ready by ten. [Pg 17]

"Perhaps, while you are finishing—" I began, when she interrupted me, sharply:

"I beg to observe that I am only just beginning."

"Well, then, perhaps more correctly speaking, while you are eating your breakfast, had I not better run up and tell Susan what we are going to wear, that she may get all ready for us, so as not to lose time?"

"Do as you like."

"What shall she put out for you?"

"I don't know; I've not thought about it."

"Oh, but do think about it, Lotty, please do," I urged, coaxingly; "I am certain to be ready myself, but there is so little time now left, I fear, unless you hurry more, you will not be dressed when the carriage comes to the door, and oh, I can't say how vexed I should be to go without you." [Pg 18]

"The vexation will all be on your side, then; I should not care a bit."

"Oh, Lotty, is it a matter of such indifference to you whether uncle and aunt are distressed by your behaviour, to say nothing of me?"

"If uncle chooses to fix the time of our destination at so unreasonably early an hour, he must care very little whether I come or not, and therefore is not likely to feel much distress one way or the other, and as aunt quite seconded him, she, of course, thinks the same."

"But, Lotty, you know that everybody who can manage it sets off as early as that, or sooner, when they have a long drive before them; besides, the principal point is to secure a good long day at Rathfelder's. However, I must not waste time in talking, but run and get everything as forward as circumstances will admit of." [Pg 19]

"Pray do; it will be quite a relief to be rid of you in your present worrying mood," replied Charlotte, coldly.

I had an uncomfortable misgiving in my heart that Charlotte's more than indifference to the expedition, together with her unhappy fit of ill-humour (which, to do her justice, was not a kind of temper of frequent occurrence in her), would unite in rendering her so careless about coming that the carriage would be at the door before she had even quitted the breakfast-table. So I hurried up stairs and ran to lay the case, with as much consideration for Lotty as it admitted of, before our kind old nurse and good, sensible friend, Susan Bridget.

---

### CHAPTER III.

[Pg 20]

A truly worthy old body was our nurse, Susan Bridget. Stern and hard of visage, firm and determined in disposition and of unpolished though perfectly respectful manners, she was nevertheless peculiarly sweet tempered, and possessed as kind a heart as ever beat within woman's breast. She had been our nurse from the period of our first becoming inmates of Fern Bank, and each year that passed her simple piety, fidelity and unaffected good sense raised her higher and higher in uncle and aunt's esteem. Although not exactly adapted to the position of lady's maid, aunt would not dismiss her as we grew older, feeling secure that in her was united to the duties of an orderly, industrious servant the true thoughtful care and anxiety of a Christian friend, and that she was, therefore, well fitted for an attendant upon two growing up, motherless girls like ourselves. Susan was certainly an old-fashioned and not always very grammatical speaker, but that seemed, I always thought, to enhance yet more the spirit and truth of her admonitions, of which she was very unsparing toward her nurslings when she considered them needed. I liked her quaint matter-of-fact mode of speech far better than many a more elegant style, for it brought her directly to the point with a kind of rough eloquence that at once struck at the understanding, leaving the delinquent no excuse to stand upon. She was quick and just in her perception of character, and altogether peculiarly fitted to deal with so capricious and whimsical a young damsel as dear, humoursome Charlotte. To say the truth, too, the latter, if she did not entertain more respect for the opinions and scoldings of nurse Susan, as she continued to be called, was greatly more afraid of her than of our gentle and kind guardians.

[Pg 21]

"I can't think, not I, why it is Miss Lotty will be always so contrary in her ways!" Susan exclaimed after listening with a disapproving face to my modified account of the morning's contretemps; "what's the good of it? can she tell me that? She gains nothing and loses a deal; she spoils the pleasure to herself of almost everything she does by her whimsies and silly tempers, and makes other folks uncomfortable too. She doesn't see how ugly and unpleasant it makes her in the eyes of her fellow-creatures, spoiling her looks and her manners, but more and worse than that, how sinful it makes her in the sight of God."

[Pg 22]

"I am so afraid," interposed I, "that she does not intend going at all to-day, Susan."

"Not going at all!" repeated Susan in a voice of stern amazement, stopping short in her preparations for our dressing and staring at me.

"She says it is too early to go, and she will not hurry herself," I replied.

"Not hurry herself! that's a pretty way of talking, and it's her uncle and aunt as wants her!" and Susan hastened from the room and down stairs, saying, as she went, "I'll just give her a bit of my mind, that's what I'll do."

[Pg 23]

Now, in what that bit of mind consisted I did not know exactly, though I pretty well guessed. Its administration proved much more speedily efficacious, however, than the bits of mind which aunt and I had bestowed upon Miss Lotty, for in a wonderfully short space of time up she came, with a rather depressed head and considerably subdued look, albeit a half-rebellious expression still lurked in her eyes and round the corners of her handsome mouth. Close behind followed Susan Bridget with very much the air of a schoolmaster bringing back some runaway scholar, her tall, bony figure more than usually straight, stiff and determined. To have seen her at that moment any one would have thought her one of the most relentless tyrants in the world. Poor, dear, soft-hearted Susan!

There was but brief while for dressing, and no time was now lost on superfluous words. Susan, without waiting to extract the half-sulky, reluctant replies from Charlotte as to whether she did or did not approve certain articles of dress, unhesitatingly selected such as she herself chose for the occasion, and without ceremony put them upon Lotty, hastening her movements and utterly disregarding her pettish complaints and discontented looks. So it was, therefore, that when the carriage came to the door, and uncle and aunt were ready, to my great joy Charlotte was ready too—ready in fact a few minutes before myself, I not having had the advantage of Susan's assistance. Just lingering a moment as Lotty left the room to press a warm kiss of farewell and glad thanks for her successful management of the former on good old Susan's hard cheek, I sped down stairs after my sister, and we were soon on our way to Rathfelder's Hotel.

[Pg 24]

---

### CHAPTER IV.

[Pg 25]

Were not places of pleasurable and healthful resort so few in the neighbourhood of Cape Town, its inhabitants would certainly not attach the degree of importance they do to visiting a spot so barren of attraction to the majority as is the country whereon stands Rathfelder's Hotel. A long, low, widespreading building, or rather cluster of buildings, it lies beside the road leading from Cape Town to Cork Bay, and nearly at equal distance—about seven miles—from both places. Excepting a scattering of small native cottages, no other habitation is within sight, and the country, bounded on the north-west by the seemingly interminable range of the Table Mountains, spreads away in other directions, far, far beyond sight, one unbroken flat. Indeed, "The Flats" is the name given to these parts by the natives. To the lover of flowers and of this kind of wild, independent solitude peculiar to the Flats, the gratification is boundless. The soil, a mixture of white sand and turf, is highly favourable to the growth of an immense variety of heaths and other flowering shrubs, which with ever-charming successions carpet the ground with their myriads of blossoms throughout the great part of the year. Heaths of the richest hues and luxuriance—scarlet, orange, pink and other colours—predominate.

[Pg 26]

It would seem that only by comparison is the value, the real pleasure or importance of anything known; even the degrees of pain and sorrow are learned but by contrast with the greater or lesser afflictions which have preceded them; and thus it was that a week or fortnight's stay at Rathfelder's or but a day's excursion to these flowery and cool regions—cooler and fresher by ten degrees than in or near the town—came to be regarded as one if not the principal delight of the hot summer-time to the inhabitants of Cape Town—especially to those who, like our dear uncle, were obliged by reason of their engagements to spend a great portion of every day in the scorching city. He was one of the managers of the great Colonial bank there.

[Pg 27]

"Oh, now, don't you call this pleasant, Lotty?" I exclaimed as we wandered together in the garden at the back of the hotel after dinner, uncle and aunt preferring to remain on the broad balcony surrounding that portion of the house allotted entirely to visitors. The garden lay at a distance quite out of sight of the house, and was shaded by fruit trees, while the banks of a stream which rippled over a pebbly bed skirting one side of the ground were brilliant with arum blossoms and other flowers, making the entire scene a very inviting one.

"Yes, it's very well in its way," answered Lotty, glancing about her with a careless air, "but I think we've had enough of it now; I should like a little change, shouldn't you? Can't we get upon those Flats, as they call them, I wonder?"

[Pg 28]

"Oh, but do you not remember," I urged, "that uncle so particularly warned us not to go beyond the garden this evening, as the hour is so late, the country so new to us, and daylight leaves this part of the Cape more suddenly than it does ours, because the sun goes down, you know, on the other side of the mountain. Just fancy losing our way out on those wild-looking Flats!"

"Losing our way!" repeated Charlotte, contemptuously; "as if that was possible in such a flat country as this. You are always such a coward, Mechie, that's the truth; and then you take refuge in a pretended obedience to uncle and aunt's wishes."

"Oh, Charlotte!" I exclaimed as I felt the blood rush to my face and brow, "you cannot mean what you say."

"Well, there! don't be offended," rejoined my sister, not attending to my vexed words, but passing through an opening which she spied out in the hedge beside us.

"Oh, Mechie," she continued in a delighted tone, "here is just the thing we want, nothing more nor less than a charming little rustic bridge which opens a way out of this stupid garden for us at once!"

[Pg 29]

I followed Lotty, who stood on a broad plank looking down into a deep, wide space which formed the bed of a much more pretentious stream or brook than that in the garden, this last being evidently an offspring of the first. Very reluctantly I followed my wayward sister, resolving just to look about for a minute or two on the confines of the Flats and then return to the garden. Ah, that weak or sinful first stop on the wrong road! After crossing the bridge and a large sort of enclosed field in a half-cultivated state, we clambered over some bars of wood serving as a gate at the farther end, and found ourselves out on the Flats.

But now it needed little more persuasion on Charlotte's part to induce me to proceed. Every step of the way teemed with attractions for me in the shape of flowers, beautiful and varied to a degree of luxuriance I had never seen before; and thus tempted, I became oblivious alike of dear uncle's advice and of time and path, and heedlessly followed Lotty, who wandered on ahead, every now and then gathering a blossom as its bright hue caught her eye, and as quickly casting it from her when curiosity was gratified.

[Pg 30]

So it came that walking and picking, each after her own fashion, it was not until my hand was full to inconvenience—for I was eager to carry back a splendid bouquet to Aunt Rossiter—that I observed the sun had disappeared behind the great Table Mountain and the brief twilight of that part of the world was fast becoming enveloped in the dark mantle of night. It so chanced I had got in advance of Charlotte during the last five or ten minutes, having passed her as she turned aside to look at something, and with increasing apprehension I saw how far we had strayed from the hotel—considerably farther than I had ever intended—and I felt how wrong and silly I had been to allow my sister's influence to have any weight with me in opposition to the advice of my

[Pg 31]

guardian, who knew so much better what was in every way good for us than we could possibly know for ourselves.

Turning hastily to Charlotte, I exclaimed:

"Oh, Lotty, how dark it is growing, and we have walked such a distance! Oh, it was very foolish of us!"

Charlotte stopped suddenly and looking up and around her with a scared expression, said in an angry and alarmed voice: "Foolish indeed! why in the name of wonder, Mechie, were you so stupid as not to observe it before? and what did you run on for at such a rate, so fast and so far? It was as much as I could do to keep up with you! It is all your fault."

I knew well from past experience that to argue with Charlotte in her present mood would but increase her irritation and lose more of that time we had already spent too much of. When frightened or angry she seldom stopped to think of the justice or injustice her accusations, but unreflectingly cast anything at me which came into her head. Amidst my own distress, however, I could not withstand saying: "Well, it was very careless of me, I must confess, but indeed, Lotty, you cannot but fairly acknowledge that, having been the proposer and leader of this walk, it rested principally with you to be its regulator as to time and distance; and though I did not exactly act upon any defined impression of that kind, I am nevertheless conscious of having been in a manner influenced by it, and—" [Pg 32]

"Proposer and leader!" interrupted Charlotte, angrily; "do you think I liked this stupid walk? I am not such a baby as you are, to find amusement wherever I go in picking up pebbles and flowers! It's just you all over, Mechie, to talk such nonsense!"

"Well, never mind, Lotty, who is in fault, but let us do our best to escape the consequence of our imprudence, and return at once," I answered, gently, seeing I was but wasting the precious minutes. [Pg 33]

"Yes, that is if we can," said Lotty, gazing about her with a thoroughly perplexed look; "let me see—which way did we come? I declare it's more than I know; every side looks alike, and not a vestige of the hotel to be seen."

---

## CHAPTER V.

Charlotte was evidently quite oblivious, in the heat of irritation and nervousness, of the previous scornful way in which she had repudiated the very idea of our losing ourselves in so flat a country. She now perceived that this unbroken level was the principal point to our disadvantage, no clearly-defined landmark anywhere presenting itself whereby we could guide our steps—none, at least, excepting the huge Table Mountain looming in the far distance, and which I remembered lay to our left in coming, and ought of course to be on our right in returning. This I suggested to Charlotte, without allusion to her past remarks on the subject, and at once commenced trying to trace our way, followed by my sister. Notwithstanding Lotty's frequently declared contempt for my tastes, pursuits and opinions, it a little amused me to observe that directly we were in any state of difficulty or danger she generally preferred trusting to my judgment and guidance to extricate us from our trouble; and so in the present instance I naturally took the lead, and to a certain extent was fortunately successful in finding the right path. This I knew by the fading blossoms Charlotte had scattered right and left on her course, and which I now looked out for. There must have been a slight inclination of the ground where the hotel stood, which, together with the thick growth of shrubs and bushes, quite concealed it from our view. [Pg 34]

At last the deepening shades of evening deprived me of this only means of retracing our steps—Lotty's castaway flowers—and utterly perplexed I came to a standstill, trying to think what next to do. Charlotte, who was considerably more frightened than I was, added to my bewilderment by giving way to the most unreasonable temper, bewailing our dreadful situation, as she termed it, and railing at me for my stupidity in allowing my mind to be always so childishly absorbed by every folly which presented itself, instead of keeping my wits about me and acting as if I possessed one grain of common sense. Thus worried, I am sorry to say I lost my patience, and asked her pettishly in what manner she had been more wisely occupied, that she had not observed for herself in place of depending entirely on me to regulate the time and distance of our walk. Upon this she flew out, saying that of course, as I had objected so much in the first instance to our coming this way at all, she naturally concluded I should be sure to keep these objections in view and not go farther than was prudent; but it was just like me, and she had been a simpleton for trusting to me! [Pg 35]

Repenting my hasty temper the next instant, I felt it was of no avail to dispute with one who, in her calmest mood, never to me admitted herself to be in fault, and was certainly not likely to do so now under the influence of her excited feelings. I took her hand soothingly in mine, and briefly pointed out how yet more injudiciously we were acting in thus losing the precious moments still left to us in profitless disputation, whereas our only sensible course was to make the best and speediest use of them to find our way back. [Pg 36]

Appeased by this concession and admitting the truth of my words, Charlotte followed in



quietness. We walked on over flowers and heaths, and through tangled underwood and between growths of bushes, many of them a mass of blossoms, trusting to chance to bring us right at last. But no, not chance: how could I say that, well aware as I am that there is no such thing as chance—that it is solely a word of man's own coining? Are we not expressly told that so loving an interest does God take in all the works of his hands that not a sparrow falls to the ground unnoticed by him? Silently I prayed for help out of this our trouble, for trouble it was, though not so great in itself as because of the anxiety and distress it would occasion our dear, kind uncle and aunt. I remembered in my anxiety that our heavenly Father has mercifully desired us to make known our requests unto him by prayer and supplication. This I said to Lotty, begging her to add her petitions to mine, which I believe that she did.

[Pg 38]

Well, on we went, and never before had Charlotte and I taken so wearisome a walk. The rapidly-gathering gloom rendering it more difficult every moment to direct our steps, we often became so entangled among the prickly shrubs with which these flats abound that our dresses were torn and our hands scratched painfully in our efforts to extricate ourselves, nor did there appear as yet any termination to these annoyances. Seemingly, we were far as ever from the hotel or any of its surroundings, and Charlotte became at last so tired and hopeless that she stopped, declaring she thought it worse than useless to go any farther, as we might, for aught we knew, be wandering in quite an opposite direction to that leading to the hotel, and thus go so far away from those who would be certain to look for us that they might not find us until morning, if even then. It was in vain I reasoned with her, pointing out that, though we might not be pursuing a straight path home, it was yet more certain we were not going directly wrong; the keeping the range of mountains on our right saved us from that, for if she remembered, they bounded the horizon facing the hotel. And as for danger, I urged, there could be none here; the Malays and negroes at the Cape were remarkable for their harmless, peaceful characters, and again I begged her to come on. But Charlotte was too nervous and altogether miserable even to wish to be pacified or persuaded, and would not listen to me.

[Pg 39]

"You do talk such nonsense, Mechie," she cried, "there's never any comfort in listening to you! and you expect me to be cheered and encouraged by mere surmises of your own. How can you answer for their being no dangers at night on these frightful wild flats? Doesn't the country swarm with snakes and poisonous reptiles—"

[Pg 40]

"Which only come out during the hottest parts of the day," I interposed.

"Well, there are plenty of other horrors which principally wander about at night," persisted Lotty, impatiently—"tigers for instance. Oh! I didn't think of that before. How dreadful!" and bursting into a flood of tears, she suddenly threw herself down amidst the heath, declaring she was too much fatigued and frightened to walk a step farther.

"But, Lotty, tigers never come so far away from their native jungles," I argued, "so please come on, there's a dear, good Lotty."

"There you go again," sobbed the incorrigible girl, "asserting things of which you know nothing. No tigers near a town! Why there may be one within a few yards of us now, for anything you or I know to the contrary."

"Well, then, I am sure we had better run on," I urged.

"Yes, and then he would jump at us!" replied Charlotte, looking round with a scared expression.

[Pg 41]

I tried to soothe her, saying that during all the many years we had lived at the Cape such a thing had not been heard of as a tiger visiting this part of the country.

"Not heard of!" repeated Charlotte, scornfully; "as if hundreds of things do not occur every day which you neither know nor hear of. A nice comforter you are, to be sure, Mechie!"

"Well, but, Charlotte, what is it you propose doing? Sitting there all night?" A feeling of impatience was again rising within me.

"I shall sit here certainly until some one has the humanity to come and look for us," she answered in a determined tone.

"Oh, do reflect, Charlotte, on what you are doing!" I pleaded; "do consider that poor auntie, and uncle too, will have become very anxious if not frightened about us before thinking it necessary to seek us, and—"

"And I only hope they will not go on much longer without getting frightened about us," interrupted Charlotte. "Oh how thankful I should feel to see uncle coming this way! I am sure all their united fears of a week wouldn't amount to mine at this moment."

