Love Kept Its Faith;

Or, The Girl With the Nut Brown Hair and Dreamy Eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.—(Cont'd).

Outside the little circle, and yet of it, having no visible association with it, and yet linked to its members by bonds forged in the white hot crucible of malignant hate, another man, too, has lived his life and waited the coming of the hour he has called his own. Since the day of his vow, Michael Strang has sailed his ships, added coin to coin, sneered and smiled, and made the burden for others almost too heavy for the bearing, and for the rest he has piled up the faggots on the fire of evil intent, and—waited. Patience, the power of waiting are among the qualities making for strength in this man. Never has he permitted his purpose to flag, but he has risked nothing by precipitation. For the accomplishment of his design he has insisted that David must be a man, controlling the destinies of the Graham fleet, he must have the power of choice. There must be no scapegoat in this business; no laying the blame of disaster on the shoulders of Cap'n Dan.

So through the waiting days; now the hour for action, now he could shape his plots and engineer his plans, and soon, long before he had done with life, he would laugh the laugh of triumph. Oh, how his soul would exult when he stood upon the pierhead and watched one of the Graham boats wallow through the Gut, and knew that her hull was crazy, her load too great, her crew too small, her food the cheapest that money could buy, and upon all the price of death.

In the hatching of plots Michael Strang was no neophyte — were there not dead men's bones bleaching in the caverns of the sea and green heart timbers rotting on its crags in triumphant testimony to his craft?—but by contrast the past was a trifle. Thus far he had dabbled in ships and lives, but now it was the character of a man, the reputation of a house he sought to wreck, and he knew that character may defy even Death itself, and that for repuation there is often a resurrection most swift. So he made his moves in his desperate venture, realizing that the secrecy and caution he had practised as a destroyer of ships might prove in this case to be mere open, undisguised recklessness.

Strang's dealings with David until the young shipowner was approaching the end of his teens were limited to the courtesies of the quayside, a nod of recognition, a few words on the weather, passing comments on ships and sailors, with now and again a brief interchange of views on freights; but as David became by degrees the commanding influence in his own business, and Cap'n Dan fell away into the background, Strang ventured upon a bolder line—at first a tempting phrase or two of commercial flattery, and afterwards, as soon as prudence permitted an appeal to the spirit which he argued must be awaiting a call, that spirit which some men call laudable ambition, and some name enterprise, but which too often is only a greed of gold or lust of power.

"You know, Mr. Graham, I'm surprised that you don't aspire to something bigger than this," pointing to the Malachi, at that moment discharging her Baltic baulks upon the wharf. "I'm certain that if I was a young man I wouldn't be content with brigs and schooners, nothing short of a fleet of ocean going full-riggers would satisfy me."

"Oh, the boats are all right," David assured him with a smile. "I'm quite satisfied with them, and as for money they make me as much as I need."

Strang shrugged his shoulders suggestively, and David observing the movement and the accompanying curl of the lips, half scornful, half commiserating, grew hot, and found the radius of his life suddenly narrowed. Nothing more was said on the subject, however, but a week later Strang again secured a quayside hearing, and informed David that he had just returned from Liverpool, where he had seen the Crummock, the new clipper of the Lake line, fitting out for her maiden trip to the River Plate.

"That's the sort of craft for a young man of ambition, Mr. Graham," he remarked with an emphasis which brought a look of interest to David's face. "She's a beautiful barque, clipper stem, stun' sails, can carry twelve hundred tons of stuff, and registers 930. It galls me to think of Netherport owning a 'Line' at all, let alone such boats as the Lake Line, and Allerdale being represented on the seas by coasters such as yours and mine. Come now, confess that with me you regard it as a scandalous reflection on the enterprise of the port."

David had an uncomfortable feeling that his companion really implied a reflection upon himself, and his answer betrayed the inference.

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of you particularly," Strang returned; "though, now you mention it, I don't know why you shouldn't take the thing in hand. I'll do you the credit of assuming that you are not without ambition; you have capacity, and no one can dispute the opportunity. Yes, now I come to think of it, I can see no reason why in the course of time your present modest fleet should not be developed into a substantial 'Line.' You can't be satisfied with this," pointing to the Malachi. "The biggest boat on your list, and yet alongside one of these Netherport clippers a miserable tub."

