Worth While.

Can the flower look sunward and lovelier grow?
Comes not more than mere color with life's overflow?
Come not sweetest of odors to float through the breeze?
With the long days of summer amid the green trees?
Can the river forget the spring in the height
Where mem'ry gleams, mountain-like, glistening and white?

Does not infancy fasten its touch on the boy—
Is not man more a man for the earlier joy?
Oh! flowers that look upward, oh! rivers and trees,
Ye mountains in distance, what messages—these?
All tell the old story, the story of life,
Sometimes a carnival, sometimes a strife;
But out of the fighting as out of the earth,
The buds of rejoicing and victory have birth.

Is not sleep the sweeter that soothes weary eyes?
Are not stars the brighter that shine from dark skies?
Is not living best lived that most of life is?
Is not life most of life that is nearest to His—
Nearest His whose life is the truest of all?
The life that is light with no darkness at all;
Nearest His whose life is the light and the way,
Whose mile-stone is this—"I am with you alway."

Oh! sleep of the weary who slumber awhile,
Oh! stars far above us that sparkle and smile,
Ye are singing a song, the song of the soul
That, fettered so oft, yet speeds towards its goal,
Man's spirit immortal gains highest of skies
Whose wings most are tried ere upwards he hies,

A MAIDEN FAIR.

A Scottish Love Story.

BY CHARLES GIBBON.

Oh, how brave and noble she had believed him to be! How much above all other men in everything—how pure, how strong and faithful in all that became a man! And lo, there he lay helpless—such a sorry sight!

She could not bear it, and she covered her face with her hands, rocking herself to and fro as she knelt beside him. Strange, piteous cries in her brain, but no sound coming from her lips. The idol seemed to have fallen from its high place—fallen so low down and still was loved.

She did not care now who knew it. She loved him and she would help him, though everybody else should turn from him.

She knew by the sounds on deck—trampling of feet, loud voices—and the varying movements of the engine, that they were nearing port. Whether or not the noise had any effect in rousing him, Ross at length stirred from his lethargy.

He moved slightly as if to turn on his right side. With anxious face and ready hands she assisted him. He muttered something in a husky whisper, but she was unable to make out what he said.

She called him by name twice and her voice seemed to reach him at last. There was a spasmodic movement of the body, and this time his muttering was distinct enough for her to comprehend—

"Starboard, starboard, confound ye. There's the Dun Buy—we must hold off."

The rest of his words faded into indistinctness again.

The turmoil above grew louder, and the movements of the engine more eccentric than before.

She dipped the towel in cold water, and bathed his face and hands. He breathed more freely and regularly than he had been doing for some time, and presently he opened his eyes.

What weary, wild eyes they were, staring at her without the least sign of recognition! They frightened her, and yet they brought the tears which relieved her own parched eyes.

"Do you no ken me—Bob?" she hesitated a little over the name.

The wild expression disappeared and slowly there came a smile of recognition.

"No ken you, Annie! how could that ever be? *My* lass! But what a dream I hae had—that I got fou and let the boat gang on the rocks and——"

But there the glimmer of intelligence faded, and a vacant expression took its place. This was not the expression of imbecility, but that of one who is looking at something he cannot see and searching his mind for something he cannot find.

Suddenly he made an effort to rise, but fell back helpless.

"Try again," she said eagerly; "if you could only get on to the seat, it would make me less wae to look at you."

Mechanically he made the effort, and with her strong help succeeded, after a few trials, in getting on to the seat. He leaned back unable to support himself, still looking at the something he could not see.

"Can you bide there that way till I get you a drink?"

She brought him a glass of water and held it to his lips. He drank greedily as if his throat were parched, and he seemed to revive. She took both his hands in hers and gazing earnestly at him, said—

"Can you tell me how this happened? Try to mind. Where did you get the drink?"

"I canna tell. I got whiskey, and I saw the Dun Buy and the Bullers, and I wanted to keep clear of them. But something aye pulled the wheel out o' my hands. There was——"

He ended the sentence by shaking his head hopelessly and muttering wearily, "I canna tell—I dinna ken."

She saw it was no use pressing her questions further at that time, and indeed she had no opportunity of doing so. Although the noise above continued, the engine had stopped, and she knew that they were in port. Her father came down. Partly in consequence of his dread of any further accident, and partly out of a wise discretion, knowing his own temper, he had delayed coming until the "Mermaid" was safely moored in Peterhead harbor. Now when he came, he found her holding Ross' hands and speaking softly to him. His passion blazed up in spite of himself.

