

## Choice Literature.

DOT MACREA.

"I will go with you, if you think I may, Down to the corner," said sweet Dot Macrea; Shaking her wayward curls away, as she Gazed at me with her blue eyes anxiously.

And so we fared together down the street, Holding each other by the hand: her sweet Glad face aglow with dignity, and each Of her five years reliving in her speech. O winds of memory! blow back, until Her very presence and her laughter fill My room as well as heart; and all her hair's Pale glory floats about me unawares.

And when I go into the glaring street, Be with me still, child-presence; that thy feet May lead me ever, like those eyes of thine, In paths of honour; and thy hand in mine.

Be with me always, little Dot Macrea, In dreams by night, and strength beset by day; My guardian angel from the morn till even, Down that long street whose only end is Heaven!

—Charles Gordon Rogers, in *The Week*.

## A QUESTION OF COURAGE.

BY MARGARET SEYMOUR HALL.

During the days that followed she was destined to see a great deal more of him, for, on investigation, it proved that the accident was of a complicated kind and beyond the power of local talent to repair. The village blacksmith was sent for, and came with his entire stock of implements hung around his waist. By his aid matters were rendered more hopeless than before, and the only resource was to send to Cairo for a workman. As the railway goes but a few hundred miles up the river, and the rest of the journey must be made by boat, the party settled themselves for at least a week of waiting. But, after all, not many places are dull when everyone is young and cheerful and ready to be amused.

They made excursions into the desert, they rode camels, they inspected the work of the irrigating company, and always the missionary was invited to make one of their party.

One morning they rose before day-break. The rosy light of dawn was shining through the palms and flushing the river as they came down to where the felucca lay moored to the bank. Above the trees hung one bright star—"Fihreih," said the dragoman, as he pointed to it. There was something witching and eerie about the scene. Unconsciously they moved and spoke softly as the fellaheen rowed them across toward the distant purple hills. The path wound up through a wild gorge where black basalt cliffs stood up on either hand, and fossil shells strewed the ground beneath their feet, where once, they say, when earth was young, old Ocean made its bed.

They rested for luncheon in the shade of ruins that were old when history began. The desert children crept softly out from behind the great pillars and squatted in a row to watch the strange proceedings.

As they were going into the temple they passed a woman seated on the ground, her head resting against a pillar. Her face was veiled, but in the whole figure and the attitude there was something that suggested the abandonment of grief. The missionary knew Oriental etiquette too well to speak to her, but he glanced at her uneasily, and said something in Arabic to one of the men.

"What is it?" said Elinor Wright.

"A common enough trouble," he answered sadly. "She was married to the village sheikh, and he has grown tired of her and sent her away. She and some others in the same condition live together somehow or other until another husband buys them."

"And what do they live on?"

"Cost 'em nothing to live," said the dragoman. "Make house, pots, everyting out of mud. Raise melons and eat goat's milk cheese. No need any money."

"Poor souls!" said Elinor Wright. "What lives the women must lead?"

"Yes," answered the missionary soberly. "You see only the outside of their story. There is darkness enough in Egypt, poor country! She is handed about from ruler to ruler and always undermost in every struggle. The English are practically rulers now, and there is something like justice to be had in the courts; but the women, there is little help for them. They are very gentle and industrious, but the men are an excitable, violent-tempered lot."

"I should think so," said one of the Harvard men. "Did you hear the workmen this morning? I thought there was an insurrection, and that all the inhabitants were massacring each other; if it had been in a Western town I should have listened for pistol-shots; and when I came out on deck it was just nothing at all. To be sure the whole lot were yelling and beating each other over the head with sticks, but then, that's nothing."

"No," added Jim Williams; "when I see a fellow throw a stone at another, and the other get up and hit him with a club, I know that's only the Arabian way of remarking, 'I wouldn't do it that way if I were in your place,' and of answering, 'Who's running this thing anyhow?'"

They were leaning back against saddle-bags and idly chattering. It was only a little pause, an incident in their lives. Even Eastern slowness accomplishes results at last, and the next day would see them upon their way. How could they dream what dreary pain of homesickness and loneliness was waiting to devour the Reverend Elisha Courtney? And it was while his heart was weak within him that temptation came.

