

## CHOICE LITERATURE.

## A DAY OF FATE.

BY REV. R. P. ROE.

## CHAPTER XV.—Continued.

As we rose from the table, Zillah asked innocently, "Emily, is thee crying or laughing?"

"I hardly know myself," she faltered, and went hastily to her room; but she soon came down again, looking very resolute.

"Emily," said Mr. Yocomb, "since thee and mother doesn't think music's wicked, I have a wonderful desire to hear thee sing again. Tell me the Old, Old Story, as thee did on the night of the storm."

In spite of her brave eyes and braver will, her lips trembled.

I was cruel enough to add, "And I would be glad to listen to the Twelfth Nocturne once more."

For some reason she gave me a swift glance full of reproach.

"I will listen to anything," I said quickly.

Mr. Hearn looked a little like a man who feared that there might be subterranean fires beneath his feet.

"I will not promise more than to be chorister to-night," she said, sitting down to the piano with her back towards us. "Let us have familiar hymns that all can sing. Miss Adah has a sweet voice, and Mr. Morton, no doubt, is hiding his talent in a napkin. There's a book for you, sir. I'm sorry it doesn't contain the music."

"It doesn't matter," I said; "I'm equally familiar with Choctaw."

"Adela and Zillah, you come and stand by me. 'Your little voices are like the birds.'"

We all gathered in the old parlour, and spent an hour that I shall never forget. I had a tolerable tenor, and an ear made fairly correct by hearing much music. Mr. Hearn did not sing, but he seemingly entered into the spirit of the occasion. Before very long Miss Warren and I were singing some things together. Mr. Hearn no doubt compared our efforts unfavourably with what he had heard in the city, but the simple people of the farm house were much pleased, and repeatedly asked us to continue. As I was leaning over Miss Warren's shoulder, finding a place in the hymn-book on the stand, she breathed softly,

"Have you told them you are going to-morrow?"

"No," I replied.

"Can you leave such friends?"

"Yes."

"You ought not. It would hurt them cruelly;" and she made some runs on the piano to hide her words.

"If you say I ought not to go, I'll stay—Ah, this is the one I was looking for," I said, in a matter-of-fact tone; but she played the music with some strange slips and errors; her hands were nervous and trembling, and never was the frightened look that I had seen before more distinctly visible.

After we had sung a stanza or two she rose and said, "I think I'm getting a little tired, and the room seems warm. Wouldn't you like to take a walk?" she asked Mr. Hearn, coming over to his side.

He arose with alacrity, and they passed out together. I did not see her again that night.

The next morning, finding me alone for a moment, she approached hesitatingly and said,

"I don't think I ought to judge for you."

"Do you wish me to go?" I asked sadly, interpreting her thought.

She became very pale, and turned away as she replied, "Perhaps you had better. I think you would rather go."

"No, I'd rather stay; but I'll do as you wish."

She did not reply, and went quickly to her piano.

I turned and entered the dining-room where Mrs. Yocomb and Adah were clearing away the breakfast. Mr. Yocomb was writing in his little office adjoining.

"I think it is time I said good-bye and went back to New York."

In the outcry that followed, Miss Warren's piano became silent.

"Richard Morton!" Mrs. Yocomb began almost indignantly, "if thee hasn't any regard for thyself, thee should have some for thy friends. There isn't fit to leave home, and this is thy home now. Thee doesn't call thy hot rooms in New York home, so I don't see as thee has got any other. Just so sure as thee goes back to New York now, thee'll be sick again. I won't hear to it. Thee's just beginning to improve a little."

Adah looked at me through reproachful tears, but she did not say anything. Mr. Yocomb dropped his pen and came out, looking quite excited.

"I'll send for Dr. Bates and have him lay his commands on thee," he said. "I won't take thee to the depot, and thee isn't able to walk half way there. Here, Emily, come and talk reason to this crazy man. He says he's going back to New York. He ought to be put in a strait-jacket. Doesn't thee think so?"

Her laugh was anything but simple and natural.

As she said "I do indeed," Mr. Hearn had joined her.

"What would thee do in such an extreme case of mental disorder?"

"Treat him as they did in the good old times: get a chain and lock him up on bread and water."

"Would thee then enjoy thy dinner?"

"That wouldn't matter, if he were cured."

"I think Mr. Morton would prefer hot New York to the remedies that Emily prescribes," said Mr. Hearn, with his smiling face full of vigilance.

"Richard," said Mrs. Yocomb, patting both her hands on my arm, "I should feel more hurt than I can tell thee if thee leaves us now."

"Why, Mrs. Yocomb! I didn't think you would care so much."

"Then, thee's very blind, Richard. I didn't think thee'd say that."

"You cut deep now; suppose I must go?"

"Why must thee go, just as thee is beginning to gain? Thee is as pale as a ghost this minute, and thee doesn't weigh much more than half as much as I do. Still we don't want to put an unwelcome constraint on thee."