"What are you doing there with that scoondrel? Come out o' that this moment."

She did not move, and Ross was apparently quite unconscious of the angry and bitter words.

"Did you no hear me?" shouted the father. "I tell you that you are no to disgrace yoursel' by speaking another word to him."

"Father, he is no weel," she said gently, but without releasing her lover's hands.

"No weel!—he'll be weel enough when he gets over his drucken fit."

"This is not a drunken fit, father. He is really not well, and you should get a doctor to see him."

"Me get a doctor for the scoondrel that nearly ruined me as weel as drooned us a'!" exclaimed the captain, as much astounded by his daughter's calmness as by her first disobedience. "I tell you he was drinking when he was at the wheel, and that would hae been enough for me even if he hadna put us a' in siccan danger."

"How do you know that he was drinking when at the wheel?" she asked calmly.

"Cargill told me he took a dram from him."

"Ah!" The exclamation was short, quick, with a drawing in of the breath. "And *he* gave it to him."

"Ay, but he maun hae been drinking before that, because ae dram wouldna mak' him like what he is. Come out o' this, Bob Ross, and thank the kindly thoughts I hae aye had for you till noo that I dinna send you to jail instead of giein' you leave to walk ashore."

"Father, will you not send for a doctor?" she pleaded once more.

"I'll no hear another word, you hizzie, but I'll hae something to say to you in a wee while."

To her amazement Ross stood up, unsteadily, but still maintaining the position. He drew one hand dazedly across his eyes and said huskily—

"No for me, Annie—no for me—you shall not suffer for me. I'll go. Your father is right. I begin to mind now, and it is his kind thought that saves me from a jail—it is not all clear yet; but it is coming back. Me standing at the wheel and no power to speak—and that's all."

"Bide a minute and I'll get Jock Burns to go with you," and she darted up the stair.

Captain Duncan was puzzled. He could not make out the man; this was not the way he had ever before seen anybody who was "fou" behave. But then there was nothing else to explain his falling asleep at the wheel; and so he answered the puzzle by resolving to stick to his first impression.

"I am sorry for you, Bob; but you hae brought it on yoursel' and I canna pass it over. Had it been onybody else I would hae been on the look-out for sic a thing, but no wi' you—no wi' you."

"You are doing kindly by me, captain, and I thank you," said the poor man, again passing his hand dazedly over his eyes. "I dinna understand yet; but it's coming to me, and I ken that I was wrang. I thank you and I'll go."

He made a step forward, staggered, and fell back upon the seat. He would have fallen on the floor but that the sturdy captain caught him in time.

CHAPTER X.

A HOPELESS CASE.

The first person Annie encountered on the deck was Cargill, and for an instant she shrank from him, clutching the top of the cabin stair to prevent herself from falling backward. He held out his hand to aid her; but she recovered herself without taking the proffered hand.

During the time of danger the most terror-stricken face of all on board had been that of Cargill. He grasped the nearest rope of the rigging, and clung to it as if he were already drowning, and this was the last straw of hope. His flabby cheeks grew yellow, and his fishy eyes started in his head more prominent than ever. He had never contemplated the possibility of a wreck. When the danger was over he was the first one to recover his equanimity, and to pretend that he had not been at all disturbed by the incident.

He lit a cigar, and whilst apparently looking on at the bustle which preceded the arrival in port, he hovered about the cabin skylight and the stair, wishing to go down, and, for some reason, unable to do so, straining his ears to catch any sound that might come from below. He heard nothing.

He advanced to the captain several times, as if to speak, but saw that he would receive very little grace if he attempted it. Then he walked back to the cabin skylight and hovered about it as before. But when they were fast in port he met the captain on his way to the cabin, told him of the dram he had given to Ross, with many expressions of regret at the almost fatal consequence, and taking his full share of blame. At the same time he offered his flask to the captain, who very willingly took a dram whilst saying—

"It was a foolish thing for you to do, though kindly meant; but it was a—weel, we'll no say nae mair about that. I dinna want to be in a passion when I gang doon to him. I'm no gaun to prosecute him, as I might do; but out o' this boat he goes this minute, if he has to be carried out."

"Don't be too hard on him, captain. He must have had a drop before that he did not take into account. One glass could never have had such an effect upon him."

"He maun hae had a guid wheen draps afore—confound him!—for you see I hae taen a big dram the noo, and I'm a heep the better o't instead o' being the waur. But that's no to the purpose. He had nae right to touch onything when he was on duty."

