

Literature, &c.

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THE BACHELOR AND MARRIED MAN.

BY H. C. KNIGHT.

To my uncle's repeated remonstrances that it was high time for me to quit home and decide what I was going to do in the world, seconded by an offer to get me a situation in a neighbouring seaport, my mother at length yielded a meek acquiescence, and preparations were fairly making for my departure. I had begged off as long as possible; for to one of my free, joyous nature, the idea of being cooped up in a store, was entirely distasteful; nor was it till my mother, with a mother's solicitude for my future, pleaded with me to heed the counsels of my guardian, that I could regard his proposals with any degree of favour.

'Why not stay with you, mother? why not be a farmer? there is enough for boys to do in the country,' I urged again and again. 'Ah, my child, your uncle thinks otherwise. I dare not trust my judgment against his; he knows best; and if it cost so much for me to yield, how much greater her sacrifice, to cast off her son and only child from the secure and peaceful haven of home, and launch his frail bark into the mighty currents of society!

My Mother was the widow of a clergyman, who occupied the small half of a small house in the village of Maysville, a little patrimony left her by grandfather. Besides my father's death, two older sisters died in infancy, so that I was not only the 'dear delight' of her daily life, but a shoot of hope and promise for days that were to come. Although my mother's income was limited, our wants being few and our habits frugal, we had enough, and to spare for those poorer than ourselves; to many a sick and destitute one was I often made the almoner of her bounty. I am sure nothing ever tasted sweeter than a slice of our own brown bread, and my mug of new milk, or shone brighter than Phæbe's nicely scoured pewter, or looked so cheerfully as the dancing flames in the broad old chimney.

'While the gay sparks went trooping up, A goodly company!'

And if there was an absence of many things within our small domain, now esteemed necessary to comfort, without and around us were the pure air, clear sunshine, blue sky, singing birds, and clover fields, luxuries which city rents cannot always purchase, and which if bought at all, are damaged to half their value.

A small garden lay around the southern and western exposure of our house, which always gave me spring, autumn, and summer work, besides going to school, when open, and helping the neighbouring farmers, when they were short of hands. When my uncle, in one of his hurried visits, grumbled over the lazy habits of 'the boy,' my mother, with something of a mother's pride, pointed through the open window to the garden, luckily just weeded, as well as just watered by the showers of the preceding night.

'There is Robert's work,' she said. He gave a corresponding turn of his head, and responded in a short, disbelieving guttural; in fact, I believe it was a part of my uncle's creed, if he had any, never to harbour any good opinion of a boy; boys, according to his notions, had always gone or were fast going to destruction and although it was occasionally his duty or interest to look for one, he always appeared to owe him a grudge, until time cured him of his youth; fortunately for any boy in my uncle's hands, it was a fault or folly that time was sure to cure. Besides the labours of the spade and hoe, a rudely constructed wood-horse was long the marvel of the neighbourhood, while a seat beneath the lilac tree, made of the interlacing of old boughs, was long pointed out by Phæbe, our old family servant, as the first fruits of what I was yet to be.

Then what fun have the country boys, damming up brooks, hunting up squirrels, going nutting, digging sassafras, coursing over the hills; nor do the long winter evenings open less varied sources of amusement; there sat Phæbe ever knitting, in the chimney corner: my mother at her sewing or reading alternately aloud with me, for with no great taste for study, I never knew the time when my father's library was not a resource and a delight. Often little Hope Day, two or three years younger than myself, came in from the other part of the house and sat with us. Hope and I used to learn our lessons together. Hope's clear and self-applying mind helping me greatly through the labyrinth of incident rays, transitive verbs, or vulgar fractions. Then we used to read Pilgrim's Progress together, 'The Guardian' and 'Amelia'; then crack nuts, and perhaps end off with a game of 'Touch and Run,' to the great inconvenience and consternation of puss and Phæbe.

But, alas, those days could not always last. I could not always be a boy. My fifteenth spring came, and I was going to —

'What books shall I take?' I ventured to ask as my uncle was settling the 'must haves' with my mother.

'Books!' he growled; 'I should like to know what you want with books! business, not books, after this—work, not play.'

A few favourites were nevertheless squee-

zed, with my Bible, into the little trunk containing my clothes; and these served not only to fortify my heart against homesickness, but fostered my better tastes, and kept me from companions, who might otherwise have proved snares to my feet during the first year from home.

