

Love Kept Its Faith;



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

CHAPTER XXVII.

Touched by an invisible hand, the curtain stretched behind the mountain chain lightly trembled, by imperceptible gradations its folds shook out their density; down in the valley a hedge sparrow twittered, on one of the fellside farms an early bird bade shrill farewell to the night, and welcome to the birth of a new day.

So once more David Graham looked down into the heart of Margery Manesty's kingdom.

By-and-by from one of the upper windows the blind was lifted, a thin column of blue smoke coiled from one of the chimneys, the big door opened, and a maid appeared with mop and pail. Still he varied. Their day must at least be warmed before he cast his disturbing presence into its midst.

One by one the signs of life multiplied. Upstairs, the casement of one of the roomy mullioned windows was thrown open and Miss Manesty's grey head appeared. Unconsciously he smiled a greeting.

Across the lawn a girl daintily tripped, a bunch of daffodils newly gathered in her hand. Her eyes searching the hillside caught sight of the figure crouching on the ledge, and she wondered what foolish fellow was tempting Providence thus, nor knew that the "foolish fellow" was tenderly breathing her name.

"Margery, Margery, my Margery."

Over their breakfast Miss Manesty and Margery briefly discussed the man whom they had seen on Barf's scaly side.

"It's just two weeks to-day, Auntie," Margery remarked at the end of the meal, "two weeks since—David—went away. Another week may bring us news, don't you think?"

"I hope so, dearie, I hope so, but the sea's so terribly masterful, and it has no dates. We shall just have to wait its will. Some folks grumble about work, but it's simply child's play to the labor of waiting. I've seen many a weak woman made mighty by it and many a weak man saved."

And lo! even as she spoke, the time of their waiting reached its end. The gate swung upon its hinges and clicked, a foot crunched heavily on the path. Margery and her aunt rose, and with scare-blached faces gazed through the window. David Graham was before them, and they thought him on the sea, hundreds of miles away.

Never a word did they speak, for words were empty, but when David reached the step Miss Manesty was there to demand of him his passport.

"What word is it you bring?" she asked almost fiercely. "I must know whether it's good or bad before you see my bairn. What she did was done for Love's sake, and I'll have no—"

"And Self has struck its blotted flag," he interrupted, smiling, yet very grave.

"You mean?"

"That I've seen the hidden thing."

"God bless you, Davie—go and tell that to Margery!" She stood aside for him to pass.

"Won't you come, too, and hear my tale?" he asked; but she shook her head.

"No, thanks, I've enough to be going on with. Besides, I prefer my joy in homeopathic doses—it lasts longer. Now, go, she's in there."

He found her still standing where her aunt had left her, one hand grasping a chair for support, the other laid upon her heart as though in an effort to subdue its throbs, and a thrill of pain, a pang of self-reproach, smote him when he missed the roses from her cheeks and saw what sorrow and suspense had done.

"Have you nothing to say to me, Margery?"

"I—I—don't understand, David. I thought—"

"You thought I was at sea on board the Daniel?"

"Yes."

"Learning the lesson I wouldn't learn at home, eh? Ah, my dear, my dear, you see how I have found you out, how I know that daring, madcap scheme for your very own."

"Forgive me, David—I wanted

you to see, and—I didn't think they would have told you."

"They did not. You made them promise not to. But when the end came they checked your name, and then I knew."

"The end. What does all this mystery mean? why are you here? It is only a fortnight since the Daniel sailed."

"A week was all that the brig would float. We left her on the bottom of the sea—her boats landed us on the Irish coast. Oh, you mustn't look like that, dear. You forgot that ships might sink, didn't you?—and the Daniel made a splendid voyage."

Impressed by the calamity, she missed the drift of his words, and passionately besought his forgiveness.

"Forgive you, Margery; I've come to thank you."

"My dream in the dark is over," he said. "I've seen with mine own eyes in the daylight, and I've sorted the shams from the make-believes. I've been longing for gold, and I've had it all the time in abundance, though it didn't bear the Queen's image. I've been longing for power, and that, too, was mine, the power of fair dealing, the power to make the rough way smoother and lighten the heavy burden of toiling lives. Dearest, it's a wonderful victory your wise little head and faithful heart have won. Saved my kingdom for me by compelling me to look upon the facts of life."

