

LITERATURE, &c.

The British Magazines.

From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal.

THE EMIGRANTS.

A STORY OF THE BACKWOODS.

[Concluded.]

Mrs Hadley had put her two little girls to bed one stormy autumnal evening, and was looking forward to a few hours of tranquil industry by their happy fireside, when the kitchen door was heard to open, and a female voice spoke in accents of grief and anxiety. George hastened to ask what was the matter, and found it was the servant maid of their friends the Oswalds. She had come to ask Mrs Hadley to go immediately to her mistress, who had been taken dangerously ill. Their only farm servant had met with an accident that had quite disabled him, and Mr Oswald himself had ridden off for the nearest surgeon, a distance of sixteen miles. The girl seemed much excited and distressed; and Marion, knowing the delicate state of her amiable friend, was deeply concerned.

'What shall I do, George?' she exclaimed; 'a night of storm, and such a road! Had it been during daylight, or could you have accompanied me. But I could not be easy if both of us were to leave our children.'

'Had not I better go?' asked the husband sympathizingly.

'Ah! I suspect it is I that ought to be with her: poor Lucy! Yes, I will go without more hesitation. Get the mare saddled for me: I will leave this girl with you, and take our Betty as the more efficient assistant. Hasten dear George, and I'll get ready some little matters that may be necessary.'

'Wrap well up, then, my love,' said George; for he felt he dare not oppose his heroic wife's proposal, the necessity being so pressing.

After a fervent kiss, and a 'God be with you my dear, on your errand of mercy,' from her husband, Marion was seated on the steady animal, and Betty trodged resolutely by her side. The wind howled dismally, sweeping showers of withering leaves to the ground at every blast, and masses of black clouds were careering past the moon, then, fortunately for the night travellers, near the fall. The hardly-to-be-distinguished pathway was broken and rugged; but the mare knew it pretty well, and after a short time Mrs Hadley proposed that her servant should try to ride behind her, thinking they would thereby get on more rapidly. This was done, and the strong, sagacious animal stepped out more surely and rapidly, as if aware of the confidence and responsibility reposed in her. In fact, in a time which, even to their anxiety seemed short, the good Samaritans reached Mr Oswald's dwelling.

Marion knew that there were none to receive or to greet her, but all the more eagerly she hastened into the house, leaving Betty to attend to their steed. The kitchen was in darkness; a large house dog sprung growling to meet the guest, whose arrival would doubtless be so welcome; but almost immediately recognising the visitor, the animal retired to the cheerless hearth whining piteously. There was no other sound to be heard, and Mrs Hadley hoped her suffering neighbor might be asleep, as the children doubtless were; so she stepped softly into the family room. A light burned dimly near the uncurtained window; it had been placed there as a beacon to light the absent home. The wood fire had sunk low, but the regular breathing of sleepers was distinctly heard. When Marion had snuffed the candle, she saw the eldest boy, who was eight years old, with his head laid down on the table before which he sat; another little fellow, stretched on the floor, carefully covered with a cloak; and the youngest on his mother's bed, which stood in a corner of the apartment—all fast asleep. No word, nor sigh, nor whisper came from the invalid. Marion held her breath while she stooped over to listen to her friend's, and only the increased throbbing of her own heart was audible. The stillness was oppressive. Alas, alas! it was that of death—the mother lay a corpse, surrounded by her sleeping children! Alone, unaided, she had perished in nature's extremity! The apalled gazer soon became too painfully convinced of this fact; and the pulses of her own life almost stood still, as she beheld the once lovely countenance distorted by pain and sorrow, and fixed in its last unconsciousness. Marion was a brave hearted, but she was not a deeply sensitive woman. Here was no indeed! In the whirlwind agony of that moment she perceived all its bitterness; yet the lightning glance she permitted herself to take of the circumstances, also disclosed to her what was required of herself. She stooped over the dead and closed the glazed eyes, and smoothed the convulsed muscles of the face; then with a heavy bursting sigh she took in her arms the hapless child that slumbered on its mother's death-bed, and tenderly kissing, she laid him in another and less sorrowful resting place: his little brother she soon nestled beside him, and then she gently touched the sleeper at the table. The poor child started as if distressed that wearied nature had overcome his intended and promised watchfulness.

'Has papa come back?' he asked. 'Is mamma better? I am so glad you are come, Mrs Hadley.'

'Go to bed beside your brothers, my dear boy—you must be sleepy,' said his sympathizing

friend, deeply affected to hear him name his mother, whom he idolised. 'Your papa will soon arrive now, I daresay; and in the meantime I will see to everything.'