[Pg 42]

I was excessively disconcerted by this obstinate fit of Charlotte's. Up to the present time I had no doubt that uncle and aunt believed us still in the garden, or the former would long ago have come to seek us, and my great anxiety was to return before they had discovered our absence and become apprehensive of our safety.

"If you are resolved to remain there, Charlotte," I exclaimed, "I cannot of course prevent you—I can't move you against your will—but you cannot expect me to second such a folly, nor will I. I shall leave you at once and try to find my way back, and then uncle will come and bring you home if I succeed in reaching it myself."

"You will do nothing of the kind," cried Charlotte, passionately. "If you dare, Mechie, I will never forgive you. How can you think of anything so wicked? I tell you I am tired to death and frightened to death, and quite unable to walk a step farther. If we stay here, they will be able to find us, but if—"

[Pg 43]

Charlotte stopped abruptly, for a rustling in the bushes a little distance on our right caused even my heart to bound with terror. We both strained our eyes in the direction of the sound.

"Look there! what's that? Oh, what's that?" gasped Lotty, pointing to a dark spot under a bush.

"Where? what?" I panted out, scarce able to breathe.

"There! don't you see it," she continued in a shuddering whisper and grasping my arm convulsively, "lying down there, crouching?"

I did see it, and felt more terrified than I had ever been in my life before. I saw the dark form of some large animal; and now it was partly raising itself, and gazing at us with great glittering eyes, distinguishable even in the gloom.

[Pg 44]

"I don't know! come on! oh, come on! quick! quick!" I exclaimed under my voice.

Charlotte, springing up instantaneously, caught my hand and tore away, dragging me after her. But one feeling guided us—to fly from the monster, whatever it was, regardless alike of impediments or course. Having run a considerable distance, suddenly, to our unbounded joy, we found ourselves opposite the very gate leading into the field we had before passed through. Scrambling over it, we now stood a minute leaning against the bars, breathless and panting, to see if we were pursued.

At this part of the Flats there was a large space free of bushes and underwood, and consisting only of sandy turf and innumerable small flowers. Nothing following us was visible as yet, but Lotty suggested the probability of its stealing round through the underwood; therefore we once more grasped each other's hand, and ran for our lives down the field to the bridge. Here we halted, for an obstacle presented itself to our proceeding which we had as little anticipated as any of the foregoing. Happily, we could clearly perceive over the open field that no animal of any kind was in pursuit. All was thus far safe, and requesting Charlotte to join me in heart in thanking the Almighty for having preserved us through we knew not what of peril, we set to work to surmount this last difficulty, namely, crossing the plank over the brook. A thick belt or line of low trees skirted the bank on the eastern side of the river, as this stream was called, and their shade, in conjunction with the fading daylight, so obscured the little rustic bridge as to render the walking across a very critical if not hazardous undertaking. The water was not deep, certainly, but the height from the plank to the bed was sufficiently great to cause us serious injury, perhaps, were we to miss our footing and fall. "What are we to do now?" I said, after contemplating the depth and darkness of the way with a thoroughly perplexed, but, I must confess, a rather amused, feeling. We were so near home now that my anxiety about aunt and uncle was considerably allayed, and our present position had, in my opinion, something irresistibly comical in it.

[Pg 45]

[Pg 46]

"I see nothing to laugh at," exclaimed Charlotte, pettishly, detecting those signs of merriment in my voice; "it's the most provoking thing in the world, I think. There seems no end of our troubles this evening! I am sure, long as I live, I shall never forget this odious walk!"

"We can't do better, both of us, than remember it," I answered; "for my part, I shall always strive to keep in mind the lesson it has taught me—not again under any circumstances, however pressing, to allow myself to disregard the voice of dear uncle or aunt, let it be on the most apparently trifling matters. Witness what our disobedience has cost us this evening! If we had attended to uncle's warning not to leave the garden, what an amount of fatigue, distress and terror it would have saved us!"

[Pg 47]

"There! don't waste time talking and lecturing, Mechie; what good will that do now?" cried Charlotte, impatiently. "How are we to get over this pitfall of a bridge now that it is so dark? That's the thing to be considered at present."

Charlotte stepped close to the plank, and going down upon her knees partly dragged herself and partly crawled over in safety to the opposite side, then springing up, cried out triumphantly, "There, Miss Mechie, what do you say to that? here I am, you see!"

Adopting the same mode of proceeding, I also effected a secure passage, though it was certainly with fear and trembling I did so. It is strange, I thought, that Charlotte, who throughout our previous adventures betrayed so much nervous fear, should on this quite as trying occasion prove herself possessed of considerably more courage and firmness than I. "The battle is not always to the strong, nor the race to the swift," I thought to myself; both would as it were have been lost in our ease this evening had the final victory rested with me, for I should never have been ingenious or brave enough of myself to conceive and practice such an unprecedented method to meet the difficulty but for Lotty's example.

[Pg 48]

"Why, Charlotte! why, Mechie! my dear children, where have you been?" broke in the anxious voice of Uncle Rossiter, who hastened forward from a side path to meet us.

"Oh, we very foolishly, and very wrongly too, forgot your advice, and went out on the Flats and lost our way, uncle," cried Charlotte, running to him and putting her arm within his; and as we proceeded to the hotel she continued in an off-hand manner, which somehow quite disconcerted me by its fluent flippancy, describing our having tired of the garden, and how, when upon the Flats, I had been so enraptured at sight of the beautiful flowers and occupied in gathering them that she had not liked to disturb me; moreover, she was highly gratified herself, and so it came to pass that advice and all else were forgotten, and on and on we wandered.

[Pg 50]

I did not say anything—indeed, Lotty allowed me no opportunity—and uncle's answer, when at last spoken, had a tone of gentle reproof and sorrow in it which went to my heart.

"Neither your aunt nor I thought you would venture beyond the garden after the warning you had received, it being already late when you went out; happily, therefore, we were saved the uneasiness your long absence would certainly have occasioned us."

"Oh yes! as it has turned out it was indeed very lucky you didn't know, uncle," rejoined Charlotte, quite cheerfully, feeling, I could see, exceedingly well satisfied that matters were, by her good management, seemingly drifting into so smooth a channel. "Mechie's and my greatest uneasiness all the while was the fear that you and auntie would find out our absence from the garden and be distressed by it; wasn't it, Mechie?"

"Ye—s," I answered rather reluctantly, remembering Charlotte's utter indifference on that very point, but not knowing at the moment what to say.

[Pg 51]

Hurrying on, Charlotte still talking in a vindicating style, we reached the balcony, and were soon in aunt's presence. She, who was as yet unconscious of our delinquency and believed we had only been sitting too late in the garden, dismissed us at once to our bed-room to take off our damp clothes before tea, which, she said, had been delayed some time by our absence.

"Now, Mechie, don't you say anything, but let me explain the whole business to aunt, and I'll make it smooth and right with her, as I did with uncle," Charlotte said while we were performing our hasty toilet. "But if you begin any of your blundering accounts, you will only do mischief. So now mind what I say, and leave it with me."

"I was not aware I was addicted to giving 'blundering accounts' of anything, Lotty," I answered, feeling rather hurt at such an imputation. "A simple statement of facts is all that the case requires, and in my opinion admits of—"

[Pg 52]

"That's all you know about it," interrupted Charlotte, contemptuously. "However, it doesn't matter what you think so long as you keep silent," she added, quickly. "So now are you ready?—for I am." Saying which, she left the room, and I hastily followed.

During our absence uncle had told of our misadventure, as described to him by Charlotte, and I was not surprised, though much grieved, to see a vexed, grave expression in my aunt's kind face as we came in.

"I am truly sorry, my dear children, that you disregarded your uncle's advice," she said, gently—"sorry for many reasons; but as I am sure you know what they are, I will merely observe that you might have wandered away in so totally wrong a direction as to have made it impossible for your friends to find you until the morning; and if nothing worse had befallen you than heavy colds, that alone might ultimately have proved the death of one or other of you. Besides, you know, my beloved girls, I am not strong—I am far from that—and believe me, it would be no light matter to me to experience the hours of apprehension and anxiety consequent upon your absence under circumstances so distressing."

[Pg 53]

Although I did not at that moment realize the full meaning of these last words, there was something in the tone and manner in which they were spoken and in the expression of her mild face, a trembling, affectionate earnestness in her voice, which made its way with painful keenness to my heart. Going to her and clasping my arms round her, I warmly and repeatedly kissed her cheek, saying how very, very sorry I felt at having vexed her and dear uncle, hoping they would forgive me and Lotty, and promising—with an inward determination which it was always afterward my constant prayer to be assisted in keeping—that nothing should make me ever again willingly do the smallest thing likely to distress them. Charlotte, who was seated at the tea-table (she and I made tea alternate evenings), rose at this instant, and coming to aunt's side, knelt down, and resting her hands on her lap, exclaimed with great seeming honesty, "I'll tell you all about it, auntie. I am a better hand at graphic description than Mechie is."

[Pg 54]

Charlotte was well aware that the view taken of the case, as regarded herself, would depend for its light entirely upon her keeping the account under her own direction. It was not that she had the least intention of asserting a wilful falsehood or purposely misrepresenting her conduct, but knowing she had been more in fault than I had, conceived there would be no harm done in just suppressing some parts wherein she figured alone, and carelessly throwing all the circumstances of the case into one line of action, in which we appeared to be mutually in fault, so as to secure herself from the blame of greater disobedience than I had shown.

Aunt Rossiter laid her hand kindly on Charlotte's head, and looking affectionately into her fair, handsome upturned face, said: "We will postpone the account, dear child, till after tea. It is late

[Pg 55]

already, and we must not keep your uncle waiting any longer."

During tea we had an animated discussion as to the strange animal we saw under the bush, Aunt Rossiter being of opinion that it was a sick deer wandered away from the herd, as is their wont when wounded or otherwise injured, and Uncle Rossiter that it was a cottager's dog lying there to be quiet. Tigers, he said, had never been known to make their appearance so low down the country, nor any other savage beasts, with the exception of monkeys, which were sometimes violent and dangerous.

After tea uncle strolled out on the balcony. The rich Southern moonlight gave a yet wilder look to the long range of Table Mountains on the one side and the boundless flats on the other, bringing out in dazzling relief against the dark surrounding foliage the patches of white sand gleaming and glittering here and there like molten silver. And now Aunt Rossiter expressed a wish that each of us would give her a narration of our evening's adventure—that is, sharing it between us, one commencing and the other finishing. "And," she added, hastily, seeing a look of alertness in Lotty's face, bespeaking an eagerness to be the first to begin, "Lotty being, as she says, the most skilful in describing, shall take upon her the concluding portion; that, of course, will be the most sensational." And aunty smiled. "And she can exercise all her eloquence and ability to render it as interesting as possible. Mechie shall give me the more matter-of-fact beginning. Now, Mechie."

[Pg 56]

I perceived, what I do not think Lotty did, that aunt had other and deeper reasons for wishing to hear this little history of our troubles, and depended upon having a true statement from me. Thus called upon, therefore, I very reluctantly described our stroll in the garden and my enjoyment of its retirement, its shade, its beautiful flowers and wild scenery. I could not with the least truthfulness include Charlotte in a participation of these feelings, for she had made no pretence even of liking it or being at all charmed by the attractions which so pleased me. On the contrary, she unhesitatingly declared the garden to be stupid. With yet greater unwillingness I was obliged to admit Lotty's proposal to extend our walk, and my own objection, on the ground of uncle's advice and the lateness of the hour; and this I told, though truly sorry to tell of my sister's fault, for I dearly loved her. But it was a far more painful feeling to my nature to lie under the imputation of having utterly disregarded the wishes of our kind friends, and of even setting them totally at defiance. Albeit I felt my cheeks flush deeply, and my manner was nervous and my voice low, and I much wished I could have left out this disagreeable portion of my account, but it might not be. Charlotte, who from the style of my character well knew what was coming, sat with disconcerted face and averted looks, gazing out through the large folding windows on the moonlit scene.

[Pg 57]

---

## CHAPTER VII.

[Pg 58]

When I concluded aunt placed a cushion on the ground by her side, and called to Lotty to place herself on it, which she did, laying her face in aunty's lap in an indolent sort of manner. Her expression was one of thorough consciousness of having done wrong, but without that feeling of repentance which would have filled my eyes with blinding tears and my cheeks with blushes. At this point I arose and went into an adjoining room, thinking my presence might distress Lotty; yet, the door being open, I heard aunty speaking earnestly on this old subject of truthfulness, pointing out the labyrinths to which so many resorted instead of following the straight road of honesty. She pressed upon her the danger of allowing small beginnings of sin to go on unchecked, seeing that even Lotty's short experience had often shown her how fatally great its endings sometimes became; and in no way, she added, was the point in question more forcibly illustrated than by the works of nature. "You have often noticed, and so, I know, has Mechie, a certain little cloud, peculiar, I believe, to the Cape, just making its appearance, creeping stealthily, occasionally quite hid, then emerging into view, then doubling round a projection, and turning and twisting, and so on, and over the top of the Table Mountain. You know how very small it generally is in the beginning, seldom larger than a man's hand, and is white and picturesque, and tangible-looking, and seems to select any tiny aperture or division on the mountain brow to glide through. One might really fancy its object is to avoid observation, or why not advance at once and openly over the broad unobstructed space? However, it seems unreasonable to suspect harm of so little and innocent a looking thing, for harmless indeed it then is, although in truth its undeveloped character is fraught with danger, violence and mischief. Well, it advances, and advances, gaining breath and magnitude every yard of the way, till finally the whole mountain side is enveloped in its folds. And now, no longer inoffensive in its proceedings, its real nature breaks out. Down pours a tornado of wind, sweeping over land and water, driving the ill-secured vessels from their moorings, bearing clouds of noxious sands into our habitations, and but that long experience has suggested to us efficient means of securing our property from destruction, much ruin would constantly result from the visit of that little, apparently simple mist. My dear child, when in future you are tempted to exaggerate in the slightest degree remember the 'cloud-hand.' I have been more especially induced to speak in this way on the present occasion because this morning, Lotty, I had a few minutes' conversation with Susan concerning your late rising, which has been frequent during the last fortnight, and your reasons and excuses for the same—many and various." Mrs. Rossiter abstained from any allusion to that evening's deception on Lotty's part. I knew her reason, and was grateful for it. She feared creating bitter feelings in my sister's heart toward me, and yet I was sure that Lotty's account to uncle of our misadventure, given in her own cautious style and coming so immediately after the

[Pg 59]

[Pg 60]

[Pg 61]

offence of the morning, had excited aunty into thus speaking without farther delay and in the impressive manner she had done.

But now, softly quitting the room, I put on my hat and joined uncle on the balcony.

---

## CHAPTER VIII.

[Pg 62]

We both slept that night, Lotty and I, in a large bed-room separated from uncle and aunt's by an ante-room. The folding windows, as in all the rooms, opened upon the balcony, and were only shaded by venetian blinds, which allowed of seeing clearly out, but not into the room. We were dropping asleep when Charlotte suddenly exclaimed in a drowsy voice: "By the way, Mechie, did aunty say anything to you about going away? She told me this evening she was—where to, I wonder?—and, from what she said, evidently intends leaving us behind—a thing she has not done before."

Of the four beloved beings comprising my heart's home (aunt, uncle, Lotty and Susan), our gentle Aunt Rossiter was the most dear to me, and the thought of being separated from her, even for a day, was more inexpressibly painful to me than until thus tried I had conceived possible. Starting up and leaning on my elbow, I looked at Charlotte, saying: "No, she did not tell me. What did she mean? What was she alluding to when she said it?"

[Pg 63]

"Oh, I can't remember that," replied Charlotte, pettishly; to her the matter did not seem one of much interest. "And indeed, Mechie, I wish you would not fly up in that extraordinary manner, just as if I had told you poor, quiet aunty had talked of setting the hotel on fire. Do try and be more rational, and less of an uncontrolled child. At this hour of the night especially your wild behaviour quite worries me. Lie down and go to sleep. Aunty will be sure to tell us all about it to-morrow."

"Oh, Lotty, I can't sleep till you tell me all you know. Please do—everything she said."

"But I have nothing to tell you, for the simple reason that aunt, as I said, refused to answer my questions. So now, pray, do not talk any more. The matter is not worth the fuss you are making, and I am very sleepy." Thereupon Charlotte turned her back to me.

[Pg 64]

"Lotty, look here! just tell me, word for word, what aunty said about going away, and what led to her saying it at all, and I won't disturb you any more to-night, I won't indeed."

"Dear me! what a nuisance you are, Mechie, with your curiosity and your questions!" cried Charlotte, impatiently. "Well, remember you are to keep to your word, for it's little enough I have to tell you, and little satisfied you will be with it, any more than you are now; but I can't help that, bear in mind. Let me see: aunt had been giving me a lecture on the subject of truthfulness, though why I cannot conceive, for no person is more truthful than I am. I hate a falsehood, and never utter one—though I don't pretend to say I go headforemost at everything in the steeplechase fashion you do," continued she, correcting herself rather, as the "cloud-hand" rose to her recollection as last she saw it creeping through a cleft on the mountain top. "I do not consider that necessary for either the sense or truthfulness of anything."

[Pg 65]

"But, Lotty," I said in a deprecatory voice, fearing to offend her, "don't you remember what uncle said?"

"Don't bring forward what uncle and aunt say about the matter," broke in Charlotte, impatiently. "They are full of old-fashioned notions on that and many other points not worth repeating."

I felt my cheeks burn at this contemptuous treatment of opinions I perfectly revered, but continued gently: "What uncle said would be just as applicable to any period, past or present. He said that if in describing any circumstance, conversation, or even feelings, the narrator omitted or altered the smallest part, with deceptive intent to change the character of the whole statement and produce a different impression on the minds of the hearers than a straightforward account of the simple facts would have done, it was tantamount to asserting a positive falsehood, since 'lying is but the intention to deceive;' and that phase of it is as hateful and sinful in the sight of God as any other."

[Pg 66]

"According to that, then, an abridged book, in which all that is objectionable is left out, is not worth reading, because the remainder, though good, gives rise to an erroneous impression of the whole."

"That is hardly a good illustration, Lotty," I answered. "It admits of many positions, which truth does not."

"I don't see how that can be," objected Lotty.

"Well, this one alone is sufficient: In altering a book by, as you say, leaving out the objectionable parts, the motive could only be a good one, and not under any circumstances with an intention of deceiving; it is done with a wish to render the work to all readers harmless."

At this juncture Charlotte gave so loud a snort in pretended imitation of snoring that it quite startled me.

[Pg 67]

"Oh, Lotty!" I cried, "how could you?"