"All the same, captain, for your own sake, don't be hard on him."

"Oh, I'm no gaun to be hard on him, as I hae told you. I hae had ower muckle liking for him for that. I'll manage quiet enough; but we maun get him ashore; I canna thole to hae him near me."

So the captain went below, and Cargill, as before, hovered about the cabin, and thus encountered Annie when she rushed up from below.

"Do you want anything—can I get it for you?" he asked eagerly.

"No—yes, thank you," she said excitedly, and with a little confusion. "Wait a minute."

She passed him and ran to the bow, where the men stood in a group, talking and smoking. As there was to be no discharge of cargo till the following day, they were all taking their ease and discussing the strange events of the passage.

"I want you to go down to the cabin, Jock," said she touching the arm of a thick-set, grey-bearded man, "and bide with Bob Ross; he is not well."

"You're fashing yoursel' ower muckle about him, missy" (that was her name on board the "Mermaid"); "but I'll do your bidding."

"I tell you all he is not well; he was not fou."

"That's just what I was saying," asserted a sturdy fellow named Campbell—the same who had been the look-out at the moment of peril, "for he was speaking to me no half an hour afore he put the wheel wrang, and he was as sober as a judge."

The man said this doggedly, having just been contending with much opposition from his mates.

"You are right, Campbell," said Annie, grateful to find some one who agreed with her. She had been much disappointed by the manner in which Jock Burns had obeyed her; for she had counted upon him as Ross' friend, and found that he, too, shared the common belief regarding the cause of the pilot's blunder.

"Go you up to the town and fetch the best doctor you can find that will come immediately."

Then she went back to Cargill, who was waiting for her with every appearance of stolid patience in his general bearing; but the fish eyes rolled restlessly between the shore and the group of men to whom she had been speaking.

It was the late gloaming—the hour when sea and land appear most beautiful, touched by the saddest, sweetest, most mysterious lights and shades. Voices and all sounds seemed hushed, and the restless plash of the sea is like the low croon of a mother singing a lullaby. The shadows deepen slowly, and by-and-by all is hushed and yet not dark.

Suddenly there comes a glory in the sky; great shafts of lights of many colors, like straight rainbows, dart across it through white streams, and the eyes are filled with wonder.

"This is the first time I have seen the Northern Lights, Miss Murray," said Cargill as he advanced to meet her; "and they are certainly admirable."

"Ay, they are fine," she answered gravely, checking the inclination she felt to show her dislike for his conventional expression of admiration: "we who have seen them before believe they are something more than admirable—we cannot put our wonder into words."

"That is exactly how I feel," he answered, evidently quite unconscious of the rebuke conveyed in her simple words. "But remarkable as these phenomena are, will you believe it, there is something which occupies my mind so much at present that I am unable to give them proper attention?"

"Indeed?"

"It is true. May I tell you what it is, Miss Murray?"

"May I speak to you first, Mr. Cargill?"

Even his dull self-conceit was taken aback by this curious way of replying to his question. He fancied he had spoken in the tones of a charmer—he did believe himself an invincible lady-winner—and she spoiled all his fine preparations by a request which he could not refuse. He had a great objection to be crossed even in trifles.

Yet she had spoken very quietly; and the wonder overhead—now appearing as luminous white streams simply—shone on her calm, sad face, making it so beautiful that for the first time he became vaguely conscious that there was something in the world finer and nobler than himself.

He made the grand bow which a dancing-master had taught him, and which he had learned to perform with less grace than an awkward elephant might have shown.

She smiled in a sad, half-hearted way; but still she smiled, and his good opinion of himself was restored. That bow had conquered her.

"I was just going to ask you, Mr. Cargill, what did Mr. Ross look like when you gave him that dram from your flask? Did he look as if he had been drinking?"

This was extremely disagreeable in several ways, but particularly because it took his mind entirely away from the arrangement of the pretty phrases in which he was to express the thought which was uppermost in it. His answer was so prompt that to her quick wit it seemed to have been studied.

"I really did not think so, or you may be sure I would have been the last person in the world to add to the poor fellow's affliction—to say nothing of the fact that consideration for our safety would have prevented me doing so."

"Did you speak to him?"

"For a few minutes, yes."

"And he answered you sensibly enough?"

"I must say that so far as my recollection goes, he did. No one was more surprised than I was when the real state of the case was brought so unpleasantly before us. But of course I had no suspicion that he could be guilty of such—such stupidity."

