

Love Kept Its Faith;

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

CHAPTER XVII.—(Cont'd).

A brave little struggle, and at last the limit of the strain was reached. Margery could remain silent no longer, and she determined that her aunt should not. One night, when Cap'n Dan had left for home, Margery followed her aunt to the old lady's sitting-room and demanded the unveiling of the mystery.

"You must speak to me, auntie; tell me what you know. This terrible silence is worse than any truth could be. What is David doing, why doesn't he come?"

"Why doesn't he come," the old lady dejectedly repeated, "I expect that it's because he's got a scrap of conscience left."

Gently she pushed back the locks from the fair brow, and looked lovingly into the depths of the sorrowful eyes.

"From what I've heard, he's eating his heart out for a sight of you, lassie. It's weary for the man who's afraid of those he loves."

"What is it, auntie? The night let him go you begged me to try and save him; how can I if you keep me in the dark?"

Miss Manesty puckered her lips and thought deeply for a few seconds ere she answered—

"It was a light task I set you then, dearie. I urged you to try and save a man's name; now it's not the name but the man himself that needs salvation. And I'm like you—this is what has kept me quiet—I'm—in the dark."

"What is it, auntie?" Margery's lips were dry and bloodless, and her voice a whisper.

"Simply this. David's set his heart on gold, and he's making it fast, making it out of flesh and blood and breaking hearts. He's brought a man down from Liverpool to teach him how to do it, and made him his manager—the appointment, by the way, has been made at Michael Strang's suggestion; the manager is one of Strang's creatures—so that now David's sailors cannot get speech with David, but only with this man who's in his pay. It's a cowardly trick but a common one, I'm afraid, and it's not confined to shipping either."

"But—David's ships, auntie?"

"Cap'n Dan shuts his eyes when he talks about them. They're not only filled up chock full to the hatches, but they carry deck loads that are far too big; every ship has one man less, some of them two, than when old Jacob sailed them; if what the crews say be true, they're victualled with stuff a pagan would turn up his nose at, and soon there won't be a sound boat on the list. They're cheap, lassie, cheap, though Cap'n Dan has one crumb of comfort to offer; he fancies they're cheaper than David has any conception of."

"Does he think—?"

"That there's trickery somewhere."

"What can we do? We can't leave him to go his own way, like this. How can we save him?"

Miss Manesty shook her head hopelessly.

"You mustn't think me cruel, dearie," she observed at length. "You asked me to tell you what I'd learned, and it's best that you should know. As for saving him, it sometimes happens that you can't pick a man up—until he's fallen—low enough. I'm sore afraid that David's not ready for help yet. We must just stand by, keeping him in sight, with our hands ready for his signal."

"Stand by!" Margery sprang to her feet, her eyes flashing, cheeks aflame. "Stand by!" she cried—"no, there must be no standing as long as action is possible. Think of your own gospel, auntie—work, work, work. Tell me what to do. It won't be too hard."

"Not too hard?—saving a man from the sin he's in love with? Why lassie, that's a thing that sometimes God himself can't accomplish."

Struck by the reckless abandonment of the tone, Margery bent upon the old lady an oddly curious look, one of intense interrogation. Then, strongly, deliberately, she completed her aunt's declaration—

"But God never gives over trying, auntie. Now good-night. I want to be alone, to think and think and look for a way."

Far into the deepest hours of the night Margery crouched on the rug by the fire in her room, and strained the eyes of grief-racked love for a glimpse of the invisible. All unknown to her, Miss Manesty, too, shared her vigil; down on the harbor-side at Allerdale, caring not for cold or darkness, Cap'n Dan dodged among the shadows, keeping an eye on David's ships, and looking for he knew not what; whilst, under David's roof-tree, Bella Mackitterick rocked herself too and fro with her apron thrown over her head, until the grate emptied and she fell asleep.

Through the self same hours, too, Malice also kept vigilant ward. Michael Strang had learned that hate was a hungry maw, an appetite that may never be satisfied, one that is ever crying out for more.

On the night when tidings of the Habakkuk's destruction reached him, he ranged his house from cellar to attic, heart and brain in a ferment of ferocious joy; on the day when he scattered the first seeds of slander upon a receptive soil and before his eyes they burst into growth, he hastened home that he might hide his satisfaction, lest he himself should be his own betrayer; and later, when he looked upon David Graham's face, he told himself that his cup was running over.

