

## Choice Literature.

BY A WAY SHE KNEW NOT.

The Story of Allison Bain.

BY MARGARET M. ROBERISON

## CHAPTER XIII.

"She wakened heavy hearted  
To hear the driving rain,  
By noon the clouds had parted,  
And the sun shone out again.  
'I'd take it for a sign,' she said,  
'That I have not prayed in vain.'"

That night while Mrs. Beaton and her son sat by the fire-side, exchanging a word now and then, but for the most part in silence, a knock came to the door. Allison had given herself no time to reconsider the determination to which she had come when she met John's eyes in the kirk, being bent on abiding by it whatever might befall.

It had not come into her mind that her courage might fail her at the last moment. It was not that her courage was failing, she told herself, as she stood waiting. It was because she had run down the lane so quickly that her heart was beating hard. It was like the thud of a great hammer against her side; it frightened her, and she was tempted to turn and run away. But she did not.

"I would be sorry when it was too late," thought she, and knocked again.

There was a pause of a minute or two, and then the door opened, and John Beaton appeared, carrying a light.

"I was wishing to say a word to Mrs. Beaton, if she will let me," said Allison, making a great effort to speak as usual.

"Surely," said John. "Come in."

"Come away in, Allison," said Mrs. Beaton's kind voice out of the darkness.

When John had shut the door and come into the parlour with the light, he was surprised to see that the two women had clasped hands, and that on his mother's face was the look which he had hitherto believed it had worn for him alone. He moved a chair forward from the wall.

"Sit down, Allison," said he.

"No," said she; "I will say first what I came to say."

John set down the candle and turned to go. But Allison put out her hand to detain him.

"Bide still," said she. "I have to ask your mother to ask her son to do something for me—something which I cannot do for myself, but which must be done, or I think my heart will break."

"Bide still, John," said his mother.

John moved the light again, so that it fell on Allison's face, and then went and stood in the shadow, leaning on the back of his mother's chair. Allison stood for a moment silent, and both mother and son regarded her with interest and with surprise as well.

This was quite a different Allison, Mrs. Beaton thought, from the one who went up and down the street, heeding no one, seeing nothing unless the child Marjorie was in her arms to call her attention to whatever there might be to see. She seemed eager and anxious, full of determination and energy. She had not at all the air of one who had been accustomed to go and come at the bidding of other folk.

"It is the true Allison at last," said John to himself.

"Her gown has something to do with it," thought Mrs. Beaton, and perhaps it had. Her gown was black, and hung in straight folds about her. A soft, white kerchief showed above the edge of it around her throat, and her Sunday cap, less voluminous and of lighter material than those which she wore about her work, let her shining hair be seen.

"A strong and beautiful woman," John said to himself. His mother was saying it also; but with a better knowledge of a woman's nature, and a misgiving that some great trouble had brought her there, she added:

"May God help her, whatever it may be. Allison, sit down," she said, after waiting a minute for her to speak.

"It is that my heart is beating so fast that I seem to be in a tremble," said Allison, clasping her hands on her side.

"Sit down, my dear," said Mrs. Beaton kindly.

"Not yet. It is only a few words that I must say. I have had great trouble in my life. I have trouble yet—that must be met. And it came into my mind when I was sitting in the kirk that you might maybe help me, and—keep my heart from breaking altogether," said she; then lifting her eyes to John's face she asked, "Have ye ever been in the tollbooth at Aberdeen? It is there my Willie is, whom I would fain save."

John's mother felt the start her son gave at the words. Even she uttered a word of dismay.

"I must tell you more," said Allison eagerly. "Yes, he did wrong. But he had great provocation. He struck a man down. At first they thought the man might die. But he didn't die. My mother died, and my father, but this man lived. Willie was tried for what he had done, and though all in the country-side were ready to declare that Brownrigg had gotten only what he well deserved, they sentenced the lad to a long year and a half in the tollbooth, and there he has been all this time. A long time it has been to me, and it has been longer to him. It is near over now, thank God."

"And have you never seen him nor heard from him since then?" asked Mrs. Beaton.

"I wrote one letter to him and he wrote one to me. That was at the first. I wrote to him to tell him what I was going to do, and to warn him what he must do when his time was over. I dared not write again, for fear that—and even now I dare not go to him. When we meet it must be on the other side of the sea. But I must hear from him before then. He wasna an ill lad, though ye might think it from what I have told you. He was only foolish and ill advised."

"And think of him all these long days and months alone with his anger and his shame, him that had aye had a free life in the fields and on the hills. And there is no one to speak a kind word to him when he comes out of that weary place—"

"And you would like my John to go and see him?" said Mrs. Beaton.

"Oh! if he only would! Think of him alone, without a friend! And he is easily led either for good or ill."

"Is it likely that he would listen to anything that an utter stranger would say to him?" said John.

He spoke coldly as his mother noticed with pain. Allison did not notice it.