"What is it, dear? what's the matter?" cried the naughty thing in a well-assumed bewilderment.

I could not resist laughing a little, exclaiming, "Oh, for shame, Lotty!" Then anxiously I begged her to answer my first question regarding aunt's allusion to going away.

"Dear me, Mechie!" cried my sister; "I do wish you would let me go to sleep! What a pest you are, to be sure, when you get anything into your head! I'm sorry I was goose enough to tell you a word about it till to-morrow morning, when you might have talked and queried as much as you liked, and I could have listened and answered as much or as little as I liked. However, this is all I know of the matter, so now listen for once and all. Aunty, as I told you, was scolding away—"

I could not withstand an interruption: "Poor aunty scold! she never did such a thing in her life!" [Pg 68]

"Well, lecturing then; and in my opinion that's worse; I would rather a good deal have one of Susan's scoldings. Short and sharp, they always either frighten or anger me, which prevents my feeling weary and sleepy, both which sensations afflict while undergoing a lecture from dear, good, well-meaning aunty."

"Please go on, Charlotte," I interrupted. Nothing was more unpleasant to me than this style of flippant invective toward our generous benefactors which Lotty was so fond of indulging in. She thought it witty, I know, and it was this, I felt sure, which instigated her to exercise so unamiable a humour, and not any want of affection for them.

"I am going on faster than you like, or you wouldn't say that, Miss Mechie," she said; "however, I have no wish to lose time. After aunty had lectured me to her heart's content she kissed me, and concluded with these words in a lower voice that trembled, I thought, a little: 'I shall not be always with you, my love. I may not be so long, even. God only knows;' and then she added something about wishing to her heart that before she left us we should both have become all that is pleasing to our heavenly Father. I asked her what she meant and where she was going to, but she only answered, 'We will not talk of that now,' and made me finish the account of our evening's adventure; and that's all I can tell you, so good-night!" [Pg 69]

"Oh, I wonder you could have forgotten aunt's words until only just now!" said I in a low, unsteady voice.

"There's nothing particular to remember in them that I can see," replied Charlotte, carelessly; "people must be separated sometimes; aunt is going on a visit for a little while, no doubt. She has not left home by herself within my memory—that is, without us—and it is high time she should begin, I think. But now go to sleep, do; I have told you everything, and if you talk any more, I won't answer you, so do not trouble me any longer, I beg of you." Thereupon she again turned her back, and in a few minutes I distinguished by her regular breathing she was fast asleep. [Pg 70]

Not so with myself. I could not sleep; every wish to do so was gone, chased away by my sister's words, and I lay looking out on the balcony, that appeared white as snow beneath the silver moonlight. What did aunt mean? why had she not told me? and why when saying it to Charlotte did her voice lower and tremble? Those changes must have been conspicuous indeed for my careless sister to have observed them. Then came back suddenly to my recollection the words spoken by aunt, which, though not understood by me at the time, nevertheless took such painful hold upon my heart: "For indeed, my dear children, I am not strong, and it would be no light matter to me to experience the hours of anxiety," etc. Coupling this sentence with the announcement made to Charlotte, could it be? did she know it? was she—was she going to die? [Pg 71]

This thought, which seemed to flash like fire through my brain, sent a rush of agony to my heart beyond my power to lie still and endure. Softly leaving the bed, I stole to the window and sat down, and gazed for some time with tearless, unconscious eyes on the singular view, white and ghost-like in the moonbeams. Our kind, gentle, loving benefactress—oh, more than that, our tender, devoted mother!—was she going to die? going to leave us? Were we never again to meet in this world? to hear her soft, earnest voice? be encouraged and brightened by her affectionate smile?

The hour, the wild loneliness of the place and the death-like stillness within and without sharpened these reflections to a degree of keenness which for a while quite bewildered me by the intensity of their misery, they were so new, so sudden and so unprepared for; for though always delicate, our cheerful, enduring, uncomplaining aunt was one of the very last people with whom I should of myself have connected the chill, dreary idea of death; for—alas that so it is and ever will be!—darkness and cold and dreariness are the brief attributes of death to our mortal nature, and we shrink from it even when the sting is removed and the grave no longer triumphs. [Pg 72]

But now, the perception once awakened, one remembrance after another came thronging to my mind, until dread doubt became an overwhelming certainty, and bowing my face in my hands upon my knees, I wept such tears as I had never before shed in my young life. Nor did they bring me that relief the tears of childhood had hitherto done; they were hot and scalding, and seemed but to scorch my pained heart. After a while I bethought me I was not acting as aunt would approve, and how unhappy it would make her were she now to see me thus hopelessly and rebelliously yielding myself up to sorrow. Sliding down upon my knees, I prayed long and ardently—prayed that dear aunt might be spared. Oh, never before had I experienced more truly the feeling of praying from my soul and heart as I did now! My whole being trembled with the [Pg 73]

fervour of my petitions. I wished to pray for our good, kind uncle, that support might be given him, if God, in his divine wisdom, still saw best to remove her from amongst us, and for a spirit of submission in myself, but I could not. I felt as if it were impossible any amount of support could in the slightest degree reconcile us to a loss that seemed like wrenching away the principal part of our very existence. I grew more calm, however, for prayer will always bring a peace to the believer's heart which the whole world cannot give at such times, and presently I returned again to my bed and to a dreamy sleep extending later into the beautiful morning than I wished.

## CHAPTER IX.

[Pg 74]

The bright sunshine, the soft voice of birds, whose songs in that clime, though brief and broken, are peculiarly melodious, the glow and glitter and warm stir of life above, below and on every side, were altogether so little in unison with the sad thoughts which had agonized my mind the previous night that my spirits, buoyant with youth, yielded to these cheering influences, and began to rise again to their own level. Hope struggled within my heart, and so far succeeded that, as I pursued my morning's walk through the sweet garden and over the memorable plank bridge to the Flats, I commenced to question with myself whether Lotty's view of the case might not after all be the right one, and that the more likely because her cooler, quieter judgment would favour her discerning the truth more clearly than my anxious disposition admitted of. Perhaps dear aunty was only meditating a short visit to some friend's house, and could not conveniently take us with her as heretofore. Yes, I would hope and wait.

[Pg 75]



**MECHIE AND THE GARDENER.**

page 75

On my return home after a more agreeable wander over the Flats than I had dared to anticipate upon first setting off, and as I was passing through the garden, I saw a man at work beside the path I was coming down. Hearing my steps, he turned sharply and looked at me from under his beetling brow. What a disagreeable look it was!—like that of a savage wild animal meditating a spring at me. Never before, I thought, had it fallen in my way to meet with a human being of so repellant an appearance as this man had, both in face and form. He evidently possessed great muscular strength, judging from his short, broad form and large head, which latter, as he took off his cap to wipe his forehead with a very unrefreshing-looking red handkerchief, displayed a thick growth of matted black hair, wiry and curling. I must confess that as I thought of the loneliness of the garden and my possession of a beautiful gold watch and chain—the latter worn conspicuously in front of my dress, and which were the gifts of my kind uncle and aunt on my last birth-day—I felt very uncomfortable at having to bring so tempting a prize closely within his reach.

[Pg 76]

Encouraging myself with the reflection that not only was his occupation a harmless one, but that he must have received some sort of recommendation to induce Rathfelder to engage him as a servant, I came slowly up to him as with a concluding scratch of his head, which he gave in a savage kind of way, he thrust his handkerchief into his pocket and replaced his cap. From very nervousness—a feeling akin, I afterward thought, to that which, with so strange and irresistible a power, draws the poor bird into the jaws of the rattlesnake—I stopped and wished him good-morning as pleasantly as I could, to which civil greeting he merely vouchsafed a grunt.

[Pg 77]

"I suppose you are Mr. Rathfelder's gardener?" I suggested, wishing to further propitiate him.

"I s'pose I be—leastways, he thinks so," he answered in a compound tone of fierceness and sulkiness.

"Well, but are you not?" I repeated, puzzled by so doubtful a reply, and still less reassured by his words and manner.

"I don't mean to be so long, that's sartin." He seemed determined to avoid giving me a straightforward answer, and as I stood perplexed and casting about in my mind what next to do or say, he added abruptly, "John Rathfelder don't pay me wages enough, that's the fact; and if he won't, I shall cut, that's all."

"I have always understood that Mr. Rathfelder is a generous, liberal master," I objected, in some surprise. "Surely there is some mistake. Did you engage with himself or through another?"

"There's no mistake about it," he rejoined, roughly. "I'll tell 'ee what it is," he added, speaking with fast-increasing fierceness, for the unlucky subject was one which evidently excited very bitter feelings, "it don't follow that what be liberal to some be so to all. He might be liberal enough to them 'ere stoopid black critters, but if he thinks Joe Blurdon will put up wi' the like he'll find himself in the wrong box, that's all."

[Pg 78]

"What country do you belong to?" I asked, feeling more and more uncomfortable as I detected his wild, glittering eyes, which boldly stared at me, frequently fastening themselves with, I thought, a hungry, rapacious look upon my gold chain, which he no doubt supposed to be attached to a valuable watch within my belt.

"Hinglish, to be sure!" he answered, with a look and tone of indignant surprise at, he considered, so unnecessary a question. "I be Hinglish, and don't want to be nothing else."

How much I wished some one would come into the garden, and break the spellbound feeling which, despite my fear and dislike of this man, kept me against my will rooted to the spot!

[Pg 79]

"Is not Rathfelder as good a paymaster as all other land-owners at the Cape?" I asked.

"I got a deal better wages when I drove a bullock-wagon up country," he answered in his usual evasive way; "I had five pun a week, and my wittles; and John Rathfelder, he gives me two pun ten a week, and I 'ont go on wi' it."

My worst suspicions were awakened by this acknowledgment of his former occupation, for of all reckless characters the wagon drivers amidst the savage wilds of Africa are considered among the worst. Nevertheless, despite all my apprehensions and his forbidding looks, an inclination I could not withstand impelled me to say a word of advice and warning to his darkened soul. I was as yet unskilled in such style of speaking; but no matter, thought I; I hold the seed in my hand, and I will at least cast it on the earth, and leave the rest to that merciful God who has declared of his word that it shall not return unto him void. Besides, I really felt a sort of pity for the man, who was evidently unhappy. Dashing abruptly into the subject, I exclaimed, "Oh, don't go back again! don't go back to those savage, godless places! how do you know but that the Almighty, in pity to your uncared for, uncaring condition, has himself worked out your return to this Christian, civilized part of the world, where you can hear his word and be taught his laws in order to save your soul and bring you in the end to himself? And oh, think how soon that end might be at hand! What is the longest life in comparison with eternity, an eternity—according to how you live in this world—of woe unutterable or of such joy as the heart of man hath not conceived? Stay at the Cape—do—and go to church every Sunday, and pray to God to make you all that is pleasing in his eyes. You will be happier, I promise you, than you have ever been while living without God in the world, even though your wages are far less."

[Pg 80]

It was clear that he had never before been so addressed, and the mixed and varied expressions which came and went like light and shade over his dark, hard face were curious to see.

[Pg 81]

"My mother was one of your sort, and as good an 'ooman as ever lived; I mind that, though I was young when first I left her," he said with a more softened voice than before.

After a short silence, during which I endeavoured to recover from the excitement which almost took away my breath,

"Is she still alive?" I asked.

"Still alive?" he repeated, abstractedly, "yes—leastways, she was when I last heered from her."

"Then you can write and read? and you keep up a correspondence with her? Only think how nice to be able to tell her you are living a respectable, religious life in Cape Town, and that you are looking forward to meeting her again in another and happier world, if not at home. Wouldn't that



make her very glad?"

In speaking of his mother, I saw I had touched the one chord which still rang out in unison with one of the best and holiest of human feelings and sympathies. I saw it in the changed tone of his voice and in the softened look of his face, that contrasted strangely with its general expression of ferocious recklessness and degradation. But my last words proved a sad failure, for to my extreme terror and astonishment his manner suddenly and completely changed; all that was hopeful and gentle vanished at once from his features, which resumed their former wild-animal style of fierceness, distrust and dislike.

[Pg 82]

"I'll tell 'ee what, miss, I don't like this at all, I don't!" he exclaimed, savagely. "I sees what it is. Some mean, cowardly-hearted villain has been a telling on me, and have set you on to trap me. That's the fact!"

His eyes gleamed and glared so ferociously I felt frightened half out of my wits. In vain I assured him he was mistaken, that no one had spoken to me about him in any way, that in truth I was ignorant of his very existence until I saw him in the garden.

[Pg 83]

"He didn't believe me," he said, "not a word, and I ought to be ashamed of myself, that I ought, to be a-preaching at him one minute and telling lies the next."

Of course I am obliged to leave out some of his words while thus condemning me, they were so profane and dreadful. "I was a good-for-naught wench," he concluded, "and he'd have nothing more to do with me." Thereupon he struck his spade energetically into the earth and resumed his digging.

As much grieved and disappointed as terrified by the failure of a success so near attainment, I stood hesitating whether or not to make another attempt; but the determined, dogged expression of his countenance and every movement deterred me, and sorrowfully I left the garden.

When again, during breakfast, my eyes rested on the pale, sweet face of Aunt Rossiter, the recollection of last night's painful fears concerning her almost chased away more recent feelings, and I resolved I would take the first opportunity which offered during the morning to ask her the meaning of those words she had spoken to Lotty which had caused me so much distress. After a while I related my conversation with the gardener and its mortifying termination.

[Pg 84]

"Such a result is not to be wondered at, my little Mechie," uncle said, smiling encouragingly on this my first serious attempt to turn an erring fellow-creature from the path of sin. "I was walking up and down the stoop a little while ago with mine host Rathfelder, and this gardener passed at the time, and impressed me, as he did you, with an unpleasant feeling of what a singularly unprepossessing-looking being he was. It seems Rathfelder's former gardener was old and sick and obliged to give up work, and Joe Blurdon, as he calls himself, was engaged a few weeks ago to supply his place. The exigencies of the case—for no other labourer in that capacity could be obtained just then—prevented our landlord from being as particular regarding character as he usually is, and he unfortunately contented himself with receiving a short, unsatisfactory recommendation from his last master, for whom he had worked a very little while, and whose place is the only one he has filled with the exception of Rathfelder's since his coming to the Cape. He is drunken, idle, discontented and altogether worthless, the landlord says, and is to leave his service in a few days. So you see, my darling Mechie, if you had succeeded, as in your amiable heart you wished, in making a convert of that misguided man, you would indeed have achieved a great victory."

[Pg 85]

---

## CHAPTER X.

[Pg 86]

To my extreme satisfaction—for there was a vast deal in this wild, out-of-the-world place which particularly took my fancy—uncle and aunt decided upon our remaining a week at Rathfelder's Hotel. Dear aunt had passed a better night than she had done for a long while, Uncle Rossiter said, which made him desirous of trying the effect of a longer stay, and he should go home that day to arrange accordingly and bring back Susan to attend us.

Aunt met my examining eyes fixed upon her—oh, she knew not how anxiously—and smiled lovingly upon me. It was a bright smile, and yet a sad one too. Ah me! what keen note I was beginning to take of every look and tone which came from her now!

"But why can't you sleep, aunty?" inquired Charlotte, carelessly. "Aren't you well?"

[Pg 87]

"One thing is certain, dear Lotty: we cannot expect always to enjoy the same health," she replied, I thought evasively. "By-the-bye," she continued, abruptly changing the subject, "we must not forget, dear," turning to Uncle Rossiter, "that our wardrobes will require an addition with this unexpected increase of absence from home, so please bear that in mind and mention it to Susan."

In the course of the morning aunt and I went into the garden to enjoy its shade and sweetness. Charlotte preferred remaining on the balcony with her books and work, and as we were the only visitors at that time in the hotel, she would not be interrupted. Having taken a few turns about the paths, we seated ourselves on a rustic bench delightfully shaded by a narquotte tree, whose branches were clustered over with a delicious little golden fruit, while the surrounding air was

redolent of odour from a group of young lemon trees in full bloom, and other rich scents.

[Pg 88]

And now I turned over in my mind how best to introduce the subject nearest my heart. Happily, Aunt Rossiter opened a way for me at once by saying, anxiously: "What makes my little girl so unusually grave and silent this morning? I trust you are not ill, dear child? or has anything occurred between Charlotte and yourself to vex you?"

Upon that I reminded her of her words to Lotty on the previous evening, saying how much the thought of a separation distressed me, and begging her to tell me where she was going to and for what reason, whether on a visit or for change of air.

She did not immediately speak, and I heard her suppress a sigh as, putting her arm round me, she drew me slowly to her side and fondly pressed her lips to my cheek. This silent action spoke volumes to my already trembling heart. An intolerable sensation of anguish, as on the preceding night, came down upon me like lead, oppressing my very breathing. She had confessed nothing, but yet I now felt, felt for a certainty, that I knew all—knew that my worst apprehensions were correct, that death was the coming separation.

[Pg 89]

Presently she spoke; her voice was a little unsteady, but low and calm: "My beloved child, remember that not a sparrow falls without the will of our heavenly Father. Whatever happens to his servants, whether of outward weal or woe, is certain to be for the best."

"You never said you were ill," I answered, in choking words. "Oh, aunt, why did you not tell me before?"

"Until quite lately I was quite ignorant of the seriousness of my complaint. Even Dr. Manfred was misled by delusive appearances, and believed that I should recover; but God in his wisdom sees fit to ordain it otherwise, and his will be done!" Again she lovingly kissed my cheek, and I unconsciously drew myself away and sat up. A feeling as though I had been stunned half bewildered me. By degrees this passed off, and then, oh how changed everything seemed to me! The brightness of the sun and the flowers, the scented air, the glad voice of birds and brook, were all now but as a hollow mockery of happiness, and I marvelled how they could look and sound so joyous while I felt so unutterably miserable.

[Pg 90]

At this instant Blurdon came by with his spade on his broad shoulder, and gave me a quick, defiant glance. Something in my face—the impress, I suppose, of the dreary feeling of woe which possessed my whole being—caused him to look again and almost stop.

"You must find this very hot weather for working," aunt said in her kind, winning voice.

"What's the matter with her?" he returned for answer, stopping and indicating myself with a jerk of his thumb.

Aunt hesitated for an instant, and then said: "In common with all human beings, my little girl finds it very difficult and painful sometimes to submit her will to that of her heavenly Father."

[Pg 91]

"Why, what's she been a-doing of? What harm can the likes of such a soft little creature as that do?" he growled, eyeing me with a perplexed and perplexing stare, for was it possible that this wild, savage, strange man felt sorry for me? And yet I thought he looked as if he did.

