

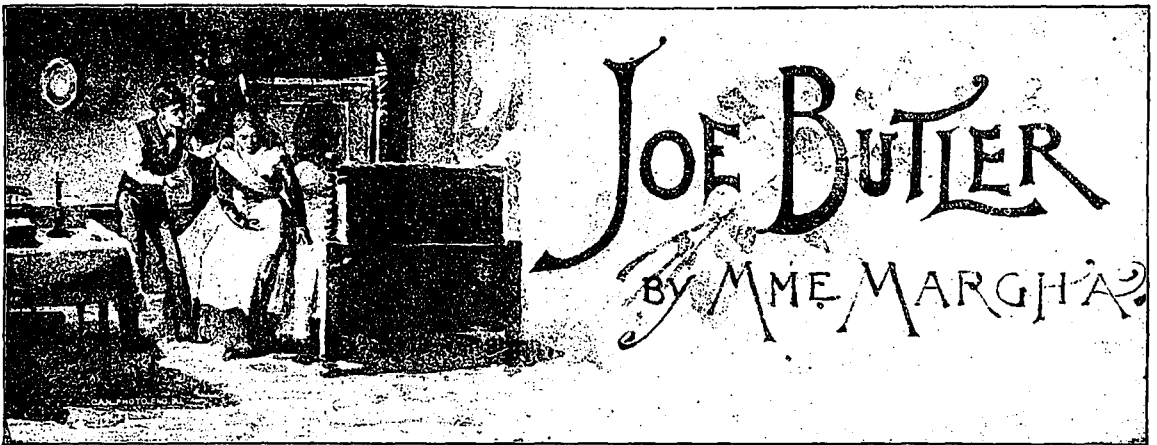
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THIRD PORTION.

“WHAT will I do when you go away?” asked Bell Higgins as Joe sat by her sofa the evening before he started for Bellevue. “I am so tired of myself, and I am sure everyone else is tired seeing me lie here. Just to think Joe, I will never be able to ride again, even if I get so that I can walk.”

“Why not study, Bell?” asked Joe.

“Oh, I hate it so, you know I never could bear to be poked up with musty, fusty old books. The *Pilgrim's Progress* that mother is always advising me to read, the *Life of John Knox*, and those *Diaries* of awfully good people, I think I should die in earnest, if I tried to get them into my brain.”

“I know, Bell,” said Joe laughing, as he remembered her school days which were not remarkable for anything except mischief, “but if you had books you liked, you might read them. Bell, perhaps there is something for you to do that you would never have found, if you had not been forced to lie quiet for a while.”

“Joe Butler, that is some more of your goody talk. Do you think that God couldn't have shown me the work, if there is anything He wants me to do, without giving me so much suffering?”

“Bell,” said Joe, “do not blame God for your own mistakes, you know that if you had not gone to the swamp, you would not have been hurt.”

“O don't preach,” said Bell impatiently, “it is bad enough to lie here, without your pious talk.”

“Bell,” said Joe, “you will not die, you have a good constitution, and in a year or two you will be comparatively well. What are you going to do with yourself? If you lie and fret all the time, no one will want to be near you. If you improve your mind, you may find some work that is worth doing.”

“I tell you Joe Butler, I am not worth anything to anybody. If I had been killed, it would have been better. I never helped mother when I was well, and now she has more work than ever with me to wait on. As for reading the books that father and mother read, I simply couldn't do it. I believe I am too wicked. You remember that verse in the Bible, that old Smith is quoting in his prayers about light afflictions working out for us something, I forget what. Well I'm not exercised thereby. I don't feel like listening to some awful voice, or staring at some vision, that will tell me I am a sinner, and now is my time to be saved. I know I have brought this on myself, and I mean to fight it out.”

“Poor Bell,” said Joe, “you will have a hard time of it, but I'll bring you some books before I go, that I am sure you'll read.”