"A wonderful victory," Margery repeated, "well, perhaps—but not a wonderful way, David. It was the only way. It has all come so clearly to me lately. There is no hope for any man until he beholds the fruit of his labor. Knowledge of the way and the end—without that a man is living only half a life."

"Crossing the T's and dotting the I's of this pronouncement a little latter in the day, Miss Manesty caustically observed—

"Sight indeed—that's one of the senses that Providence has been niggardly in. Not one in a thousand men ever do see; that's why so many of them are so well satisfied with earth and so sure of heaven. If they'd put their glasses on and look for a few of humanity's gangrene sores, they'd be thinking differently of their acres and their banking accounts, and they'd be wanting to do a bit of cleaning up before they asked their Maker for the crown and the robe they've never earned.—As for yourself, David, it's a fine bit of blundering you've accomplished. You set out to establish a line, and—two of your ships are at the bottom of the sea. What do they say at Allerdale?"

"They don't know yet. You see we only landed at Liverpool yesterday, and as I wanted Margery to know before anyone else, we came along to Penrith right away, and then coached the rest of the road to Keswick. I left Cap'n Dan behind me this morning; he'll be here by-and-by, and we'll go home together with the news."

"And what then? No heroics, I hope; no flag hoisting. I don't care much for fussy conversions."

"No." David colored distressfully, but met her piercing gaze without flinching. "I'm just going to try and drop quietly back into the old way. As the ships come in they shall be overhauled, and made as my father would have had them; their ratings shall be restored, insurance reduced, food made right, and—and—"

"Well?"

"I'm going to take the tiller again."

"Meaning good-bye to the manager?"

"Yes. His appointment is my greatest shame. It was a cowardly trick. And I've paid. There's one thing I want to say for myself and only one. This is for you, and Margery, and Bella, and Cap'n Dan, and no-one else. Though it's true that I used the fellow as a shield, and would neither see nor hear my men, I had always made him produce samples of the food that was being shipped. Those samples, it is clear, must have been false; I've paid for tons of stuff that the men have never tasted."

"How did you come to engage the man," Margery inquired.

"He was recommended to me by Michael Strang."

"Michael Strang, always Michael Strang," the girl murmured; but just at that moment she caught sight of Cap'n Dan plodding up the path and flew to meet him.

Now all the way from Keswick Dan had diligently employed the time in preparing a fitting greeting for the two ladies, or, as he himself expressed it, in "practising a new hail." But when Margery seized his hand and actually kissed him, his red cheeks flamed crimson as his bandanna and every fragment of his speech basely deserted him.

"Eh, Missy, what a headpiece you have got."

When the shadows were again lengthening on the land the train that began its journey by the grey ruins of Gammersby Castle and would end on the edge of Bransty Harbor rumbled round the curve, and, halting at The Bridge, dropped the young shipowner and the little skipper on the platform. In silence they crossed the river, but when they struck the Mill Field by-way, and beheld the snow-white flash of the cataract beyond the green and farther back the tangle of brake and thicket and steep-poised wood, and away in the rear of the fells the misty mountain horns, memories that for years had soundly slumbered awoke and became articulate.

"D'ye remember that morning when you and I came through the fields together, Cap'n Dan, long long ago?" David asked.

"Ay, we were going to see Missy, an' you carried the Chinese idol over your shoulder, an'—an'—"

"And you sang 'Rio' as though it was you who were the boy. Sing it again, Cap'n Dan, sing it again just as you did then."

"Sing 'Rio,' Davie. Ay—well, ay—if you want me to."

"Oh, never mind," Davie begged, detecting hesitation in the tone, "I ought not to have asked it. You must be dog tired."

"Oh, it's not that, Davie, it's not that. You see 'Rio's' a grand chanty when you've got the wind-lass manned and the voyage it before you, but I never fancied it so much when I was making the home port."

"No? What did you sing then?"

"The Doxology, boy."

There was no sting of intent in the words.

"I'd like to sing it now, Cap'n Dan."

"Sing what?"

"The Doxology, please. You and I together."

Dan's face flushed with delight. Reverently he took off his hat, David following suit, and the two voices, one lusty with life, the other cracked by years of use, burst into thanksgiving—

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,

Praise Him all creatures here below,

Praise Him above ye Heavenly host,

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

And again, as on that other long dead day, the rabbits lay low in the underwood and the birds hopped to the higher branches; and the white-haired woman waiting in the old home on the top of the hill, flung wide the door, and strained her ears for the sound.