"Judging from the style of your accusations against her this morning, you did not then consider her so innocent or harmless," rejoined Aunt Rossiter, smiling, and with intent, I knew, to check further questioning on his part. It instantly took the desired effect.

"Ah, that's true enough!" he exclaimed, savagely. "I'd forgot that, I had. No, it's not always, nor maybe never, for the matter of that, the most innocent-looking things are the safest. I knowed a-many flowers up country as soft and pure to see as she be," nodding his shaggy head at me, "and yet they was as full of poison as they could hold—ay, that they was!" and with another defiant glance, that seemed to dare me to do my worst, he strode on his way.

[Pg 92]

I longed to ask Aunt Rossiter whether she was very ill, whether the doctor had said she would die soon; but besides that the mere uttering such woeful words made me shrink, I dreaded her answer. I felt if she told me, "Yes, in all human probability she must leave us speedily," I could not bear it.

Once more she came to my assistance. Again putting her arm around my waist and drawing me close to her, she said, in her usual cheerful, heart-comforting voice: "It does not follow, my precious child, that because my disease is mortal it will in consequence be brief. Under the blessing of the Almighty, human skill and care may keep me with my beloved on earth much longer than I think. Trust in the mercy and wisdom of our heavenly Father, therefore, my little daughter; pray for me, pray that he will, if he sees good—only on that condition—permit me to remain amongst you yet a while."

[Pg 93]

I could only kiss her fondly; I could not speak. "Oh," thought I, "if prayers and entreaties to heaven, if love and care and skill can obtain it, will we not try!"

If only a few days ago sweet, gentle aunty had uttered such uncertain words, how sad and comfortless would they have sounded to my then all-confident soul! but now they came as a bright flash of hope piercing the gloom which enveloped my heart, like an indefinite reprieve to one condemned to execution. One of the wisest, most merciful arrangements of Nature is that gradual advance toward the completion of her works, and not the least so among them is the

ready buoyancy of youth—that happy tendency, the result of the ignorance of inexperience, to turn away from the shadowed to the sunny side of life's path. Were it otherwise, were distress and grief to cling to us in the springtime of our existence as in its autumn, alas! how aged should we prematurely become! How soon would the winter of life settle down upon our heads and heart—ay, before the sunshine has even come.

[Pg 94]

From that day forward, my first, my ever-anxious prayer was for our beloved protectress, my constant thought and care to promote her comfort and guard her from every breath of harm. And as time went on, bringing with it a perceptible change for the better in her general health, so my spirit lightened of its load of solicitude. Albeit I was conscious that the sorrow of that day had cast a shadow between my heart and its before unreflecting joyousness which neither event nor time could remove, yet it was a merciful lesson, teaching my inexperienced soul the uncertainty of all human happiness, teaching me that in the midst of life—ay, the brightest, the most seemingly blessed and prosperous life—we are in death. Ah, boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth!

---

## CHAPTER XI.

[Pg 95]

Upon uncle's return, he brought us the unwelcome intelligence that Susan had been suddenly sent for by her aged mother, who was ill, and that consequently she could not come to us at present, but hoped to do so soon. I will here add that she was prevented from acting upon that wish until too late to be long of use to us at Rathfelder's Hotel. "And meanwhile," continued Uncle Rossiter, with a meaning smile, "Lotty must take care of herself, and Mechie will take care of us all."

"How will you like that arrangement, Lotty?" asked aunt, giving one of her gentle, anxious looks at Charlotte.

"Judging from past experience, and especially that of last night, I would rather take care of myself than trust to sister Mechie to do it for me, auntie," replied Charlotte, laughing. [Pg 96]

I did not know to what experience she alluded, whether the troubles of our walk, which she still persistently laid at my door, or my keeping her awake when we went to bed.

"Why, what mischief has my little girl been at?" uncle said gayly.

Charlotte, seeing that her love of repartee was bringing her, as it too often did, into trouble, extricated herself by exclaiming, "Oh, by-the-bye, uncle, what about our clothes? Could you manage it with Susan from home?"

"Oh yes," he said; one of the other servants had packed a box full for us, and we should, he hoped, do very well.

Charlotte and I then went to our room to dress for dinner.

"As I walked by myself  
I talked to myself,  
And myself said to me,"

sang my sister, while combing her hair; but I will not conclude the verse, for to those who know it already it is unnecessary to repeat it, and those who do not lose nothing by their ignorance. To me the sentiment it contains is so odious in its selfishness that although I feel certain Charlotte had no unamiable motive in thus singing the really silly words, yet her tone and manner grated harshly with a heart still aching under its present load of afflictive knowledge. I was the more vexed, too, because only a short time back I had told her of my conversation with aunt in the garden and the painful confession it had elicited; and though certainly surprised at the moment by her calm reception of an announcement which had so greatly tried and distressed me, I inwardly laid it to her superior firmness and self-control enabling her to take a more rational view of the case. Her calmness often made me feel myself to be morbidly sensitive, foolishly tender-hearted to a degree which was sometimes quite sinful. There were occasions however—and this was one—in which I pined to see a little less (I will honestly confess it) of the firm, upstanding spirit and more of weeping sympathy. I cannot but say that Charlotte heard my sad news with surprised feeling and evident regret; the colour deepened in her cheek and her eyes filled with tears; but it hurt me keenly to see how quickly she recovered from the stroke, making up her mind that, as she expressed it, "what must be, must be, and all the grieving in the world could not prevent it." [Pg 97]

"If all the care in the world can, it shall," I exclaimed, passionately, yielding for the first time to an irrepressible burst of agony which drew upon me a lecture and a scolding, though not unkindly, from Charlotte.

"Such violent, uncontrolled sorrow, Mechie, proves a want of proper submission to the will of God," she went on. "I really wonder at you! Does not the Bible say, 'Have we received good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil?' or words to that purport at least. We have had [Pg 98]

nothing but good, as you know, all our lives through; and now the very first affliction which is sent upon us excites in you a most unholy feeling of opposition and expressions of murmuring and discontent."

[Pg 99]

And thus Charlotte continued until the subject, or rather her eloquence, was exhausted, wholly forgetting how often some trifling inconvenience or a few hours' illness had led her to bewail and lament over herself as one of the most ill-used and unfortunate beings in the world, and how any consolation or admonition on my part had been met by arguments as skilful in support of her discontented feelings as those she now used in condemning mine.

These thoughts and many others bearing upon the strange inconsistencies of her character, which I never could quite understand, flashed through my mind while Charlotte was carelessly singing the foregoing rhyme. That she could sing at all and seem so sorrow free only two short hours after hearing from me of our threatened bereavement astonished and pained me beyond expression. And now to be proclaiming, even in joke, that "no one cared for her, and therefore she had better take of herself," added so strong a feeling of anger to my other sensations that I cried out in a vehement tone: "Don't say that, Lotty! I can't bear to hear you. They are unchristian, unholy, heartless words! And how do such sentiments agree with what you said a short time ago—and very truly—that our whole life has been a continuation of blessings? Oh, Lotty, Lotty, how I do wish you would try, with the help of the Almighty, to cure yourself of that inconsistency which makes you appear what I know you are not—heartless and selfish!"

[Pg 100]

Charlotte had affected to be startled as first I spoke, and stared round at me with wide-open eyes of assumed amazement.

"Why, Mechie, how you frightened me! Really, these violent outbursts of indignation quite take away my breath. I must say I am very glad, considering poor auntie's delicate state of health, that you always reserve your heroics for my especial edification. Such sudden surprises would be highly injurious to her."

[Pg 101]

"My heroics! Oh, Charlotte, when you see me really distressed is it kind to speak in that sneering way?" I said, warmly, and bitter tears filled my eyes.

"Dear me, Mechie! do not be so silly; you know I do not mean to be ill-natured."

"I know you do not mean to be unkind in any way, dear Lotty, and it vexes me the more to hear you repeat as if you were in earnest such selfish words as you sang just now."

"Oh, now you are giving me credit for too much or too little, whichever it is," answered Charlotte in a more serious tone than she had yet spoken and again resuming her hair dressing. "I am not at all sure that I did not quite sympathize with the feeling of the author—indeed, that I do not do so now; at any rate, a sensation closely akin to the sentiment so beautifully expressed in that poetic verse filled my heart and thereupon overflowed my lips," she said, laughing a little.

[Pg 102]

"Oh, Lotty!"

"Now you just look here, Mechie, and say honestly whether I am not perfectly excusable." In her unreflecting vehemence Charlotte evidently quite overlooked the fact of there being any one else in the same boat with herself. "Look here. I am brought away, without any will of mine being consulted, from a home full of comforts and luxuries—which ours certainly is; from attendance abundant and varied according to every requirement; from agreeable society, suited to my tastes—Hester Martin, Jane Burgess, Lucy Morgan, and the rest; from other pleasures and advantages which I need not enumerate,—to a place destitute of every attraction under the sun—a wild, dreary, frightful country, a great and desolate hotel without a soul in it but ourselves; no companions, no servants even, except the St. Helena girl and her sister who cook and do the rooms and are as ugly and stupid and uncivilized as everything else here. I declare, I would as soon ask one of them to dress me or get out my clothes as I would one of those mountain monkeys of which uncle spoke. Then, to bring matters to their worst, Susan, knowing well the delectabilities of this place and what was in store for her, wisely provides against the evil and strikes work in time to save herself—"

[Pg 103]

"Her mother is ill, Lotty!"

"Yes, of course she is, and always will be when occasion requires. And so, now, here I am, as I say, without any choice of my own, as uncomfortable as I can possibly be, every act of others from first to last proving that they care nothing for me; consequently and of necessity I must, as the objectionable rhyme has it, 'look after myself.' In what way I am to do it, however, in this wilderness, passes all my powers of devising. But now, Miss Mechie, you must see that thinking these thoughts is the natural result of such disagreeable circumstances, and naturally led to my singing that verse which so instantly set your inflammable temper in a blaze, and that so far from being to blame in anything I am exceedingly to be pitied, in everything."

[Pg 104]

"But, Charlotte, is it possible that you have so forgotten or are indifferent to what I told you of poor aunt? Do you not remember that it is on her account that we are staying here?—that the change is doing her good? Oh, Lotty, surely you would feel any sacrifice you could make compensated for by even the slightest improvement in dear auntie's state of health?"

"Oh, of course I should! I wonder you consider it necessary to ask such a question, Mechie!" exclaimed Charlotte in a tone of warm indignation that sent a comforting glow into my chilled heart. "But that is, in my opinion, the silliest part of the business. Just think, seriously, Mechie,

and you must see as plainly as I do that she can get no good by staying in a place like this. Remember the distance we are from Dr. Manfred. Uncle must of course drive in every day to the bank, and fancy the distressing position you and I would be in if during his absence aunt were to fall dangerously ill, requiring instant medical advice, perhaps, and the doctor seven miles away!"

[Pg 105]

Oh, if Charlotte had known what a thrill of pain her words would awaken in my heart as they brought before my imagination with sudden vividness the picture of her whom I loved better than all the world beside lying white and still, patient and suffering, perhaps dying, on her pillow—had Charlotte known it, she would not have spoken so carelessly.

"Lotty, you do not think her so ill as that, do you?" I faltered.

"So ill as what, you silly thing?" she answered, turning and looking at me. "Why, how pale you are, Mechie! How can you be so absurd as to catch up my words and misinterpret them in that hasty way? I don't know anything about illness; how should I? I was always aware, of course, that aunt was more or less delicate, but had no idea that she laboured under any really serious disease until you told me; and all I meant to say was that, such being the case, it is unwise for her to have placed herself in the position she has done, and it might prove very distressing to us."

[Pg 106]

"Oh, I am so glad you meant nothing more, Lotty!" I answered, feeling immensely relieved by this explanation. "You often see the truth much quicker than I do, and the thought agonized me that perhaps you perceived her to be worse than I suspected or than she is herself aware of. But, Lotty," I continued, changing the too painful subject, "to return to what you were before complaining of—the want of a lady's maid—can't I help you? I will gladly dress you if you like, and get out your clothes if you will just tell me always what you require."

"Well, unquestionably such an arrangement would render my disagreeable position much more bearable to me until Susan comes," replied Charlotte, condescendingly; "so thank you, Mechie; it is well thought of on your part, and I very gladly accept your offer; for, between ourselves, if there is one thing I dislike more than another it is trouble."

[Pg 107]

And yet, I thought, I have often seen Charlotte bestow an amount of time and trouble on trifling matters in which pleasure was concerned sufficient utterly to exhaust me, and she did not seem to feel it a bit.

---

## CHAPTER XII.

[Pg 108]

After dinner, uncle, Charlotte and I set off to clear up the mystery of the strange animal we had seen under the bushes. It was daylight now and the way easily traced and soon I distinguished the identical bush beneath which it was sheltering itself. And yes, there it was still, sure enough, and only a poor dog, after all—a huge creature, now stretched out dead and stark, a gunshot wound in its side declaring the cause of its death. It was a splendid, great animal, and in good condition; who, therefore, could have killed it, and why? So we questioned of each other. Uncle and Charlotte preferred continuing their walk over the flats, but as I wished to return to aunt on the balcony, they saw me in safety to the little bridge, and then left me.

Not liking to encounter Blurdon, I ran rapidly through the garden, meeting our landlord just coming in at the gate. Instantly I gave him an account of the dead dog, begging to know how he thought it had happened.

[Pg 109]

"Oh, it was that rascally Blurdon's doing," he answered, "The idle fellow has been amusing himself of late shooting every stray dog that was unlucky enough to come sufficiently near to the house to be within his reach. He knew perfectly well I didn't wish them destroyed. But he possessed a gun of his own and went out at night, by which means he could do what he chose: so you see one of the results. However, I have made an end of his impudence here sooner than he either wished or expected, for this afternoon I bundled him off, bag and baggage, and I hope never to set eyes on his face again."

"Then he is really gone, you think?" I said, joyfully.

"Am quite sure of it," said Mr. Rathfelder. "This is no place for him, for besides having nothing to do here, the people hereabouts are too quiet and respectable to suit him and his bad ways. Oh no; he's gone, and no mistake."

[Pg 110]

"Well, I must say I am glad," rejoined I, "for, to confess the truth, I am quite afraid of him."

Mr. Rathfelder laughed, saying: "His looks are certainly against him, but, though a worthless sort of fellow, he might not be as really bad, after all, as his face proclaims him to be."

"God, who reads the heart, alone knows," I murmured to myself while pursuing my way to the hotel, feeling, nevertheless, exceedingly comforted by our landlord's assurance of his departure.

So time passed on—tranquil, pleasant days—days whose brightness increased to us all as each one told to advantage on the health of dear Aunt Rossiter. Charlotte, too, was quite contented, for not only was the period fast approaching for our return home, but so satisfactorily had I supplied Susan's place (she was still prevented coming to us) that Lotty declared of the two she was inclined to think my attendance preferable, for she could have her own way just as she liked with

[Pg 111]

me, which was not often possible and never easy with that self-willed, unaccommodating Susan.

My lady's-maid duties, however, generally obliged me to curtail my morning walk a good deal in order to be back in time to secure my dear, lazy Lotty's presence at the prayers (which uncle always read while the tea was drawing); but so long as that desirable end was effected, I did not regret my shortened walk. I am quite sure our heavenly Father far oftener than mortals in their blind ingratitude, even among the best of us, take account, directs that such trifling acts of self-sacrifice shall work good to the humble Christian. Little did I anticipate when each morning, checking my eager desire to go farther and seek for other and more beautiful flowers, I turned and hurried back, that this very proceeding would at last prove a merciful means of salvation from I know not what of evil, yet so it was.

[Pg 112]

One morning—it was the last, according to present arrangement, to be spent at Rathfelder's, previous to the day of our return home—pursuing my way as usual at an early hour across the flowery country, I stopped to look at my watch—a habit I practiced now almost every quarter of an hour at least, fearing to outstay my time. As I did so I partly turned round to see how far I had come, and at that instant caught sight of a dark form slinking behind some bushes in the distance. Imperfect as the view was, it nevertheless showed me the figure of a man. What was he doing there? and what was his motive in thus concealing himself, if concealing himself at all? "But oh no," thought I; "it can only be a poor negro searching on his knees for land-tortoises or negro-figs," as a certain little prickly, disagreeable kind of wild fruit is there called; "it can't be anything more dangerous than that." Whereupon, having ascertained I had a good bit of time yet to spare, on I went, and, absorbed in enjoyment of all around me, soon forgot the mysterious figure.

[Pg 113]

I had wandered on considerably farther, and was once more halting to consult my watch, when again—yes, there it was!—the same dark form, still skulking behind the bushes, and by this time so much nearer that no great distance lay between us. What did it mean? Was it possible he meditated harming me? And robbery or violence of any kind was a thing almost unheard of around Cape Town. I could not believe he was intending evil against me. "He must be wanting to beg," I said to myself; "nothing more, oh, surely nothing more!" But my heart throbbed tumultuously, nevertheless, and I trembled exceedingly while, pretending to arrange the bouquet I held in my hand, I keenly watched him. An open space separated the thicket behind which he was unquestionably trying to hide himself and another in advance; and across this he must pass should he continue the course he was apparently pursuing—a course which would shortly bring him directly in front of me and upon the path I was following, for it made a turn at that point right before his way. I had not long to wait. Believing himself again secure from notice, the man advanced stealthily a little forward, projected his head and gazed at me. Words cannot describe the feeling of terror which possessed my whole being when at that instant I recognised the repellant face of Joe Blurdon! I did not move; I affected to be completely engaged with my nosegay and to see nothing else. But, alas! where was I to go? Forward or backward, I was now equally in his power, and that his intentions were undoubtedly bad was clear, or why these underhand proceedings? Why, too, was he here at all? Did he meditate robbery? What was I to do? And I thought of my watch, that I had taken out while he was looking, but I dreaded much more even the touch of his hand. I was conscious of a strange feeling stealing over me as I stood there amidst the beautiful works of the Creator—the bright sunshine, the balmy air, the clear sky above and flower-carpeted earth beneath—spellbound by that dark face and evil eye fixed upon me in the distance.

[Pg 114]

[Pg 115]

But now Blurdon stole rapidly across the bare space, and for a brief while was again hid from my view. With his disappearance subsided the lethargy of terror which was paralyzing me, and I strove to raise my heart in prayer to heaven. The very effort brought new life into my soul—brought the remembrance that I was not alone, that a merciful, loving Friend was near whose arm was as powerful to protect in this wilderness as in the greatest crowd. "Oh save me, my God! Direct me what to do!" were my only words. And he did direct me.