The time of departure was at hand. 'Oh, mother who will weed the garden, when I am gone, fetch in the wood, and—' with head and shoulders out of the window, to hide a glistening in the eye, that would come in spite of all I could do.

'Phæbe and I can do wonders,' she answered in a cheerful tone.

'And no me,' I added, tender thoughts gushing up in my bosom. Finding the 'little man' within fairly unmaning himself, I turned a somerset, I hid myself and my tears on a bed of spearmint below the window.

On the 30th of May my moorings were loosed.

As the coach lumbered away, and we were turning a corner which hid from view everything dearest to me, I thrust out my head to look back,—there stood Hope, leaning her head on the garden gate, following with tearful and straining eyes the fast receding vehicle. Phæbe's cap could still be descried topping the little blue window curtain; and my mother—where was she?

Curling myself up in the corner, wild, rebellious suffocating sensations arose in my throat, while the scalding tears trickled thro' my fingers! Going home! Who does not remember the bitterness of the first leaving-taking? Who can forecast the future?

'It is well we cannot see What the end shall be.'

Behold me in a large wholesale and jobbing grocery store, surrounded by barrels of flour and bags of coffee, hogsheads of molasses and chests of tea; without were bricks around and bricks below, drays and dray-horses, hard faces and hurried feet. Through the dingy counting-house window were seen only grim walls, while the fumes of tobacco and fish inspired me with a homesick longing for the lilacs and honeysuckles, which I knew were blooming in social sweetness around my mother's door. Though sometimes in the lull of business, I used to shut my eyes, and wish that I might open them again on the new-mown grass, and troutling brooks, my employers left me little time to indulge in idle wishes. From early morning till the middle of summer's evening, it was work—work, or if not at work, on hand to answer to the call; at night I went home too tired for anything but sleep, or perhaps to count the weeks gone and the weeks to come, before seeing home again.

Thus six months passed; bringing among not the least of harvest bounties, 'harvest home.' Thanksgiving day, when I had been promised a short release from weary round of weight and measure. Never can I forget the impetuous and rampant delight with which, at an earlier hour than I was expected—for I had come out in an extra—did I dash through the little gate and bound into the little sitting room, my heart as full as full could be, hugging mother, Phæbe, Hope—for she was there to await my coming—the cat and everything which came in my way; then, though the ground was sprinkled with the first snow, how I galloped into the garden and clambered up thy old pear tree, sent the bucket down the well, tumbled over the cabbage-stalks, and cut up as many other antics equally grotesque and unaccountable, upon any other known principles but the wild and delightful excitement which always accompanies the first visit home. How glad was everybody to see me, and how glad was I too see everybody. Thanksgiving morning I scoured the neighborhood, and had shaken hands with half the district before church time.

The hills, the trees, the fields looked beautiful to me, all bare and leafless as they were, and I ran and shouted for very joy.

Leave of absence was granted until the following Monday, when the sawing and splitting which I disposed of, the talking I got through with, the visits I made, going from Bear Hill to Crane's Cove, besides sitting up one night with poor Tom Jones, a dear old playmate, whose life was fast ebbing, for heart-service is self forgetting and never weary; I say all that I rammed into that four days' visit seemed almost incredible; but what cannot be accomplished under the genial influences of a warm and unspent heart.

The years of my apprenticeship passed on, at first slowly, then fast and faster, as hold on home scenes gradually loosened; and I learned not indeed to love home less, but my business more.

Under the severe discipline of Colesworth and Yates, that natural energy which had given such zest to the labors and pastimes of boyhood became trained into different channels, and directed towards new objects. As the hopes and aims of manhood began to spring up within me, I no longer shrank from the great world,

—'Driving slow,

And thundering loud with its ten thousand wheels,

Checked with all complexions of mankind.'

New appetites as well as new tastes grew upon me. I longed to be a man, and to play my part among men. I longed to share in their bold schemes and exciting struggles; to run the gauntlet with day book and ledger, profit and loss, stocks and bonds. I determined to rise in the world, to become a rich man, and to this end all my energies were directed towards gaining a thorough insight into present duties, and trying to profit by all

I saw and heard from my employers. No requirement was neglected, no service was too hard.