They were sipping the small cups of rich Turkish coffee when Mrs. Genet began to speak. "Mr. Courtney," she said, "we have a confession to make. We have formed a conspiracy against you, and we are all in the plot. You must know that we are not always wanderers on the face of the earth. We have homes, in which we stay sometimes, and we have country houses in a very pretty and prosperous town in Massachusetts. Now comes the point. Like the nursery rhyme, in that town there is a church; by that church there is a rectory, and in that rectory, there is, at present, no rector. Our last, a dear, old gentleman, died six months ago, and we have been seeking for another ever since. We have not known you very long, but we have seen enough of you in these days to be sure that you are the very man we want. Mr. Pelham-Bronson and my husband have the matter in charge, and it will be settled by their word. Now, will you let us give you the call? You need not fear idleness; there are large factories and plenty of work among the hands; and we truthfully think that you will be doing quite as much good with us as out here among the savages."

The minister was very pale when she had finished. His mouth was set, and he gazed off across the sandy waste with unseeing eyes. "You must excuse me," he said, a trifle unsteadily; "it is so sudden, so unexpected." He rose to his feet. "I must have time to think of it. Pardon me if I leave. I will tell you to-morrow. Of your goodness I cannot trust myself to speak."

He turned and left them. He felt conscious of a fever of excitement through his veins. As in a mirage he saw green fields, ideal rivers, waving trees, home, country, friends, and above all, like some transcendent, heavenly vision, a fair face with violet eyes, that waking or sleeping, had haunted his senses for days; and, as a companion picture, dreary desert, dirt, flies, moral darkness and degradation, months and years of loneliness.

"I am going to speak to him myself," said Elinor Wright, springing to her feet with sudden resolution. She

hurried after him through the arches of the temple. The statues stared stonily at these two young things of a later day, who yet were contending, perhaps, with much the same old problems as stirred once the breast of those ancient pharaohs and their lotus-crowned companions. He was leaning against a broken papyrus column, and he started as he saw her, then stood gazing at her without a word, but with such a world of love and longing in his eyes that she stopped suddenly. Though she had inspired admiration enough in her young life, yet she felt instinctively that it was no common sentiment which confronted her.

"I only wanted to add my word to the rest. I hope that you will come." He smiled faintly. "Do you think I need urging? I am trying to see the truth. Do you know what this means to me? But my poor people! I am their friend; I have work here to do that perhaps another would not understand. How can I tell if there would be one to fill my place, and even if there were, would it not be cowardice for me to shirk this? No! I must try to do the best."

The last rays of the dying day lighted the room where the missionary sat, his head bowed on his hands thinking. It was a bitter sight. Outside the dogs howled, the jackals brayed, and a Soudanese band banged and thrummed. Nearer at hand he could hear a fella singing at his work the song, with its old dreary refrain, that has, they say, come down from the days of the Pharaohs.

Work, my brother, rest is nigh;  
Pharaoh lives forever!  
Beast and bird of earth and sky,  
Things that creep and things that fly,  
All must labour, all must die,  
Pharaoh lives forever!  
Work, it is the mortal doom;  
But Pharaoh lives forever!  
Shadows passing through the gloom,  
Age to age, gives place and room,  
Kings go down into the tomb,  
But Pharaoh lives forever!

There was a low scratching at the door. He raised his head. Again it came. He rose, went to the door and opened it. By the faint light he saw a woman standing at the threshold. Her feet were bare; she was dressed in a blue cotton robe, and was veiled as she stepped into the room. She uncovered her face for a moment disclosing the features of the sheikh's discarded wife. He knew her well; she was the mother of Zanooba, the brightest and prettiest of his scholars. Her eyes had a fixed look of fear and misery. She glanced cautiously around, then stooping, put her head to the edge of his coat and touched rapidly, with her fingers, her forehead, lips and heart.

"Temil ma ay el-ma-arooft atragak?" she said.

"Yes," he answered; "I will help you if I can. What is it?"

"May the compassion of Allah fall upon his poor slave. The teacher knows who I am and how I am homeless—I and the rest. We live in a tomb, and others fill our place—but of that I speak not; let it pass. But a great horror has befallen me. The teacher remembers my Zanooba?"

