

The Fireside.

HAVING IT OUT WITH THE LORD.

BY MRS. FINDLEY BRADEN.

'Twas a cauld morning i' late October, an' I sat by the fire alane brooding owre the griets an' losses that had o' late been mine an' gude wife Maily's. For auld black Luck, the horse, an' banny Spot, our ane coo, had droppit oot o' life juist a week apairt. Then Laddie, the dog, was struck by an engine, an' killed. Next, the bank tailed i' which a oor savings waur stored, an' las' an' worst, I lost the weel-paying position I'd lang held wi' the great firm o' Lomond an' Sons.

Maily had taen the bairns oot for a walk, sae there waur nane tae hinder my complaining, as a rule aften will.

"Craig Minto," thoct I, "noo's your time tae pitch into the Laird, for 'your trials, an' the heaviness o' his hand upon you! Have it oot wi' him this morning, if iver!" An' I said oot loud an' daring, wi' never an' upward glance, "Laird, Laird, your mills are grinding me to powder! I canna bear it, I canna! Puir Luck is gane, an' you ken it weel! He was auld, but he stood wi' 'oot hitching, an' might hae carried us on for many a mile yet! Why did you tak' him frae us, why?"

An' juist then, i' awfu' answer tae my blasphemous words, the room seemed tae hilt wi' strange licht, that was brichter than the day, an' a ta' Presence quickly entered, an' a voice grand an' deep replied,

"I am the Laird, willing an' ready tae listen tae the murmurings o' Craig Minto."

I tried tae rise frae my chair, but something held me doon, like a weight o' iron. I wanted tae ta' on my knees, but cudna.

An' the voice went on: "I took your auld horse, but I did it i' kindness. A' beasts maun die, sooner or later. Luck's teeth waur a' most gane, an' he was thin an' lame, besides."

"But wat o' the coo, Laird?" I cried indignantly, yet wi' a bit o' a courtesy. "Spot was young, an' her milk was gude for the bairnies!"

"Well, I might hae taen little Jean, or Tam, i' stead," said the Laird again. "Which should it hae been, Craig Minto?"

I thoct o' Jean wi' her gowd locks, an' wee Tamsie i' his first boots. "Nae, nae!" I shoutit, i' horror. "We cudna hae pairtit wi'ither!"

"Then do no mummur," said the voice severely. "Spot only died frae the disease that took your neighbors' cattle, as well."

"True, Laird," I acknowledge, "but why did you let Laddie be cut i' twa, on the track?"

"He ran awa' frae hame, when you bid him not. He didna obey, an' sae lost his life, i' consequence."

"But the bank failure, Laird? Maily's legacy, an' a' my savings waur i' it!"

The voice grew sterner. "You were cautioned against it months ago, but you were headstrang, an' said you would bank where you liked. Thousands hae suffered besidets yoursel's. But you hae the house an' lot yet, an' the bairns are baith healthy."

"Laird," I whispert humbly, "I canna mooch langer pit bread i' their mouths; I hae lost my place at Lomond's."

At that, his hand fell hard upo' my shoulder. "Gae an' look for other wark, Craig Minto! You are an' idler a-ready, I am ashamed o' you, an' sae is your gude wife Maily. She left hame this morning, wi' a prayer on her white lips, that you might be brought back tae your richt senses."

"I'm ashamed o' mysel!" sighed I. "Laird, Laird, just gie me anither chance! Tak' a' frae me save Maily an' the bairns, if you see fit!"

"You are a puir Job," sighed the Laird, i' turn. "The men o' tae-day are but weaklings, at best. Where is the faith, an' strength i' trial, that you ance possessed?"

"Where indeed?" I groaned. "It's a miserable bit o' a body that I am, Laird! I thoct tae hae it oot wi' you for your dealings wi' me, i' the loss o' a' that's gane, but you're haeing it oot wi' me, i' stead! I'll find ither wark, an' food for the bairns as weel, an' when you try me again I willna be found wanting."

"Spoken like a man, Craig Minto," said the Laird, an' his hand on my shoulder seemed a' maist caressing. "Only trust an' obey me, an' you an' yours shall never want."

The verra next second he was gane frae the room, an' the strange beautiful licht wi' him.

I rubbed my twa e'es i' astonishment. Was it a vision I'd haed, as was I still asleep, an' dreaming? It was ten by the clock on the wall, an' the fire was oot besides.

But I went on my knees, before starting it afresh. "Laird, dear Laird," I prayed loud an' fervent, "I will trust an' obey thee, till I dee! Forgie a' my past complainings, an' help me tae ken that watter thou doest, is recht an' best for ivry creature!"