The boy looked wistfully to his mother's bed, and whispered, 'Mamma is surely asleep—she was so ill, and groaned so sadly; but when Ann went for you she was better, and I gave her a drink; and then she told me to sit down and watch the children, for they were so sleepy and cross they would not let me put them to bed; so they fell asleep, and I waited and waited, and at last I could not keep awake I believe; but I hope dear mamma did not want me.'

'I daresay she did not, my dear, so go to bed now. And to bed he went.'

Mrs Hadley had a severer task to restrain within bounds the expression of Betty's horror and dismay than her own feelings. She at length prevailed on her to assist in making the house more comfortable, for it was too apparent that all that day's work had been left undone. A fire was made to blaze cheerfully, the rooms swept, the kettle boiled, and tea prepared to refresh the gentlemen, now momentarily expected, though one of them at least, both females thought, and Betty said, could hardly be expected to partake of it. All these cares were scarcely completed, when a horse's trampling was heard; and Marion was thankful the surgeon had first arrived, so that some preparation might be thought of for the husband, bereaved under such distressing circumstances.

The medical man attempted all he thought possible, in case the poor lady might yet revive. It proved unavailing, and the living now was first to be thought of. Mr Oswald, exhausted by fatigue and anxiety, hastened as fast as his jaded horse would carry him, yet dreamed not of the fearful blow awaiting him at that home where he had so often met his Lucy's smile of welcome. But we shall not attempt to paint the scene on his arrival. Henry Oswald, notwithstanding every tenderness of preparation that circumstance admitted of, was at first almost stunned to insensibility; and I am sorry to say, afterwards acted the part of an utterly distracted person. The warm-hearted, impulsive Irishman yielded to paroxysms of sorrow and despair, unworthy of a brave or a Christian man, and subversive of his duty to his helpless children.

Almost as soon as the cheerless morning had dawned, Mrs Hadley was relieved by the appearance of her husband. She had done all that seemed immediately necessary, and thought it best to take the motherless little boys home with her till their father was more composed. Alas! that time came not! The kindly surgeon and George Hadley attended on him through the ravings of a brain fever—and ere the necessary arrangements for the wife's funeral could be completed, he had followed her to the other world.

In a few moments of composure preceding death, he recognised his friend; and when his roving eye seemed to ask for his children, the other assured him they were with his Marion, and should be tenderly cared, and, if necessary, provided for. The exhausted father smiled as if satisfied, and closed his eyes in death. The pledge thus given to the dying parent was amply fulfilled. Mr Hadley endeavoured to let the Oswalds farm, but did not succeed; therefore, as he was unable himself to attend to it, and part of the purchase money remained unpaid, it relapsed almost into its pristine state. The relatives of the family in Europe were of course informed of what had occurred. Oswald's friends were unable, poor Lucy's were unwilling to interfere or assist, and the children remained with the Hadleys, whom God continued to prosper and bless. The two youngest required not long the cares of these compassionate strangers. Inheriting weakly frames, they soon sank to the grave, over which parental tears of anguish were shed by those whose sole original tie had been pity for the desolate and helpless. Richard, the eldest boy, however, grew up a sedate and thoughtful lad; and very early became most helpful to his adopted parents. He was a few years older than their girls, and as Providence had given them no sons, Dick Oswald was to them instead of one. He was indeed even more; for to the wellings of devoted love and reverence were added in his breast a tide of overflowing gratitude, that one might soon foretell would probably influence all his future life; and though out of tender respect to the memory of his unfortunate parents he retained their name, yet by others he was much oftener called by that of his benefactors.

Richard had reached his sixteenth year, when, to his great surprise, a letter from his maternal grandfather called him to the country and estate of his ancestor. There appeared so much that was cold-hearted and selfish in this tardy acknowledgment of the orphan lad, that he at first spurned indignantly the unwelcome invitation. Accustomed, however, to school his inclinations to meet the paramount claims of duty, a few days of calm consideration changed or modified his opinions as to the future procedure. He felt as if he had not courage to open the subject to his adopted mother, but with Mr Hadley he then sought a full consultation.

