

Choice Literature.

Still and Deep.

BY F. M. S. SKENE, AUTHOR OF "TRIED," "OUR LIFE ONLY," ETC.

CHAPTER VII. (CONTINUED.)

It was a glorious summer morning which dawned on the world next day, with every accessory of light and music and colour to make it gorgeous and brilliant...

Half an hour later, when she left the room and went once more to Mr. Lisle's door, Mary was met by Mrs. Parry who was coming out, her round face beaming with satisfaction, to tell her that the invalid was sleeping still, more tranquilly than he had done for weeks...

Mr. Lisle had already slept longer than he had done at all since his illness became serious, and he shows no sign of waking yet. You must have brought him great peace of mind, Bertrand, somehow, to produce such a result.

"Oh, Bertrand, no!" she said, tears welling into her eyes, "I dread it so much; I would not have told your father this on any account, it was so kind of him to think of me at all."

"You can trust me to call you so soon as he wakes," said Mrs. Parry; he will want to see you both I have no doubt, and she bustled from the room with the pets of her widow's cap flying out behind her...

"I am so thankful I was able to come here in time to see him for every reason," said Bertrand; "but, dearest Mary, though he is my father and only your friend, I think that it really will be sadder for you than for me when he is taken; for my profession necessarily leads me to a life apart from him, and to you it will involve much more than the loss of one you love."

"The loss of home, of protection," murmured Mary; but her voice died away, for she dreaded beyond words that her forlorn condition should in any sense appeal to Bertrand, so long as she was uncertain that Mr. Lisle was right in believing she had won his love.

Bertrand gently took her hand, and was sorely tempted to tell her then and there that all she was about to lose would be given back to her fourfold in his affection; but to talk of love or marriage in that atmosphere of death seemed a desecration, discordant as the clash of wedding bells over a grave, and he only said, "Such a one as you are can never be left lonely or unprotected, Mary, do not fear."

"Yes, but I should have recognized it any way," she answered, quietly, "how glad your dear father will be that you are come."

"Bertrand could easily understand that the reason of this limitation was simply Mr. Lisle's inability to pay Mary's board in advance for more than one year, as, although he had scarcely any personal acquaintance with his relation, and none with her husband, he knew enough of their circumstances to be certain that they were not in a position to receive visitors freely for any great length of time; he knew that Mrs. Windham had, late in life, married a widower, who, though an elderly man, was still only a poor curate, and that they lived in a very lonely and inaccessible district of Yorkshire, skirting an exceedingly small stipend by taking pupils; it did not sound a very enviable prospect for Mary, but it was probably the best arrangement that could be made under the circumstances, and he thought to himself, with a glow of satisfaction at his heart, that he would certainly remove her from hence at the end of the year."

CHAPTER VIII.

"It seems a sensible plan, dear Mary," said Bertrand, after thinking it over, "I have no doubt Mrs. Windham will be very kind to you; do you like the idea?"

"You know Mr. Windham had a grown-up daughter when he made his second marriage, and I have heard that she was annoyed at her step-mother coming there, and that she makes the home very unhappy in consequence; she may not like my presence either."

"The loss of home, of protection," murmured Mary; but her voice died away, for she dreaded beyond words that her forlorn condition should in any sense appeal to Bertrand, so long as she was uncertain that Mr. Lisle was right in believing she had won his love.

"You shall hear no more complaints," she whispered, while his fingers clasped cleer round the little hand he held. They sat down under a willow-tree that grew on the banks of the stream, and Bertrand began to tell her of his life on the Continent; of the country ceremonies he attended, and the brilliant society which surrounded him in the diplomatic circle to which he belonged.

"By all means; but quiet sleep can only be beneficial," said Bertrand; "and he has suffered much, has he not, from wakefulness?"

"Did she know what she was saying? They strolled on together over the sunlit lawn, and went into the house, where all was perfectly quiet and silent, for the servants offices were at the back, and Mr. Lisle and nurse Parry were the only occupants of this part of the dwelling. They went on up the stairs, through the passage and in at the open door of the sick-room. Mrs. Parry's absence was at once accounted for, as she had lain down on a sofa placed at a little distance from the bed, and had, naturally enough, again fallen asleep in the slumberous heat of noon.

