

The Sea.

BY BERNARD BARTON.

The sea! the sea! the glorious sea!  
What has the earth so fair,  
Hill or valley, grove or lea,  
Which may with it compare!  
I could sit for hours to look  
Upon its wide expanse,  
And read in its unwritten book  
Fresh charms at every glance!

The sea! the sea! the solemn sea!  
It has a voice for all,  
And o'en to hearts of happiest gleo  
May sober thoughts recall.  
Come it speaks of distant days,  
Of vanished hopes and fears;  
How silently can o'er it gaze  
With eyes undimmed by tears?

The sea! the sea! the changeless sea!  
Of tears I take my leave;  
I half recall a smile from me  
To think for what I grieve;  
The hopes and fears I sorrowed o'er,  
Were hopes and fears of time;  
You art the type of something more,  
Unchanging and sublime.

A BOY OF TO-DAY

BY

Julia MacNair Wright.

Author of "The House on the Bluff," etc.

CHAPTER X.

SITTING ON A RAIL-FENCE.

If there had been other people living on that low acre near the railroad where the Sinnets had come to dwell, they would have heard very early in the winter mornings, before daylight, a boy singing and whistling. That was Heman, as by the gleam of a lantern he fed and milked the cows, fed the pig and chickens, and set the poor little barn in as neat order as if it had been the fine big barn where as a child he had played. After that there was wood to carry in to fill Aunt D'rexy's wood-boxes for the day, water-pails to be filled and set in a row; and so off to Lawyer Brace's office to kindle fires, sweep, and dust. When Heman came back from that work he must wash, change his working clothes for his school suit, and then have breakfast. After breakfast, putting on a canvas apron and a pair of sleeves, Heman worked in the shop with Uncle 'Rias until the bell rang for school.

Thus far the shop had not been a very profitable venture, but as Aunt D'rexy and Heman said to each other, "It did 'Rias a power of good to have it, and made him feel as if he was doing something." 'Rias and Heman made stands, sleds, ironing-boards, clothes-racks, ple-boards, and other small wares, and ticketing them "For Sale," set them in front of the shop. One by one they were sold, and so trade was creeping up.

After school in the afternoon Heman was still busy; more milking and feeding; milk to carry to two or three families who bought their daily quart of Aunt D'rexy; wood to saw and split to keep the two or three fires going, for Aunt Espey's room must be heated, and sometimes the shop as well as the kitchen.

Heman was not condemned to "all work and no play." Many a merry evening he was off skating or coasting "with the other fellows." They had fires by the river bank, and baked potatoes and apples, or roasted chestnuts to be ready to warm them up when they were tired and cold.

Aunt D'rexy and Uncle 'Rias liked to talk; they carried the old neighbourly country ways to town with them, and the boys were largely welcomed in the evening, the elders entering into the fun and gossip as heartily as any one. Sometimes they made molasses candy, or popcorn balls, or nut-taffy.

Heman made a checker-board and a fox-and-geese board, and taught Uncle 'Rias these games. The boys who came in the evening played them also, and the schoolmaster showed them how to make a geography game, a history game, and a game of birds, which became very popular. At Christmas Heman earned a dollar by making fox-and-geese and checker boards. He felt almost the cares and interests of a millionaire as he laid out three binding quarters on Christmas presents for his "home folks," and divided the last one between the collections for the Sunday-school Christmas-tree and a present for the schoolmaster.

Heman was not in the village a boy more alert and jolly than Heman; it was his work trying to conciliate with him. Fred Knapp tried it. He was leaning

over the fence watching Heman at his evening work, which seemed to Fred interminable. "How can you whistle and sing over it, especially in the cold mornings when you have to turn out so early?" he asked.

"As long as I have to turn out, it wouldn't make it any easier to glump and gloom over it, would it? You wouldn't advise a fellow of my size to go crying and whining round, sucking his fingers to keep them warm, would you?"

"Oh, not that," admitted Fred; "but 'pears like I'd hate it so. I couldn't be jolly over it the way you are."

"But I don't hate it at all. I've been used to getting up early, and so long as I have sleep enough what would be the use staying in bed? I always worked, and I don't see but I like it. When folks have to work it makes it easier to like it, and get out of it all the fun there is in it."

"I don't see any fun in it," said Fred. "I think it is a real pity for you to have so much to do morning and night."

"Who would do it if I didn't?" demanded Heman wrathfully. "Would I leave it to Uncle 'Rias, crippling round on a wooden leg? What kind of a fellow do you take me for, to see women folks carrying in wood and water, and milking, out in the cold? You talk about 'too bad.' I think when a man has a good home, good meals, some decent clothes, some friends, and knows where he belongs, he is pretty well off. I've seen people dragging about the country with none of these comforts, I can tell you."

