

MIRIAM.

CHAPTER V.—(CONCLUDED.)

"You are wet and tired," his wife said, passing her hand over his coat. "Do come and change your coat, James," but he took no heed.

"Who of us shall say what is for the best?" he remarked at length. "This news would have broken her heart."

"Whose heart, dear?" his wife asked, slipping her arm within his. "You must not let other people's troubles worry you so much, James; you are looking fagged and worn out."

"I have heard bad news," he said. "And I," said Mrs. Archer, only vaguely alarmed, "have heard good news. We will set the one against the other. Which shall be told first?"

Miriam's scarlet blossoms were scattered on the white cloth. She was looking at Mr. Archer, a growing terror in her eyes. "Whose heart?" she whispered. "You are speaking of Lady Hicks—has anything happened to any of them?"

"There has been another fearful accident at sea—a collision in the night. A ship has gone down with nearly all on board—it is the one in which her brother—in which Kingston Keene sailed."

Mrs. Archer, with a horrified cry, put her hand up to her husband's mouth—too late! Miriam, standing for one instant white and rigid by the table, suddenly began to sway, and, before one of them could reach her, fell senseless to the floor.

"He—she was her husband," Mrs. Archer sobbed, looking up with grieving, reproachful eyes into the Rector's face as he bent over the girl's prostrate body. "She had but just told me. Oh, James, it was the good news I had for you!"

"You must forgive me," Mr. Archer said presently, when consciousness had come back to Miriam, and she was gazing before her with tearless, dreadful eyes of despair. "I would have died sooner than be the bearer of such news to you, could I have known."

"Is there no hope?" she asked in a voice anguished and hoarse, and all unlike her own. "Was no one saved?" "A few," he returned sadly. "My dear, the names are known of those who are saved, and his is not among them."

Then Miriam struggled into a sitting posture, and put her hands to her head, wildly pushing the dishevelled hair from off her face.

"No hope?" she repeated. "I cannot believe there is no hope—I will not. There is hope somewhere—I know it. You—you who comfort others, why don't you comfort me? Pretend there is hope if there be none—so that I don't go mad."

"Dear Miriam," Mrs. Archer interposed before her husband could speak. "Dearest Miriam, of course there is hope—be quiet, James! This is only a first report—we all know how erroneous they often are. He may have been saved, although his name is not in that list. It is cruel and wicked, and—unchristian to say there is no hope."

"My dear Mrs. Keene," the Rector said, "I have never known aught but pain to arise from the mistaken kindness of arousing false hopes. The vessel collided at night with a steamer in the Channel. The whole of those saved were picked up at once in a boat lowered from the steamer. The whole thing was over in a few minutes; the passengers were mostly asleep in their cabins and few had even time to rush on deck. The saved were of the crew."

"Are the names of the drowned given?" his wife asked. "Loes Kingston Keene's name appear at all?"

"A list will be given to-morrow." "Then till to-morrow," Mrs. Archer cried triumphantly, "we will not believe that he is amongst them! Who knows for a certainty that he sailed in this ship? He meant to do so, I know, but may he not have changed his mind? Who knows that he sailed at all?"

She looked with a defiant glance at her husband as she said this, and he, looking from her tear-wet face to the pallid face beside it with its mournful eyes fixed in agonised appeal on him, forbore to utter those words of dreary, sensible certainty which rose to his lips.

Miriam had caught at those words, "he might not have sailed." They seemed to her to convey the only although most unsubstantial hope. She was too stunned to be able to form any reason in her mind as to why he might not have sailed, she could not discover for herself any real ground for such a hope. She was indeed incapable of thought, she could only cling to those blessed words which had admitted a slight ray of light into the gloomy night of her mind—"Who knows that he sailed at all?"

"If he did not sail, where is he?" she asked, with sudden sharpness of tone, looking at Mr. Archer. "Where is he?"

"My dear, let me beg you not to trust in such a broken reed," he implored. "Mr. Keene sailed."

"He would be in London," Miriam declared, ignoring his last words. "He is in London!" she cried, and started up. "I will go—yes, I will go now myself, and find him. He is in his rooms in London—his is not in the wreck at all!"

"Sit down, dear. Keep quiet," Mrs. Archer implored. "We will send to his rooms; James will telegraph."

"But here a difficulty arose; no one knew where those rooms were situated. Sir Robert's London address was known, but it was also known that Mr. Keene had declined to occupy rooms there, and had always stayed at an hotel hard by.

"We could telegraph to the people in charge of the Hickses' house and they could make inquiries in the neighborhood

and reply," was suggested; but Miriam shook her head.