"Has Zanooba been hurt?" asked the missionary, and his face grew anxious. The mother bowed her head.

"When I was driven forth, the strangers entered, and none of them held dear the child of the old woman. She was naught to them. May afrites haunt them, may they be barren and accursed, may their eyes fail and their tongues be withered, that they did not watch the child. At night she came not back; morning comes, and still she comes not. I go to look for her. None can tell me of her. I go to the Beshareen, and they are silent, and I ask the wandering Bedawin. At last I find a woman who has mercy. She tells me how they have stolen her to take her to the south. The teacher knows what that means. They will carry her across the border and sell her to El Mahdi. While I speak, perchance the slave-dealers seize my little one. The teacher is wise, and can speak to the

English, who alone have power. Will he have pity and go quickly? The Bedawin travel fast."

"I will do my best," he answered. "Have hope and pray. Allah is compassionate." There was no time to lose, he knew, as he started for the nearest point from whence he could communicate with an officer of the mounted police.

Temptation had gone—fled away into the desert. The poor, insignificant Egyptian woman was rival strong enough against the world. There was only one thought in his heart as he rode swiftly through the darkness. For good, or evil, his choice was made, his lot cast with these suffering people. All night he rode about on horseback, sending messages to the frontier, rousing the armed sentries. In the morning he rode up to the Armenartas, looking rather pale and haggard, to say good-by. "I can never forget your kindness to me in this offer and everything else," he told them; "but it is not for me. My place is here, and I must stay. I must travel through Nubia at once, perhaps cross the border, in search of one of my children who has been kidnapped." And he told them the story briefly.

"But, my dear fellow," expostulated Colonel Genet, aghast, "you know El Mahdi is making things uncommonly lively down there. The chances are against your coming back alive."

"I think you are the greatest hero I ever knew," said Elinor Wright, tears springing to her eyes as she held out both her hands. "I shall never forget you."

He took her hands and held them while he looked at her for one long moment with the look of one who lingers upon a dream too bright for earthly hopes. The he stepped ashore. The great sails filled and the boat glided away. He watched it dwindle upon the river, then vanished forever from his sight. And he turned his face towards the Soudan.

(Concluded.)

## THE MORALITY OF ANTS.

Sir John Lubbock is as much interested in ants as in ledgers. For years he has been investigating the nature and habits of these industrious, but pugnacious insects, several colonies of which he keeps in his study. Among the curious facts which his studies have brought to light, there is one over which the Republican leaders of Europe should rejoice. Sir John has discovered that even ants are susceptible to the influence of democratic ideas, when they become acquainted with them. If an ant's nest loses its queen, and gets accustomed to living without one, nothing will induce it to admit a queen, even for a day. In one case, Sir John exhibited a queen to a queenless nest for three days. To guard her majesty from the fierceness of the nascent democracy, and to accustom them to the sight of royalty, he confined her in a wire cage. But the moment she was introduced into the nest, the ants ruthlessly killed her. Evidently they regarded her as an expensive superfluity, which they would not support.

But Sir John does not speak so well of the morality of his ants as he does of their democratic sympathies. He says their reputation for veracity is bad, and he is afraid that they are as much addicted to lying as are human beings. He bases his opinion upon sundry facts he has observed, which convince him that one ant never believes another until he has clear and independent evidence of the truth of the other's story. For instance, an ant finds some booty too large for him to bring to the nest. He hurries home and reports his discovery. Several recruits languidly accompany him on his return to his booty. But their hesitating movements indicate that they suspect he is leading them on a fool's errand. If he hurries on and they lose his tracks they turn back to the nest. The suspected discoverer is often obliged to return two or three times before he can persuade his sceptical brethren to follow him unto the end. But as soon as they themselves see the object sought their languor gives place to an activity, which soon brings the booty into the nest. On one occasion, Sir John pinned an ant a little distance from the nest. Its cries summoned help, which was responded to by several ants. They came forth from the hill, but moved slowly, as if suspicious that the crying one was fooling them. Sir John's explanation of the facts he has witnessed is, that ants are so much in the habit of telling big stories as to create a common feeling of distrust.