"It canna be him," she cried. "Nothing but a mirrikle could have browt him back seah soon. An' yit—it is him, it is. My oan laddie's back, agen, an' aw mun be reet or he's nut be singin' 'Praise Him.' What can it mean?"

The voices died away, but she could hear the crunch of fallen twigs and the swish of the branches as they drew nearer. When at last they emerged from the cover of the trees and beheld her, Cap'n Dan again plucked his hat from his head, and waved a joyous signal. But David dashed across the lawn, flung his arms around the woman who had tried so hard to fill his mother's place, and kissed her. Then, without a word, he passed into the house.

Blowing like a grampus Cap'n Dan trotted to the door, and of him Bella demanded the news.

"Hooray, hooray," he panted; "Glory be to God. Miss Margery's licked the devil—raked him fore an' aft. T' Daniel's lost—Davie's saved—an'—an'—here we are."

The details of the story David himself filled in. This was part of the penance on which he insisted, that, as far as possible, he should be the instrument of his own humiliation. A little later he mildly rallied Bella on her share in the drama.

"That's one of the things I can't get over," he assured her; "when Barney Rigg came with his cock-and-bull yarn about the Daniel you knew what it meant, what they intended to do with me, and yet you allowed me to walk blindly into the trap. It's past understanding."

"You were always a fairly hard one, but—"

"Ay," she grimly interrupted, "soft-heartedness isn't oaluz a proof of luv. When I was a lass I used to think my mother a mighty cruel mak,' bit what; I'm gay set up noo that she licked me seah weel an' seah often. The ways of the Lord are wonderfull, laddie. I'm thinkin' that yan o' these days we'll aw be thankin' Him for His skelpin's. Eh, what a pack o' childer we aw are, wid oor tantrums an' oor pretendin' that we can't tell mire fra solid ground. It's amazin' hoo the Lord fashes Himself about us at aw. I wadn't; where fwoly tumملت, I'd let 'em lee."

"Listen to her, Cap'n Dan," David cried; "d'ye hear that? Why, she'd run to help them up." He threw back his head and broke into a gleeful lugh, and Bella's face relaxed its set, dimpling into a smile. That laugh was David's own, the first she had heard since Michael Strang spread his net, and it flooded her heart with the joy of content.

Now, in their innocence, Bella and Cap'n Dan regarded the victory as complete, and only to Margery had David revealed the gap that must be filled before he could proclaim himself satisfied. That night, when Margery retired to her room, she lifted her ring from the breast of the yellow god, held it for a while, and then replaced it, softly whispering—

"Not yet, little god, not yet. You must keep it for me until everything is made known. The mystery of the Habakkuk is still to be explained. Davie's name still bears that horrid blot. Not yet, David says, not yet."

(To be continued.)

About the Farm

SELLING LOW-GRADE SEED.

Practices tending to defeat the purpose of the "Seed Control Act," in protecting the farmer, are reported as being prevalent in some sections of Canada, even among farmers themselves. Not only this, but also the regulations in the Act, are being violated. Seedsmen justify protest against farmers who produce grass and clover seeds, selling them to neighbors, when the standard is lower than the law allows them to handle.

Farmers seem to forget that they are liable under the Seed Control Act. The only exemption is that the farmer is not obliged to have "each and every receptacle, package, sack or bag containing such seeds, or a label securely attached thereto, marked in a plain and indelible manner," showing name and address of seller, kind of seed contained, and common names of weed seeds present. Instances are known where those who deal in seeds refused to purchase lots of seeds from growers because of the presence of foul seeds, and where the farmer then sold the same seed to his neighbors. Seed represented as being number one, must not contain more than one of the following weed seeds per 1,500 of the seed represented: Wild Mustard, Tumbling Mustard, Hare's-ear Mustard, Ball Mustard, Field Pennycress (Stinkweed or French Weed), Wild Oats, Blindweed, Perennial Sow Thistle, Ragweed, Purple Cockle, Cow Cockle, Orange Hawkweed (Paint Brush), Ergot of Rye (Sclerotia), White Cockle, Night-flowering Catchfly, False Flax, Canada Thistle, Ox-eye Daisy, Curled Dock, Blue Weed, Ribgrass (English Plantain or Buckhorn). In addition, seed of first quality, offered for sale, must "contain, out of every one hundred seeds, not less than ninety-nine seeds of the kind or kinds represented, or seeds of other useful and harmless grasses and clovers, of which ninety-nine seeds ninety must be germinable."