He had hesitated over the word he should use; for he desired to show a friendly disposition towards Ross.

"Thank you, Mr. Cargill. It was a pity you gave him that dram."

She turned away, looking anxiously for the return of Campbell with the doctor. Cargill's heavy paw rested on her arm.

"Are you forgetting, Miss Murray, that I asked to be allowed to speak to you?"

"No."

"Then permit me to do so now" (he had resumed his grand air and the flabby smile which he thought so winning). "You know the question I want to ask; your father wishes you to say yes; and I need no say that I desire you to say yes."

She turned upon him those clear bright eyes and that fair troubled face.

"I will speak honestly, Mr. Cargill, and it will save you and me a heap of vexation, maybe. I know what you mean, and I tell you once for all that as long as I live my answer will be the same to you as it is now—you can never have yes from me."

"But your father would like it."

"Ay, but he would never wish me to do what I do not like and do not think would be right."

The man was not a wooer; he had not the feelings of one. So, instead of persuading, instead of feeling that he must give everything to win the one object he desired, he felt his pride wounded, he drew up his big frame and used reproach.

"It cannot be that after what has happened you still think of this man, Ross! You yourself said that a man who could disgrace himself as he has done would not be worth thinking about."

She felt her cheeks tingling and she looked down as she spoke in a low voice.

"You have no business with what I may think, Mr. Cargill."

Then she looked up and her eyes brightened again as she cried: "Here's the captor."

It was curious how the pride-puffed form of Cargill appeared to collapse at that announcement, and he slunk back a few doces.

Campbell came forward with a grey-haired, muscular-looking gentleman, whose fresh healthy face gave evidence that he lived much out of doors. On the way to the steamer Campbell had told Dr. Pratt the circumstances of the case, so that he was ready to see the patient at once. Annie went down to the cabin with him, and, after some hesitation, Cargill followed, but stopped at the foot of the stair.

Ross was lying on the seat where he had fallen when he made his attempt to leave. He was again in a state of stupor. Captain Duncan was moving restlessly about; Jock Burns was standing by, stolid and indifferent.

Annie watched the doctor's face eagerly whilst he was examining the patient; and waited, breathless, for the verdict.

The doctor treated the case in a brisk, off-hand way as one of mere drunkenness, and Annie's heart ached with shame.

"He is a strong healthy fellow," he said, "and there is nothing the matter with him except that he has had a drop too much. Put him into a berth and let him sleep it off. He'll be all right when he wakens."

Then the doctor, too, was against her; he also found that common explanation for the condition of Ross. Annie felt that the last hope of convincing her father that there was a mistake was gone. According to the doctor, there had been no "fit," no sudden attack of illness—only that vulgar crime of drunkenness.

But she had faith, and she did not despair even now.

Ross wakened in his berth early in the morning; but he was not yet "all right," as the doctor had predicted he would be. He was certainly much better; but he was still confused, and for a little while unable to comprehend his position.

Then it flashed upon him with cruel vividness—the drink—the disgrace.

He could not yet recollect all that had happened, but enough was clear to make him anxious to get away from the "Mermaid" without causing more pain to Annie. With that thought he turned out of the berth and soused his head well in cold water. Then he had only to pull on his boots and fasten his necktie, for his clothes had not been taken off. That done, he made his way to the deck, purposing to go on shore and take the first train home. What was to be done afterwards would be decided when his head was clearer.

Early as it was, however, Captain Duncan was already astir, and as soon as Ross appeared from below, they met.

"I am sorry for you, Bob, but its the best thing you can do to gang hame by train. I dinna think I could thole to hae you on board after what has taen place. Had you done it at ony other time, I wouldna hae thought muckle about it; but when you were at the wheel and at such a place—oh, confound it, I canna think aboot it wi' ony patience."

Ross bowed his head and could not speak. Presently the captain went on—

"Howsever, you can mak' your mind easy sae far that I'll no speak a word about it, and the lads will haud their tongues for your sake. At the same time I am done wi' you."

"It's very good of you, captain," said Ross, speaking low and huskily; but although you may hide it from other folk, you cannot hide it from me. That's the worst of it. I don't know yet exactly what I have done or how I did it; but I dare say I shall learn it all soon enough. Thank you, and good-bye."

He went on shore, the captain looking after him with something wistful in the expression of his ruddy face. Suddenly he turned and shouted—

"Campbell—here. You gang up to the station wi' Bob Ross and see him safe into the train. I'm doubtin' he's no just himsel' yet."