"On yes, it has been his great trial; I am truly thankful he is quiet now; I have so longed that he might rest."

"Yes, she said, "he was so good and dear, he did not limit his kindness to his own life, but thought of what was to become of me when I was deprived of his precious care, he had provided me with a shelter, for one year, in the only home he could find for me--with your mother's cousin, Mrs. Windham. I do not know why my residence there is to be limited to one year; but he told me it was so decided."

"I have been with him nearly all the night," said Bertrand, as they walked along the passage together. "And he has proved a better nurse than any of us, Mary," said Mrs. Parry; "for"

and looked at Mary without speaking, and gently drawing her down beside him, they knelt together by the couch in silence. It was even so, carefully as he had been tended by that poor human love, which is so helpless in the face of death, the old man had gone through the last dread change in solitude, unaided and unwatched; secretly, silently, the long life of hope, and fear, and love, and anguish of thought and error, had floated away into the invisible air on one expiring breath, and now it no longer existed at all, save as a memory, a feature of the past, which soon would vanish, even from the remembrance of those to whom his living presence had been most familiar.

As the sunbeams flickered through the Venetian blinds that shaded the room, and fell in straggling rays upon the kneeling group, and the rigid figure with its folded hands and marble whiteness, it looked as if all were alike out out in stone—the effigy of one long dead stretched upon a tomb, and the sculptured representatives of those who had lingered a while to pray for him, carved by the cunning of the artist's hand into a vivid imitation of life. But the spell which held them in such perfect immobility was soon dissolved, it was broken by a cry from Mrs. Parry, who, waking up suddenly, had come towards the bed, and in a moment had understood all that had occurred.

"Her distress and excitement were so great, that they both were obliged to draw their thoughts away from the contemplation of their loss, in order to console her. Bertrand emphatically assured her that he did not blame her, and that his dear father had passed away in sleep, so that it could have made no difference if they had all been present; but Mary's gentle soothing did more for the good woman than all his vehement protestations, for her sympathetic nature told her she should best relieve the sense of remorse for neglect, by reminding her that she had still a duty to accomplish for him whom they mourned, and by begging her to calm herself in order that they might join together in performing the last offices of the dead; even in that sad moment Bertrand could not help admiring Mrs. Trevelyan's delicate tact, and it had at once the desired effect. Mrs. Parry wiped her eyes, and resumed her composure, while Mary, in a tremulous whisper, asked Bertrand to go into the garden and cut some of the white roses his father had so specially loved, that she might lay them in the form of a cross upon his quiet breast.

A few days passed away—days of glorious summer beauty in the world without, floods of sunshine streaming over wood and field, birds making the whole air musical with ecstatic songs, green grass waving, flowers opening new blossoms to the light, all nature full of gladness and life, and within shaded rooms and voices hushed, falling tears, and footsteps lingering round a silent bier; yet it might be that the truest life was there, in the midst of that atmosphere of death, for the sunshine of the summer days would fade, the birds would cease to sing when came the winter snows, the grass would all beneath the mower's scythe, the flowers would shrivel and perish in the chilling frosts, but out of the very rigour and soullessness of death there springs the imperishable hope of life that cannot die, and from the gloom and horror of the grave there rises a light for the righteous, which shall forever shine in the un fading brightness of the perfect day. This much is certain, that, deeply as those true mourners grieved for their personal loss in him who had been taken from them, there yet seemed to be a strange prophetic sweetness in the peculiar calm that was all around and within them, during the waiting days before he was hidden out of their sight till the morning of the great awakening; for it had befallen them, as it does to most in the actual presence of death, to receive so strong an impression of the utterly ephemeral nature of all those conditions of life which it could terminate so suddenly, that it seemed scarce possible to attach much importance to the vicissitudes of that mortal state, which would seem to be as a vanished dream when once they had passed to the eternal existence on which they believed he had already entered.

