THE STORY OF CONSTANCE.

BY FLORENCE E. ROBINSON.

In these days of psychological research and investigation I am often reminded of an occurrence which took place many years ago, when such subjects were less commonly discussed by non-professional people than at present.

The earth, I think, holds no fairer spot than the island, washed by the water of the English Channel, and so tiny as to have but a local name, which was the scene of a tragedy whose events will by-and-bye pass into a tradition of that far-away spot.

The tale was related to me by an English clergyman, as we stood together beside the last resing-place of the unfortunate victim to scientific experiment, and, as he spoke, my eyes wandered over graveyard and glebe down to the shore where the fisher folks were drying their nets in the sun, out indeed to the very projection connected with the facts narrated.

I would I might transcribe, word for word, the story as it fel lfrom the lips which told it to me, but the old gentlemen's quaint language if reproduced would seem now like an echo from the past.

In the year, 18—there had come to the island a tall, bronzed man, whose military bearing and dress proclaimed him an officer in Her Majesty's service. He was accompanied by an Indian Ayah, who guarded with watchful tenderness a fragile little girl just old enough to lisp her father's name. They at once took up their abode in an old chateau which had been in former days the home of some noble French refugees, and here they lived in great seclusion, the widower, for so he proved to be, holding little communication with any one save the clergyman, to whom I am indebted for these notes.

Having lost in India the wife to whom he was passionately devoted, he had returned, broken in health and spirits, to hide himself in this retired nook, cut off so completely from the busy outside world.

The housekeeper and servants at the chateau were from families dwelling near at hand, and for that reason, perhaps, the new comers were objects of great interest to the dwellers on the island. When curiosity had abated, however, their kindly natures drew them towards the little child Constance, so she was called, and many were the greetings bestowed upon her as she was carried from place to place in the arms of her dusky attendant.

As time went on the mothers of the village wondered that the child had never yet been seen toddling as infants will toward the butterfly or blossom for which her eager hands were outstretched, but always sat waiting for what she desired to be brought, or was carried where she would by the patient nurse. Through some of the servants the father's attention was called to this backwardness on the part of the little one, and ere long the village knew that the child had been visited by one of the great London doctors who had given it as his opinion that Constance would never walk unaided, though there was no distortion of the frame to make his cruel verdict a reasonable one.

Years rolled by and Constance grew from sweet childhood to a still sweeter girlhood, those around her forgetting almost that there was anything painful in her utter helplessness. In spite of, perhaps on account of, the delicate body, the mind and heart were unusually active. Though gentle and retiring in disposition, she drew into friendship all who came in contact with her, and the island children in their excursions rarely failed to remember "Miss Constance" when the first spring flowers uplifted their fragrant heads or the waves cast upon the beach some curious trophy of the sea. Among the older folks there was not one but would have gone out of his way to oblige her and felt himself repaid for his trouble by a grateful glance from her dark eyes and a word of thanks from the lips which never spoke aught save kindness.

Surrounded thus by a love, simple yet steadfast, the girl lived quietly on, finding her chief solace in the society of the clergyman who had been her teacher and guide in all things, for Major Kingsford, her father, grew daily more absorbed, and, though not wanting in fondness for his daughter, found a relief in her dependence upon some one other than himself.

There came a time when the calm of her life was broken by the advent of the stranger who forms the chief actor in this history. Felix Barth came to the island bearing with him a letter to the clergyman from one of his former pupils, then travelling on the continent, recommending the young man to his consideration. Barth having studied medicine in France, philosophy in Germany, and human nature everywhere, had come to this quiet spot in search of rest before establishing himself in the metropolis. Handsome as he undoubtedly was, Barth could hardly have been a favorite with the ordinary run of people, for his cool scrutiny of those with whom he came in contact produced an uncomfortable feeling on the part of the scrutinized not likely to result in very kindly sentiments toward the young man himself.

The grave eyes could, however, light up, the set lips curve in smiles, and it was easy to see that where he so willed Barth could both win and keep affection.

In accompanying the clergyman on his round of visits, one bright day in June, Barth for the first time saw Constance Kingsford, seated in her wheeled chair under a rose-covered arbor. During the entire call his observing eyes noted every action of the young girl before him—the caressing hand laid upon the head of the grey-hound at her side, the loving glance given to her father as he appeared for a moment at one of the windows, the quickly uttered thanks for some slight attention from her attendant, and lastly, the affectionate farewell bestowed upon her old friend at the close of the visit.

No sooner had they passed the boundaries of the chateau ground than Barth began a series of inquiries concerning Constance—the length of time she had been in her present state, her surrounding influences, education, general characteristics, and many others, whose object the clergyman could not discover, but which he thought perhaps not unnatural, coming as they did from a medical man anxious to diagnose an interesting case.

After his queries had been answered, Barth sank into a sort of reverie from which he roused himself with a remark at that time unintelligible to his companion: "All a mistake, all a mistake! Love is the main spring there."