Mechanically David allowed his glance to follow the line of the outstretched finger; his pride shivered and a fragment crumbled away; discontent crept into his heart. Michael Strang's foot flicked a pebble over the side of the quay, and as the yellow ooze sucked it in, he softly whispered: "In the mud! In the mud!" Then David spoke again.

"It would require more than one life. Just reckon up the capital one would require."

"Capital, of course, it's always capital! When a man wants a thing now-a-days, instead of getting it he sits down with his head in his hands and groans because he lacks so many pounds, shillings, and pence. I tell you, all the capital a man requires is brain and push. Besides, how much capital had your fathers? I've heard that your fleet has grown from a fraction of a share. Isn't that so?"

David nodded his head. A little later, his hands dug deep in his pockets, he slowly sauntered home, his eyes bent upon the ground, his brow wrinkled to a frown.

In after years these colloquies were recalled by the veterans of the dogwatch who gathered round the capstan at the harbor end, and their wonder waxed great that suspicion should have slept so soundly, but at the time they passed unnoticed or were regarded as part of the common round of the wharf.

Only The Captain took note of them, and beheld something of their significance. Like his master, The Captain had never lost touch of that night in the graveyard, again and again in the wakeful hours of the night its horror had shaken him, and that hidden notebook with its record of the vow had acquired a fascination which expanded with the passing of the years. Now he was convinced that he was to witness a new act in the drama, that the great plot, dormant so long, was at last to be resuscitated and carried to its end. As one of the actors he had a sharply defined conviction that the heroic was demanded of him; sympathy urged him to an exposure of the design, but his theory that help should only be given where it was deserved always checked the word of warning and sealed his lips.

Stretching opportunity to its extreme limit, he maintained a close watch on his master's movements, and often when Strang supposed him in the bare flagged kitchen or the musty little office The Captain had him in sight. Always was this the case when the tide was in flood, but for safety's sake the self-appointed spy chose the Mariners' Quay, where the coal hurries and stacks of grey logs and bleached planks gave him shelter, whence he might watch the life of the farther side without risk of detection. Here, lurking within one of the big red hurries, stretched along one of the piles of wood, or crouching among the rank grass which flourished in the open spaces, he would spend the tidal hours, his big emotionless eyes riveted upon the moving figures across the waters, and when the old man, whom he knew best of all, and the young one, for whom he feared, came together, his lips would twitch in a low guttural, their burden ever the same.

"Rag from rag—rag from rag—in the mud—in the mud. Yes, that's what he said. Rag from rag—rag from rag."

On one occasion, when the conversation had lasted longer than usual, he scampered to the bridge at the head of the harbor so that he might have a word with David on the edge of the town; but, even as he waited, his theory again asserted itself, his warning intent grew weak within him and died away.

"David Graham must wait," he said. "Yes, that's it—wait—if he's good, why, if he's good, he'll manage by himself—if he deserves help he'll not need it. Rum thing, but true. Wonder if it often works out like that? But how if he doesn't deserve it?—wait an' see."

Little did The Captain dream how short would be the waiting time. It was a hard thing for David Graham that Temptation came to him linked hand in hand with Revelation. For a man may agonize with the dark promptings of a base ambition and end the fray with a clean soul; but if Love casts itself into the strife, urging him to get that to the best beloved he may give, then the Recording Angel may take his pen in hand and open the pages of his book.

CHAPTER IX.

It was the heather that did it. The first of the blooms and the first of the snows were alike irresistible, and when David turned in at the Sleddlemere gates and Margery pointed upward to the purple on the shoulder of the Little Man, the day's programme was settled beyond dispute.

The heather was out, and to the heather they must go.

Boarding the skiff, they pulled across the lake, and then, alpenstock in hand, threaded the maze of the lower pines, criss-crossed along the heights beyond, and so won the rounded stretch whereon the bells clustered, waiting for the fullness of life.

Falling upon her knees by the fringe of the rioting expanse, Margery tenderly fondled the baby blooms and crooned over them a welcome, wherewith they were recompensed at once for all the days of summer they had missed, while David stood by and silently echoed her welcome and repoiced in her joy. Suddenly she looked up into his face, her own aglow.

"David," she said, "I've had a lovely idea. If ever I get married i shall be in the autumn, and I'll climb up here all by myself and gather my own bouquet. A heather wedding—won't it be sweet."