This is a phase of feeling which all have experienced probably who have seen a familiar friend, that has shared all their daily cares and passing joys, suddenly withdrawn behind the veil; but for a brief time only it seduces the things of sense to their true proportions, and then all the passion and frenzy of earthly hopes and fears rush in and blind our eyes, and they loom out before us so near and prominent that they seem to drive back all that lies beyond them. Already the hopes and anxieties of their earthly career had returned to beat tumultuously in the hearts of Bertrand and Mary Trevelyan, when they turned away to leave the father and the irrevocably lying peacefully beneath the green turf of the little country churchyard. It had been Mary's special wish that he should be buried at sunset, when the sunset soft evening light and heavenly stillness was on all the living nature, which had filled him with such serene quietude when she sat by his side, and bade him mark how like the golden west was to the gate of paradise. Quietly as the sun was declining, they walked out hand in hand behind the coffin, borne on the shoulders of poor men to whom he had been kind; and Mrs. Parry followed near them. So they carried him to the rustic graveyard that surrounded the village church, and laid him down by the side of his lost love, with the music of celestial hymns breathing in every one of the solemn holy words with which they lulled him to his rest.

As yet we little know what a blessing there is in being helped with a little help. A FATHER'S THRONE! I hope we shall never be satisfied with that—a Father's heart!

"By all means; but quiet sleep can only be beneficial," said Bertrand; "and he has suffered much, has he not, from wakefulness?"

"Did she know what she was saying? They strolled on together over the sunlit lawn, and went into the house, where all was perfectly quiet and silent, for the servants offices were at the back, and Mr. Lisle and nurse Parry were the only occupants of this part of the dwelling. They went on up the stairs, through the passage and in at the open door of the sick-room. Mrs. Parry's absence was at once accounted for, as she had lain down on a sofa placed at a little distance from the bed, and had, naturally enough, again fallen asleep in the slumberous heat of noon. Thou Bertrand and Mary Trevelyan went and stood by the side of Mr. Lisle's couch. Was it the living father that lay there or a statue carved in monumental marble to represent eternal peace, white and inanimate, with sealed eyes and lips set in a strangely meaning smile, as though some wondrous secret had just been revealed to him? Something there was in his aspect so antagonistic to the glow and warmth of life that a deadly pallor stole over the two bright young faces that looked down on him, and a chill of dread struck to their hearts. Involuntarily Bertrand grasped Mary's hand, and then stooping down, he laid his own reverently on his father's breast, no leaving breath, no throbbing of life, responded to his touch, but the mysterious inappreciable change which pervaded the whole well-known form, struck home to him instantly with that unmistakable conviction of the presence of death which compels the living to vary to recognize it the very moment they are brought in contact with its mystery. Bertrand turned

"Yes, she said, "he was so good and dear, he did not limit his kindness to his own life, but thought of what was to become of me when I was deprived of his precious care, he had provided me with a shelter, for one year, in the only home he could find for me--with your mother's cousin, Mrs. Windham. I do not know why my residence there is to be limited to one year; but he told me it was so decided."

Learn to Keep House. Beautiful maidens—aye, nature's fair queens, Borne in your breasts, and some in your teens, Seeking accomplishments worthy your aims, Striving for learning, strutting for fame, Taking such pains with the style of your hair, Keeping your lily complexion so fair, Miss not this item in all your gay lives; Learn to keep house; you may one day be wiser; Learn to keep house!

New your Adieu loves a root moonlight walks, Hand-clasp, and kiss, and nice little talks; Then, as plain Charlie, with pudence of care, He must subside on more nourishing fare; He'll come home at the set of the sun, Heart-sick and wroth, his working day done; Thence let his slippered feet no'er wish to roam; Learn to keep house, that you may keep home. Learn to keep house!

First in his eyes will be children and wife, Joy of his heart, and life of his life; Next to his bright dwelling his table, his meals, Strive not at what my pen to-morrow reveals, Excite no romance; the truth must be told; Knowledge is better than silver and gold; Then be prepared in the spring-time of health; Learn to keep house, tho' surrounded by wealth; Learn to keep house!