'I think you ought to meet your grandfather's wish, if not obey his mandate, was the result expressed by the paternal Hadley. 'I am persuaded mercenary motives are likely to have little weight with one brought up simply and industriously as you have been; yet it cannot be overlooked on other accounts, that by the death of your uncles you are the hope and heir of your mother's ancient family. As a matter of choice my opin-

ion of course is yours, since it would lead you to remain with us.' His voice trembled as he felt the pressure of the young man's hand. 'As as a matter of duty,' he proceeded, 'doubts arise. Has or has not your grandfather any claims on you? You tenderly cherish your mother's memory—ask yourself how she would have wished you to act?' This latter consideration was ever a sacred point with the youth; it appeared to decide the conflict in his mind, and immediately he so expressed himself.

'Well, then, my dear boy,' concluded his friend, 'we must, however reluctantly, consider this matter settled. Only this remains to be said: 'If you should not find everything in Britain as you have reason to expect, or if you should ever feel the want of friends or a congenial home, remember my house and heart, and the hearts of my family, will ever be open to receive you with a glad welcome.' And so terminated this painful interview—equally painful to the well balanced mind of the excellent Hadley, and of the child he had educated with so much care.

The present occurrence was, in truth, a very severe trial to all the inmates of Young Hope Farm. And who can wonder that it was so? The melancholy parting over, and the young man launched abroad into life, we can readily imagine he carried much of 'Young Hope' with him. Manly and energetic, he was not without praiseworthy ambition and ardent curiosity to see the world, and all its wonders. Yet still the secret wishes of his spirit were, that after a few years of improvement or of wanderings, he might be permitted to return—as a wearied bird would to its nest—to the peaceful sheltering haven in the western wilderness.

He wrote regularly, though at considerable intervals, to his parted friends: his short epistles contained little but the strongest expressions of gratitude and affectionate remembrance, and almost with each were sent little articles of use or elegance to those he still called his mother and sisters. He had a tutor, and then went to college; and afterwards he travelled with his aged relative, and thus he wrote to his friends:—'Amidst all the perillities and conventional forms of artificial society, its heartless, ceremonial and tiresome etiquette, how often do I find my heart and memory turning to the boundless liberty of the glorious woods—the crystal-like candour, and outspoken tenderness, with all the innocent hilarities and simple enjoyments of my transatlantic home! I am to study for the bar I believe, as a matter of *status* and *eclat*, and I am to inherit a moderate patrimonial estate. Oh how gladly would I rather assist my father to improve and decorate Young Hope Farm! And again—'Greatly would I prefer sitting an hour on the lonely grave by our little lake side in communion with nature, to mixing with the most *recherche* society I have yet seen. And oh, how much rather would I read one of your letters, that tell me I am still dear to you, than reap even such academic honors as I have attained to, when I cannot have your voices to add your need of applause! My grandfather is very kind, and most indulgent: on but one subject are we not congenial. He thinks my heart is too much in my childhood's home. He seems to be seriously in dread that some fine morning he will discover that I have escaped to the woods, like a red Indian but half reclaimed from savagism. This, too, may come to pass some day. Keep up your hearts, dear ones, in hopes it may.'

Half a dozen years escaped thus, tedious in their transit, like a dream when they are gone; and then young Oswald's grandfather died. The patrimony that now became Richard's was found to be heavily burdened: for the law, as a profession, he had an unconquerable distaste; and to keep up a hollow show on an inadequate income, was at variance with every sentiment of manly candour, and straightforward principle so carefully instilled in his breast. Richard Oswald, therefore, immediately entered into negotiations with a cousin, who panted to become a land proprietor and head of the family (and who, indeed had ever been disposed to consider the former merely an interloper), and from him accepted an equivalent in cash for his patrimony.

How glad some was a letter from the beloved absent one now read and re-read at Young Hope Farm; for it said, in a few thrilling, joyful words, that his duty performed, his mission accomplished, and himself at liberty, he would now return to devote his life to the friends that had nurtured his orphanage. From that day mighty preparations went on at the farm—preparations intended to welcome the wanderer to his nest again. But weeks and months rolled on, and Richard arrived not. They knew not now how to address him a letter; and hope deferred began to make sick the longing affectionate hearts. The spring flowers, whose blossoms he had almost promised to greet, were withered; summer was fast brightening into a rich productive harvest; but Young Hope Farm looked cheerless and sad. Not a living thing was to be seen without; no cheerful busy sounds, so usual there, were to be heard, except it might be the birds singing among the trees—those trees which, twenty years before, were planted as mere saplings, now enclosed and concealed the fair home, it was like a nest indeed, and like nothing so much. The birds we say still sang blithesomely around it: but was there mourning within? Yes: in the inner chamber lay the matron, the mistress of the house, apparently in the last doubtful stage of an acute disease. Her devoted husband sat near her, his face buried in his hands, for she could not recognise even him. Her eldest daughter, most like herself in form

and character, supported the sufferer's head, and endeavored to soothe her restless moanings; while the other, a beautiful girl of seventeen, was altogether overcome and weeping bitterly. The low casement was partly opened to admit the summer breeze, bearing with it refreshingly the fragrance of woodbine and roses, while it swept the long branches of a graceful acacia against the window panes, with a caressing-like gesture, throwing shadows as graceful and life-like over the nicely papered walls of the rooms and the snow white draperies of the silk couch.