As I outgrew the boy, my uncle became more gracious, condescending often to drop the results of his professional experience, not so much in any settled or well-defined rules—for he was frugal of words—as by hints, inferences, warnings, which it became my interest to digest as leisure and opportunity afforded.

The half yearly visits home kept my heart warm. My mother's sympathy and love were the dew and sunshine of my path; her blessing and prayer, like the beckonings of heavenly messengers to purer and loftier things. Many things I did and abstained from, for her sake. Tender thoughts of what she had done for me, stole upon my memory when I lay down and when I rose up, and all by the way, breeding grateful purposes of all I one day meant to do for her.

The years of my apprenticeship were at last over. My twenty-first birthday at length arrived, and with it an offer from my uncle to place me as a partner in a large city firm, with which he was connected. What an exulting gladness filled my bosom. I was no longer the almost penniless boy. Position, wealth, and the regards of men were within my grasp. I could put out my own strong arm, and they were mine; mine, too, by right, for I knew well that I had worked for and earned the present offer. It was not the gift of friendship or kindred; for my uncle and his partners would have cast me off as the yellow leaf, had I not made it their interest to keep me. I had a marketable value, earned by industry, faithfulness and skill. Great as was the gratification, half of it or more arose from the pleasure I expected in telling the good news to my mother, and feeling that she shared it with me. I did not write to her. I wanted to tell it myself, to behold the color mount into her cheek, and the tear moisten the mild radiance of her eye.

As my leave of — was final, it was some time before I got away, and the next four or five weeks I meant to have for leisure; upon the credit of our bettered prospects, I meditated our taking a little journey together, my mother and I, for hitherto we had been frugal of expensive pleasures. The ride home seemed tedious. I longed to unbosom myself; and we at last reached Maysville, at the close of a beautiful June day. Phæbe hearing the old stage-coach, came forward, grasping me with one hand, while the upraised finger of the other rebuked the clamor of my welcome.

'What is the matter?' I cried in voice which meant to be low, although I daresay it was the voice of three.

'She is weak, Robert, your mother is weak, the warm weather does not agree with her as it used to; and then her cough troubles her.'

'Cough! Is mother sick?' I exclaimed, brushing by poor Phæbe, making my way through the little sitting room, and pushing open the door of my mother's bedroom.

There she sat in the great easy chair, but her cheek was so bright and her eye so sparkling, as she put out her hand of welcome, that I exclaimed—

'Sick, dear mother! you are not sick, are you! only you look as if you had heard the good news.'

'Good to have you come—we did not write—but it is not too late.'

Her voice was low and hurried. What did it mean? I sank down on the bed near her, chilly and bewildered. Then Phæbe came back—Hope appeared with a bowl of strawberries—my mother spoke cheerily—the cloud passed off—then came the good news. I could hold it no longer.

'It is just what I expected,' exclaimed Phæbe.

The tear and the color on my dear mother's face.

'And you will forget us then?' said Hope, looking timidly in at the door.

'Forget you!' I cried. I do not know what you mean, Hope.'

Hope already had the quick insight of her sex.

'I did not mean any harm, Robert,' she answered quickly and deprecatingly; 'I only meant—she stopped, stepped back and was no longer with us.

My projected journey was speedily given up, or deferred until my mother was better able to bear it; and I concluded to spend all the time at Maysville. My mother was sick. At times she looked very sick, thin, and wan; again, she was so like herself, her tones so cheerful, her eye so clear, and her cheeks so blooming, that I was sure she could not be very sick—only more beautiful than ever. She talked to me more than usual about heavenly things, of my own inward life, of God and his holy law. 'All this is because I am going to the city,—it is so absorbing and tempting there,' I said inly, drinking in her words. Phæbe said, once or twice, 'If she should get well.' 'If I should get it from me.' 'If my mother would get well!' She had been sick many times before, and got well; why not again? My mother die! there was something awful and unnatural in the thought. When the warm life ran so joyously through my own veins how could I ever think of death—and her death who was the dearest part of me? I drew her chair to the garden window, and worked among the beds as I used to, with her eye upon me. Hope and I read to her, and gathered things that she loved; and we both saw, or thought we saw, as midsummer came, a change for the better.

'She is gaining,' said we; 'September is her month, but she mends before it comes.'