"But you would not seem like a stranger to him if you came from me. And anyway, ye wouldna be strangers long. You would like Willie, or you would be the first one who didn't

all his life. And oh! he needs one wise, and strong, and good like you. The very touch of your hand would give him hope, and would keep him from losing heart—and, it might be, from losing himself—"

She stood, bending slightly toward him, her eyes, which in spite of his will and his reason had all these months haunted him by night and by night and by day, looking into his. She stood in utter unconsciousness of herself or of him, save as one whose strength might help the weakness of another who was in sore need. No spoken words could have made clearer to him that he—John Beaton—was not in all her thoughts, save as a possible friend to the unknown criminal, who, doubtless, had well deserved his fate.

And to think of the life which lay before this woman, with this weak fool to share it—a woman among ten thousand!

"She will need strength for two, and her love will give it to her," thought John, a dull pain at his heart, with which some self-contempt was mingled. But it was no time to consider himself with Allison's eyes on his face.

"I could trust him to you," said Allison, trying to smile, "because ye have a kind heart, though folks say ye're a wee hard while. But I ken what you have been to the lads at the manse to win them, and to warn them, and to keep them out of mischief. It would be the saving o' my Willie if you would but take him in hand."

"I would gladly help him or any one in trouble," said John, "but how could I do it in secret?"

"But you needna do it in secret. It's not Willie that needs to hide. When the prison door opens to him he will be free to go where he likes—to his own house, and his own land to bide there at his pleasure. But he will have a sore heart in going to a desolate house. And the thought of going alone to a far-off land will dismay him. The help of such a friend as you is what he needs, though it may seem a strange thing in me to ask it from you."

"You have a right to all the help that I can give you, as has any one in trouble. But why should you not go to him yourself?"

"But that is what I cannot tell you. I would never be suffered to go with him if I were to be found. I have been asking you to help my Willie, but indeed it is myself that you will help most. I cannot go with him for both our sakes, but I will follow him. He will be watched through every step of the way, and I would be brought back again from the ends of the earth. And then," added Allison, her face falling into the gloom of which John had seen but little, but which his mother had seen often during the first days of their acquaintance, "then I should just lie down and die."

John made a sudden, impatient movement, and then he said:

"And what am I to say to this man from you?"

"Willie his name is—Willie Bain," said Allison, smiling faintly. "Oh! ye'll ken what to say to him when ye see him. And ye are not to let him know that ye are sent from me till ye are sure of him. He is a lad who is moved by the first thought that comes, and his first thought when he hears of me will be to try to see me. And he must not try," repeated she, "for he will be watched, and then ye will be parted forever."

There was a pause, and then John said:

"I will go to him, at any rate, and do what I can. I will faithfully help him, if he will let me—so help me God."

"I'm not feared for him now. You're strong and wise, and you can do what you like with Willie."

John did not seem to see the hand she held out to him. Allison went on:

"When he speaks of me, as he'll be sure to do, just hear him and say nothing till you are sure that he'll listen to reason—till he promises not to try to see me, but to have patience and wait. I can trust him to you, John Beaton, and I must go now."

He could not this time refuse to see the hand she held out to him. He took it in his and held it fast, while she looked at him with eyes full of light and longing. "John," said she softly, "ye'll mind what is said in the Book: 'I was in prison and ye came unto me.' And then she turned to go."

It must be owned that was a sore moment to John Beaton. He neither spoke nor moved while she stood thus, nor when she bent down, kissed his mother's hand, and then without a word went away. For a time, which he did not measure, but which seemed long to his mother, he stood leaning on the back of her chair. His face was hidden in his hands, but happily she did not know that, and she waited till the first word should be spoken by him. In a little he "pulled himself together," and came forward into the light, which was but dim at the best. He snuffed the solitary candle, and then fell to stirring the fire, which, never very large, was in danger of disappearing under his hand. He added a dry peat, however, and it soon blazed up again.

"Yon's a strange story, mother," he said at last, "I hardly see the good of my meddling in it. I suppose I must go and see the man, anyway."

"Yes, ye canna do less than that," said his mother.

"I'll do more. I'll do my best to help one who seems much in need of help, but I cannot say that I am very hopeful as to what may come of it."

"Ye'll see when ye go what can be done. Poor lassie. Her heart is in it."

"Yes," said John, "her heart is in it." And then they sat silent till another knock came at the door.

It was Robin Hume this time, who had been sent to ask for Mrs. Beaton, who had not been at the kirk, and no one had got a chance to speak to John.

"My mother said I wasna to stay," said Robin. But he came forward into the room, now bright with firelight, and he stayed a good while, and had much to say about various matters, and the interest with which John seemed to listen and respond comforted Mrs. Beaton concerning her son.

Of course there was something to be said about the coming winter and its work, and some other things came in as well. Then there was a little sparring and laughter between them, which, with a lightened heart, Mrs. Beaton gently reproved, as not suitable for the Sabbath night. Then Robin rose to go, and John went with him to the door. But he did not linger there, or go out for a turn in the lane as he sometimes did, and as his mother thought he would be sure to do. He came in and fell to mending the fire again "for a last blaze," as he said.

"And, mother, is not it near time that we were beginning to think of the flitting that is before us?"

"It's early days yet, John," said his mother.