Now he is seething with discontent. He has begun to fear the manifestation of some latent flaw in his project. Cap'n Dan's obtrusive but persistent watchfulness has scared him, and he has heard enough of David's love story to make him dread the influence of the girl whom he has robbed of her lover. What if Dan should reassert his old sway; what if, for the sake of Margery, David should abandon his ambition; what if Tinion should blab!

All these, and other possibilities, have conspired to urge him further along the highroad of havoc. On David's reputation fresh daubs of discredit must be plastered, his remaining friends driven beyond the outer barriers, Tinion more deeply involved. So he has devised another move, and to-night he has paralyzed his ally by a disclosure of its details, and then compelled him to a hot denunciation of its author.

"You black-souled scoundrel."

Once upon a time such an indictment would have amused the shipowner, but to-night his mood is distinctly one of extreme irritation, and as the accusation rasps from the sailor's tongue, Strang's upper lip curls back from his gleaming teeth, and he snarls—

"Be careful, Thomas Tinion, be careful. Such words as those come with ill grace from the man who ran the Habakkuk on the Bulger."

The shot hits the target. All the truculence vanishes from the sailor's demeanour, and his tone is one of sullen submission as he unsteadily replies—

"Well, you don't need to fling that in my teeth. I only did what I was fooled into doing."

"You did what you were paid for doing. I offered you five hundred golden sovereigns for the job, and you took them, and that fact is quite enough to land you in Carlisle Gaol. Moreover, when I bought you for that particular commission, I purchased you body and soul; you are mine until I've done with you. If you care to serve me still further, you'll be as well paid as—well, as for sinking the Habakkuk—"

Tinion shivered and raised his hand in protest.

"But if you decline to aid me further, you must look out for squalls, nay, for a tempest, a typhoon, one that will blow your white-livered heart into spume, and wreck you as completely as you yourself wrecked David Graham's brig."

"And what about you?" the sailor fiercely cried, stung once more into a show of resistance—"what about you? I didn't wreck the boat. I was only a tool. It was your cursed gold that paid for it, and, by Heaven, if you blow the gaff on me you blow it also on yourself. If I sink you sink with me."

"Fudge. You talk like the fool you are. I've been sailing too close to the wind all my life to be driven on a lee shore now. Don't

delude yourself with the fancy that I've entered on this business with my eyes closed to any of its possibilities. Mark me, man, I've fingered every rope on the craft, and among them I've handled one that will do all I want. There are rewards in this for both of us—gold for you, ambition satisfied for me—but the penalties are only for one. Haven't you learned yet that it's only the tool who pays?"

His shabby shred of good intent shattered by terror, the sailor remained silent, while the man who held him in the hollow of his hand watched him with contempt, mentally congratulating himself of the triumph of bluff.

"Why d'ye want me to do these things?" Tinion whined at length. "It's not fair letting me run all this risk and not telling me what it's for."

"What d'ye think it's for?"

"How can I tell? You're too deep for me—deep as the devil himself. I only wish I'd been down in Davie Jones's locker before I clapped my lights on your figure-head. Think! What can I think? When I started on this cruise with you, I thought it was money you were after, but that's not it, because you're paying it out instead of hauling it in; then it seemed as if it were David Graham's ships you'd got your spite on, but it's not that. All I know is that David's lost a boat, and that you paid for the wrecking of it."

"I tell you, man, it's horrible. Here's David going about with this disgrace on his shoulders, even the bonny lass that had promised to wed him has taken back her word because of his shame; everybody's agen him, barring Cap'n Dan and Bella Mackitterick, an' yet a word from you or me would set him right."

"Well, go and speak that word."

Tinion shook his head.

"I darsn't do it," he groaned; "I darsn't—but my punishment's growing harder'n I can bear. I cast away his ship, an' he comes an' pats me on the back an' begs me not to take it too much to heart, an' says I mun have been varra badly, an' that he doesn't blame me a bit; an' after that he moves his men about so as to make me t' mate of t' Noah—an' I'd sunk his other brig, man, ay, he did—he pats me on t' back, an' squeezes me hand, an' gives me another berth."