To run for my life seemed the only chance left me. "But not yet," I murmured as, making believe to gather flowers and at the same time to be continuing my walk, my eyes watched the on-going figure, and noted the vigilant guard he also kept upon my movements. Before him, and close beside the grassy pathway I was coming along, skirted a thicket of some length and breadth and of considerable denseness of foliage, and to this point he was evidently hastening. Arrived there, I perceived him stop and look earnestly in my direction. How wildly my heart beat! but with seeming boldness I advanced a step or two in a careless manner, examining the flowers the while. The next minute he was making his way round to the side of the bushes near the path, and was finally quite concealed from my sight, as I was also from his.

[Pg 116]

To catch me unawares was clearly his plan; he feared that any cry of alarm on my part might bring assistance he knew not; and it was but acting in accordance with his wild-animal instincts to adopt this crafty method of effecting his purpose rather than a straightforward, open one. As soon as I recovered my recollection of the omnipresence of God, which my sudden fright had momentarily scared away from my mind, I half unconsciously so gave myself up to his care that I waited to be impelled, as it were, by some inward feelings of guidance what to do, and this trust it was which saved me. Had I made the least attempt to escape too soon, had I betrayed any consciousness of the dangerous vicinity of this man, I should have been lost, but now was the moment, if ever; and yielding to an irresistible impulse, I turned and fled back the way I had come.

[Pg 117]

Never before in my life had I run so fast; on, on, without once looking behind me, and scarce feeling the soft turf beneath my feet—on, till reaching the gate, I threw myself over; and then, as Charlotte and I had before done, I stood grasping a bar, panting heavily and straining my eyes over the Flats. I was not pursued; nothing met my sight but the wild country; and I poured out a flood of thanksgiving to the great and good God who had so wonderfully sustained, guided and saved me in this my hour of great trial and danger.

Again I scanned the widespreading view, and now I distinguished the herculean form of Blurdon moving rapidly here and there. Examining more earnestly (I was possessed of a naturally very long sight), I could see him looking round the shrubs and bushes where I had so recently been standing, evidently unable to comprehend my sudden disappearance, so swift had been my flight. [Pg 118]

Becoming fearful that he might seek me in this direction, I hastened down the field as well as my filtering steps would take me, for I was feeling quite weak now. When in the garden I stopped once more to rest a few seconds on one of the benches, and then returned to the hotel. On the balcony I met uncle, and in as few words as possible narrated to him my adventure and escape. He listened with breathless anxiety, his face paling as I proceeded, and, scarcely waiting to hear the end, hurried away, uttering an ejaculation of thanksgiving to God for my safety. In a few minutes I saw him hastening across the court toward the Flats in company with Mr. Rathfelder.

Fearing the effect which my tale might have on aunt in her delicate state, I decided to leave it to uncle whether or not to tell her, and for that reason was silent on the subject to Charlotte also, lest she might heedlessly speak of it. [Pg 119]

We were sitting at breakfast when he returned. To my surprise he came in looking quite cheerful and satisfied, instead of anxious and distressed, as was his expression at parting with me. Smiling as he sat down to the table, he said: "You will be glad to hear, my little Mechie, that Blurdon meant no mischief. We found him leaning over the gate at the end of the field and looking about him apparently in a quiet, peaceful, meditative mood. In answer to our questions he said he had come to this part again to have another talk with the good little lady who had spoken so kindly to him the other morning, and that he thought he saw you picking flowers in the distance, and followed to see if it was really you. He seems to have the idea that you can help him with a little good advice before he leaves these parts."

I saw at once that uncle thought I had been frightened without cause, and put my alarm down to my having been alone, but I did not say more than lest I should disturb my aunt and Charlotte, who were already looking up and waiting to hear what had occurred; but I was none the less well assured in my own mind that robbery was intended and devoutly thankful to have been preserved. [Pg 120]

---

## CHAPTER XIII.

[Pg 121]

Charlotte was to accompany uncle to Cape Town this morning, some friends having begged him to bring her in to spend the day with them. She was charmed at being allowed to accede to the proposal, and quite agreed this time in the wisdom of securing the cool hours of the day for driving. I found her sitting in our open carriage, ready and waiting for uncle, sooner than necessary.

"How much I wish you were coming too, Mechie, instead of staying by yourself in this stupid place!" she said to me, turning up her handsome face, bright with smiles, as leaning over the balcony rails I awaited her departure.

"Don't you remember when we were coming here, Lotty, I told you I should be so greatly vexed to go without you, and you said, 'All the vexation will be on your side, then, for I should not care a bit'? Well, that's my answer to you now," I replied, laughing. [Pg 122]

"Ah, well, there's no accounting for tastes," rejoined Charlotte in a tone of commiserating superiority; "you always were, and I suppose always will be, a queer, incomprehensible little thing."

"Come, Lotty," I said, feeling rather piqued by the implied contempt of her words, "confess honestly, which is most desirable, to find sources of enjoyment in every place, or be dependent always upon external excitements?"

But Lotty was in no mood for grave remonstrances, and while she was still laughing our uncle entered and the carriage drove up. He nodded a farewell to me, and Lotty looking back cried out gayly: "Good-bye, Mechie."

Aunt and I passed a delightful day together—a day full of sweet, tranquil enjoyment. For many hours, during the hottest time, we remained under the refreshing shade of the fruit trees, reading, working or talking, as the mood inclined us. Occasionally I wandered about, attracted by the musical note of some bird I wanted to see or the gay tints of some insect I wished to capture for a brief while that aunty and I might examine it closely. But of all happy, joyous little creatures whom it charmed me to watch, the chameleons were the most amusing as they glanced about amidst the branches of the trees, in their hunt for insects, their varying colours contrasting brightly and beautifully with the rich hues of the fruit and flowers. [Pg 123]

In the evening a disappointment befell us. We were hopefully expecting the return of our loved ones, when instead there came a letter from uncle, saying that particular business would detain him in town until the following evening. As for Lotty, he continued, her friends, from whose house he was then writing, were only too delighted to have her with them for as long as she could be spared, and he had therefore agreed to her remaining their guest for the present, "an arrangement very agreeable to Lotty herself," uncle added. He then went on to say he had met Dr. Manfred, who strongly advised that as his patient, Mrs. Rossiter, was deriving so much benefit from the air of the Flats, she should stay out the fortnight, returning again to Rathfelder's in another month, and so on repeatedly while she found she gained any advantage to her health. "I am glad to say," uncle concluded, "that Susan's mother is so much better that she hopes to be able to come back with Charlotte and myself to-morrow evening, which will make your longer visit in that 'wilderness,' as Lotty calls it, more agreeable, I hope, to all parties."

[Pg 124]

"Dear, good old Susan!" exclaimed I; "excepting that the attendance of such a servant and friend must always be an acquisition, and the sight of her kind face in the highest degree cheering to me because of her genuine piety and sound sense, I should not otherwise wish any addition to our present party or any alteration in our ways. That it does you good to be here, my own dear aunt," jumping up and kissing her fondly, "is in my opinion sufficient to make it delightful were it far less charming than it really is or our arrangements far less convenient."

[Pg 125]

I was very anxious that my aunt would allow me to share her bed-room that night, feeling uneasy at the thought of her being so entirely alone in the present delicate state of her health. But oh no, she would not on any account agree to such a proposal, she said; I had quite enough to do during the day without the risk of my nights being also unnecessarily disturbed. She was a very uncertain sleeper, she added, and often extremely restless, without, however, feeling ill or requiring anything, and my rest would perhaps be much broken and to no purpose. There was but one room between our bed-rooms, and should she be seriously in want of assistance, nothing could be easier than to open her door and make me hear instantly.

[Pg 126]

I will here explain that Rathfelder's Hotel was a portion of building entirely separated from the part inhabited by our host and his family, which lay at the back—a long line of rooms on the ground floor. The hotel, a substantial house of two stories high, consisted of suites of rooms, sleeping and sitting-rooms alternately on the upper floor, and spacious reception-rooms with one bed-room, filling up the whole of the ground floor. The latter were for the accommodation of casual visitors, picnic parties or travellers to Port Elizabeth, but all the first were reserved exclusively for boarders who stayed weeks or months at a time. There was no staircase in the building, access to the upper rooms being only obtained by means of flights of steps ascending at different points to the broad balcony which I have before mentioned. No servants slept in the visitors' portion of the hotel, and oddly enough, though sometimes full of company at other seasons, no one but ourselves was lodging there just at the present time; consequently, aunt and I had the whole hotel at our disposal. This independent state of affairs did not in the least disconcert us; on the contrary, the novelty of our situation afforded us amusement; and in the evening we wandered through the large rooms, which all opened into each other by single doors, without any feeling of apprehension.

[Pg 127]

The next day we were again disappointed. Uncle and Charlotte did not come, and a second letter of much the same import as the first once more put off their return until the day after.

In the evening, toward night, aunty and I once more perambulated the great suite of rooms, and though feeling no fear of danger, we as a matter of course shut and fastened the venetians and locked the different doors, which, conducting from one room to another, finally opened into a narrow passage running through the upper house and beginning and terminating with the balcony. This securing of windows and doors the servants considered superfluous, and therefore never performed; as it was, they had now completed their last services in our sitting and bed-rooms, paid their last visit to see if we wanted anything and taken their departure, evidently without a thought being given to the other parts of the house above or below.

[Pg 128]

It was still sufficiently light to admit of our seeing with tolerable clearness without candles, and on passing on our way to the extreme end with intent to begin shutting up the first room in that direction and all the rest backward in succession, we noticed a fowl roosting on the back of a chair beside one of the beds. A large quantity of poultry was always wandering about, outside the hotel, and frequently they walked into the rooms and laid their sweet white or brown eggs in some sheltered corner. It had become quite a matter of amusement to Charlotte and me to search for the eggs every evening.

"We must turn Mrs. Hen out of the window when we return," observed aunty; "it won't do to leave her there all night." And laughing together at the domestic character displayed by the bonny-looking feathered lady, we continued our way. Having fastened the doors and windows of the end room, we were on the point of quitting it, when at that instant I was startled by a sudden shriek from the fowl as she flew down from her perch in the distant chamber. With some feeling of terror I looked inquiringly at Aunt Rossiter, but her perfectly composed smile reassured me as she said:

[Pg 129]

"She evidently heard our remarks, Mechie, upon her ill-regulated disposition, and is either offended or ashamed."

"Oh, she is in the highest state of indignation," rejoined I; "just hear how she is attacking us both!"



And certainly Mrs. Hen seemed to be fully verifying my words, for on she came to the room we were in, cackling at the very top of her shrill voice in a most unmistakably incensed manner.

"What's the matter, old lady?" exclaimed I, laughing, as she angrily strutted toward us holding her head very high and looking about her right and left, and over her shoulder behind, with a scared and frightened glance. "Do you think we are shutting up the house with intent to kill and roast and eat you?" I added, opening the window to let her out on the balcony, to find her way home. Instead of immediately leaving us, however, she stood in the room cackling louder than ever, saying something eagerly and earnestly which I longed to understand, feeling certain she was passing some very severe strictures on our want of consideration in having thus disturbed and terrified her, which remarks, I gayly said, must be of an extremely original and amusing nature.

[Pg 130]

When she had said all she could to enlighten us—and oh that we had been able to understand her!—she walked in the same dignified, albeit disturbed manner out of the window, her whole expression declaring, as I afterward pictured to my imagination, that she could do no more, and must now leave us and our obstinacy to our fate. "All she has received in return for her noisy garrulity is to be well laughed at, especially by myself, so no wonder she is offended," I said, laughing again as I reclosed and fastened the venetians and windows.

[Pg 131]

---

## CHAPTER XIV.

[Pg 132]

Anxiety on Aunt Rossiter's account rendered my sleep that night even more light and broken than on the preceding one. I feared that she might be very ill and require help, and be unable to make me hear her call, and it was with the full impression on my mind that her voice was still sounding in my ears that, for the fourth or fifth time, I awoke and listened. Rathfelder kept two or three little dogs, which rambled about the outside premises and were continually barking, but as nobody seemed at any hour to pay the least attention to them, their trouble was, I thought, quite thrown away. To my annoyance, one began barking now on the balcony. I knew it would disturb poor aunt, and felt sure it was that which had awakened me. Under cover of the noise it was making, I jumped out of bed and softly unlocked my door, to hear whether all was quiet in her room.

[Pg 133]

With a keen thrill of distress I perceived by the light inside that her room door stood partly open, and I was on the point of running across to ascertain the reason, when, to my amazement and terror, I heard aunt's voice, as if in conversation with some one. Who could it be? Had uncle returned after I came to my room? If so, what had brought him? Or was Charlotte ill? These thoughts flashed through my mind as I stood there hesitating what to do. But then came a sudden dread into my heart keen as steel. Was aunt more ill than she would let me know? and had she sent for either Uncle Rossiter or Dr. Manfred? Scarce conscious of my actions, I stole across the floor noiselessly, for my feet were bare, to the open door of aunt's room.

For the last two nights, being alone, she had shut this door, but when uncle was with her they left it open, and, to prevent draught, a large screen was placed across it inside. Peeping through a chink in this screen, a sight met my eyes which while mind and memory are spared to me will cling to my recollection like a hideous nightmare. Instinctively my eyes sought my aunt's beloved form. She was sitting up in bed, very white and still. Standing beside a table, his back toward me, engaged in unlocking uncle's desk, was the unmistakable figure of Blurdon.

[Pg 134]

"You may take all you like, and take it without fear; I will never appear against you if you harm us no further," aunt was saying in a tremulous voice. "May that great God who is now looking down upon you, reading the thoughts and intents of your heart, mercifully turn you in time from the error of your ways!"

I could not move, but I heard Blurdon demand whether there was any more money. Then to her expostulation he replied, "You and the other have got jewels worth a deal more than this shabby bit of money. I saw a gold chain on her, I should say, and of course a watch to it; and you've the likes, I'll be bound."

[Pg 135]

I understood then why he had followed me on the Flats.

"There are my watch and chain on the dressing-table," replied aunt, quietly; and as she spoke she made a movement as if about to rise. Blurdon, with fierce threats, bade her lie still, and tauntingly assured her that he would "go and look up the little girl himself."

The impulse of my feelings when first I came to the door was to rush in and implore Blurdon on my knees not to harm my aunt, yet while I stood trembling I instinctively saw that I should but provoke him to violence. Now a sudden desperate courage seized me. Blurdon had turned to the drawers, and was tossing out the contents of the bag to find another purse. This movement still kept him with his back toward me, and I could not resist at this instant making a step to the left which revealed my white-robed figure to aunt, but not to him. Holding up my finger to enjoin silence, fearing that in the excitement of the moment she might betray me by some exclamation, I made a sign that I was going for help, and, turning round, fled back to my room and shut and locked the door. The ceaseless barking of the little dog, which must have seen the robber through the Venetian blind, providentially rendered every lesser sound indistinct, and slipping my feet

[Pg 136]

into my shoes, I caught up my dressing-gown, and struggling into it on my way, I gently unfastened each door until I reached the balcony.

At the instant of leaving aunt's room I saw her raise her clasped hands and eyes to heaven, and I knew that with them went a prayer to God that he would be my support and safeguard, and so it was.



**THE ROBBER.**

page 136

Noiselessly and rapidly I sped on through the rooms, round the balcony, to the back of the hotel, and down the flight of steps there, which brought me to the door of the suite of apartments occupied by Rathfelder and his household. But now how could I waken them without making too much noise, and thereby perhaps bringing that awful Blurdon down upon me? I began to rap and call gently, and used every means I could think of to arouse the sleepers, but in vain. Nothing I could do seemed to make the least impression on their heavy German ears. I became almost wild with fear how the ruffian might treat my aunt in revenge when he found I was gone, for, with his strength, he would soon force an entrance into my room. In utter desperation I knocked louder and louder against the door and windows, yet with a want of success that perfectly amazed me. For a long time I continued my endeavours, and was on the point of giving it up and trying to find my way in the dark round to the front of the house, and so on to some one of the native cottages, when, to my unutterable joy, one of the servants answered from within to my last vehement appeal, asking who was there.

[Pg 137]

Never before had human voice sounded so delightful to my ear! And now the whole family were soon astir, and Rathfelder in a few minutes came out. It needed but little to be said on my part; the very name of Blurdon, as connected with my terror, was sufficient; and calling his two men from the loft over a stable where they were sleeping and accompanied by Mrs. Rathfelder and one of her maidens, who kindly came with me, we all ascended to aunt's room.

[Pg 138]

I could not speak my dread, it was too overpowering; but oh, when I found that she was uninjured, words cannot express the feeling of thankfulness—of positive ecstasy—that filled my heart. She was hastily putting on some clothes to come and seek for me. Flying into her arms, I kissed and hugged and cried over her.

"Where is he? where is he?" Rathfelder had cried out the instant he saw her.

She pointed to the ante-room. "Gone a few minutes back." Whereupon the three men dashed after him.

That terrible night I shall never forget. Even while I write the whole scene comes back as vividly as if it occurred but yesterday, but with it a deep thankfulness that we were mercifully spared

[Pg 139]

---

## CHAPTER XV.

[Pg 140]

It was a pleasant relief to our excitement when uncle and Charlotte came back the following evening, and Susan with them. They were surprised to hear of our adventure, and deeply thankful that we had escaped without further injury. Blurdon had not been found, though search had been made in every direction round the house, and information given to the authorities in Cape Town, but my aunt remarked that a heavy storm of wind had arisen, which must have rendered the pursuit difficult. We were all glad to turn from this painful subject to more ordinary themes of conversation.

While undressing that night, Lotty frankly confessed to Susan that she had been indebted to me, during the whole of our previous stay in the hotel, for as skilful attendance as Susan herself could give. "So I have not missed you a bit, you dear old thing," she concluded with pretended seriousness.

[Pg 141]

"And who has done for Miss Mechie?" inquired Susan, gravely.

"Mechie? Oh, she does not want any one to do for her," rejoined Charlotte, gayly. "Every one has his own peculiar gift, you know, and Mechie's is a liking and adroitness in waiting upon others; now I have not a bit of ability—to say nothing of fancy—in that way myself, as you know."

"Well," answered Susan, gruffly, "I always find that Miss Mechie requires as much proper attendance as you, or any other young lady, and why should she not? But this I know, that while you are so lazy, Miss Lotty, that you always want to have everything done for you, and do as little as you can in return, Miss Mechie is quite contrariwise to that. And who, pray, minded poor mistress?"

"Oh, I delight in attending to aunty, you know, Susan," I said, "and indeed it was not Charlotte's fault, for I preferred acting as I did for both of them. My only regret was that I could not by any amount of love or labour make dear, darling aunty better and stronger. But, thank God! she is much better."