From that time he was a constant visitor at the chateau and seemed to have but one object in life, that of endearing himself to its fairest inmate. He dropped all reserve and austerity, replacing them with a devotion which soon made him an important factor in the girl's existence. He gained her love and trust completely, then gently but persistently forced upon her the idea that the days of her helplessness were numbered if she would but make the necessary effort, impressing constantly upon her the delight it would afford him to see her erect in youthful vigor. It was a difficult thing to overcome her natural timidity and to change the habits of a lifetime, but through an unforeseen accident Barth at length attained the object he had in view.

In accordance with an ordinary custom Constance had been taken down to the shore, delighting, as she did, to feel the breeze upon her face, and to watch the craft which dotted the bay. The Ayah had been sent back to the chateau for some forgotten article, and except a fisher boy just putting out to sea, the girl was alone, when turning her head she saw her lover springing with hasty steps along a narrow path which wound down from the steep cliff that on one side protected the harbor from the surges of the outer ocean. With eager eyes she gazed—eyes which were soon strained in horror to see Barth stumble, as if having lost his balance, then fling his arms in air and plunge downward to the rock-strewn shore below. One instant she paused, looking in vain for help, the next she was speeding with love-given strength across the beach.

She found Barth reclining half-stunned against a projecting boulder. As soon as she knew him to be comparatively uninjured and all necessity for action passed, her new-found strength fled as rapidly as it had come; leaving her to sink down upon the sands beside the one she had come to aid. Barth soon recovered, and taking Constance in his arms carried her lightly back to her chair, and regardless of his hurts began an earnest conversaton. At its close Constance placed her hand in Barth's, saying with trembling lips, "To please you I will try." These last words were overheard by the clergyman as he came up behind the two, and aferwards he remembered them when events had made clear the pledge contained in that one brief sentence.

After the incident upon the beach Barth's devotion seemed greater than ever. Those who passed by the chateau gates might see, on any fair day, two figures pacing slowly along the shaded avenue—Barth supporting with his strong arm the clinging girl at his side, at intervals bending low his head to whisper words of encouragement and persuasion, as the feet faltered or courage failed. Before long, the islanders who held her so dear, were no more astonished than delighted to see Constance walking almost unaided along the seashore. How fond they were in their praises of the young doctor's skill, little knowing the mystic power which had wrought the miracle without the help of drugs or balms! The time had come for Barth to leave the island, and of all that was said at parting between himself and Constance nothing was ever known save that, as they stood together upon a low, sandy point running out to meet the sun-lit waves, he laid upon her the injunction to walk out alone every morning, and again at sunset, to the scene of their farewell, and there think upon the promise she had made him.

The first mail boat that touched at the island after the departure of the young physician brought to the clergyman a letter from Barth concied in terms so explicit as to be almost brutal, and enclosing a note for Constance. He stated that his interest in Constance had been of a purely scientific character, and that he trusted the beneficial results of his experiment would be an excuse for the course he had taken to attain the desired end. He seemed to forget all the personalities of the case, and dealt with its details as he might have done before a gathering of his colleagues.

After giving in a concise manner his reason for believing the case had been misunderstood and mismanaged from the beginning, he wrote as follows: "Upon deciding that what Miss Kingsford needed was some great incentive or stimulus to action, I at once sought for the sensibility through which she might most easily be reached. It required no very close study of her character to discover that he who won her love and trust could exercise over her will, if he chose, a moving power. To please me who gained for myself the place of both lover and guide she put fourth those efforts which have, as you know, resulted in her complete restoration to a normal condition. I leave it to your good judgment to decide how much of the real truth should be disclosed to Miss Kingsford in handing to her the enclosed which tells her simply that, owing to unfortunate circumstances, we shall meet no more."

The clergyman, distracted with doubts, knew not which way to turn, and after pondering over the letter for some days, had resolved to break in upon the gloomy reserve in which Major Kingsford enshrouded himself, and take counsel with him as to what it were better to do, when word was brought that he was even then lying at the point of death, stricken down by a mortal illness. In a few days all was over. The sad master of the chateau lay at rest beneath the churchyard willows, leaving to the clergyman the double duty of comforting Constance in her grief and of inflicting upon her a wound which neither sympathy nor time could wholly heal.

The day after her father's funeral he gave to Constance the note entrusted to him by Felix Barth, with a gentle warning that it contained sad tidings; then withdrawing a few steps, waited while she perused it. With singular firmness for one who had hitherto shown herself so yielding, she came toward her friend, when she had read through to the end, and looking steadily into his eyes, asked:—

"Do you know the reason for this?"

Upon the clergyman's bowing his head affirmatively, she continued: "*You* will tell me truly. Is the reason for our separation one which leaves Felix Barth what he has seemed to me—a wise, honest man, worthy of my love and reverence?"

Longing from the depths of his soul to mete out of whatever retribution there might be in showing Barth as he really was, the desire to spare the girl before him was stronger, and fearing for her the effects of a complete revelation, he fought against his own conscience, tampered with the truth, and with a a hasty answer of, "Yes, yes, you may love him still," left her, the memory of her face irradiated by the light of trust shining through the veil of sorrow, silencing his scruples at having in a measure deceived her.