I took her hand in both of mine as I said earnestly, "God forbid that I should ever escape from any constraint that you put upon me. Well, I won't go to-day, and I'll see what word my mail brings me." And I went up to my room, not trusting myself to glance at the real directress of my action, but hoping that something would occur which would make my course clear.

As I came out of my room to go down to dinner, Miss Warren intercepted me, saying eagerly,

"Mr. Morton, don't go. If you should be ill again in New York, as Mrs. Yocomb says—"

"I won't be ill again."

"Please don't go," she entreated. "I—I shouldn't have said what I did. You would be ill; Mrs. Yocomb would never forgive me."

"Miss Warren, I will do what you wish."

"I wish what is best for you—only that."

"I fear I cloud your happiness. You are too kind-hearted."

She smiled a little bitterly. "Please stay—don't think of me."

"Again, I repeat, you are too kind-hearted. Never imagine that I can be happy if you are not;" and I looked at her keenly, but she turned away instantly, saying,

"Well, then, I'll be very happy, and will test you," and she returned to her room.

"Mrs. Yocomb," I said quietly at the dinner-table, "I've written to the office saying that my friends do not think I'm well enough to return yet, and asking to have my leave extended."

She beamed upon me as she replied,

"Now thee's sensible."

"For once," I added.

"I expect to see thee clothed and in thy right mind yet," she said, with a little reassuring nod.

"Your hopeful disposition is contagious," I replied, laughing.

"I'd like to see thee get to the depot till we're ready to let thee go," said Reuben emphatically.

"Yes," added Mr. Yocomb, with his genuine laugh, "Reuben and I are in league against thee."

"You look like two dark, muttering conspirators," I responded.

"And to think thee was going away without asking me!" Zillah put in, shaking her bright curls at me.

"Well, you have all made this home to me, true enough. The best part of me will be left here when I do go."

At these words Adah gave me a shy, blushing smile.

"Mr. Morton, will you please pass me the vinegar," said Miss Warren, in the most matter-of-fact tone.

"Wouldn't you prefer the sugar?" I asked.

"No; I much prefer the vinegar."

Mr. Hearn also smiled approvingly.

"Don't be too sure of your prey," I said mentally. "If she's not yours at heart—which I doubt more than ever—you shall never have her." But she puzzled me for a day or two. If she were not happy she simulated it wonderfully, and made my poor acting a flimsy pretence in contrast. She and the banker took long rides together, and she was always exceedingly cheerful on her return—a little too much so, I tried to think. She ignored the past as completely as possible, and while her manner was kind to me she had regained her old-time delicate brusqueness, and rarely lost a chance to give me a friendly filip. Indeed I had never known her to be so brilliant, and her spirits seemed unflagging. Mr. Yocomb was delighted, and in his large appetite for fun applauded and joined in every phase of our home gaiety. There was too much hilarity for me, and my hope failed steadily.

"Now that her conscience is clear in regard to me—now that I have remained in the country, and am getting well—her spirits have come up with a bound," I reasoned moodily. I began to resume my old tactics of keeping out of the way and of taking long rambles; but I tried to be cheerfulness itself in her presence.

On Wednesday Miss Warren went down to breakfast in a breezy, airy way, and scarcely speaking to me as I stood in the doorway, she flitted out, and was soon romping with Zillah and Adah. As she returned, flushed and panting, I said, with a smile,

"You are indeed happy. I congratulate you. I believe I've never had the honour of doing that yet."

"But you said that you would be happy also?"

"Am I not?"

"No."

"Well, it doesn't matter, since you are."

"Oh, then, I'm no longer kind-hearted. You take Reuben's view, that I'm a kind of heartless monster. He scarcely speaks to me any more. You think I propose to be happy now under all circumstances."

"I wish you would be; I hope you may be. What's the use of my acting my poor little farce any longer. I don't deceive you a mite. But I'm not going to mope and pine, Miss Warren. Don't think of me so poorly as that. I'm not the first man who has had to face this thing. I'm going back to work, and I'm going next Monday, surely."

"I've no doubt of it," she said, with sudden bitterness, "and you'll get over it bravely, very bravely;" and she started off toward the barn, where Reuben was exercising Dapple, holding him with a long rope. The horse seemed wild with life and spirit, and did I not know that the beautiful creature had not a vicious trait I should have feared for the boy. Just at this moment, Dapple in his play slipped off his headstall and was soon careering around the dooryard in the mad glee of freedom. In vain Reuben tried to catch him; for the capricious beast would allow him to come almost within grasp, and then would bound away. Miss Warren stood under a tree laughing, till the boy was hot and angry. Then she cried,

"I'll catch him for you, Reuben."

I uttered a loud shout of alarm as she darted out before the galloping horse and threw up her arms.