[Pg 142]

"Those are very nice feelings, Mechie," observed Lotty, demurely. "You cannot do more amiably than encourage them. I wish I could increase your happiness, dear, by increasing your labour of love. I would set you to dress my hair every morning, only you have such bad taste you would make a perfect figure of me."

"Yes, it is very likely I should or I would," replied I, laughing, "so do not risk it."

"No, that is just what I thought; and—"

"There! don't talk no more nonsense, Miss Charlotte. I can't abide folly, and that you know, miss," interrupted Susan, peremptorily; "I don't object to an innocent cheerfulness, as much as you like, but not—"

"In church?" Charlotte said with pretended surprise, remembering a sharp lecture she had once received from old nurse for irreverent conduct with a young friend during divine service.

[Pg 143]

"In church!" repeated Susan. "I was not thinking of church; but no! play of any kind would no longer be innocent in God's house: you know that, Miss Lotty, as well as I do. What does the Holy Bible say on that matter?—'Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God, for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.' Now, do you think those few words ought to be words of lightness or wordliness? Do you go there to speak such? 'Be not rash with thy mouth.' What does that mean? If you were come before a great king to make a petition, would you, while standing there and his eye upon you, begin whispering and giggling with your friends? You know you wouldn't. And what is any earthly king to our heavenly King of kings?"

[Pg 144]

"I can't think what you are so cross with me about, Susy," Charlotte said, half poutingly. "The fact is you don't like coming to this place, and very naturally, and so you are trying to lighten your feeling of annoyance by throwing it upon me. Why don't you make Mechie share it as well?"

"No, I don't object to coming here a bit, miss. I think it a very pleasant place for a while, and, moreover, if I didn't like it, I shouldn't mind so long as it did poor, dear mistress good to be here. But what annoys my feelings, child, is this: there are two weeds growing up in your character, and though as yet they have made no great show, because everybody that cares for your future happiness keeps nipping off their heads and warning you of them, too, that you may try to root them up, they nevertheless go on throwing out their roots into your heart and soul. Now, from every fresh root will, in time, spring up another plant, until your whole mind is at last so overrun with them that they will kill every good and beautiful thing growing there now, and poison the soul for everything else."

[Pg 145]

"In the name of patience, Susan, what do you mean?" asked Charlotte, with an astonished look in her amused face. "Am I becoming a female Blurdon? Well, I know somebody who will think me a

much more interesting personage if I do," gayly glancing at me.

Poor old nurse looked puzzled for an instant, as well she might, but, coming to the conclusion that this was only some of Lotty's usual nonsense, passed it by, continuing with increased seriousness:

"Many a young person, Miss Charlotte, begins life with laughing at what in after years she is forced to weep burning, heartfelt tears over."

"Well, but what are these two weeds, Susy, which, according to your account, are possessed of such life-destroying properties? They must be very small at present, for I declare I have not the remotest conception of their existence, in my heart at least." [Pg 146]

"No, child, there's the mischief! More's the pity that you haven't. If you could only see those weeds in your own heart, and were to pull them well up by the roots instead of being proud of their ugly blossoms, as you really are, mistaking them, as you do, for things to be admired, you have no notion how a deal comelier you'd be; ay, that would you."

"What does she mean, Mechie? Can you understand her? I protest I cannot!" And Charlotte laughingly sat down on the bedside, staring at Susan.

"I'll clear it out for you in two words, Miss Lotty," nurse said, standing before her with a stern face, while holding in her hands a dress which she was on the point of folding up. "Selfishness and indolence—they are the weeds—or indolence and selfishness, it doesn't matter which I put first, for either of them is parent to the other, as the case may be."

The offended expression that came into Charlotte's face pleased me much better than its preceding one of levity and indifference. [Pg 147]

"Well, I must say I see no just reason why you should accuse me of so bad a fault as selfishness any more than Mechie," she exclaimed, warmly. "I may be indolent, if not liking disagreeable trouble is being so, but selfish I am certainly not; or if I am, so is everybody else, for I see no difference between me and others, excepting, perhaps, that I am more good-natured."

"Now, listen to me, Miss Lotty, and judge for yourself if I am right or wrong. You say you are not selfish, and you question being indolent because you only don't like disagreeable trouble. You are not indolent? Then what is it, in the first place, makes you such a sluggard in your duties to your God that if it were not for others there's scarce a morning you'd be down in time for the Bible and prayers? You know very well, too, that your poor aunt is a deal better in this place from the change than she was before, and yet you have done nothing but grumble and complain, and that because things aren't so straight and pleasant or so gay as at Fern Bank. Isn't that selfish? And hasn't it to do with indolence? You haven't many servants to be attending to you here, and that obliges you to attend to yourself and to wait upon your aunt—at least, you ought to wait upon her, and you can't help feeling and seeing that you ought, whether you choose to do so or not. Then you haven't a carriage to be driving you out in whenever you fancy it, and that obliges you to walk, which you don't like either; and the conclusion of all is, that if you could make us all go home this minute, you would gladly. And if you could avoid doing anything that gives you trouble and get other people to do all for you, you would be quite contented and very good tempered, and think yourself all the while one of the most amiable, obliging young ladies at the Cape. But is that what you have been taught to be, Miss Lotty? Is that the sort of life which is pleasing in God's sight? Oh, child! child! remember what our blessed Saviour's example was while on earth—how he spent the whole of every day in teaching and benefitting poor human beings, pleasing not himself in anything except in doing good." [Pg 148]

"Dear me!" sighed Charlotte, wearily, passing her hands over her face after a fashion of her own; "now I do wish that all that is pleasant wasn't wrong, and all that's wrong—Well, no matter; it can't be helped, I suppose. I will try and be better, if only just to please you, dear old nurse; see if I don't!" and, jumping up, she threw her arms round Susan's neck and impetuously kissed her check several times. "There! dear old thing; don't scold any more."

Susan, with whom Charlotte was secretly at heart the favourite, warmly returned her embrace, and her eyes filled with tears as she said earnestly, "If I did not love you two children as though you were my own, I shouldn't grieve over your faults so much, nor scold you so much, maybe; but don't you say that, dear—don't encourage them hard thoughts against the all-wise, all-merciful God, for it is against God we grumble when we murmur at the dispensation of his laws on earth." [Pg 150]

"What thoughts, you dear old scold?" and Lotty laid her soft young cheek caressingly against Susan's.

"Why, that everything pleasant is wrong, and—"

"Well, but is it not so, nurse? I declare, I rarely, if ever, do anything pleasant, or wish to do it, that I don't find out that it is in some way wrong, and things I generally dislike you tell me are right;" and Charlotte hid her face on Susan's shoulder.

"It is true, dear, that many besides yourself have that notion about right and wrong, but then they are unthinking, foolish-headed young things like you" (Charlotte did not look particularly flattered by this definition of herself), "or, if they are older, they are no wiser. But come! get into bed, both of you, and I'll just set that error to rights in your mind, then leave you to go to sleep."

We did as she desired, and seating herself beside Charlotte, Susan continued: "In just those very words you used, Miss Lotty, lies right and wrong most times. 'In some way,' you said, if you remember. Well, that's just it. Very often it is not the thing itself that's wrong, but the abuse of it; it's the degree it's given way to that makes it either wrong or right. Can't you see that running through almost everything? God has put us here to learn self-control and moderation and obedience to his will. 'Thus far shalt thou go and no farther,' is the boundary line to many of our enjoyments, if not to every affair and act in life. I can see with half an eye that since you have been here you've given way to all your whimsies and humours to their fullest extent, and how much happier have you really been? And mark, it was the abuse mostly, not the moderate use, of your liberty that spoiled your pleasure. Miss Mechie was wrong to encourage you, and I hope she will not do it again. And now, before I go listen to this text, and keep it always in mind."

"But just tell me this, Susan," interposed Charlotte. "You say that God shows us things are harmful if we abuse their use, but how? I don't understand you." [Pg 152]

"You have seen those things they call buoys floating on the water?" questioned Susan.

"Yes."

"What do they put them out there for?"

"For? Oh, to denote danger of some kind and to warn vessels not to come any farther, lest they be lost or seriously injured."

"That's it—that's it exactly. The instant the feeling of wrong, or the appearance of wrong, comes up into any pleasant thing, depend upon it that is, as it were, a buoy floating over some hidden danger to the soul. When amusements or feastings begin to bring uneasy sensations to the body, be sure you are going too far—you are passing the buoy! God has given us all things richly to enjoy, but only in moderation and in the way in which he sees best for our temporal and eternal interests; and when in our obstinacy we choose either to have things different from his will or in greater excess than is good for us, then the pleasantest things become hurtful—become wrong. But I must go to mistress now, so I will just leave you a text or two and then run away." [Pg 153]

Taking her Bible, Susan read the following: "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." And again: "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." And once more: "Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith."

---

## CHAPTER XVI.

[Pg 154]

On the morning of the fourth day from the night of the robbery we returned to Fern Bank. As yet we had obtained no tidings of Blurdon, and it was believed that he had at once gone off up country, bribing and frightening the natives to conceal him in their cottages during the day, and travelling on in any fashion that presented itself during the night. On the evening of our coming home, however, uncle brought us back an account that was at once as dreadful as it was unexpected.

All who have lived at the Cape know that even in the daytime, and to those well-acquainted with the geography of the Table Mountain, it is extremely unsafe to attempt to cross it while enveloped in mist, as in many parts the ground breaks off precipitately to a depth of some hundreds of feet; and these chasms or precipices, concealed by the clouds, have often proved graves to the ignorant and incautious. It was therefore with imminent peril that Blurdon endeavoured on that dark night to make his way over the mountain to the town. Nor did he escape the consequences of his wickedness and folly, for the furious wind that swept across the country made it still more difficult for him to find a way, and he fell over a height upon a bed of rocks, breaking his leg and arm and otherwise injuring himself. [Pg 155]

Poor creature! Notwithstanding his ruffianly character, many a heart felt for him when his case was known. There he had lain for some time undiscovered on the rocks, alone and unaided in his agony. On the following evening, some negroes, taking advantage of the return of calm weather, were hunting on the mountain side for land crabs, and to their surprise and terror came upon the scarcely conscious form of the robber, whom one of them instantly recognized. With a compassionate care and gentleness which in the days of his strength he would have scorned, they conveyed him to the hospital, where he was immediately attended to. [Pg 156]

Uncle went there as soon as he heard of the circumstance, to satisfy himself that this was really the man who had robbed us, and he found that the doctors had succeeded in restoring him to consciousness, but not in reducing the inflammation and swelling in the fractured leg and arm. It was feared that amputation of one or both limbs would be inevitable, and the long-delayed care of his wounds had brought on symptoms that threatened even his life. Some of his ribs also were broken, on the same side with the arm and leg, and his head was frightfully bruised and cut. "Altogether," said uncle, "he presented the most deplorable appearance of any human being I have ever seen in my life."

"Did he remember you, uncle? Did he say anything?" questioned Charlotte.

"Yes, I think he remembered me. He opened his feverish eyes upon me as if he did, but said nothing." [Pg 157]

"Poor, wretched creature!" aunt exclaimed. "I trust he may not die. When you see him again, dear, which I hope will be soon, pray take the first opportunity to tell him how sincerely I feel for him, how deeply I regret the dreadful sufferings he has brought upon himself, and that, should it please the Almighty to spare his life, I shall not forget the promise I made him—nothing of the past will, by my means, be brought up against him."

"I propose going every day to see him," answered uncle, "until, at least, he is out of danger (if such a mercy awaits him), and will certainly deliver your message the instant I can do so unheard by others."

The next evening's account of the unfortunate Blurdon was, if possible, worse than the preceding—worse because hopeless. His life seemed now limited to a few days only. He knew it, and had been warned to employ, to the best of his power, the short time left him in this world, in seeking the mercy he had spurned or neglected. [Pg 158]

"I told him all you said," continued uncle, "and after a moment's silence, during which his hard, dark face underwent several strongly-marked changes, he told me to bring him a coat which was thrown over the back of a chair. I did so, and then at his further desire passed my hand down between the lining and the coarse cloth almost to the bottom of the coat behind, and from thence drew out this chain and watch of yours, and these notes and sovereigns;" and uncle laid them all upon the table as he spoke.

"In a husky, broken voice he bade me return them to you. He had spent nothing out of it, he said; he has had no time. I promised to do as he requested. His voice and manner were full of a sort of reckless despair that to me was truly sad, and presently I spoke gently and kindly to him, as my little Mechie once did, and told him of the boundless love and compassion of our merciful Redeemer for even the greatest of sinners. Then I read to him about the thief on the cross, and concluded with a short prayer. I do not know what impression I made upon his darkened soul, or whether any at all; he said nothing, but lay quite still, his glittering eyes sometimes fixed on vacancy, sometimes on my face, though instantly averted if our looks met. As I rose to leave, saying I would, if possible, come and see him again to-morrow, he exclaimed suddenly, in a low voice, 'Are you her father? You speak and look just like her.' Guessing directly to whom he alluded, I told him no, but she was as dear to me as a daughter; did he wish to send any message to her? I would deliver it faithfully if he did. [Pg 159]

"'Yes,' he answered, abruptly. 'Tell her Joe Blurdon wants her to come and speak to him again—just once more—as his poor old mother used to do. Tell her it won't be for more than once, maybe, for the doctors say my hours are numbered.'

"'God willing, I will bring her with me to-morrow,' I said. A softened light came up into his hard features, but he remained silent; and wishing him good-night, to which he made no response, I came away. And now, my little girl," continued uncle, turning to me, "what do you say to the promise I have made this unhappy man in your name?" [Pg 160]

"Say, uncle?" I repeated, my heart throbbing painfully from mingled feelings; "I am glad you answered as you did. Oh, I hope, I wish, I could do him good!"

"You can but do your best, my child," aunt said, encouragingly. "Our blessed Redeemer assures us that even a cup of cold water given in his name shall have its reward, and think you, my little Mechie, that your compassionate endeavours to save from utter starvation this famished soul will not be highly pleasing in the sight of our gracious Saviour?"

Early on the following morning I awoke, and could sleep no more from thinking of the coming interview. The sun was just rising, and his golden light glinted here and there through the closed venetians into our large, well-furnished bed-room. Rising, I comforted my disquieted spirit by earnest prayer, then went out into the garden. How cheering and soothing are the early summer mornings on the high parts of the Cape! The extreme softness and dryness of the air, owing to the sandy quality of the soil, the sweet, harmonious call notes of myriads of birds, the several sorts of gay-coloured and innoxious insects out at that time, whose appearance adds yet more of life and brightness to the radiant combination of flowers and sunbeams around, and then the splendid boundless view of mountains, valleys and water, the glittering ocean, whose subdued, treacherous voice mingles so musically from the distance with all the other pleasant sounds of that waking hour and penetrates to quiet spots removed beyond reach of the sight and the noise of life's great commercial stir and conflict,—these things altogether present a union of delights rarely to be found, and the more to be enjoyed because of the beauty also of the climate. [Pg 161]

But the day passed, and the time arrived for my painful and yet anxiously desired duty to be performed. The carriage conveyed me to the town, where, according to previous arrangement, I met and took up Uncle Rossiter. In a little while we reached the hospital, and I was soon seated by the bedside of the dying man. Uncle, after a few kind inquiries and the brief remark that he had brought his niece according to Blurdon's request, left us together and went to the end of the ward to speak to another sick person with whom he was acquainted. [Pg 162]

At the first moment a sensation of faintness came over me. How frightfully changed he was from

that morning when, in all the pride and power of unbroken strength, he had scowled defiance at me as he strode wrathfully away with his spade on his shoulder! With a strong effort I mastered my emotion, but although the endeavour to do so saved me from the weakness of fainting, it could not restrain my tears, and for a minute or two I sat silent, choking them down and wiping my eyes.

"I am so sorry for you, Blurdon!" I exclaimed, as soon as I could speak. "You have suffered so dreadfully! Let us hope that the merciful God, knowing the infirmity of our mortal nature and the temptations to forget him and to yield to sin to which your life has been more particularly exposed, has punished you so severely in this world in order that he may save your soul in the one to come."

[Pg 163]

He had watched me crying silently, and with a softening expression coming into his white face and his eyes fastened upon me, he said abruptly:

"Do you mind the other morning when I came after you on the Flats? I told him, and he believed me" (indicating uncle by a slight jerk of his thumb in his old fashion), "that I only wanted to ask your advice, but that was a lie—a lie as black as was my thought. I wanted to rob you—to take the chain and watch, and everything else you had about you." And as he spoke he seemed to experience a momentary relief from his confession, then again fell back exhausted and troubled. I knew that but few words could be allowed in such a case.

[Pg 164]

"Though your sins be as scarlet," I whispered, "they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

He looked at me as if dimly understanding my meaning, but remained silent. For some time I sat by him with a strange confusion of thought, my heart beating violently and my prayers ascending in secret. Then I rose quickly, seized by a sudden, nervous desire to examine some bottles on a table near. He gasped and gazed after me as if he would have me stay. Again I sat down and spoke of the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, and I read to him the account of the Prodigal, his sin, his repentance and his return to his father. Then I turned to that other parable, so full of comfort to the repentant sinner, which tells of the labourers hired in the vineyard, and of those of the eleventh hour receiving in common with those of the early morning.

"So you perceive, Joe," I went on, "that while the holy Bible is abundant in threatenings and denunciations against the hardened sinner, it also abounds in promises and encouragements to the sorrowful and penitent—to those who, in true lowliness of heart, come to their heavenly Father declaring their utter unworthiness to be his sons and imploring him to receive them, if only as hired servants."

[Pg 165]

I did not dare to say much more, and it was almost a relief to me when uncle came to take me home. A tear I could not restrain fell upon the wretched man's hand as I rose to go. He noted it, and started.

"Ah, my friend," said uncle earnestly and slowly, "you felt that tear, but I say unto you, there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance."

---

## CHAPTER XVII.

[Pg 166]

The week that followed my first visit to the hospital was full of painful excitement to us all. Blurdon lay for some days, and was at intervals able to converse. All the gloomy ferocity, the savage harshness of his tone, look and manner, which before so repelled and frightened me, had now given place to a subdued, contrite voice and expression, such as could not but strengthen my hope that his heart was changed. I need not dwell on those closing scenes. He gradually sank, and his last words were a petition for forgiveness.

Before his death the repentant man confided his history to Uncle Rossiter. He was the son of a pious mother, against whose counsel his restless spirit had early rebelled. "I am dying now," he said, "because I have all along chosen to live without God in the world. I set off and followed my own way, against the warnings and guidings of as good a mother as ever son was blessed with; against the teachings of the best and wisest book that ever was written, the Bible; against a right good education; and lastly against the rein of that conscience which would often have held me in."