For the general trade in seeds, the following section applies to all: "No person shall sell or offer, expose or have in his possession for sale, for the purpose of seeding in Canada, any seeds of timothy, alsike or red clover, or any mixture containing the said seeds, if the seeds of the weeds named in this Act are present in a greater proportion than five to one thousand of the seed sold or offered, exposed or held in possession for sale."

Every intelligent farmer realizes that only clean farming pays, and that, in order to keep down weeds, strict care must be taken to avoid introducing the pests through grain, grass or clover seeds. Protection is afforded against all vendors, whether seedsmen, general storekeeper or farmer.

In order to be fair to those who handle seeds, the Act stipulates that complaint must be made within seven days. The section relating to this reads: "Any sample of seeds taken from any seed found or suspected to be sold in violation of the provisions of this Act shall be taken and forwarded to an official seed analyst: (a) From seeds that are sold in sealed packages, sacks, bags, or receptacles, at the time of breaking the seal thereon; and (b) from seeds that are not sold in sealed packages, sacks, bags or receptacles, within seven days from the date on which the seeds entered into the personal possession and became the property of the purchaser." Samples for official analysis are to be drawn in the presence of the vendor or two disinterested witnesses, and forwarded with a certified statement, accompanied by name and address of the vendor, and particulars relating to the seed.

Those making purchases of seed would do well to examine it carefully at the time of purchase. If there is ground for complaint, write at once to the Seed Commissioner, Ottawa, Ont. It is his duty to make investigation, and do everything possible to protect the purchaser from undue contamination of his fields with foul seeds, and, if circumstances warrant, to prosecute the vendor of such seed.

Four conditions form exceptions to the Act, viz.: (a) Any person growing or selling seeds for the purpose of food; (b) any person selling seeds direct to merchants, to be cleaned or graded before being offered for sale for seeding purposes; (c) seed held in storage, to be reclaimed before being sold for seeding purposes; (d) seed marked "not absolutely clean," and held or sold for export only. All seed held for sale in Canada for seeding purposes, comes under the Act, and offenders are liable to prosecution.

During the past few weeks samples have been collected from stock sold by farmers, and if there is proof of violation of the act, the offenders are liable to prosecution. In the interests of Canadian agriculture, those farmers who are guilty of selling low-grade seed should be dealt with just as promptly as they would have other vendors treated.—Farmer's Advocate.

CZARINA'S COSTUMES.

Wears Plain Dresses Except at Regal Functions.

According to a writer in the Girl's Own Paper, the Czarina takes no interest whatever in her clothes, and though her costumes are of course well made and of expensive materials, they never have any thing remarkable distinctive about them, for the very reason that she cares so little about the matter. She does much of her own shopping in Paris, but she does it by proxy. Each season one of the ladies in waiting is commissioned to buy in Paris her gowns and her hats and all the other little details appropriate for the wardrobe of an empress, but many times when they reach the Czarina she discards them with the expression, "Indeed, that is perfectly lovely and very French, but it would never do for me at all."

For everyday wear her gowns are all of the plainest, but, of course, there are occasions when she must wear legal robes. Her court costume is a magnificent creation of the richest satin, elaborately trimmed with heavy embroidery. Masses of the embroidery are used, while the corsage is laden with jewelled trimming. The buttons which trim this court costume are each one of them worth a small fortune. They consist of a large pearl in a wonderfully artistic setting. The Czarina's pearls which she wears with this costume are famous the world over.

Sometimes she wears drop earrings of matched pearls, which are very valuable, and her dog collar and necklace and corsage ornaments, also of pearls, are almost priceless. The Czarina is always glad when the time comes for her to take off her court costume, the long heavy train is a burden to her. She always prefers gowns that are light in weight. Many of her dresses are of the lingerie order, consisting of lace and fine cambric.

Yet on the other hand, she has many house gowns and cloaks of velvet, trimmed with rare laces. Perhaps, of all her jewels, she prefers a long string of wonderful pearls, which she wears very often. The string is so long that she can wear it twice around her neck, and yet have the longest loop reach her knees. The short loop comes to the waistline, and is finished with one single pear-shaped pearl of enormous value.