"All that will create delay," she said. "Delay will kill me! Waiting here helpless to read that telegram would kill me. I must go."

She began to move unsteadily towards the door.

"I will go with her, James," Mrs. Archer said, but he shook his head.

"I will go, of course," he said. "It is useless, but since it pleases her—There is no train for an hour, Miriam; you must eat something."

He himself sat down with what appetite he might to the pretty luncheon table, but Miriam escaped to her room; she would neither eat nor drink. Poor Mrs. Archer, left alone with her husband, burst into tears.

"What a burden for her to bear through all her life!" she sobbed. "Oh, James, what a burden! He loved her and wanted to stay with her, and she—she sent him to his death! And you—you are not fit to take this journey without rest. I wish, oh, I wish that I had not awakened this hope in her mind—"

"It is all useless," he said wearily. "There is no hope; but it may be for the best that she should take some action, however futile. To sit still, to wait and endure is more difficult than to perform prodigies of exertion. It is but an hour's journey; travelling and excitement may be good for her, may take her out of herself."

An hour later Miriam and her friend were speeding towards London.

"Good-bye," she said tearlessly to Mrs. Archer; she had not yet shed one tear. "You must pray for me—pray not to see me for a long, long time. For if we find him he will keep me with him, and if—if not, then pray that I may die."

She would not talk to Mr. Archer during the journey. She sat by the window, her eyes fixed upon the flying fields with an eagerness in them so terrible, an impatience so hardly restrained that it pained him to look at her.

"How slowly we are going!" she complained once or twice. "The train hardly moves, does it?"

"Lean back and close your eyes," he advised her. "The distance will not seem so great if you do not watch every inch of the way."

But she paid no heed.

"You do not want to get there," she said. "You do not believe I have a chance. It is cruel of you—cruel!—not even to pretend to hope. How is it that you can bear it," she said again presently, "if you have no hope? You knew him, he was your friend; I heard you say how liberal he had been to your poor. You know how full of life and manhood he was; you parted from him the other day, a powerful, noble-looking man, in the very height of his strength. Can you believe that he is drowned—drowned like a rat in a trap? He is so alive to me; I can hear him speak; I can see him always coming towards me; I can see his eyes seeking mine. Mr. Archer, I know—do you hear me?—I know he is not dead!"

He was very gentle and patient with her, tender as a father might have been in his compassion. It would have been so much easier to leave her those fond delusive hopes, to encourage her with the possibility of finding the man she would never see on earth again; but he, knowing the fatal certainty that awaited her in an hour's time, would not stoop to this. She shrank in silent silence when he talked to her of resignation and spoke in his simple earnest way of the beauty of submission to the will of Heaven. She could only feel resentment towards him for his well-meant effort to give her peace.

Then he told her of the sorrowful house he had visited that morning; of the poor young wife's heart-broken anguish; of the life of poverty as well as loneliness which was before her; of the little child—their little child—that the Rector had found laughing and crowing on the bed on which lay its father's body. Miriam turned her eyes momentarily from the window and seemed to listen. "Did they love each other?" she asked. "How did they part?" Glad to gain her interest, he spoke to her of that parting; told how the wife had slept till, in the darkness of the cold winter morning, she had found her husband already dressed to go to his work; how she had been conscious of his drawing an extra covering over the bed on which his wife and child lay, and of how, only half awake, she had stretched up an arm and pulled his head down to her, of how the poor young fellow had kissed his wife and the sleeping child nestled in her arms before he had gone forth to his death.

The Rector dwelt on the sorrow of the tale, making it as pathetic as he could. If Miriam could not weep for her own sorrow, she might weep for another's, he thought; but Miriam turned back to her window impatiently. "She is a happy woman. I envy her—oh, how I envy her!" she said. "If I could have done what she did—just that—only that, this horrible load on my heart would lose half its weight. Tell her how happy, how blest she is—tell her of me!"

* * * * * Arrived in London, Mr. Archer conducted Miriam straight to the Hickses' town house. The woman in charge of it bustled about, lighted a fire in a deserted and ghost-like sitting-room, and offered refreshments, which were hastily declined. Did she know Mr. Keene's London address? she was asked; and Miriam clutched the back of a chair for support as she awaited the reply. She knew nothing of it. Both of them breathed more freely for that. Another respite!

Mr. Archer, faint and weary himself, pulled a chair to the spluttering uncheer-

ful fire, compelling Miriam to sit down.

"I am going," he said, "to make inquiries. I may be away for hours. Do not be impatient or give way to despair in my absence."

"Oh, may I not come too?" she cried, catching at his hand. "Let me—let me!"