[Pg 167]

I can well remember how we all sat with a great sadness on our hearts and listened while uncle told the story.

"I cared for none of these things," said Blurdon to him—"that is, I came to care for none of them, for at first I did, but soon I didn't. And I came to think, or chose to think, that I knew better than the great, all-knowing God what things and ways were good for my happiness. That it was neither good nor necessary to be so particular as the Lord required was the first notion I took up, and after that the devil himself could not have wished me to go ahead faster. It was throwing the reins on the neck of a wild horse. Folks talk of the downward road being bright and easy, but, to my shame, I know every mile of it only too well, and can testify that after a bit there is no road so rough and none so dark."

[Pg 168]

Uncle told us much more which I need not now repeat. "Poor fellow!" he added; "it was the downward road that led him over that precipice and brought him to his death. Children, take this lesson to heart: the downward hill to perdition is covered with paths, so to speak, some broad, some narrow, some straight, some winding, some smooth, some rough; but, varied though they all are, both in appearance and in apparent course, they every one lead to destruction. How many are tempted to set off down this great widespreading hill, each in pursuit of his particular employment or pleasure! and how many are thus hurried into danger and ruined for ever! It is a blessed thing to choose from the first the right path. Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are paths of peace."

My sister Charlotte had once gone with uncle to the hospital, and, tired of waiting in the carriage, thoughtlessly begged leave to follow him into the ward, but as she entered a faintness and horror seized her, and she realized the scene in a manner that had otherwise been impossible to her light-hearted nature. It was days before she could shake off the impression, and it seemed to create quite a deep feeling in her, making her unusually grave and sad. The tears filled her eyes now while Uncle Rossiter was speaking, and she told me afterward that then old Susan's words had come back to her with a new force, and she saw a resemblance in her own life and the same evil self-will at work as in Blurdon's early days. "Do you remember," she asked, "my once saying that everything pleasant seemed wrong, and everything wrong seemed pleasant? What was that but choosing the wrong path?" Dear Lotty! that day was a memorable one to her, for, by God's grace, it became the turning-point of her life.

[Pg 169]

Three years came and went after the foregoing visit to Rathfelder's Hotel and the consequent events I have recorded. Painful as the nature of those events was, I then saw that they were blessings productive of eternal good to Charlotte and me. To our great joy and comfort, dear Aunt Rossiter's health continued slowly to improve, but the feelings awakened in my heart and soul when first I learned how perilously in the midst of life she was in death never passed away. And good for me it was they did not—good in every way, as regarded this world and the next, making me more thoughtful, considerate and excusing toward those whom I loved, for, ah me! had I not learned that we know not what shall be on the morrow? "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." And as for dear Charlotte, the death of Blurdon and all the circumstances attending it had left so deep an impression on her mind that even time was powerless to efface it. This influence cannot but be regarded as a divine interposition in her favour; for she confessed to me that at that period her soul was in a dangerously rebellious state against the all-wise, all-merciful Creator. When the truth suddenly flashed upon her soul she was terrified exceedingly, she said, and began from that hour to think as she had never thought before, and to resolve—yes, to resolve to live a new life.

[Pg 170]

[Pg 171]

"You see, Mechie," she added, "it was not of course that I thought I could live such a life as that poor creature did, or come to such an awful end, but there are few things which vary more than the ways of sin, or are more skilfully and amiably accommodating to every style of character; and therefore, while Blurdon took his course as it were down the hill of perdition, running, jumping, rolling, tumbling headforemost, I more slowly, less desperately, but equally surely, might even now have been pursuing one of its many flower-decked paths to ruin—quite as certainly in my way as that unhappy man in his."

And oh what an improved being darling Lotty has become! Old Susan used to say that heartfelt holiness made people a deal comelier, and I am sure it was so with Lotty when she put on that most adorning of all robes, the compassionate, self-sacrificing, humble religion of the merciful Redeemer. Instead of living solely to please herself and looking as though she did—a look which no device, no assumed good-nature can conceal or change the character of—she now endeavoured earnestly to obey the divine injunction: "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than himself," and, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." The result was she seemed daily to become more and more all that is really beautiful and admirable in woman, and her handsome face, no longer marred by its former expression of selfishness and thoughtless levity, wore now a sweet, kindly gravity and care for the happiness and welfare of her fellow-creatures.

[Pg 172]

"What a very engaging-looking girl that eldest Miss Marlow has become!" a gentleman observed to another, one evening, when Charlotte and I were at a party in a friend's house. "I didn't think much of her a couple of years ago, but latterly she has bloomed out wonderfully. Her whole expression is altered. There used to be a vacancy, a want of something rather than the positive presence of anything defective in her countenance and manner, but that is quite gone now, and she looks sensible, thoughtful, and, it strikes me, in some way much more amiable."

[Pg 173]

"Yes, decidedly," rejoined his companion. "And now let me tell you, Hedding, that in your observations you have unwittingly admitted more in favour of the power of Christianity than you supposed."

"In favour of Christianity? What has that to do with Miss Marlow's improved looks?" exclaimed the other, scornfully.

"All—everything," was the unhesitating answer. "I am, as you know, an old and intimate friend of the Rossiters, and have known the two Marlow girls since first they came to the Cape. There do not exist in the wide world more truly worthy, kind-hearted people than the Rossiters, but I could not help sometimes thinking that their management of the eldest girl was a mistaken one. She

[Pg 174]



was to the last degree self-willed, pleasure-loving, and intensely selfish. Now, instead of enforcing a different line of conduct, they employed persuasion only, founded on good instruction—a mode of treatment which, while perfectly successful with the more pliable nature of the younger child, quite failed, so it seemed to me, in the case of the elder. Yet possibly they were right. Other circumstances have since occurred which have laid fast hold of her mind and heart, and the good seed they have sown has sprung up in an abundant harvest." Then followed a brief account of what I have related.

"But how do I know, or how can you be sure, that the change I see is the result of what you describe?" objected Mr. Hedding in a cynical tone. He was a man of infidel principles, and, for that reason, not an intimate visitor at Fern Bank. [Pg 175]

"I am myself a case of 'proof positive,'" replied Mr. Frere, with his usual imperturbable good humour. "More than two years ago, as you know," he continued, his voice failing, "I lost one to whom I was deeply attached—my wife. While under the influence of this heavy affliction my society, although every friend pitied me, was but little desired or sought after. I was only a cloud on their pleasures and naturally shunned by them as such, or, if not absolutely shunned, at least neglected or set aside for the time being as quite a useless member of society. But not so by the Rossiters—no. The very reason that rendered me unacceptable to the world made those truly Christian people take me at once to their hearts, and I may say to their home, for from that time, for nearly six months, I dined with them and spent almost every evening at their house. Now, see the difference between the two sisters, Charlotte and Maria Marlow. Mechie, who is a counterpart of her amiable benefactors, eagerly and warmly seconded their kind endeavours to draw me out of myself, and in her gentle way led me to submit more patiently to my sudden great sorrow. Charlotte, on the contrary, although she without doubt compassionated my case, evidently regarded my frequent presence in the house as oppressive and disagreeable, and avoided my society as much as she could. She generally kept apart with some young friend, of whom she had many, and often I only saw her at the meal-times. At last came the change in her feelings which, acting upon her whole nature, has by degrees wrought that marked effect in her appearance which excites your admiration so much, and then neither Mrs. Rossiter nor sweet Mechie was kinder or more thoughtful and considerate to me and others than she became. No longer seeking only her own gratification, she would remain with us of an evening, adding greatly to our cheerfulness by her pleasant conversation—for Charlotte is naturally endowed with very good sense and with a vein of quaint humour—and often lightened the time by reading aloud, an accomplishment this piquant talent makes her perfect in. [Pg 176]

"Very soon she opened her whole heart to me—young people are always willing to confess—acknowledging her previous utter want of religion, which made her, she said, the selfish, heartless, unamiable girl she was, and concluded by begging me to forgive her for all the unfeeling neglect—so she termed it—and want of kind consideration toward me which she had shown during my deep distress. She spoke with a gentle, blushing contrition of manner very unlike her usual self-satisfied style, and which to those who love and care for her was infinitely gratifying to witness. Nor have that winsome tone and mien passed away. In her case the seed had not fallen by the wayside, nor on stony places, nor amongst thorns, but on good ground, where it still grows and flourishes, abundant in blossoms and fruit and promise of rich future harvest."

"Hum!" ejaculated Mr. Hedding, apparently not very ready with an answer. "I don't see, myself," he went on, after a pause, "that a girl properly brought up and taught to be polite and kind to her friends needs any other style of instruction, nor do I think she would. It's bad bringing up—that's the fact of it." [Pg 178]

"Everybody can tell you—she can tell you herself," said Mr. Frere—"that, as far as advice, warning, instruction and the most perfect human example can go, Charlotte Marlow was, and that far beyond your limited meaning, properly brought up and taught to be kind and polite to every one. But it too often happens that the true significance and value of what we hear and see and receive every day is not recognized until some unlooked-for circumstance occurs which opens our eyes and makes us feel. Now such was Charlotte Marlow's case; and thus it comes about, doubt the truth as you like, that from having been an off-hand, unpleasing, selfish young creature, living entirely for her own gratification—as unpleasing at least as so handsome and not really heartless a girl could be—she has become a generous, amiable, sympathizing woman, herself, instead of holding as before always the first place in her thoughts, now occupying the second." [Pg 179]

"Well," objected the other, but in a less confident tone, "I feel certain I could bring up a girl to be as kind and polite to every one without the least help from religion as any Christian of them all, and more so, for the matter of that."

"Yes, you might educate them to be perfect in politeness while the world's approving or condemning eye marks their conduct, but when position shuts that out, or time or circumstance renders it uncared for, what remains then to influence their feelings and behaviour the right way?"

"Habit," replied Mr. Hedding.

"Habit?" repeated Mr. Frere, laughing incredulously. "If you ever have met or ever do meet with a single young person, man or woman, who from habit only, when unseen by others, is amiable and polite in opposition to temper, interest or inclination, you will certainly be the first man who [Pg 180]

has witnessed stability on a 'foundationless practice,' for that is all, in truth, which a habit formed on such principles as yours would or could be. Why, I have heard you yourself argue that no harm existed in any evil unless it was found out; and I know that that sentiment is entertained and practiced by many of your way of thinking—a sentiment which you must excuse my saying in plain, honest words is but the lowest quality of caution, and would ultimately degrade the immortal souls of men to a level with the mere instinct of beasts. Now you must be well aware that according to your own express opinions so you would educate a child, and, alter the deteriorating nature of things, so that child would unchecked become even worse than yourself. Is it likely, therefore, that habit of any kind, when interfering in any degree with pleasure or comfort, would have power to control a spirit under no rule but the world's opinion?"

At that instant other friends joined the two speakers, and it was from them that I afterward heard what had passed. [Pg 181]

And now I must lay down, my pen, having completed as far as necessary the little account of our visit to Rathfelder's Hotel.

It is now many years ago. I do not know if Rathfelder's Hotel still remains, or what changes may have taken place in that region, but there must be some of the older residents of Cape Town who remember the incidents of the latter part of the narrative. This record of former days I give in the sincere hope that it may in the perusal prove of some benefit to those young readers who, as Lotty and I were, are living in any way without proper thought of God or of their earthly benefactors, be they parents, relatives or Christian friends. They are blessings—the greatest blessings heaven can bestow—and as such should be regarded. In no slight degree do Charlotte and myself thus consider dear old nurse Susan, who still continues, in as high force as heretofore, our friend and servant. Nor does she with advancing years hate an iota of that authority which her long established rule over us has given her, and which authority seems to increase in its influence, instead of lessening. Good, excellent old body! may God's blessing ever be with her! [Pg 182]

---

## UNCLE JOHN'S GIFT.

[Pg 183]

"See what I have bought for somebody!"

Uncle John held out in his hand a morocco case lined with dark blue velvet, containing a small watch, while his nephew and two nieces, John, Emma and Maud, came closer to get a better look, and uttered exclamations of surprise and delight.

"Who is it for?" said Emma, "Is it for brother?" asked Maud in the same breath; though John, feeling very certain that the watch was intended for him, remained silent, anxiously awaiting his uncle's reply.

"I can't tell yet," said Uncle John.

"Not tell, uncle? is it a secret? Isn't the watch yours? and can't you give it to any one you please?" asked John, hastily.

"The watch is mine, I bought it, and I can give it to any one I please; and I will tell you now how I shall please to give it. I intend staying with you two weeks, and at the end of that time this watch shall be given to the child I find the most truthful." [Pg 184]

"Oh, uncle," interrupted Emma, "none of us are liars!"

"I hope not, my dears. But I shall be very particular, and watch closely for the slightest deviation from the plain truth, and will give, as I have said, the watch to the child I find to be the most truthful."

"You will have to give us all one, then," said his namesake, "for I am sure I speak the truth, and Emma and Maud are very truthful, for mamma has often said so."

"I always try to be," said Maud in a low voice.

"Well, well, we will see," continued Uncle John. "And perhaps I will have to give you each one like this." He closed the case and put it out of sight, and John marched off to school thinking how grand he would feel carrying the watch around with him to show to his admiring friends, and even hinted the probability to some of them. His Latin lesson was not perfect, and after recitation his teacher called him: [Pg 185]

"John, will you promise me that this lesson shall be learned for to-morrow?"

"Oh yes! I will certainly study it to-night, and know it perfectly," was John's ready reply.

That night his father inquired about his lessons. John coloured a little as he said: "I knew all but my Latin; I promised I would study that to-night." He intended doing so, but left it until the last, because it was the hardest; then a friend came in, and John went with him to the parlour, where the family were sitting, to show him a new book.

"What time is it?" asked Emma.

"I did not look at the clock when I came down," said John.

"When you get your new watch you won't have to stop to look at the clock," said his friend.

"His watch!" exclaimed Emma; "he is not certain of getting it."

[Pg 186]

"Oh!" said the friend; "I thought his uncle had promised to give him one."

"Not exactly," interrupted John hastily, knowing that Uncle John could hear all that was going on. "There are certain conditions."

"Oh!" And his friend said no more.

"How about the Latin lesson to-day?" asked Uncle John, the next evening, to his nephew's great confusion, as he replied:

"Well, uncle, the truth is, I forgot it last night, but I mean to take it up the first thing this evening." And he did so, finding that the hardest lesson is the easiest when learned first. "I know it perfectly, perfectly. Emma, just hear me, and see if I do not."

Emma was standing by the window as she took the book and heard it for him, and they stood together looking out at the passers-by.

"Here comes Mary Baker, I do believe," said Emma. Maud ran to the window, and was very much disappointed when she did not see her friend coming, as she expected.

[Pg 187]

"April fool!" said Emma. And they both laughed at Maud's disappointment.

"But it is not April, brother," said Maud in an aggrieved tone.

"Why, you silly little thing," exclaimed Emma, "I was only in fun. If I were to say, 'Here comes Queen Victoria,' you wouldn't be goose enough to believe it, would you?"

"No; but you see Queen Victoria would not be walking down the street, and I have been expecting Mary every minute;" and Maud's eyes were almost filled with tears.

"Come, puss, don't think any more about it." John put his arm affectionately around his sister's neck. "Emma, what has that man in his wagon?"

They were both looking with great curiosity at the wagon coming toward the house when John heard his father call him.

"In a second, sir," he replied; but sixty seconds passed, and he heard his father again. "Yes, yes, sir, in a minute;" but five minutes were gone before he obeyed, and then he found that his father had left.

[Pg 188]

"There! you don't know what you missed," Emma said, significantly. "I heard father say he had something in his pocket for somebody."

"It was not for John, you know," interrupted Maud, "for we heard mother say so."

"Well, little telltale, we must be on our p's and q's before you, my darling."

The day before Uncle John's visit ended he was sitting in the bay window, partly concealed by a curtain. It was twilight, and the three children came into the room together. On the centre-table there were some wax flowers covered with a glass case. Their mother prized them very highly, and had repeatedly told the children to be careful and not touch or knock the table.

"Oh, I wish I could bring Carlo in here," said John, "just to show you how the boys have taught him to stand on his two hind legs and beg. There he is in the hall now."

"Don't call him in," Emma said. "You know mother don't like it."

[Pg 189]

"No, I sha'n't call him, though I know he would not hurt anything."

John did not call him, but he gave a low whistle. Carlo understood it perfectly, and came bounding into the room. "Out, out, sir!" and John tried to order him back, but Carlo thought this was mere play, and jumped and frisked about until he came near the table, when away went the flowers and case with a crash. The children looked at each other in dismay.

"Oh, John, what will mother say?" said Emma, reproachfully.

"It is not my fault, Emma."

"Yes, but you whistled for Carlo."

"I did not know he would come in, though." And John tried to drive Carlo out in earnest, and succeeded after a good deal of shouting and scampering, and the children left the room unconscious that Uncle John had witnessed the accident.

"I am very sorry this has happened," said their mother at tea-table. "Carlo must not be allowed to come in the hall. Of course, I cannot blame any of you, as you did not call him in, but I am very sorry it happened."

[Pg 190]

"So am I," said Uncle John—"very sorry indeed. What has Maud to say about this?"

"Maud I did not ask. She was in the room, and Emma and John told me how it happened."

"Maud, my dear," Uncle John said, "did any one call Carlo in the room? Look straight in my eyes and tell me, little one."

Maud's cheeks became rosier; she hesitated a moment, and then said softly: "Brother whistled, but he said he did not mean that Carlo should hear him."

"You should have told me this before," said their mother, reproachfully. "I always want to hear the whole truth."

"So do I," said Uncle John. "And now I will put on my spectacles and read you all a few notes I have taken during my visit, and then we shall decide who deserves the watch. Let me see, John is oldest: I will read what I have against him: A promise to a teacher to study a lesson—did not do it. He tells a friend he is to have a watch at the end of two weeks—that remains to be seen. He tells his father he will come in one second, then in one minute—did not go for five or ten. He whistles for a dog to come into the room, and, I fear, would let punishment fall on the poor animal, and by silence implies falsehood. That is all I have against him. Now for Emma: I heard her telling her mother she did not have a minute of time to spare, and was idle for an hour after; said her biscuit, one morning, was burnt as black as a coal—it was only very brown; said one time she was roasting, another time starving, and again dying, and one day was in dreadful agony when she scratched her finger; one morning tells Maud that her friend was coming up the street when there was no person in sight. Come! I await the verdict: to whom shall I give the watch? Which of you thinks you most deserve to have it?"

[Pg 191]

"Oh, Uncle John, we did not mean to tell stories," exclaimed Emma and John, with burning cheeks.

[Pg 192]

"No, my dear; I am glad to say neither you nor John have been guilty of telling lies, but I promised to give it to the most truthful."