Dapple stopped instantly; in another second she had her arm around his arched neck and was stroking his quivering nostrils. Her poise was full of grace and power; her eyes were shining with excitement and triumph, and to make her mastery seem more complete, she leaned her face against his nose.

Dapple looked down at her in a sort of mild wonder, and was as meek as a lamb.

"There, Reuben, come and take him," she said to the boy, who stared at her with his mouth open.

"Emily Warren, I don't know what to make of thee," he exclaimed.

Never before had I so felt my unutterable loss, and I said to her almost savagely, in a low tone, as she approached,

"Is that the means you take to cure me—doing the bravest thing I ever saw a woman do, and looking like a goddess? I was an unspeakable fool for staying."

Her head drooped, and she walked dejectedly toward the house, not seeming to think of or care for the exclamations and expostulations which greeted her.

"Why, Emily, were you mad?" cried Mr. Hearn above the rest; and now that the careering horse was being led away he hastened down to meet her.

"No, I'm tired, and want a cup of coffee," I heard her say, and then I followed Reuben to the barn.

"She's cut me out with Dapple," said the boy, with a crestfallen air.

Already I repented of my harshness, into which I had been led by the sharpest stress of feeling, and was eager to make amends. Since the night of the storm honest Reuben had given me his unwavering loyalty. Still less than Adah was he inclined or able to look beneath the surface of things, and he had gained the impression from Miss Warren's words that she was inclined to make light of their danger on that occasion, and to laugh at me generally. In his sturdy championship in my behalf he had been growing cold and brusque toward one whom he now associated with the wealthy middle-aged banker, and city style generally. Reuben was a genuine country lad, and was instinctively hostile to Fifth Avenue. While Mr. Hearn was polite to his father and mother, he quite naturally laid more stress, on their business relations than on those of friendship, and was not slow in asking for what he wanted, and his luxurious tastes led him to require a good deal. Reuben had seen his mother worried and his father inconvenienced not a little. They made no complaint, and had no cause for any, for the banker paid his way liberally. But the boy had not reached the age when the financial phase of the question was appreciated, and his prejudice was not unnatural, for unconsciously, especially at first, Mr. Hearn had treated them all as inferiors. He now was learning to know them better, however. There was nothing plebeian in Adah's beauty, he would have been untrue to himself had he not admired her very greatly.

It was my wish to lead the boy to overcome his prejudice against Miss Warren; so I said,

"You are mistaken, Reuben; Dapple is just as fond of you as ever. It was only playfulness that made him cut up so; but, Reuben, Dapple is a very sensible horse, and when he saw a girl that was brave enough to stand right out before him when it seemed that he must run over her, he respected and liked such a girl at once. It was the bravest thing I ever saw. Any other horse would have trampled on her, but Dapple has the nature of a gentleman. So have you, Reuben, and I know you will go and speak handsomely to her. I know you will speak to her as Dapple would could he speak. By Jove! it was splendid, and you are man enough to know it was."

"Yes, Richard, it was. I know that as well as thee. There isn't a girl in the country that would have dared to do it, and very few men. And to think she's a city girl! To tell the truth, Emily Warren is all the time making game of thee, and that's why I'm mad at her."

"I don't think you understand her. I don't mind it, because she never means anything ill-natured; and then she loves your mother almost as much as you do. I give you my word, Reuben, Miss Warren and I are the best of friends, and you need not feel as you do, because I don't."

"Oh, well, if thee puts it that way, I'll treat her different. I tell thee what it is, Richard, I—one that sticks to my friends through thick and thin."

"Well, you can't do anything so friendly to me as to make everything pleasant for Miss Warren. How is her favourite, Old Plod?" I asked, following him into the barn.

"Old Plod be hanged! She hasn't been near him in two weeks."

"What!" I exclaimed exultantly.

"What's the matter with thee, Richard? Thee and Emily are both queer. I can't make you out."

"Well, Reuben, we mean well; you musn't expect too much of people."

## CHAPTER XVI.—"RICHARD."

I came in to breakfast with Reuben, feeling that Dapple had been more of a gentleman than I had, for he had treated the maiden with gentleness and courtesy, while I had thought first of myself. She looked up at me as I entered so humbly and deprecatingly that I wished that I had bitten my tongue out rather than have spoken so basely.

Straightforward Reuben went to the girl, and, holding out his hand, said,

"Emily, I want to ask thy forgiveness. I've been like a bear toward thee. Thee's the bravest girl I ever saw. No country girl would have dared to do what thee did. I didn't need to have Richard lecture me and tell me that; but I thought thee was kind of down on Richard, and I've a way of standing by my friends."

With a face like a pony she turned and took both of the boy's hands as she said warmly,

"Thank you, Reuben. I'd take a much greater risk to win your friendship, and if you'll give it to me I'll be very proud of it. You are going to make a genuine man."