After Major Kingsford's death there came down from London several relatives all earnest in their solicitations that Constance should leave her island home and return with them to the city, but refusing all offers of a home elsewhere, she continued to live on at the old chateau. She was never heard to refer in company to the past, but regularly every day, no matter what the weather might be, she would cross the sands and taking up her position on the point where she had parted with Barth would gaze out over the waters, first when they were touched into brightness by the beams of morning and again as they reflected the richer hues of the setting sun. Her habits of life remained unchanged, save that she seemed possessed with a spirit of restlessness, where once she had been so calm and would wander for hours among the different haunts of the island. When remonstrated with she replied as though it were an all-sufficient reason: "He wished me to walk you know." In all her ordinary rambles she was accompanied by her Ayah, old and wrinkled, yet faithful still, but her morning and evening pilgrimages she made alone.

The sea changed its summer voice of gladness to one of moaning; the autumn winds blew chill, and yet that solitary figure outlined itself against a lowering sky. One evening Constance passed unnoticed to her customary place of vigil. Lost in contemplation she heeded not the gathering clouds, or the turbulent waters crowding closer, closer to her feet, and at last on the bosom of a mighty wave she was carried out through the war of the breakers to eternal peace beyond.

"When the sea gave up its dead" rough hands tenderly carried the light form to the chateau and heavy feet, a few days later, trod lightly beside a fresh grave in the little churchyard as the island folk came to lay away in sorrow her who had been among them a spirit of goodness.

Among those present none save the clergyman knew the facts I have here set down, and which he was afterwards moved to tell me through a discussion which arose concerning certain reputed wonderful cures brought about by mind influence, exercise of faith, and similar things. Since those who might be affected by the making public of this history have passed away, I have ventured to record it, vouching at the same time for its authenticity.

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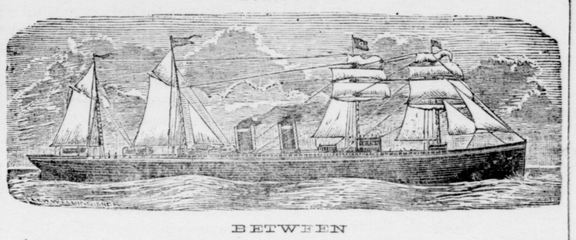

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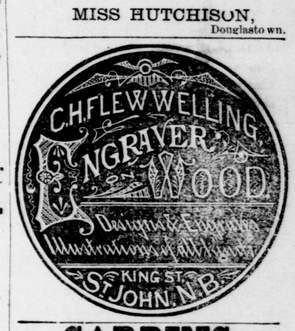
A GIRL for kitchen work. No washing or ironing. APPLY TO
MISS HUTCHISON,
Douglastown.



CARDING.
THE SUBSCRIBER'S Carding Mill will be in full operation after the middle of the present month. Wool left at the mill will be promptly attended to Wool left with E. A. Strang, Chatham, Wm. Stothart, Moorfield, or M. M. Sargent, Newcastle, will be taken to the mill, carded and returned within one week.
R. D. WILSON.
Derby, May 4th.

NEW LIVERY
AND
Boarding Stable.
ADJOINING THE ADAMS HOUSE.
CHATHAM, N. B.
The subscriber has just fitted up these stables, put in first class stock and hopes by strict attention to business to win a share of public patronage.
FRANK S. GRIFFIN,
Proprietor

Marble Works!!
The subscriber has removed his WORKS from Upper Chatham to the premises on WATER ST., CHATHAM, lately occupied by MR. ALEX. CANTLEY, Blacksmith, (near the Ferry,) where he is prepared to execute orders for
MONUMENTS, HEAD STONES, TABLETS AND CEMETRY WORK GENERALY,
Also: COUNTER and TABLE TOPS and other Miscellaneous Marble and Fine Stone Work.
A good stock of MARBLE constantly on hand.
EDWARD BARRY.
Chatham, August 1st 1885.

NOTICE OF CO-PARTNERSHIP.
The subscribers have entered into business co-partnership under the name and style of MOSS & SON.
MYER MOSS,
MYER MOSS JR.
While thanking our patrons for past favors, we respectfully solicit a continuance of the same to the new firm.
We beg to announce that our stock of
Watches, Clocks, Jewelry, Plated-ware, &c.
will be much larger and more varied than hitherto.
Our BOOK and STATIONERY Department will be more complete also. We are determined to make our prices such as to meet the approval and favor of our customers.
Engraving, Watch and Jewelry repairing, &c., done promptly and in the best manner. Work sent by mail will receive prompt attention—at either of our shops in Chatham or Newcastle.
MOSS & SON.
Miramichi, August 1st, 1885.

PRINTS! PRINTS!
Twelve hundred yards NEW PRINTS in all the
Newest Shades & Patterns,
from 7c. a yard and upwards.
GREY COTTONS
rom 4½c. upwards, a
F. W. Russell's.
Black Brook