

him. He put it aside gravely, saying, "No luxuries Mysie; no, child, they always disagree with me. Brown bread, little one; that's my fare, and the best—fan the best for me."

Tears came into Mysie's eyes as she said, "Isn't such a luxury, father; and I toasted it myself—just as I used to toast it for—"

A look and gesture from Marian kept the speaker from finishing the sentence. She stopped rather awkwardly, and made no further attempt to press her handiwork; a very welcome interruption to the rather marked pause being made by the opening of the door, and the entrance of a youth with a portfolio in his hand.

"What! home so soon, Norry?" said Marian. "There's no class this afternoon, and I thought I might do something for the master." He bent his head as he spoke to Mr. Hope.

The setting sun, whose slanting beams fell athwart the little room, kindled up the face of the young speaker, and made it look its best. This Norry was a tall, rather loose-limbed boy, with a dark, strongly marked, and sallow complexion. Plain, most people would have called him—that is, if they had not chanced to look into his eyes and see him smile. It was very certain the dark well-defined brows could frown, and even in repose looked heavy. His hair clustered over and half concealed the height of his forehead, and as yet the carelessness of boyhood had not been superseded by the comeliness of youth. He did not care to smooth off his hair from his brow, or to let his dark face often break into a smile, whether people called him ugly for his carelessness or no.

He was certainly a contrast to Mysie, who, tall like himself, was a brunette, with the hazel eyes, white teeth, red lips, and the damask blush on the cheek that is so sparkling and attractive in a dark beauty.

Marian, whose age might be twenty-one or two, without anything that could be called beauty, had a face that won upon you by its look of goodness. No one noticed whether the features were regular, or complained that the complexion was nearly colourless, when they saw the mild intelligence of the clear grey eyes, or the tranquil sweetness of the mouth. Are there not some faces so full of spiritual grace that every one feels the presence of a lovely soul, and in meeting them is reminded of a better world? And yet these are rarely called beauties.

"How are you getting on, Norry, my boy?" said Mr. Hope, adding, "Mysie will not be satisfied unless her brother has the makings of a clever man in him—will she?"

There was evidently an effort on the part of the house to enlighten the gloom that seemed to be gathering over the little party, and so he spoke cheerily.

"I have regretted as a great misfortune your looking so much older than you are. Let's see, was it eighteen that neighbour Godfrey took you for last week? Why, that must be more than three years older than you are."

"I wish I knew my birthday like other people; then I should be more willing to believe that I am not fifteen yet," said the youth.

"We do have a birthday, Norry, and a very happy birthday, I'm sure, every year. The day we came to our dear mamma and papa Hope is surely the best birthday we could have," said Mysie.

"Ah, that's because you're a girl, that you say so; and girls never think—not they—about the rights of a thing—whether it's true like a line, or like a sum. I'll do for them if it just hits their fancy. I should like to know the true day."

"Now, Norry—for shame!"

"Hush, dear," interposed Marian. "I'm sure Norry does not undervalue the birthday we have always kept."

"Norry," said Mr. Hope, "ever be rigid for the right—true and exact as a sum in all things. But you will learn—ay, both of you will learn, as you advance in life—that it is not in mere human strength either to attain or keep that moral exactitude without higher aid and a loftier motive than human reason will supply. Be content, my boy. There are doubtless many orphans who do not know or have forgotten, their exact birthday; and I think there are few or none that

have been more tenderly cared for than you both have been by me and mine."

A flush mounted to the brow of the boy, turning his sallow face to a dark crimson, as he said—

"Mr. Hope—father—I know it. Forgive me!"

And Mysie, running towards the old man's chair, threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him.

Poor children! theirs had been a chequered history, more so than they knew; and yet Mr. Hope had not, as he thought, kept anything from them. For he was a Christian in word and deed, and strove to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man. But the mystery was not the less.

#### CHAPTER IX.—THE ORPHANS.

"Daily struggling, though unloved and lonely.

Every day a rich reward will give;

Thou wilt find, by hearty striving only,

And truly loving, thou canst truly live."

Mrs. WINSLOW.

When Mysie and Norry retired at their usual early hour, and left Mr. Hope and his daughter alone, the conversation, as they sat together for an hour or so before bed-time, turned very naturally on their circumstances, and led unintentionally to the mention of the brother and sister. The teaching that Mr. Hope had now left him would certainly not suffice to maintain the humble home in which he dwelt. His daughter was the most careful and industrious of household managers, but there must obviously be an income to manage, and if that fails, the talent of thrift, however great it may be, must fail also.