When Heman took this tone, and alluded more or less darkly to his experience, his boy friends were full of awe and veneration. They had concocted many myths about the world as Heman had seen it. They had tales about the tawny-haired Heman having lived for a month with an ex-penitentiary convict; that this ill-chosen comrade had tried highway robbery, and Heman had gallantly delivered his victim. They hinted to one another that Heman had carried on "a great lawsuit, and won it, sir, won it as you'd win a game of checkers, don't you know?"

It was said that Heman knew all about "circus men" and prestidigitateurs and their tricks, and could tell, too, only he was deeply pledged never to unfold these dark arcanes. When Heman was deferentially approached about these tremendous adventures, he laughed openly, showing all his strong white teeth, and said, "Sho! I never told such things as that; guess some of you fellows must have made it." All the same the boys believed it steadfastly, and felt sure that these denials were only a part of Heman's pledged secrecy. By reason of these legends and his big bulk Heman was rather a king among the boys.

One spring afternoon Heman, busy at his desk, suddenly asked leave to go away from school.

"Is it necessary?" asked George Renfrew reluctantly.

"Yes, sir," responded Heman promptly.

A little later the boys who sat where they could overlook Miss Polly Drew's place saw Heman over there, darting about, busily getting in certain flocks of young chickens and callow broods of turkeys. Various significant winks, head-shakes, and pointed fingers conveyed information that Heman, instead of shining in the history class, was making Miss Polly's little place and poultry ready for a thunder-storm that was rapidly rolling up. As he ended his task he saw Bob Henden dashing along on his pony.

"Hello, Bob! As you go by Lincoln's, stop and tell Miss Polly Drew not to worry about her chickens and little turkeys, because I've put 'em all up for her!" cried Heman.

"All right!" said Bob.

"I say, Heman," asked Fred, "what'd you do it for? You're real good in history, and you lost your marks going out of class to-day."

"Why, I had to," said Heman; "I couldn't let Miss Polly Drew lose all her poultry, could I? I saw the storm coming up, and I knew she was out at Lincoln's sewing. You see, Miss Polly makes a lot of her living out of her fowls—couldn't let her lose 'em, of course. My, I know she was glad when Bob Henden told her they were all shut up right; Miss Polly makes her living by hard knocks. Aunt Espey says she's terrible thankful she isn't alone in the world, like Miss Polly."

"Yes, Miss Polly does have it hard; but say, Heman, why don't you try for one of the prizes? The history one, say. You might as well get it as anybody, you're just as smart." Heman modestly admitted that he wasn't deterred by any fears based on a lack of smartness, but explained:

"You see, Fred, I just came to school to learn a lot of things I needed to know. I couldn't stir myself up trying to get prizes, for I knew to begin with that if any one was sick at our house, or anything bad happened there, I'd have to stay at home and see to it. Then if I had a good price offered for a day's work, I'd need to stay out of school and do it I need the money. The lessons I could make up at night, and come in all right for examinations, but I can't go in for prizes. Don't know as I want to. School prizes aren't in my line, you see it's work I'm bent on."

Plodding along in this fashion, doing what he individually must, and not measuring himself by the doings of other boys, Heman reached May and the last week of school. He had been out in the country for a day's ploughing. Aunt D'rexy had undertaken to clean the church for him that he might go and earn his dollar. He had earned it and was coming home. Master Renfrew met him.

"You're early, Heman, it is not six yet."

"We finished the field," said Mr Weeks did not care to begin earlier. He always knocks off work a little early Saturday night."

"If you're in no hurry, come and sit here on the fence with me, and let's have a talk," said the school-master.

The two perched on the top rail, each with his knees drawn up, because his heels were stuck in the third rail, and each took a stick to whittle. Said the schoolmaster:

"What a delightful place is a rail fence! Here the raspberries and blackberries make a mat with their red and purple stems that shine of fiercer colour in the sun; pretty soon along these brilliant stems there will be thousands of white flowers, and then the berries. I've heard folks talk of 'ugly rail fences'; they simply don't understand where to look for beauty! Heman! school is nearly over, and I suppose you are not expecting to come back to books next year. What are you going to make of yourself, my boy? You should have a plan and pursue it. Have you a plan?" Thus the school-master, quickly changing the tenor of his remarks.

"Well, sir, I've got to stir around pretty lively and do something," said Heman, sedately. "You see, I've a family on my hands. My folks are growing old; time'll come when they can't help themselves much, and when I won't want them to feel forced to do anything. Aunt Espey's quite old; Uncle 'Rias has been dreadfully broken up by losing his leg. They took care of me when I was little, and they meant to give me all they had. That's all lost, so they haven't anything for themselves or me either; but they meant it all the same. Why, school-master, when I came to them I was a baby about three years old, without parents or a penny, nothing but a little carpet-sack full of clothes!"

"Poor little fellow!" said the school-master, impulsively.