"An' now, when I lie in my bunk, I'm hearin' t' grindin' o' t' Habakkuk's timbers as she pounded on t' Bulger rocks; an' when I shut my eyes David Graham's white, harrassed face stares through the lids that willn't keep out the sight, an' in my dreams that bonny lass at Sleddmere comes to me with tears an' pitiful prayers, an' begs me to clear her lad. One night I thought in my sleep that I'd done the thing she wanted, an' when she knew she came to me with a smile that was like an angel's, an'—she—actually bent over me—an' kissed my broo—an', eh, man, I felt as happy as—as when I was a lad. Then I woke—an—I was just floundering in my own hell."

"Let me go, Mr. Strang, let me go. Don't ask me to do this other thing. You've paid me well for what I've done, but I don't want the brass, an' if you'll let me sail my own course an' say nothing of what's gone, I'll bring it all back, every penny piece. I will; I'll go for it now."

He sprang to his feet and shuffled towards the door. Not till then did Michael Strang speak again.

"As you will," he said, "but I warn you that before you sleep, Ben Hetherington wud have tried the fit of his gyves on you. Perhaps you'd like to dream of David Graham's benefactions and Margery Manesty's kisses in the stone jug."

With a gesture of despair, Tinion returned to his chair, and Strang, drawing closer to him, and laying his hand on his shoulder, impressively continued—

"I'll let you go, Tom Tinion, when I've finished with you, and when I'm done you'll be a richer man than you are to-day, and you'll thank me for what I'm doing. I've paid you well, you say, and I'll pay you better yet. Why, man, already you could buy a brig of your own."

Five hundred earned, more for the taking! Tinion's eyes glistened with the flash of greed. Twelve months ago he would have been satisfied had he been assured of such a sum as the product of a life's strenuous toil, and here instant possession was offered him, it was simply his to take. And yet—Haggardly he gazed into the fire caverns, whence the imploring face of a man, the prayerful eye of a maiden seemed to stare back at him, burning into his very soul. A movement at the other side of the hearth recalled his wondering fancies; he turned to see that Strang was unlocking the old bureau in the corner. With the

click of the lock, the shipowner beckoned him to his side, and then dropping the front of the case, revealed a heap of glittering gold piled on the green baize cover.

"Yours, lad," he luringly whispered, "and there's more of them in my treasury—you've seen them. I'm a lone man—don't know what to do with all I've got—can give to whom I like—who knows?" He leered suggestively.

"Yours," the syren-voiced tempter continued—"yours for an hour's service—service without risk. Why should you hesitate? David Graham is nothing to you. Why should you slave all your days to pamper him? Let him sweat for his bread as you have done. Why do you hesitate? Is it Margery Manesty—why should you lose all this to give her a sweetheart? It doesn't matter, man, one lover's as good as another, and she'll be just as happy with the next. Don't be a fool and wreck your future for a crop of empty notions; don't throw away the greatest chance of your life."

The chance of his life, forsooth! As if in this case, as in so many of the crises, humanity must meet, the chance did not lie in renunciation.

The chance of his life! It is enough. Hate and Greed, children of the same foul brood, confederates ever linked in Shame's conspiracies, have triumphed.

"I'll do it."

The chance of his life! And deep down in his heart abject despair.

Strang snaps his desk and turns the key. Tinion goes back to his chair, drops his chin upon his hands, and once more bends his gaze upon the fire, and again beholds those faces 'mid the ember glow. That of the man still begs for mercy, but in the luminous depths of Margery Manesty's eyes prayer no longer pleads. There he finds a smile of derision, fearless defiance. It is a relief to him when Strang breaks the silence and dispels the vision.

"You'll lose no time about it?" he asks. "You'll be wanting to finger that gold, I've no doubt."

"No, curse it; I'll get the job done to-night; the sooner the better. I think I'll be off now."

"In that case, I may expect to see you again to-morrow night."

Tinion declines a reply, and slouched from the room, Strang in his wake. Their feet, beating the boards of the passage, are still rousing the slumbering echoes of the house when the door at the end of the parlor is gently opened, a close-cropped head is projected through the aperture, and The Captain bestows a knowing wink upon the furniture. Translated into speech this means—

"You're a very clever chap, Mr. Michael Strang—very clever—but not clever enough to stop a key-hole."

To be continued.)

CUT BOTH WAVES.

School Managers and Applicant for Position Broke Even.

