

BEACON LIGHTS.

BY EMILIE SEARCHFIELD.

LINKS FROM THE CHAIN OF LIFE.

"Open not thy door to a little sin, lest a greater one should enter."

IT was early morning, that is to say, the summer sun was far from its mid-day height, and as yet it was pleasant to be out. A boat lay motionless on the bosom of one of the smaller of the Cumberland lakes; its occupant was reading, as could plainly be seen from the volume which he held in his hand. The sky was very blue, and so was the water—nay, the very air itself seemed of the same tint; for a light bluish haze encircled the mountain tops like a sort of summer glory. Ah, it was grandly glorious! and by-and-by, when a human voice, clear and soaring like that of the lark, rose upon the summer air, it seemed but in keeping with the sweet scene around. There were no abrupt quavers, rises or falls in the song which was being sung: no, the voice was simply sweet, powerful, and clear, seeming almost as though it would in its clearness pierce the very heavens.

Where was the singer? The boatman had dropped his book, and was listening; as yet he had not seen her, although for days past he had heard the same voice at the same hour, and so well did it seem to accord with everything around him, that he had almost grown to think of it as a part of the beauty which seemed to thrill his very soul, turn which way he might. Ah, there she was, seated in a huge cavity of the mountain side, and the boatman dropped his book, while his whole countenance kindled with interest at the sight. Presently another figure came round the turning—a girl too—carrying a sun-hat in her hand, the counterpart of one she herself wore. She seemed to offer it to the other girl, and then, the moment after, a peal of light laughter floated away over the water to where the boatman still lay at his ease, watching and listening. After that they both strolled along by the edge of the lake, the newcomer still carrying the sun-hat in her hand. Never perhaps had the morning sun shone upon a fairer face than that of the singer. Not that her beauty would have attracted great attention amid others of her sex; but there in the full sunshine, her lithe, tall figure standing out so clearly amid the

grandeur of nature, her golden hair flashing back the rays of light as they fell, and the purity of her complexion, together with her clearly-cut features, contrasting so strongly with those of her companion, I say she possessed a charm and fascination rarely if ever found in scenes of home life or common intercourse.

At length they turned away in the direction whence the second girl had come—the fair one had donned her hat; the boatman also had rowed in close to the land and stepped noiselessly ashore. Altogether the scene was changing in more ways than one. Up the green slope he walked, and the girl who had proved so lovely in the fair sunlight glanced back over her shoulder once and again as she moved away. The other turned as well, but he did not notice her: she was not graceful even, when compared with her companion, and if he made no mistake her face was very ordinary both in feature and expression. The words she spoke might have altered the whole of his after-life had he only heard them; such was not the case, however, seeing that the distance between them was too great for even Love's ear to catch the sounds; therefore the sequel still remains to be told.

"Rose," the dark sister said, "I believe the gentleman from the boat is following us."

"Well, never mind," once more the other glanced carelessly back.

"I should like, Rose, to take a peep at poor George. I wonder if he is thinking of us just now," continued the first speaker.

"Poor George! One would think that I had forced him to go away. You make me angry, Belle. Of course he went as much for his own good as for mine."

"Yes, I know," Belle said softly; "but, Rose, dear,

you mean to be true to him, don't you?"

"True to him! Oh, yes, of course." But Rose's cheek crimsoned, for she well knew that in thought, at least, she had been wavering and unsteady towards this George, her lover, who had gone away to make a fortune for her; and for the last few days Belle had heard but very little from her sister's lips when alone together, save of this same gentleman of the boat, who now appeared to be following their steps.

After that, time still flowed on, bearing events with it, and I think Rose was one without deep feelings, else the lover across the seas making a fortune would not have been forgotten for the one who came later with it already made;