"My dear, stay here; you would be but a hindrance."

"Where are you going? What will you do?"

"I shall find out where are his agents' offices. I know of some one in the City who will tell me. Once the agent is found the thing is easy."

Miriam, sitting almost in a stupor over the fire where she had placed her, could not have told if hours or days or even years passed over her aching head. She knew that at last there came the sound of an opening door. She started to her feet, and stood in an agony of suspense. Her hat had fallen from her head, but she was still wrapped in her heavy travelling cloak, the thought of removing it having never occurred to her. She stood rigid as a statue, the only sigh of life in her agonised, wildly appealing eyes, turned on Mr. Archer as he entered.

He came up to her quickly and took her hands.

"I have been successful so far," he said. "I know where he puts up when in London."

Still Miriam looked at him with the same intensity of appeal, and Mr. Archer turned his own eyes away as he answered the unspoken question of hers.

"I had better tell you," he said sadly, "that he is believed to have sailed. He mentioned this ship to his agents, and took leave of them last week. Until I mentioned to them our—our vague hope, no thought but that he had met the fate of the other passengers had occurred to them. They have however applied to the proper quarters for particulars, and—and all necessary steps have been taken. Now I shall go on to Mr. Keene's rooms; they are in the neighborhood. I thought you would like to see me first."

"How long?" she whispered through dry lips. "How long?" "Less than half an hour," he answered. "Miriam, have patience—pray to Heaven for resignation!"

"I cannot," she cried wildly—"I cannot!—I tell you I cannot!" She wrenched her hands from him and fell upon her knees, her arms stretched along the table against which she leaned, her face resting on them. "I cannot! I do not want resignation! I will not be resigned! I want his life! Oh, Heaven, give me this man's life!"

Mr. Archer knelt by her for a while, speaking by turns a word of comfort, a word of prayer. But it was of no avail. She only moved her head restlessly on her outstretched arms, moaning— "His life—oh Heaven! Nothing but that! His life!"

So Mr. Archer left her; so he found her on his return. She was still kneeling with her back to the door, the lamp light shining upon her down-bent, dusky head, still moaning her almost inarticulate prayer when he returned and ran swiftly up the stairs. She heard his footsteps, but, from weakness or from fear, she did not rise nor lift her head. He came in and knelt by her side once more.

"Miriam," he whispered brokenly, "Heaven is all-merciful—all merciful, my dear!" She was silent. She seemed to him to have stopped breathing in the intensity of her suspense.

"Heaven is merciful!" he went on. "Do you understand me, Miriam? Now can you rise? That is right. No, do not look round; look into my face for one moment. Do you hear me—do you understand? You were right—and you and George—and I was wrong—and Heaven is very merciful, and—he is here!"

A cry that Miriam had no strength to repress resounded through the room. Some one else entered by the door to which her back was turned, and put strong arms about her sinking form, and for one ecstatic moment she floated into unconsciousness of all but delirious joy on Kingston Keene's breast.

"Miriam, my love, my wife!" he was whispering to her, when, after a moment of forgetfulness, she awoke into life and love and joy in his arms. "Miriam, my wife! I could not leave you! My heart failed me at the last! I did not sail!"

THE END

He Shot his Sweetheart.

William Millsbaugh and Jennie Halford of Reynoldsville, N. Y., were engaged to be married. Recently they were out sleigh riding, and stopped at Millsbaugh's house. While they were there Millsbaugh picked up a revolver that lay on a bureau. Miss Halford was afraid of it, and requested him to put it away. He laughed at her fears, and, pointing the pistol at her said: "Look out I'm going to shoot you!" He pulled the trigger, and the pistol was discharged. The bullet passed through the girl's head, killing her almost instantly. Millsbaugh gave himself up. He said he did not know the pistol was loaded. Miss Halford was a beautiful girl, nineteen years old.

Imitating Adult Generosity.

Scene—Two little girls playing that they are grown up people: "You must accept this ring as a present." "Oh, no, I couldn't think of it." "Really you will oblige me if you will take it; you know it doesn't become my complexion." "Thanks, and in return I beg you will receive this pocket-book." "I believe I must decline." "Please don't; I was just about to throw it in the ash barrel."

A LOGGER'S STORY.

Thrilling Incident in the Pines of Northern Michigan.