The managers of a school in a little village in the Far West were examining an applicant who desired the position of head master. The young man had satisfied them of his knowledge of geography, arithmetic, and grammar. At this point the chairman of the managers drew a magazine from his pocket, peered intently into it, and remarked—

"Well, young feller, now we'll see whether you're up in the English language. What's the meanin' o' incomprehensuble?"

"Incomprehensuble?" faltered the applicant. "Why, incomprehensuble means the proximity of the corollary to the molecular ingenuity."

"M'yes! An' what does disintegrate mean?"

"Disintegrate means the general consanguinity of the hyperbole when affiliated with the zodiac."

"Jest so," commented the chairman. "Now, what is the definin' o' sublimination?"

"Sublimination is when the overplus goes into perihelion with the decussation of the instability and produces transfixity of the protoplasm."

"You'll do," announced the chairman.

The candidate, overjoyed, shook hands all round, and then left to make his arrangements.

"Purty smart feller, that," observed one member of the board.

"Yes," said the chairman. "Good joke on him, though, me a-makin' him think I knew all them big words, wasn't it?"

And down the road, about half a mile, the candidate was chuckling to himself—

"Good joke on them. Bless if I don't believe they think I know what all them long words meant."

Even one taste of defeat may be hard to swallow.

About the Farm

ERRORS IN FEEDING.

There are a goodly number of small poultry keepers who, after trying fowls for a year or two, give them up in disgust, as troublesome, unprofitable things. Though in reality it is a simple matter to keep hens so that they will lay enough eggs to allow a large margin for profit, there are a few conditions that must be observed. One of the most important of these is that they should be correctly fed.

The most common error in feeding is to give the birds too much, so that the food may be seen lying on the ground at all times. The egg supply, under such conditions, is poor, and the hens look dull and unhealthy. If poultry keepers would keep an account of the eggs they obtain from their fowls in the course of the year they would generally find that they do not get nearly as many eggs as they should—the result mainly of overfeeding.

Enough food should be given at each meal to be eaten eagerly and greedily, and no more. The poultry should neither be starved nor overfed. The happy medium can be arrived at by feeding them until they begin to pick and choose, and consider which are the tit bits; and then promptly stop that meal. It is not possible to lay down any hard and fast line as to the amount of food always to be allowed, as some breeds eat more than others, individuals vary in their appetites, and hens when laying eat a good deal more than when they are not producing eggs.

It is an error to feed the big fowls and the young chickens together. When this done the latter do not get their proper share and they are invariably trampled upon and pecked and ill treated. However small the space may be, if it is large enough to rear chickens in, some portion should always be divided, in which the youngsters can feed by themselves. A shelter for them can be easily made with a few pieces of board and some wire netting. It is particularly necessary to give young chickens food at regular times and not just as it happens to be convenient; and as they quickly go ill if offered anything stale or sour, the feeding vessels require constant attention.

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

If the horse is inclined to looseness of the bowels, look at its teeth. They may be so sharp that he cannot chew his food well. If the teeth are all right, look into the matter of the watering and the feeding.

There is no better winter breakfast for hens than equal parts, by weight, of bran, middlings, ground oats, cornmeal and meat scraps, to which add its bulk in cooked cut clover hay, and five per cent. of linseed meal. Mix the grain with the tea made by cooking the clover.

In these days, the specialists are the ones that get a reputation and make money; but, in this case, the grand secret is that with one kind the breeder soon finds out the possibilities of the breed, soon learns it thoroughly, the breed improves in his hands, his strain becomes noted, he derives an added pleasure in handling and his pocket-book grows fat.

It is not a good plan nor can it be made the most profitable to keep poultry confined. One of the principal advantages the farmer can have is that his poultry costs him but a small outlay for food, because whenever the weather is suitable—and this is all the time that the larger number is kept upon the farm—they can find the most of their own living. If more than one breed is kept it is necessary that they should be kept separate, and of necessity one or the other must be kept confined at least a portion of the time. And there is nothing to be gained in keeping different varieties, while there is a risk of their getting together.

RIGHT SORT OF EXPERTS.

Visitor—"You must have a remarkably efficient Board of Health in this town."

Shrewd Native (one of the many)—"You are right about that, I can tell you."

"Composed of scientists, I presume?"

"No, s'r. Scientists are too theoretical."

"Physicians, perhaps?"

"Not much. We don't allow doctors on our Board of Health—no, sir—no undertakers, either."

"Hum! What sort of men have you chosen, then?"

"Life insurance agents."