The watchful daughter fancied her mother's spoke: she bent her ear to catch the words, and heaved a deep sigh as she heard only 'Richard, Richard.' Yes many times during the ravings of delirium in the last few days had that name burst with deep paths of impatient longing from the parched and fevered lip. Richard came not. 'Oh would he but arrive to soothe the last moments, if it must be so,' thought the daughter.

The family were anxiously expecting, too, the arrival of the friendly surgeon, who had been obliged to leave them the day before. He at least now came. They heard his horse's feet; and Mr Hadley was beckoned noiselessly from the room to meet him. Almost immediately he reappeared, and was followed by a stranger, who silently gave a brother's kiss to each of the afflicted girls; and ere they could recover their surprise, he was kneeling beside the low couch.

'Mother,' he said, 'my more than mother! am I returned to find you thus?'

She opened her eyes, and again murmured dreamily, 'Richard!'

'Richard is come, never more to leave you. Oh mother live to bless us.'

She looked at him with a sudden, yet faint gleam of intelligence, and then wearily turned her head, as if to rest.

The surgeon, who now entered, drew the young man and the agitated maidens from the room, which was instantly darkened; and the patient slept, happily to awake composed and sensible, the crisis past, and renewed life in prospect. And she has lived since then many happy years, the valued wife, the tender mother, to rejoice over her recovered treasure and re-united family.

The adopted son built a fair and graceful addition to the farm house, and imparted many elegancies and useful appendages to it, and to the flourishing gardens. There he married the eldest daughter, to whom his thoughts had long in secret involuntarily turned. A nephew of Mr Hadley's afterwards joined them from Scotland, and became the husband of the lovely second sister; while a third, yet in childhood, was the cherished darling and plaything of all. So the roof tree of Young Hope—its owners delight to think that not one of their early hopes had really failed—promises fair to become a flourishing stock, adorned with numerous noble branches and rich fruit. At all events the fair dwelling now stands in nestling loneliness and loveliness, a heart stirring ornament of the majestic wilds, an oasis of happy rest, and of anticipations realised; demonstrating—how much more *breathingly* than our poor words may!—what skill and energy, when combined with upright intentions and good feeling, may accomplish amidst the boundless solitudes of the 'far west.'

From "The Iron Man."

PROGRESS.

The age is onward! We can look back now like one who, having gained the summit of a hill, retraces with his eye the toilsome leagues he has travelled. We may look back and behold the monuments, mementoes, the dangers and disasters of the road; and whilst we note all these, as warnings for our future progress, we yet sit not down to survey them, but casting a single look behind, press once more boldly forward.

For it is in vain to look back. The attainable is only before us. The past is a ladder of sand, each round of which has crumbled beneath our feet; and should we pause or turn to descend, the shades of ruin and uncertainty would encompass us. There is naught in the circle of being, naught in the range of matter, that is not an exemplar of the great principle of Progression, and a continual cycle of ever-growing results. Naught is ended—for nothing dies. Dissolution is antagonistic to all material or spiritual things, and retrogression, if nature in reality discloses such a phenomenon, is but transient, and mediant towards renewed progress. A particle of dust, could we trace it through all the ramifications of its utility, would lead us through a labyrinth of the mightiest works. From the sand whirl that bore it across the desert, to the column which held it as an integral of Palmyra's splendor; from the fallen and shivered column, to the tomb of some desert Emir; from the tomb of the sands once more; from the sands to the crucible, and from the crucible to the glass which forms the very inkstand in which I now dip my pen; how simple the transition—the progression—for all is progression that is motion, since motion must effluetate results.

Be not cast down, O little man, which art as a sand-grain in the whirlwind of motion! Thou art integrally of the world's life, and strength and beauty! Through the crucible must thou pass in thy day, but thy destiny ever preserves thee. Utility in the eye of nature is the keeping of her laws. Be thou, then what thy nature impelleth thee, and thy symmetric life is found. Thou shalt make harmony, if thou canst but touch the right string in the great harp of humanity.