"For a young man I have done pretty hard scrapping in the Rockies and mining regions of New Mexico and Arizona, but a few days ago I had the worst scare in my life in the lumber districts of Northern Michigan." The speaker was a young man of some 27 years, dressed in rough-and-ready style and wearing a frizzly tow beard. He shifted the position of his broad shoulders as he lounged back in an easy chair in the Sherman House office, puffed his cigar vigorously, and then continued: "It was one of those bitter cold days we've just been having, and I had got up at three o'clock to rouse the men and get the sprinkler out. The air seemed full of blue steel and cut to my marrow like a razor. One of the teamsters got scared out and played off sick, so I had to take his place. When we had got a good load I took the reins and sat down on the butts of the logs, leaving the two loggers on behind. Of course about twenty feet of the load hung off the last bob. The road was a sheet of ice, for the sprinkler ran over it every morning, and the horses were sharp-shod, so we slid along smoothly till we got to the slide—a pretty steep incline ending in a turn which was mighty sharp for a road sixty feet wide. As soon as we started down my hair began to stand on end, for the horses galloped like fury to keep ahead of the bobs which were slewing over the road. I got so paralyzed and nervous that when we approached the turn I reined in too suddenly. I felt the front bobs jump one way and the back bobs the other. The hind ends of the logs whistled through the air like willow switches, and I heard the loggers yell: 'For God's sake, ———!'"

The next thing was a loud snap! snap!—like three tremendous paper-crackers—as the big log chains broke like so many cotton threads. Did you ever use a switch-sling? Whirl it round and round your head, you know, till a sudden twist sends the apple off the end and spinning into the air? Well, that is the way I felt, and that is just what I thought of as I was shot off into the air, over, and over, and over, till I struck in a snow drift some 100 or more feet from the road. When I struggled back through the snow I found the horses trying to kick loose from the few bits of harness that dangled about them, the bobs tangled about the trunk of a small pine tree, and the logs scattered to the four winds. One logger crawled back to the road with a fractured leg, and the other soon followed with a dislocated shoulder. One had struck a tree and the second had landed against a stump. They afterwards told me in camp that these things were not at all unusual, and, as I had some pretty heavy bruises myself, I concluded that I was not made to boss a lumber camp. So I was driven to town the next day to telegraph the management that the head teamster was filling my place, and that I was on my way to Chicago; and you bet your life I am glad I did it."

Early Marriages in Lancashire.

Early marriages are nowhere so common as in the prosperous manufacturing districts of Lancashire. Boys and girls not out of their teens, but earning big wages, and having their feelings of independence prematurely developed by the absence of home life, get married at a time of life when, in the higher ranks of society, they have not left school nor begun to think of a calling. Saturday is a favorite day for getting married because it is a short one, and the ceremony can be got through with a minimum of loss—a thing certain to be considered by a thrifty operative. The town is paraded for a few hours in tawdry finery of glaring colors, which cannot serve any useful purpose again; perhaps some of the watering places is visited if it is fine, and on Monday morning by the stroke of six the newly married couple may be found at their looms, in defiance of all poetry and romance, and the wear and tear of life begin with them in earnest. Marriage makes no alteration in the position of the wife so far as mill work is concerned; she puts in her ten hours a day now as she did before. Indeed, she has the worst of the bargain, for when work is over it is her privilege to light the fire at home, get the supper ready, and do the necessary work, while it is the prerogative of the husband to use his leisure according to his own sweet will. When the time comes for the baby to be born the mother expectant withdraws from the mill for a few weeks, and when she is well enough to resume her place at the loom, the baby is placed in the care of some old crone who is past work herself, and ekes out sufficient to live on by taking charge of five or six of these luckless babies for the consideration of a shilling or two a week, according to the age.

A Treat in Store for Charlie.

Two young ladies entered a cigar store and one of them said timidly: "Have you any choice cigars, sir? I want them for a present." "Oh yes, Miss," replied the tobacconist, "we have any choice you want, from a cent apiece up."

"I think I will take some of the one cent ones, then, if they are choice. I had no idea that choice cigars were so cheap. Won't Charlie be delighted?" she said to her companion as they left the store. "Poor boy! He is so fond of a choice cigar, and they will taste all the better," she added, with a little blush, "for having come from me."

General Butler tells of a civil service candidate writing against the question, "What is the distance of the sun from the earth?" that he couldn't tell the exact distance, but he did not think it was near enough to interfere with his duties as Post-office clerk.

A Bargain in Corner Lots.

is what most men desire, but to keep from filling a grave in a cemetery lot are half your days are numbered, always keep a supply of Dr. Pierce's "Golden Medical Discovery" by you. When the first symptoms of consumption appear lose no time in putting yourself under the treatment of this invaluable medicine. It cures when nothing else will. Possessing, as it does, ten times the virtue of the best cod liver oil, it is not only the cheapest but far the pleasantest to take. It purifies and enriches the blood, strengthens the system, cures blotches, pimples, eruptions and other humors. By druggists.