"And you will be loth to leave your little home, another dear?"

"It has been home to us both, John, and I like the place.

But any place will be home to me where you are, and if you think it wise to go I'll soon be ready. And so ye have made up your mind to go to the college, John?"

"I am not sure yet, but it is likely. Whether I do or not, I must be in Aberdeen all the winter, and I will be happier and safer in my mother's house than anywhere else. But I am sorry to disturb you, mother. Ye have got used with the place and are happy here."

"I can be happy anywhere where it is wise, and right for you to be. But it is only August, yet, and there is time enough to think about it."

"Yes, there is no hurry. But there are arrangements to be made. And mother I have been thinking, how would it do for us to have Robin with us for the winter? It would be a satisfaction to his father and mother, and a safeguard to him."

"Surely, if you wish it. It will make a difference, but only a cheerful difference. And it is a small thing to do for them who have been aye so friendly."

"Well, that is settled then. And I will look out for rooms, or for a wee house—that will be better, wouldna it, mother dear?"

He did not need to ask. Anything that would please him would please his mother also. But she was not so cheerful and eager about this as she generally was about new plans and arrangements, John thought, and after a little they fell into silence.

John woke his mother out of her morning sleep when he came to bid her goodbye. She had only a single word to say to him:

"Dinna be long in coming home again, John," said she. And he promised that he would not be long.

He kept his promise, coming even sooner than he was expected, and when his mother saw his face she was glad. For there was on it no sign of either gloom or grieving. It was John, "at his best and bonniest," she said to herself with a glad heart, as he sat for a little while beside her bed, for his coming was late, as usual. She asked no questions. It was well with him, that was enough for her. As he rose to go she said:

"I hope you have good news for Allison Bain. Then John sat down again."

There was not much to tell. John had not seen the man himself. He had been set at liberty before his time was out. As to what sort of a man he was, John had been told that after a month or two, when he had been first wild with anger and shame, and then sullen and indifferent, a change had come over him. A friend had come to visit him more than once, and had encouraged him to bear his trouble patiently, and had given him hope. But he had never spoken about himself or his affairs to any one else. The chances were he had gone home to his own place; but nothing, which his informant could repeat, had been heard from him since he went away.

"Poor Allison Bain!" said Mrs. Beaton with a sigh.

"Surely it will be good news to her that he has been free all the summer days, and in his own house," said John.

"Yes, but of her he can ken nothing. And he must go to America, if he should go, with only a vague hope of some time seeing her on the other side of the sea. And she kens his weak will, and must fear for him. She will likely be here in the Sabbath gloaming to hear what ye have to tell."

But it was otherwise ordered. John rose early, as was his custom, intent on getting all the good from the country air which could be got in a single day. It was a fair morning, clear and still. Only a pleasant sound of birds and breeze was to be heard. There was no one visible in the street. Most of the tired workers of the place were wont to honour the day of rest by "a lang, lie in the mornin'," and the doors and windows of the houses were still closed. While he stood hesitating as to the direction he should take, out of the manse close, sedately and slowly walked Fleckie and her companions, each dragging the long chain by which she was to be tethered; and after them limped cripple Sandy, whose Sunday duty at all times it was to see them safely afield.

John did not quicken his steps to overtake him, as he had now and then done at such times, for the sake of getting the news of all that had happened while he was away. He turned and went down the green, and round by the lane and the high hedge which sheltered the manse garden, and giving himself no time to hesitate as to the wisdom of his intention, stopped at last at one of the doors of the long, low outbuildings of the manse. He had been in the place before with the lads, and knew it well. There was no one there; but the foaming milk-buckets indicated that some one would be there soon, and he waited.

(To be continued.)

## GENEVA'S CARNIVAL.

The following interesting letter by a Canadian gentleman at present in Geneva appears in the *Week*:

Every people has a state holiday that it keeps in its own fashion, and that is intended to commemorate some event in its history. Frenchmen, who seem in a measure to deserve even now Burke's epithet of that it keeps in its own fashion, and that is intended to commemorate some event in its history. Frenchmen, who seem in a measure to deserve even now Burke's epithet of being the ablest architects of ruin that the world has seen, glorify the Great Revolution every fourteenth of July, and sing the praises of Danton and Robespierre; on the first of September Germany celebrates the anniversary of Sedan that gave her unity and strength; and in like manner Italy on the twentieth of the same month reminds her children of the entry of the Italian troops into Rome, and the birth of Modern Italy. Englishmen keep the Queen's Birthday, Americans celebrate the glorious Fourth; Canadians, Dominion Day, and Genevans the *Escalade*. In accordance with ancient custom—for the Republic of Geneva keeps a national anniversary in comparison with which the others are of yesterday—the youthful population of this city celebrate every twelfth of December; that is to say, for some days before, bands of boys, masked and disguised, parade the streets from dusk to midnight with lanterns, horns, tin pans, kettles, and other instruments of discordant music. On the night of the twelfth the principal streets are crowded, one third at least of the people being masked; and as prizes are given to encourage it some of the characters are got up with great taste and ex-