Maily an' the bairns cam' i' sune aifter, Tamsie waiving a letter high aboon his curly heid. It proved tae be frae Maister Lomond himsel', saying that he had reconsidered the matter o' my dismissal, an' my auld place was awaiting me, at the same gude wages.

An' as though that waur not bra news enough, Maily bocht me a morning paper, which told i' bold headlines, that the broken bank could, after a', pay sixty cents on the dollar.

We thankit the Laird togeth'er for that, an' had hardly gotten through, before a knock cam' at the door, an' Neebor Fethroe entered, wi' a fine dog at his heels.

"It's for you, Neebor Minto," he said, wi' a leugh. "It can't tak' Laddie's place, of course, but the bairns will sune learn tae loe it, for its ain sake. Up Frisk, an' bow tae your new master!" An' wi' that, the beastie stood on its hind legs, an' ducked its brown heid, tae the great delight o' Jean an' Tamsie.

Before that same day was owre, i' cam' anither neebor, who had owed me a cool hundred, for a six-months.

"I'm ready tae pay you a'," he said briefly. "Noo you can buy anither horse, an' perhaps a coo as well."

An' when he too had gane awa, Maily an' me just cried frae pure joy, an' thankfu'ness.

Sae that was the way the gude Laird had it oot wi' me, i' stead o' me wi' him, as I'd reckoned, i' my foolish shortsightedness.

LOST IN PORT.

Are you awake, my dear? If so, it would be worth your while to dress quickly and come down on the quays with me."

The speaker was an Englishman, but he was knocking on the mat door of a Japanese house as he spoke. All was wood, paint, and paper in that little house, with its one storey and picturesque roofing!

"What is there to see?" came a woman's voice from behind the slight partition.

"One of our greatest Liners on fire!" was the unexpected answer, as Mr. Vernon stood impatiently beside the sliding door.

"Oh! well, wait an instant! I will be with you."

So in a few minutes the couple — for Mr. Vernon had been calling his own wife — were making their way along the wide streets in a jinriksha drawn by a little bandy-legged Japanese coolie, down towards the big wharves and docks, which line Yokohama harbor.

The sight that met them there was certainly a wonderful one. Moored against the wall towered a huge Liner, her sides looming up far above their heads. The sides, as well as all the vessel's spars, bulwarks, and cordage were one sheet of flame.

Mrs. Vernon shivered.

"I hope there are no poor souls on board here?" she asked in a whisper.

"Oh! you may make your tender little heart quite easy about that," laughed her husband, tucking her hand under his arm, and pressing it to reassure her.

"There were several Chinese coolies at work on board late this afternoon, but I am told they have all escaped, and, when the fire was first discovered, all the specie was saved."

Mrs. Vernon sighed contentedly. She felt she could now look at the wonderful spectacle of the harbor, where crowds of folk of all nationalities were gathered together. And, on the opposite side, the deserted quays, bathed in a flood of silver moonlight, lying quite as the grave.

Suddenly, from one side of the burning vessel two or three forms were seen to drop, one by one. A great shout went up from the spectators. Evidently some folks had been left on the ship! Of course all eyes were strained to see the tiny black heads swim into a place of safety. Each figure had boldly and bravely struck out for the harbor wall. But — what was that! Along that thick line of people waiting to help the swimmers swept a hollow and agonizing groan. One of the black spots had suddenly disappeared. And after it, in quick succession, each of the other two "turned turtle," and was sucked under by the flowing tide.

"I can't make out what it may mean," was Mr. Vernon's remarks. "They were evidently Chinese coolies, and could swim like fishes. Whatever pulled them down?"

No one knew. In a few moments, however, a raft was pushed off with grappling hooks and ropes. One after another the figures in their quaint, voluminous garments were drawn on board. They were towed to land, and placed in proper hands. All the men, however, were dead.

"The truth is, Marion," explained Mr. Vernon to his wife the next morning, as he came to breakfast after an early investigation, "those fellows were returning from America, where each had made a small fortune. Of course,

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they carried it, as they always persist in doing, in silver dollars. Now, the rule of the company is that all money and valuables should be put in care of the captain. But these men were so suspicious that they preferred to carry and hide it themselves. A whole heap of silver must have been in their quarters. When the fire broke out, they returned to their cabins, or wherever they were sleeping, to try and save their fortune. It took so long to tie up their money bags and dispose them safely in their big sleeves and about their waists that their boat was burned before they could get into it. They flung themselves overboard, as we saw them doing, and had every chance of escape. But — the silver in their sleeves weighed them down too much. It literally drowned them, for each poor fellow was carrying on his body several pounds weight in silver coins!"

And so the money had sunk them,

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