Poor Marian Hope had, for a long time past, lived in some dread of what seemed now actually to have occurred. She had nursed her mother through an illness of two years; and, when death ended the long agony, there was left as a bitter addition to the sorrow a heavy debt necessarily incurred, which the honest pride of both father and daughter could not endure should remain. So Mr. Hope had walked, despite his lameness, many miles to his round of daily teaching, and had in the evenings done law copying when he could obtain it from the law stationers; and his daughter, besides dismissing their only servant and undertaking the work of the house, with occasional assistance from a charwoman, had toiled early on summer mornings, and late on winter nights, before or after the rest of the family were in bed, at embroidery; by which all that she had gained had been the means to keep her slender wardrobe in such a condition that it should neither shame her sense of propriety nor make demands on her father's failing income. And fail, indeed, it did most rapidly, particularly in this last year. Just as the payment of the doctor's bill for Mrs. Hope had given some respite to the cares of the survivors, the sources on which they depended seemed to be shut up against them; Marian believing, though she did not utter the painful thought, that her father's wan looks, infirmities, and threadbare dress overweighed, in the consideration of those who employed him, their knowledge of his talents and respect for his character.

It was a hard lesson for her to have to learn in her early womanhood, that a jaunty air and good broadcloth were by some—nay, by most—more valued than worth or talent. It brought with it a bitter sense of wrong and injustice that she had never before experienced.

As for Mr. Hope, despite his cheerful name, he was one of those who seemed born both to bear and to dignify adversity. He had been in his youth in a Government office, that by some changes was reduced, he being one of the clerks thrown out. He had saved from the grave which had taken many of his children one child, this daughter Marian, when the alteration in his position and prospects occurred. By the advice of a few friends, he employed the small sum of money that he possessed in emigrating to, and buying some land in, Canada. If diligence would have done, in their new life, in the place of bone and muscle, Mr. and Mrs. Hope might have succeeded; as it was, he met with the injury that ended in permanent lameness, and his wife contracted in that rigorous climate the

pulmonary complaint that made her life one long disease; and it was in the hope of benefiting her health, or rather rescuing her from impending death, that, eight years previously, they had returned to England poorer than they left it, bringing with them the two children, Norry and Mysie. Then Mr. Hope, by the recommendation of a friend who had known him in his earlier days, obtained employment as a teacher, for which his fine penmanship and mathematical skill fitted him. The education of the two children had been carried on by himself and his daughter. Therefore, when, after a long pause, as they sat alone in their parlour that night, his daughter said to him, "Was ever anything settled, father, about Norry and Mysie—as to any pursuit in life, I mean?" Mr. Hope sighed heavily, and replied—

"If I had known, my dear, all the anxiety that the charge would involve, I think I should have opposed your dear mother. But she was bent on it, and the poor things were certainly wretchedly neglected when they came to us."

"Indeed they were! Young as I then was—not eleven, I think, father—I well recollect the little rough, unkempt things. Those must have been hard people—those Johnstons, father."

"They were rough people, child. I do not know that they were harder to the orphans than they would have been to children of their own. Johnston had been a schoolmaster in Scotland before he emigrated, and used to rule by force of hand more than brain; and his wife was just a maudlin slattern."

"He ill-used her as well as the children, I've heard mamma say."

"There were faults on both sides, doubtless; but the woman suffers most in such cases; I'm certain Johnston's wife did. What with hardships, and quarrels, and—"

"And whisky, father."

"Yes, and whisky, doubtless, she, like many more, did not live out half her days. I shall never forget going into their log hut and finding poor little Mysie lying fast asleep across the feet of the poor dead woman."

"Ah, yes, how that impressed poor dear mamma! She used often to say, 'We liberally took her from death—though Norry was in a worse condition.'"

"Norry had been taken on tramp by Johnston, and a tavern-keeper had so pitied the little footsore wean of four years old, that he set the police on Johnston's track, just as the neighbours came to me to write to him that his wife was dead."

"Did the neighbours think that the children were their own?"

"Yes, if they troubled themselves to think at all about them. Johnston was disliked as a quarrelsome fellow, and his wife as a drunkard. People avoided them, but your mother, Marian, was always drawn towards children."

"It was she that found out the children were not the Johnstons."

"Yes, she discovered it one day when she was giving Mrs. Johnston some little wraps she had made for the bairns. To her surprise the woman said, in a maudering way, 'Ah, we would get proper things for them if we were paid properly. But the money comes so irregularly.' And then, having said so much, she told the truth—not that, as far as I know, they had previously wanted to conceal it; but they had never contradicted people who took it for granted they were their own children. Acquiescing in a falsehood is much the same as telling one, to my mind. However, we had the truth at last. The children's name was Grant, the parents were dead, but some kinsman—uncle, I think—paid for them, when the Johnstons offered to take them; a trifle, certainly, but enough to secure the Johnstons from any loss. Indeed, the money, well employed, might have been a help to Johnston; and it roused our indignation to think that the little ones were not better cared for than if they had been beggars. I was resolved to appeal to the magistrate of the district, and went to the cottage to see the state of the children for myself, when I found the end had come, as far as the miserable woman was concerned."

"Johnston was, I think, sincerely horrified when he was recalled to the scene his cottage