To most men experience is like the stern lights of a ship, which illumine only the track it has passed.

Young and middle-aged men suffering from nervous debility, premature old age, loss of memory, and kindred symptoms, should send three letter stamps for large illustrated treatise suggesting sure means of cure. World's Dispensary Medical Association, Buffalo, N. Y.

Seclusion is not conquest; it is crucifixion. Strong character, like strong muscle, comes from activity, from warfare, not from retreat.

"Work, Work, Work!"

How many women there are working to-day in various branches of industry—to say nothing of the thousands of patient housewives whose lives are an unceasing round of toil—who are martyrs to those complaints to which the weaker sex is liable. Their tasks are rendered doubly hard and irksome and their lives shortened, yet hard necessity compels them to keep on. To such Dr. Pierce's "Favorite Prescription" offers sure means of relief. For all female weaknesses it is a certain cure. All druggists.

The mind of childhood is the tenderest, holiest thing on earth. Let parents stand as watchers at the temple, lest any unclean thing should enter.

No Disappointment

Disappointments of one kind and another crop up all along life's pathway, for unfortunately it is the unexpected that always happens. There is at least one article of acknowledged merit that never disappoints. PUTNAM'S PAINLESS CORN EXTRACTOR is sure to remove the worst corns in a few days, and as no claim is made that it will cure anything else, it cannot disappoint. If you have hard or soft corns just try it. Beware of the article "just as good." N. C. Polson & Co., proprietors, Kingston.

The most influential man, in a free country, at least, is the man who has the ability, as well as the courage to speak what he thinks when occasion may require it.

The only variation in quality which will ever be found in "Myrtle Navy" tobacco is in the degree of moisture which it contains. Tobacco is a very ready absorbent of moisture, and in unusual states of the weather it may become a little too moist or a little too dry to suit the taste of some. This is a minor matter, however, as the essential quality of the tobacco is not changed. Its combustion is a little slower or a little faster according to the degree of moisture, that is all. The darker the plug the greater the moisture, and many prefer the dark. In each caddy, however, the preference for either can be met.

Teach self-denial and make its practice pleasurable, and you create for the world a destiny more sublime than ever issued from the brain of the wildest dreamer.

Cataract—A New Treatment.

Perhaps the most extraordinary success that has been achieved in modern science has been attained by the Dixon treatment of cataract. Out of 2,000 patients treated during the past six months, fully ninety per cent. have been cured of this stubborn malady. This is none the less startling when it is remembered that not five per cent. of the patients presenting themselves to the regular practitioner are benefited, while the patent medicines and other advertised cures never record a cure at all. Starting with the claim now generally believed by the most scientific men that the disease is due to the presence of living parasites in the tissues, Mr. Dixon has since adapted his cure to their extermination; this accomplished the cataract is practically cured, and the permanency is unquestioned, as cures effected by him four years ago are cures still. No one else has ever attempted to cure cataract in this manner, and no other treatment has ever cured cataract. The application of the remedy is simple and can be done at home, and the present season of the year is the most favorable for a speedy and permanent cure, the majority of cures being effected in one treatment. Sufferers should correspond with Messrs. A. H. DIXON & SON, 305 King-street West, Toronto, Canada, and enclose stamp for their treatise on cataract.—*Montreal Star*

Speaking truth is like writing fair, and comes only by practice; it is less a matter of will than of habit; and it is doubtful if any occasion can be trivial which permits the practice and formation of such a habit.

Young Men!—Read This.

The Voltaic Belt Co., of Marshall, Mich., offer to send their celebrated Electro-Voltaic Belt, and other Electric Appliances on trial for thirty days, to men (young or old) afflicted with nervous debility, loss of vitality, and all kindred troubles. Also for rheumatism, neuralgia paralysis, and many other diseases. Complete restoration to health, vigor and manhood guaranteed. No risk is incurred as thirty days' trial is allowed. Write them at once for illustrated pamphlet free.

It has been well said that the noblest souls, of whatever creed, have insisted on the necessity of an inspiration, a joyful emotion to make moral action perfect. The paramount virtue of religion is that it has lighted up morality, that it has supplied the emotion and inspiration needful for carrying the ordinary man along the narrow way.

The self-indulgent man thinks to secure the gratification of appetite without paying its price. For a time he may enjoy sensual pleasure; but by degrees his course of life brings forth its natural fruit. His vitality is sapped, his self-respect is gone, his very power of enjoyment is diminished, and he is, perchance, the victim of disease, or poverty, or self-reproach.