"Maud deserves it," cried all.

"Yes, Maud deserves it. Here, little one; we know you would rather not take it, but it belongs to you. I do not want to be severe, but I love and prize perfect truth above everything else. And if we are truthful in small matters, we can never be false and dishonest in great ones; but if we allow falsehood to take even a small lodging-place in our hearts, it will be a plague-spot that will spread and poison the soul and ruin character. Whatever it may cause you at the time, cling to the truth, and you will never regret it, for it is the sure and firm foundation-stone of every noble character."

---

## A GIRL WHO COULDN'T BE TRUSTED.

[Pg 193]

It is the easiest thing in the world for some people to make a promise. They will say yes or no to anything that may be asked of them, sometimes knowing what they say, but often without knowing; sometimes intending to keep their word, and sometimes without thinking or caring anything about it. Such persons are usually very polite and pleasant, full of smiles and soft words, and if one could only rely upon them, they would be very obliging, for you know they will promise anything. But there is just the difficulty; for these easy-tempered, good-natured people who never can bear to say no are oftentimes so very easy-tempered that they are able to utter a falsehood as easily as a truth and feel no disturbance of conscience whatever.

Bessie Hill's character, it must be confessed, was such a one as has just been described. She was a child whom every one loved, for she seemed to love every one, and she appeared so anxious to please, so unwilling to be disobliging, that one who had known her only a short time might have considered her disposition very nearly perfect. Yet if Mr. A., her music-teacher, had been questioned as to what he knew of Bessie, he might have told how every week for a whole quarter she had repeatedly promised to practice for an hour each day, and how, every week in the quarter, she had failed to keep her word, until, at length, his patience would have been completely exhausted had not his little pupil renewed more earnestly than ever the assurance that she would really try to do better. Yet he knew that while he hoped for the best his hope was doomed to be disappointed.

[Pg 194]

And Miss Ellers, who every Sabbath went to Sunday-school thinking, "How glad I will be if Bessie has learned her lesson, as she said she would do!" and every Sabbath went away sorry because of Bessie's broken promise; and Mrs. Banks, who day after day worried through one imperfect recitation after another in the constant expectation of an improvement which it seemed must come, it had been so often promised,—both of these might have agreed with Mr. A. in saying that Bessie was certainly the most amiable of all their pupils, but, at the same time, the most unreliable. Bessie's mother, too, mourned over this fault of her child, and tried, but tried in vain, to help the little girl to overcome it. She would persist in promising to meet her schoolmates at certain hours and places, and in then going home and forgetting all about her engagements, leaving her friends to wonder where Bessie Hill could be. And she would not give up her habit of running over to Aunt Hester's in the morning and saying: "Auntie, I will come and play with the baby this afternoon," when she knew very well that when afternoon came the baby would

[Pg 195]

probably be left to amuse himself while his little cousin across the street was occupied with some new toy or book, just as though she had made no promise at all. At last Bessie found out by experience what her friends had so long been trying to teach her—that it was very important that she should learn to keep her word.

[Pg 196]

Among Bessie's companions was one whom she often visited, and whose home was at some distance from Mr. Hill's. The road, over which it was necessary to pass in going from one house to the other was a lonely one, and Bessie had been often told that it was not safe for her to attempt to go back and forth alone. There was usually some one willing to accompany her, and she was too young to be without protection. So it happened that one pleasant Saturday morning her father said: "Come, Bessie, I am going to take a long ride to-day. If you would like to go and see Mary Brown (for that was the little girl's name), I will leave you there on my way and stop for you on my return."

"Thank you, father," answered Bessie. "I would like it very much." So the arrangement was made.

"Now, you will be sure to wait for me this afternoon, will you not?" said the gentleman to his daughter as he left her at Mr. Brown's door. "Oh yes, father, I will wait, of course," Bessie replied, and for once she really intended to keep her word. But when afternoon came, and with it no appearance of her father, Bessie began to grow impatient. She suddenly remembered an arithmetic lesson which she had promised to learn for the next Monday, and which she had not before thought of, and she felt slightly uneasy in regard to the verse which she had assured Miss Ellers she would be able to recite on the next day, and which now for the first time came to her recollection. You see her conscience was not quite dead, after all, only it troubled her at the wrong time. However that may be, Bessie imagined that she had a sufficient excuse for not keeping the promise to her father, as, by observing that, she would be in danger of breaking two others made before it; so she said to Mary: "Mary, I don't believe father will be here till evening, and mother will be anxious about me, so I am going home. See, it is growing dark already."

[Pg 197]

[Pg 198]

Neither Mary nor herself knew that the darkness was caused by the gathering storm, and not by the approach of night.

So Bessie set out on her return, feeling, meanwhile, very guilty and unhappy. She had not gone more than halfway before the raindrops began to fall. They came faster and faster until the single drops became torrents of water. Bessie took shelter under a large tree, and looked about her in dismay. Above her all was blackness, around her the pouring rain. The branches over her head swayed to and fro in the wind until Bessie was afraid that they might fall and crush her, and the rain penetrated beneath them, and came and made a little pool at her feet. Bessie remembered the story of the flood which had once been sent to punish people for their wickedness, and she began to fear that the water around her would continue to rise gradually until she should be swallowed up in the waves, just like the transgressors who were drowned in the time of Noah. She was in the act of looking about her to see whether there might not be a board that she could get to float upon, as some were represented as doing in the picture in the large Bible at home, when suddenly the sky grew brighter, the clouds overhead began to break and move away, and before her, reaching from the glowing hills in the east higher and higher up along the brightening heavens, shone, all the more beautiful for the darkness that had gone before, a rainbow. Bessie was comforted. "How foolish I was!" she said to herself; "I might have known that there could not be another flood, for God promised Noah that there never should be one again. I remember now that the rainbow was the sign of the promise." And as Bessie thought of the faithfulness of the great Father in keeping his word to his children, and of how far she had been from imitating his example, she began to cry. As she stood there under the tree, the very image of distress, troubled with mingled sorrow for her naughtiness and anxiety to reach her home, Dr. Burroughs came riding slowly along, his old gray horse looking almost as rueful as Bessie herself, and his gig bespattered with mud from top to bottom.

[Pg 199]

[Pg 200]

"What, little girl! out here in this storm? Crying too! Well, I don't wonder. Jump in here by me, and I'll take you where you can get some dry clothes. Strange that your mother should let you be out when she saw the shower coming on!"

"She didn't let me," sobbed Bessie; "I promised father to wait for him at Mr. Brown's, and instead of that I started alone. I'm so sorry."

"Yes, I should think you would be," said the doctor. He was a kind-hearted man, but not sparing of his words. "I guess you will remember to keep your promise the next time you make one. When people neglect to keep their word they generally get into trouble." And with this remark the doctor left Bessie to her own reflections, not speaking again till he came before her own home. There he put her down, saying: "Let me give you one piece of advice, little girl: Never make a promise unless you mean to keep it, and never break a promise after it is made."

[Pg 201]

Bessie entered the house feeling very miserable and forlorn, but it is to be hoped a wiser and a better girl than when she had left it in the morning.

Reader, whoever you may be, whether boy or girl, if you would be happy and prosperous in this world, if you would enjoy the confidence of your friends, would win the favour of the God above, speak always the "truth in the love of it." Be so honest, so upright in your engagements that all who know you may be able to trust in your good faith, your fidelity to your word. Remember that "it is better not to vow than to vow and not perform," and that the seat of faithfulness is in the heart where God's Holy Spirit dwells, for "the fruit of the Spirit is faith."

## THE MOTHER'S LAST GIFT.

[Pg 202]

Thirty years ago there was seen to enter the city of London a lad about fourteen years of age. He was dressed in a dark frock that hid his under apparel, and which appeared to have been made for a person evidently taller than the wearer. His boots were covered with dust from the high road. He had on an old hat with a black band, which contrasted strangely with the colour of the covering of his head. A small bundle, fastened to the end of a stick and thrown over the shoulder, was the whole of his equipment. As he approached the Mansion House, he paused to look at the building, and seated himself on the steps of one of the doors. He was about to rest a while, but the coming in and going out of half a dozen persons before he had time to finish untying his bundle made him leave that spot for the next open space where the doors were in part closed.

[Pg 203]

Having taken from the bundle a large quantity of bread and cheese, which he seemed to eat with a ravenous appetite, he amused himself by looking at the building before him with all the eager curiosity of one unaccustomed to see similar objects.

The appearance of the youth soon attracted my curiosity, and gently opening the door, I stood behind him without his being the least conscious of my presence. He now began rummaging his pockets, and after a deal of trouble brought out a roll of paper, which he opened. After satisfying himself that a large copper coin was safe, he carefully put it back again, saying to himself in a low voice: "Mother, I will remember your last words: 'A penny saved is twopence earned.' It shall go hard with me before I part with you, old friend."

Pleased with this remark, I gently touched the lad on the shoulder. He started, and was about to move away when I said:

[Pg 204]

"My good lad, you seem tired, and likewise a stranger in the city."

"Yes, sir," he answered, putting his hand to his hat. He was again about to move forward.

"You need not hurry away, my boy," I observed. "Indeed, if you are a stranger and willing to work, I can perhaps help to find what you require."

The boy stood mute with astonishment, and colouring to such an extent as to show all the freckles of a sunburnt face, stammered out:

"Yes, sir."

"I wish to know," I added, with all the kindness of manner I could assume, "whether you are anxious to find work, for I am in want of a youth to assist my coachman."

The poor boy twisted his bundle about, and after having duly placed his hand to his head, managed to answer, in an awkward kind of way, that he would be very thankful.

I mentioned not a word about what I had overheard with regard to the peony, but, inviting him into the house, I sent for the coachman, to whose care I entrusted the newcomer.

[Pg 205]

Nearly a month had passed after this meeting and conversation occurred when I resolved to make some inquiries of the coachman regarding the conduct of the lad.

"A better boy never came into the house, sir, and as for wasting anything, bless me, sir, I know not where he has been brought up, but I really believe he would consider it a sin if he did not give the crumbs of bread to the poor birds every morning."

"I am glad to hear so good an account," I replied.

"And as for his good-nature, sir, there is not a servant among us that doesn't speak well of Joseph. He reads to us while we sup, and he writes all our letters for us. Oh, sir, he has got more learning than all of us put together; and what's more, he doesn't mind work, and never talks about our secrets after he writes our letters."

Determined to see Joseph myself, I requested the coachman to send him to the parlour.

[Pg 206]

"I understand, Joseph, that you can read and write."

"Yes, sir, I can, thanks to my poor, dear mother."

"You have lately lost your mother, then?"

"A month that very day when you were kind enough to take me into your house, an unprotected orphan," answered Joseph.

"Where did you go to school?"

"Sir, my mother has been a widow ever since I can remember. She was a daughter of the village schoolmaster, and having to maintain me and herself with her needle, she took the opportunity of her leisure moments to teach me not only how to read and write, but to cast up accounts."

"And did she give you that penny which was in the paper that I saw you unroll so carefully at the door?"

Joseph stood amazed, but at length replied with emotion, and a tear started from his eye:

"Yes, sir, it was the very last penny she gave me."

[Pg 207]

"Well, Joseph, so satisfied am I with your conduct that not only do I pay you a month's wages willingly for the time you have been here, but I must beg of you to fulfil the duties of collecting clerk to our firm, which situation has become vacant by the death of a very old and faithful assistant."

Joseph thanked me in the most unassuming manner, and I was asked to take care of his money, since I had promised to provide him with suitable clothing for his new occupation.

It will be unnecessary to relate how, step by step, this poor lad proceeded to win the confidence of myself and partner. The accounts were always correct to a penny, and whenever his salary became due he drew out of my hands no more than he absolutely wanted, even to a penny. At length he had saved a sufficient sum of money to be deposited in the bank.

It so happened that one of our chief customers, who carried on a successful business, required an active partner. This person was of eccentric habits and considerably advanced in years. Scrupulously just, he looked to every penny, and invariably discharged his workmen if they were not equally scrupulous in their dealings with him.

[Pg 208]

Aware of this peculiarity of temper, there was no person I could recommend but Joseph, and after overcoming the repugnance of my partner, who was unwilling to be deprived of so valuable an assistant, Joseph was duly received into the firm of Richard Fairbrothers & Co. Prosperity attended Joseph in this new undertaking, and never suffering a penny difference to appear in his transactions, he so completely won the confidence of his senior partner that he left him the whole of his business, as he expressed it in his will, "even to the very last penny."

---

## NOT THE BEST WAY.

[Pg 209]

Alice and Eva were sitting together in the pleasant sitting-room, one engaged in reading and the other in arranging an almost countless variety of pieces of calico destined to form, at some future time, a quilt which might fitly have had written upon it the motto of our country, *E pluribus unum*—one composed of many. So completely was Eva surrounded by the bright stripes of cloth that, at a distance, one might have supposed her to be clothed in a garment very much like that which Joseph wore—a "coat of many colours." She was considering whether or not it would be a proof of good taste to place a red block next to a blue one when she happened to remember a piece of green chintz which some one had given her, and which, with the red calico, would form precisely the contrast she desired. But the chintz was, unfortunately, in her own room, and how she should rise to go after it without displacing the groups which had been formed so carefully was a problem which Eva was unable to solve. While she was puzzling over it her brother, two years younger than herself, came into the room. He was a bright-eyed, active boy who thought nothing too difficult when fun was in prospect, but, as we shall see, was not always as ready to exert himself in order to oblige others.

[Pg 210]

"Oh, Willie," Eva exclaimed as soon as she saw him, "I am so glad you've come! Won't you please go up stairs and get something for me?"

"Well, I guess you can go after it just as well as I can," was the unbrotherly reply. "You girls seem to think that all a boy is good for is to wait on you, and I think you might just as well learn to wait on yourselves."

Eva did not answer, but wisely concluded to do without the chintz as well as she could. Willie sat down and began to whittle, taking care to let some of the splinters fall among his sister's work. Eva seemed to take no notice of this, but went quietly on with her cutting and planning. She grew tired of it, however, before long, and made up her mind to rest a while. So she began in silence to gather up her work. As she did so it would have been very easy for her to pick up the few chips which were scattered here and there about her, but Eva had not yet forgiven her brother for his want of kindness; so she said to herself: "Willie can pick up his own whittlings if he wants to. I'm not going to do it for him. I think it would be just as well to let mother see how he makes the room look when she is out. If he does not care, I am sure I needn't, and so I will let them remain just as they are."

[Pg 211]

What an affectionate brother and sister! and how they disobeyed the command, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ"! Willie, failing to find any more amusement in the use of his jack-knife, put it away, and began to study his French lesson for the next day.

[Pg 212]

Eva, on her part, commenced reading a story-book. But either it was less interesting than she had expected to find it, or her conscience would not allow her to enjoy it, for she soon laid it aside, and, for want of better employment, leaned her head on the window and watched the passers-by. Willie also failed to make such progress as he had intended, and after some time had passed exclaimed in a sort of despair, "Oh dear! I cannot translate this at all! Eva, won't you just read it to me?" Eva had now an excellent opportunity of showing her brother that she knew how to return good for evil, for she was a fine scholar and might easily have given him all the help he needed. But she resisted the "still small voice" which pleaded with her to do so, and chose rather

to "pay him back" for the manner in which he had treated her. "Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh," and as Eva felt cross it was not strange that she spoke crossly: "If you will not do anything for me, you can't expect me to do anything for you. You may learn your lesson the best way you can. I'm not going to help you." Alice, who had all along been watching the conduct of her brother and sister without remark, now thought it time to interfere.

[Pg 213]

"Bring your book here, Willie," she said; "perhaps I can help you."

Willie eagerly accepted this offer, and with Alice's aid the translation was made easily and quickly. The lesson, which was a passage from a celebrated French author, happened to be the history of a savage race who lived long ago in a far-off country. These people, so the history went, having killed their rulers and thus freed themselves from the power of law, resolved that in the future every one should attend to his own interests without respect to those of his neighbours. Each one said: "Why should I kill myself by working for people for whom I do not care? I will only think of myself; I will live happily; what difference does it make to me what others may be? I will satisfy all my needs, and, provided that I have what I wish, I do not care though all around me are miserable."

[Pg 214]

So when the time came for planting corn every one said to himself: "I will plant only enough for my own wants; a greater quantity would do me no good; and why should I take trouble for nothing?" Now, the country where these people lived was divided into lowlands, which were well watered and fertile, and mountainous districts, which were less fruitful. Well, it happened that the first season was a very dry one, and while the people who lived in the valleys had plenty of food, those who lived on the mountains, having no harvest, suffered from famine. The next year the case was entirely different. This time the season was a rainy one, and the inhabitants of the lowlands were as much troubled by too great a supply of water as their fellow-countrymen had been by the want of it. And now the mountaineers rejoiced in plenty while their brethren starved. These foolish men continued their system of selfishness both when they were attacked by foreign enemies and when disease came upon them. Each one refused help to every other, and finally the whole nation perished.

[Pg 215]

"One would suppose that this story had been written expressly for you and Eva," Alice remarked when she had finished reading it.

"Why, I hope you don't think we are as bad as those savages!" exclaimed Willie, indignantly.

"Well, I think you have been acting very much like them. Don't you think so, Eva?"

Eva's face turned crimson, but she did not exactly like to confess the truth, so she made no answer.

"Well," said Willie, more frankly, "perhaps we haven't been very kind to each other to-day, but then we wouldn't keep on acting so all our lives, as those people did."

"No, I should hope not," Alice replied, "for I believe you see the folly and wickedness of such conduct. You know if we act selfishly and unkindly, it is not because we have never been taught to do better, for we have all read often of the example of Christ, who 'went about doing good,' and of whom it is written that 'he pleased not himself.' Surely we ought not to be unwilling to perform little acts of kindness toward others, although it may cost us some trouble and self-denial to do so. And even when we think that we have not been treated rightly ourselves, there is no reason why we should act unkindly in return; at least I never heard of any, did you?"

[Pg 216]

Willie answered "No," very emphatically, but Eva still kept silence. Yet the next morning when she, as usual, recited a Scripture text to her sister, Alice noticed that she had chosen this: "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

THE END.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK RATHFELDER'S HOTEL \*\*\*

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright



law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE  
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE  
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at [www.gutenberg.org/license](http://www.gutenberg.org/license).

**Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works**

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR

BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

## **Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™**

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org).

## **Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation**

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at [www.gutenberg.org/contact](http://www.gutenberg.org/contact)

## **Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation**

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable

donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit [www.gutenberg.org/donate](http://www.gutenberg.org/donate).

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: [www.gutenberg.org/donate](http://www.gutenberg.org/donate)

## **Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works**

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org).

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.