

ashamed to have her work so for me," said the cheerfully confidential Rob, taking a chair at her bedside.

"Mary is a good girl—a good girl," said the old woman, beginning to weep; "but my head tears me—here it comes again."

Rob took her hand in his. There had grown to be an exceedingly firm as well as gentle quality in his once flaccid touch; and his well-featured, sunny, ingenuous face added to the general reposefulness of his presence.

"Smoke your pipe if you want to, Honey," said the old woman.

"Would you like it better if I did?" Rob asked, willing to sacrifice his hoarded tobacco at a lady's command; though, marvellous to relate, not in the mood for smoking just now.

"Yes, I would like it better," she avowed, shrewdly guessing that he would stay longer if he had the pipe for solace. Rob drew his old clay pipe from his pocket, ostentatiously managed that her hand should accidentally touch it for assurance, and put it between his teeth, but he had not lit it. Faithfully again he took her outstretched hand in his. She gazed with her sightless eyes at his clear-cut, quiet face; he gazed out of the open window.

Beyond, there lay the many waters, and the "Gut," through which swept in the profound tides from the Bay of Fundy. In another direction lay the river and its hamlet, surrounded by its dramatic steeps. Rob, though prisoned in a limited and temporary sense, felt the throb of all human possibilities in his veins. Some time—some time soon, in his young life, he should "make out," beyond the Basin, beyond the Bay, and into the cities and the ways of men again. But this poor palsied creature whose hand he held, for her there was only one more journey—that brief one, from her bed to those white stones down on the hillside.

The sublime view, which had so uncomfortably impressed Rob at first (not but that he had travelled in his time and glanced, between puffs of his cigarette, at highly-recommended scenery—before the luxuries of New York City had become his confirmed and exclusive habit)—the sublimity of the view was becoming rather a friendly object to him.

He faced it almost always now, instead of turning his back upon it. Some of the sunsets even lured him to stand and look off as absorbedly as if at a theater. Now and then the panoply of nature was so startling and so gorgeous he actually forgot to close his admiring and astonished mouth as he stood gazing.

"What ye gapin' at?" Bate, passing with the milk pail, had inquired contemptuously on one such occasion. There glowed in the west such a riot of color, of fiery horses of the sun, of purple-rimmed cloud chariots, travelling along a highway all gold-en-paved, over there—and all in plain sight of miserable Power Lot, God Help Us.

"What am I gaping at?" said Rob, half turning his head, in his matter-of-fact way. "Say, just look off yonder, Bate—what do you think of that?"

"Middle o' June, and a January wind to the nor'-west'ard," growled Bate; "freeze our crops to-night, and we'll have to plant all over ag'in too late—that's what I think."

Rob's jaw had dropped.

Bate jeered.

"Does that business over thar' look so purty to ye, now?"

"Why, yes," said Rob, though a look of anxiety and disappointment had settled on his face. "I can't discount anything on the grandeur of 'that business over there.'"

But now—as he sat by poor Mrs. Stingaree's bed—he was thinking of the possibilities of a bright future for himself after all, as set against her brief, fateful journey to the gravestones on the hillside.

Then he thought of Mary. In her speech she was always letting drop things that made a man think; he had sat spellbound, once, down at

the River, on the back seat of the Baptist meetinghouse, where she had elected simply to hand in her "testimony" with the rest. She believed in God, actually, this sensible, keen woman; believed in Him with her whole soul, practically and forthrightly.

And she believed that the journey from the bed to the white stones on the hillside was not the end of all. She seemed to regard it as a minor affair, and unrelated to the soul, which had great enterprises on hand. Her conception of existence and the grandeur of being were as vast as the universe she beheld; leading beyond the "Gut," as it were the strait of death, into infinite bays of achievement and to undreamed-of shores of peace.

These thoughts were confusing, dizzying to Rob, as once the physical landscape now spread before his eyes had been.

He fell asleep in his chair. Mrs. Stingaree, holding his hand, had fallen into a sleep as childlike. In his sleep Rob saw the sick woman rise from her bed and start off on her journey, out into the wind and sunshine; and the apple blossoms fell upon her. But she did not stop at the tombstones. She seemed not to see them. She went on and on—and very clearly he saw her. She crossed the nearer waters that seemed neither to touch nor dismay her, and wonderfully she entered the mighty tide surging in through the "Gut"; yet was she not troubled or overwhelmed by it, but waved her hand to him from afar, smiling.

Bate looked in at the door and saw his mother, quietly asleep, her withered hand held fast in Rob's; and Rob, asleep, with his head on his breast, his old clay pipe clasped in the other roughened hand. Bate's face showed only a stupid wonder, but he closed the door softly as he crept away.

Mary came later, and as she glanced at her mother's face a sharp look crossed her own. She pressed forward and put her lips to her mother's forehead. It was cold. There was no awakening.

(To be continued.)

A LAUGH IN CHURCH.

She sat on the sliding cushion,
The dear, wee woman of four;
Her feet, in their shiny slippers,
Hung dangling over the floor.
She meant to be good; she had promised,
And so, with her big, brown eyes,
She stared at the meetinghouse windows,
And counted the crawling flies.

She looked far up at the preacher,
But she thought of the honeybees
Droning away at the blossoms
That whitened the cherry trees.
She thought of a broken basket,
Where curled in a dusky heap,
Four sleek, round puppies, with fringed
ears

Lay snuggled and fast asleep.
Such soft, warm bodies to cuddle,
Such queer little hearts to beat,
Such swift, round tongues to kiss,
Such sprawling, cushiony feet;
She could feel in her clasping fingers
The touch of the satiny skin,
And a cold, wet nose exploring
The dimples under her chin.

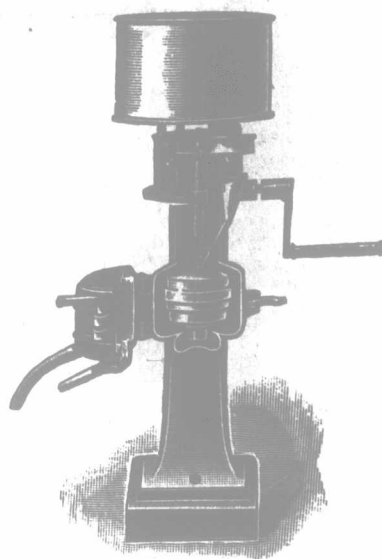
Then a sudden ripple of laughter
Ran over the parted lips
So quick that she could not catch it
With her rosy finger-tips.
The people whispered, "Bless the child,"
As each one waked from a nap,
But the dear, wee woman hid her face
For shame in her mother's lap.

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