"Married!"

Amazement quivering in the tone, he repeated the word. Wonderingly she met his gaze; then one of life's chords seemed to snap. The world spun around and vanished, leaving a new one in its place. Margery buried her face in the flowerets again; David bent towards her and then drew back, and when the girl rose he was stripping a heather spray of its spikes.

Impelled by custom rather than by intent, they passed without a word around the great hunching excresence to the dip where the giant bracken lay ready for the hand of the gilder, and after that betook themselves to a favored retreat, whence from the Low Man you may scan the mightiness of the Big, and downward look deep into the sublimity of the Derwent Vale, where with the sun upon it, Bassenthwaite cleaves the emerald like a riband of steel, and Derwentwater glistens as an azure shield, and over all, from Barf the Bare to the turret of Castle Rock, the everlasting hills keep watch and ward.

When man comes face to face with Nature, familiarity rarely breeds contempt. In those other days behind them the scene had never failed to fill them with a sense of awe, making mute their lips by the ecstasy for which there is no utterance; but to-day the spell of a mightier force was upon them blinding them to all externals. Only, David's soul was filled with a wonder exceeding great, and in Margery's heart there was that she knew not for joy or fear, but her eyes were strangely luminous, and now and again the curving of her lips might have answered for a smile.

When the day had gone, taking David with it, Margery stole away to her own room, and through the open casement leaned across the creeper-covered sill. The wine red glow had faded from the heights; out of the drowsy dale a fleecy cloud uprose and by an invisible hand was smoothed out over sedge and meadow and mountain base—a counterpane of Nature's knitting; and over all the glancing lights of the tremulous stars. But to the call Margery's heart made no response. The feathered folks had ceased their song of thanksgiving, and naught was heard save the lisping of the waters, the raucous cry of prowling night bird, the far-off baying of restless hound; but her ears were unconscious of loss or gain, of the sounds that had gone, or those that had come. Only the dream thoughts were with her, and she desired no more.

Out there on the mountain height uncertainty had lain, but now the last shred of doubt had fled, now she knew.

From the casement she turned to the little table whereon the idol given to her by David had lodging, and yielding to the caprice of the moment she sank upon her knees before it and declared unto it the thing that clamored for utterance.

"Oh, little god from China," she said, "have you heard, have you seen, or is it hidden also from you?

"Do you know, little god, that to-day the world has given me such a lovely smile, and I must tell somebody about it, somebody, anybody, so long as I tell, and I'd rather it was you than anyone else. For even if you want to laugh at me, you'll not do it; and if you're angry, you'll not scold; if you feel a blush, your yellow cheeks won't show the red; and—and—and, oh, little god from China, best of all, you'll not tell anybody else.

"I'd like, oh, how I'd like, to bury my head in auntie's lap and whisper my secret to her, but I'm a coward and I daren't. I daren't, for she would put her arms about me, and then slip away to her room—and cry. No, I'm not crying myself, how dare you say such a thing?—and—oh dear me, what will she do when she knows?

"How would you like, little god from China, if you'd lived in a temple all your own and had all the worship, and then one day, when you looked about, you saw that another altar had been built and that another idol shared your throne—how would you like it?—tell me that, or I'll shake you. I knew you wouldn't. Well, that is just what has happened. There's another idol, little god, another idol.

"Can you guess who it is? Come, you're a god, surely you know that much? Well, I'll tell you. Now, listen, hard, both ears, for I'm going to whisper. . . . Yes. Are you surprised?—fancy a god having a master—he was your master once—and now—and now—and now he's mine. There, I've said it.

"I haven't told him yet—perhaps he'll never ask me—but if he does, I'll tell him just as I've told you.

"Now, little god, you tell me something. When does love begin? I didn't know anything about it until to-day, and yet I think—yes, I really think that I must have loved him all the time. That must be how it is with God, I think: He loves us all the time and we don't know it.

"Would you like to know why I love him? Ah, that is easily told—but remember this is part of the secret. No, it's not because he loves me, I don't know anything about that—yet—but I think—— No, it's not because he's good—I hardly think it would make any difference to me if he were bad. I love him because—because — because he's David.

"Good-night, little god from China, good-night."

(To be continued.)