Five dear, happy weeks went by full soon, and again I was to leave Maysville, no longer the boy, but the man, not now, as once, sorrowing. I was to take my part among men; there was a spirit within crying, 'Act! act!' and my whole being responding to the call. The parting was more tender and solemn; but, 'my mother thinks I shall be more exposed,' I said to myself. In September it may be, I would come back, and September was coming apace. Thus I left hopefully, cheerily—a bright future looming before me.

New scenes, new companions, new and more responsible duties—like, conflicting and crowding—burst upon me, absorbing me in the present, shutting out the future and the past. I had now fairly launched into the great world, with its whirls and eddies, and counter currents.

Every week I heard from Maysville, often a few lines from my mother, Hope closing the letter, lest she be weary. Sometimes she felt better, then a little feebler. 'She only needs bracing,' writes Hope, 'and we long for September; then she will revive.' I was so glad Hope was there; she loved Hope, and Hope was so true-hearted. Then, after a while, in dating a letter, I found September had come with its golden days. My mother seemed to be restored; there was a sudden lighting up of my heart, and a voice whispered, 'It is well.' All the day I blessed God for September. Two days after, a letter in Hope's handwriting lay upon my table.—'This is to assure me,' I said. Dear Hope! glorious September! and for a moment I bowed my head at the open window, through which a soft southwest came sporting in.—'Our journey—mother's and mine,' I said. But the letter—I broke the seal and began to read.

'My mother! on my mother!' burst from me in tearless agony. She had journeyed but left me behind; she had journeyed, but gone alone—oh, oh, not alone;—she had leaned upon the arm of the beloved. It was well. I was left alone. On the morning of the burial day I reached Maysville. We laid the dear remains in the village church yard. It was a beautiful September day: the full ripeness of life was everywhere—in the fruit, on the trees, the grain in the field, and the rich blossoming of autumn flowers. It was life all around, rich, glowing. There was death also; and winter chills were in my heart.

We sat together in the dear little sitting room—alas, it could never be to me again what it had been—we—Phæbe, Hope and myself as they told me all that had happened since I left.

I was to leave in the mail coach at midnight, the illness of one of the partners making my return to the city indispensable; but it was a return I shrank from. I wanted quiet. I longed for a sabbath in the country, where everything was so tranquil and peace-making—then to be near her, to be where she had so lately been. Death seemed not to have borne her so far away. I could almost hear the rustling of her garments, and feel the pressure of her hand.

I did not retire. I could not sleep. Hope and I sat together, sometimes in unspoken sympathy, then dropping a few words as we thought, and were sorrowful. Old Phæbe slept in her easy chair, since I had assured her that the old home should still be her home and my home to the last. She should 'take care,' as always, of all that remained, living by herself in our part, or taking more social meals in the family of Hope's uncle, who occupied the other part.

'This will be such a cordial to poor Phæbe,' said Hope, in an undertone, 'she has been sorely tried at the thought of breaking up.'

Again I left. How unlike was this leaving-taking to all former times! There was now no longer any one to come home to. For a long time darkness sat on all things, and for me there was no little nook where light and love dwelt. For a while, I could not recover my former interest in business, struck down as it had been by my mother's death. To be alone, with none to share our hopes or our success, seemed like a stranded mariner.—Though miles and months divided us, yet I knew, while my mother lived, that her heart beat responsively to mine.

(To be Continued.)

RISING IN THE WORLD.

You should bear constantly in mind that nine-tenths of us are, from the very nature and necessities of the world, born to gain our livelihood by the sweat of the brow. What reason have we, then, to presume that our children are not to do the same? If they be, as now and then one will be, endowed with extraordinary powers of mind, those extraordinary powers of mind may have an opportunity of developing themselves; and, if they never have the opportunity, the harm is not very great to us or to them. Nor does it hence follow that the descendants of labourers are always to be labourers. The path upward is steep and long, to be sure. Industry, care, skill, excellence in the present parent, lay the foundation of a rise, under more favourable circumstances, for the children. The children of these take another rise; and, by and by, the descendants of the present labourer become gentlemen. This is the natural progress. It is by attempting to reach the top at a single leap, that so much misery is produced in the world. Society may aid in making the labourers virtuous and happy, bringing children up to labour with steadiness with care, and with skill; to shew them how to do as many useful things as possible; to do them all in the best manner; to set