Campbell obeyed willingly; he was the only one, except Annie, who had the slightest doubt as to the cause of Ross' disgrace. The captain turned to his duties with an excess of energy, as if anxious to forget in the bustle this painful incident.

When Cargill rose and learned that his rival was safely off, he was in high glee. He had no doubt that now with a clear course before him and with her father on his side, he would speedily overcome Annie's objections. In his cunning schemes, however, he did not take into account his own clumsiness. Annie did.

CHAPTER XI.

ONE FRIEND AT LEAST.

It was a busy day for the master and crew of the "Mermaid." The cargo consisted chiefly of salt, saltpeter, and a large quantity of oil, intended for one of the experiments in oiling the angry waves for which Peterhead was become famous. The captain was desirous of having all cleared out before the noon of the following day, and his men found him more impatient than they had ever known him before.

Cargill would have persuaded Annie to accompany him on an excursion inland to view some of the beauties of Buchan, which he had been told were numerous. She declined, pleasantly enough, as it seemed, but so firmly that he did not persist. He counted upon his victory during the return passage. Meanwhile he sauntered into the town by himself, to gratify the eyes of the folk with a view of his manly person and the latest style in tailoring.

Annie felt as if the atmosphere were somehow purer during his absence. Without exhibiting any deliberate design to avoid him—and certainly without discourtesy—she contrived to escape being left alone with him during the next two days, when the business of unloading having been completed, that of reloading was in progress.

On this second day after the departure of Ross there was amazement on board the "Mermaid" at sight of old Dick Baxter hirpling along the quay, as calmly consequential and as much at home as if he had been at Newhaven.

"Dod, there are surely few bees i' the byke when the drones come out," exclaimed the captain cheerily. "Whar in the world do ye come frae, Baxter?"

"Just frae hame, captain, and I'm wantin' you to tak' me back again."

"And are you out on business, or are you just taking a daunder to see the kintry?"

"Oo, baith, baith, captain; a man's never ower auld to learn, and I hae been learning a heap as I cam' alang. But I would never hae started if it hadna been that naething would satisfy Bell Cargill except that I should gang ance errand to look after her calf."

"What's ta'en the auld wife?" said the captain laughing; "does she think he canna take care o' himsel'?—he's auld enough."

"I coulna say, but Bell has notions, and she will hae them carried out."

"Aweel, gang you below, and Annie will see that you hae something to eat."

"And whar's Jeems the-noo?"

"Up the town, some gate."

At that Dick Baxter hirpled down to the cabin with unusual alacrity. To Annie his only salutation was, as he presented a letter—

"Bob Ross sends you that, missy."

Her face flushed with pleasure; but she put the note in her pocket in order to attend to the wants of the unexpected guest.

"Na, na," he said hurriedly; "read your bit letterie, and while your doing that I want to look into Jeems' cabin. I hae got an idea in my head that puir Bob didna get fair play, and I want to try to make sure o't

"You think that?" she cried joyfully.

"I hae nae doubt about it, and the doctor that saw him in Edinbro' has nae doubt about it—for, tak' his word for it that he tasted naething a' day exceptin' what Jeems gied him. But we want to mak' sure afore speaking. Whar's his cabin?"

She pointed to a door. Old Dick passed into the place, closing the door after him. Annie, like many others had great faith in Dick Baxter's wisdom, for as he studied the newspapers so carefully he could always tell about everything that was going on, and no one had ever been bold enough to question his judgment on any question of right and wrong.

She opened her letter with fingers which were not quite so steady as usual, and read her first love-letter. It was a strange one.

"I write this to let you know I am better, Annie, and to tell you that there has been some mistake about me somewhere.

"On the way to the station, Campbell told me about everything that happened, and although I could not take it all in clearly at the time I have been able to do so since. You will al think that I was drinking. You will believe me—I had nothing except what Cargill gave me, and that I took because after what you had said to me I was kind of pitying him, and did not like to show ill-feeling. There was something wrong about that whiskey. Dick Baxter had been reading something in the paper that made him suspect it the minute I told him about the accident.

"He is going to you. If he should be right I will be able to face your father and the world again, and, best of all, I will be able to meet you without feeling that there is any shame upon me.

"It has been a hard time for me, Annie, and I do not think I could have come through it but for you—God bless you. I am hoping that there is only a wee while to wait till I may see you again; and I am feared that something may come between us yet. But nothing can change me."

To be continued).

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