RUSTLESS WHEAT.

A Marvel Which is Being Accomplished at Cambridge.

The most important and the most fascinating of all Prof. Biffen's experiments in the laboratories of Cambridge University, England, concern production of varieties of wheat immune to prevalent pests.

In all countries the most serious enemy of the wheat farmer is rust. In the bad rust year of 1891 the loss due to this cause in Prussia alone was calculated at over $100,000,000, while a well known authority estimates that the average loss from rust to the wheat crops of the world would not be covered by $500,000,000.

No prophylactic against the disease has ben discovered, and it is recognized that the only way to avoid it is to make use of varieties which are naturally immune. Unfortunately the few such varieties that exist are in other respects poor and unprofitable to grow.

Prof. Biffen began his experiments crossing a variety peculiarly subject to the attacks of yellow rust with an immune variety. The hybrids produced were all severely attacked by rust.

In the following year such seed as could be collected from these plants was sown. The greater number of the resulting plants were much rusted, but some were entirely free from the disease, though growing up in the closest contact with their rusty brethren. It was found on counting that the immune plants formed almost exactly a quarter of the total number.

In other words, the experiment proved susceptibility and immunity to be a pair of Mendelian characters, and consequently within the control of the breeder to combine with other characters according as he pleased. The fact that resistance to yellow rust is a unit character exhibiting Mendelian inheritance makes it a simple matter to transfer it to wheats which are in every way desirable except for their susceptibility to rust.

From the knowledge gained through his experiments Prof. Biffen has ben able to build up wheats combining the large yield and excellent straw of the best English varieties with the strength of the foreign grain and at the same time quite immune to yellow rust. During the present year several acres of such wheat coming true to type were grown on the Cambridge University Experimental Farm, and when the quantity is sufficient to be put upon the market there is no reason to doubt its exerting a considerable influence on the agricultural outlook.

About the Farm

BUTTER FROM WHEY.

In Jefferson county, New York State, the St. Lawrence Dairy Products Co., has erected a plant for the manufacture of butter from whey, and about 25 factories are supplying it with separator cream taken from whey. The butter made is said to be equal to best creamery butter. The loss of butter fat in cheese-making has long troubled factorymen, it being found impossible to incorporate all the fat in the cheese. The new system appears to have solved the question and patrons are netting about 2¼c. additional per 100 lb. from this source. The whey is said to be worth as much for feeding as before, and does not sour as soon, being run through the separator at a higher temperature than under the old method retarding the action of lactic acid. About 4 lbs. of butter is obtained from 1,000 lbs. of whey.

THE COW HELPS AUSTRALIA.

"Corn is King in America and the cow is queen in Australia," remarked R. J. Guthrie, agricultural editor of the Sydney Mail. "The cow has redeemed the country and hundreds of farmers who lost nearly all they had by the drought of 1902 are now better off than they ever were, and it is all due to the cow. Australian butter ranks well up with the best butter in the world.

"Our butter making is all done bq co-operative creamery system. It has been years since the farmer made butter on the farm. We have little use for a dual purpose cow in Australia. That is, the dairy farmer wants a cow that will give milk ten months in the year, and he uses it for no other purpose while those who raise cattle for beef have no thought of milk production."

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

Do not winter more stock than you can feed well. Sell the surplus in the fall.

The cow giving milk wants more food than the dry one by her side. Still, some men feed all alike. Use common-sense, and feed each individual cow according to her needs.

Select the breed which you like best, and then stick to it long enough to test its value. Cater to its special needs, but do not continually shift from one breed to another. All standard breeds are good. Your favorite, properly cared for, is the best for you.

The trouble generally is that the breeder is too anxious to have his young stock grow too fast, and oftentimes he is found forcing them along to early maturity with fattening food. This will give them a sleek-looking appearance, and this is just what a great many breeders are working for, but which really is a detriment to the utility and value of the stock in question.

Taken all around oats is the best grain feed young stock can have, but whatever feed is used, keep them growing every day, for it is only by that means they ever do their best. Any falling off is not only a present loss, but is a loss that can never be regained. Any animal that has been in any degree stunted, can never grow to its full stature by any after feeding or crowding, and the owner of such an animal loses, not only the extra growth the animal would have made, but also loses the extra feed given in the attempt to gain what has been lost.