"But they never let me know that I was a poor little fellow! They loved me and I loved them, and they gave me all the good times that were a-going. They saw to it that I had all I needed, that I was healthy, and made much of. I don't know as my fix was different much from any other child's. When children come to their own folks, you know, they're littler than I was, they can't get about on their legs, and they haven't any sack of clothes. Yes, sir, my people have loved me for all I was worth and have done their level best for me, and now I must do for them."

"What?" asked the school-master.

"I don't know," said Heman.

"You don't want to be a day labourer, or odd-jobs man, all your life. You can be more and better than that, and if you are only that, you'll get but a poor living for your family. You need to have a trade or some business or profession, some regular thing to begin at and keep at and be proficient in. One gets to a journey's end quickest by going straight on, not by zig-zagging all over the country. Is your mind made up as to your life work?"

Heman shook his head.

"It is time it was," said the master, incisively. "Let me see if I can help you to a conclusion. What do you think of clerking, or book-keeping? You've done nicely in book-keeping."

"I wanted to know how to keep books for myself if I had a business, but there's not the making of a book-keeper or a clerk in me, Mr. Renfrew. I'd use a yard-stick as if it was a club, and put the scissors through a piece of cloth like a rip-saw going through a plank, and I'd wish it was the rip-saw, too! No, I never craved to stand in a store all day."

"What about a profession? Have you thought of that?"

"Oh, yes, I've thought; but they take too much time and money, and there are no prompt returns. It can't be done."

"Why have you thought about a professional life, Heman?"

"Well—it seemed—more honourable like—I would like to be worth something in the world."

"Can't you be worth something in a trade?"

"Yes; but somehow, as I thought of it, a profession seemed to be more high-toned."

"A man must love a profession for itself before he is fit to pursue it, Heman. He must desire it so much that he would be willing to purchase its ideal for double the usual term of years, as Jacob served his seven years twice told for Rachel. He must feel that cold, hunger, poverty, weariness, are all as nothing for the love wherewith he loves the profession of his choice; as if, prince or peasant, he would or could be nothing else but master of his profession."

"Oh, but master, it's not in me to care for anything in the study way like that. I don't love study much. I like books, magazines, newspapers. I like to sit at home in the evening and read a little, partly because I want to know what other folks know and talk of; partly because I'm sure I'm safe and out of mischief; and partly because the folks like to have me there, and it cheers them up if I read a little to them. I get asleep over it often, and if I were studying a profession I'd get asleep over it always!"

"Come, come, we're getting on! You don't want clerking or indoor mercantile work, and evidently the Lord has not called you to the ministry, medicine, or the law. You don't like books particularly; you will not be a "mute, inglorious Milton," or a Shakespeare spoiled. I doubt if ever there are any such. If genius for letters is in a man, it will come out, but family pride, a craving for the "high-toned," as you just said, has dragged many a boy from a useful, honourable, manly handicraftsman to be a miserable, inefficient dabbler at some profession. Now, Heman, you've made it clear that you want a trade—what trade?"

"Do you know, Mr. Renfrew almost any trade that I can give good hard knocks at, do something at, looks fine to me! I don't really think I care for bricklaying, or stone-cutting, but there was a time when I was pretty sure I would like to be a blacksmith. I liked to hear the hammers ring, and see the fire glow and the sparks fly! On the whole, I want carpentry for my business. I like boards, and nails, and tools. I always did! I want to learn the trade well and go on to house building. Why, I might, you know, get so far as to build not only houses, but churches, court-houses, school-houses, colleges. I could go on and on, by doing well, to fine work, if I was a house carpenter, just the same as I could go up in any other business, if I knew enough."

"That's the right spirit," said the master; "wish to excel, to rise, by deserving to rise, in whatever work you choose for your life occupation. Whether you are a tailor, a shoemaker, a baker, a merchant, artist, or teacher, whatever you are, be thorough and make your mark in it. You have no time to lose, Heman, if you are to learn house carpentry thoroughly, you cannot spend further time in cleaning offices or in ploughing. You must say, like Paul, 'This one thing I do.'"

"I know it," said Heman; "it has worried me lately as I thought about it. If Uncle 'Rias had not hurt himself I could have learned with him; he's first-rate. I do know something, I have lathed, and shingled, and boarded, and put on clap-boards; I could earn my way now with a builder."

"Then this very evening talk it over with your uncle and aunt, and see what plans you can make for beginning at once on your life-business. Some day you and I will plan how you can study mechanical drawing. You need more mathematics, too, for making estimates."

The two dropped the sticks they had whittled and got down from the rail-fence; slowly they turned toward the village, and soon in the purple evening light Heman saw the flat acre, the little house, the little barn and the beds newly arrayed of Aunt D'rexy's garden.

(To be continued.)

No temporal blessing is too great to expect from a God whose love was so infinite as to give his own Son for the salvation of mankind.—Saurin.