Duty and Pleasure. I utterly repudiate the worldly maxim of "Duty first and Pleasure afterward." That is a poor school which does not teach, or a poor scholar who has not learned, how pleasure is a duty, and duty a pleasure. And so the words are one. For what is duty? Simply what is due; and duty done is a debt paid—recouped, cancelled, and released. We are too apt in the overflow of life which belongs especially to youth, but lasts, thank God, into gray hairs—we are too apt to treat it in another way; too apt to dwell upon its hardness, its severe demands, its restrictions of liberty. Learn to look on it, dear children, in the true light. It is undone duty that is hard; just as a debt owed and paid has in it a thought of pleasure and relief, of freedom from a haunting shadow which bears down stout hearts with its anxious load. And in its highest reach, your duty is a debt of honor, of gratitude, of love, whose payment is all pleasure in the act of paying, no less than in the sense of its discharge.—W. C. Doane.

The Portuguese. A very interesting book has been published in England by a Mr. Latouché, about Portugal and the Portuguese. It describes many curious customs, which are doubtless of long standing in that little-visited country, and which mark its people as quite different in many respects from others that we know. In the first place, their farming tools are very primitive, for Mr. Latouché says of them: "A man might have fancied himself carried back eighteen hundred years, and transported to that famous farm among the Sabine hills. Barring the maize, I fancy Horace would have seen nothing outlandish on this Portuguese farm. The ploughs, the ox-carts, the sickles, the pruning-hooks, are of the ancient Latin patterns, and all the operations of farming absolutely the same." The author follows up the traces of the old Moorish occupation of Portugal in an interesting chapter, and gives many strange instances of the rooted belief in the existence of hidden treasure which prevails in every part of Portugal. The uninhabited royal palace at Queluz, near Lisbon, is believed to secrete immense wealth, and has been nearly pulled to pieces in the vain search for it. In Oporto a club has been formed for the sole purpose of seeking for the hiding place of a fabulously large diamond said to be concealed in its near neighborhood. Mr. Latouché had reason to believe that he was popularly supposed to be travelling in Portugal for the sole purpose of seeking for the military chest of the French army, which was buried near Ponta de Lams, after the passage of the Douro, and the capture of Oporto by Wellington.

A pleasant characteristic of the people is their kindness and gentleness to all animals. "The tameness of all domestic animals in Portugal," says the author, "cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry, resulting from habitual kind treatment, is striking to a foreigner."

The Portuguese are described as being frugal, moral, religious, and sentimental, ceremonious in their manners, and scrupulously polite among themselves. The author is very entertaining about the difficulties of modes of address in Portugal, which must indeed present some, when one may hear a little street-boy say to another, "Your lordship is cheating," and the accused reply, "Your worship has stole my kite."—In some parts of the country it is a solecism to talk of a dog; the animal must be named apologetically as a puppy, a "cachorro." No Portuguese, the author tells us, will name that shocking animal the pig:—

"If he must be alluded to—and it is necessary sometimes, seeing that the Portuguese are very fond of him cooked—he is called the 'fat animal, carneira,' and if a Portuguese is devoted into a corner, and absolutely forced to employ the word, he will use the diminutive 'porquinho,' a little pig, and even that only under his breath, and with the phrase 'by your leave.' In a Portuguese translation of a French savant's account of a fossil bone-cave, in which bones of swine were abundant, all direct mention of the animal is avoided with immense ingenuity, and as often as science clearly demands the word 'pig,' recourse is had to some pompous paraphrase, such as 'a familiar mammal which we still employ as food,' and so forth."

As funny is the avoidance of the word "dog." Even in print they slide over it with an initial and two stars, and Mr. Latouché says, "I have seen the name of a well-known place in Lisbon, 'Fonte do Orlão do Cão,' the Fountain of the Dog's Eye,' printed 'Fonte do Orlão do Cão.'"

Glean upon the conscience unites a man for all his service of God. MAKE me more fruitful—and all the discipline—the how and the wherefore I leave to Thee.