

"I tell you what," Mrs. Might said one day, sitting up very erectly in her chair, and beaming upon me, while she tapped her smelling-salts bottle, "the way Peggie's handlin' things around here 's a credit to her. It was only last night I heard my man Adam say, 'Peg Mallory's goin' to make more money with her brains than half the men in the townships is with brains 'n' hands too.' That's what he said, Mrs. Mallory, sure 's my name 's Amanda Might. I alwus knew what she'd come to, Mrs. Mallory"—shaking her forefinger impressively—" 'n' ye see I wasn't mistook."

My mother looked at her mystified. "Oh, yes," she said, "Peg's a great help to me. It's a hard thing for a woman to hev' a farm to manage when her husband's gone, 'n' her help's gettin' too old to be what he used to be. But Peg's been a great help; I must say that."

And it was a great joy to me to hear my mother say so, and to know that she appreciated my efforts.

For me, it is true, there was much worry in all this head farming and fussing with hired help; but it is to be much doubted if we ever do anything that is of much real value without finding some sort of hardship in it; and, after all, it is just such hardship that brings the keenest satisfaction. I should have liked to go on to school longer, and my having to give up so soon, especially when Gay Torrance went off to "Miss Vincent's School for Girls" in Saintsbury, and Hud Jamieson to study medicine, was, for a time, a source of keen disappointment. But there was no possibility of my having such opportunities, so I had to content myself with determining to read and study in the evenings, as Dick Carmichael, so I heard, was doing, with the assiduity characteristic of him.

As for Chris, he seemed often filled with a sort of vague unrest, which betrayed that, after all, his mental weakness was the result of bodily infirmity, rather than the approach of senility. Old age, as a rule, comes on with a gentle gliding, like the waters of a great, quiet river, which pass imperceptibly out into the bosom of the calm, deep lake; and so we see contented old men and women, putting about, busying themselves with small tasks, and cheating themselves with the sweet delusion that they are just as energetic and able to accomplish as ever they were.

But Chris sometimes sat moodily, without a word to say; or, if he spoke at all, in a tone of gentle complaint.

"Aye, Peggie," he said to me once, when I came in all aglow from a tramp over the farm, "ye're young 'n' strong, 'n' it's right fer ye to rejoice in yer strength. Aye, I've been through it"—dropping into that low tone of far-away reminiscence—"I've seen the rosy skies, 'n' the sunrises 'n' sunsets all light, 'n' the storms jist outcries o' strength, makin' ye exult in life 'n' the power to rise beyond them. But now I'm old, 'n' already the heavens is gray, 'n' the steady clouds lowerin', 'n' jist a little streak o' light on the far sky-line to show that there's light, 'n' youth, 'n' strength waitin' yet. It'll be a glad endin', but the waitin' 's long."

"But, Chris," I said, "you are not yourself now. You'll be well again, and able to go about, and then you'll not find the time so wearisome."

"Aye," he said, "I'd like to be o' some real use again."

"You've done so much, Chris. You ought to be satisfied to take a bit of a rest."

"Aye," looking about the clearing, "I've turned the mulleins 'n' thistles to corn 'n' 'tatoes, 'n' the rest o' the farm didn't go back, neither. But dash it, Peg"—with a spurt of the old spirit—"it's all the harder to sit here with one's foot in a sling!"

It was Miss Tring, however, who was my real stay and inspiration

through all this time of stumbling and proving. She was one of those whose good acts it is not easy to tick off like beads in a rosary. So quiet and gentle was she that, indeed, it is hard to tell just how and wherein she influenced those about her; yet I do know that whenever she was near I was never wholly discouraged, and that my best thoughts and firmest steps have almost invariably been due, directly or indirectly, in some way, to her. Her name was Violet, but often I thought it would have been more appropriately "Hope."

CHAPTER X.

A Paring Bee.

It may seem somewhat far-fetched to say that the whole tenor of my life was changed by an unusually large apple crop which the Might's had in the fall of 18—, and yet, how can I help thinking so, when I know what followed, and that, by just such trifles, is often set free the lever which swings with mighty force in carrying out the thing we call destiny?

However that may be, in the fall which I have mentioned the Might orchard showed a tremendous apple crop. I saw it at the height of the apple-picking, when the maple woods all about were aflame with scarlet, and the yellow apple leaves, just beginning to drop in a thin, golden rain, left all the more open to view the bending crop of brown russets, rich-red Baldwins, and pippins round and full as the harvest moon.

Amanda Might was perched upon a ladder up among the branches, but she came down as soon as she saw me, untying the red kerchief from her head.

"D'ye know what I've been thinkin'?" she said, looking round upon the bountiful harvest concentrating into little heaps beneath the trees. "I've been thinkin' I'll jist hev' a parin' bee Hollow Eve (Hallowe'en) Night. It's an awful bother, I know, hev' 'n' people tapsalteerin' all over a body's (she pronounced it 'buddy's') house; but, as I said to Adam Might, it 'ud be a burnin' shame to let all them apples go to waste. There's no sale fer them this fall, 'n' fer pittin' them, why the half o' them 'ud roll out rotten in the spring. Jist so much labor lost, says I, 'n' it never was the way o' the Greens to work fer nothin', 'n' I guess it won't be the way of a Green that's turned a Might."

"But," I hesitated, "what will you do with all the dried apples you'll have after a paring bee, and only you and Mr. Might to eat them?"

"There's good sale fer dried apples in the spring," she said, "now that dryin' apples has gone out o' fashion among the farmers, 'n' there's not many o' them comin' in. And,"—giving her head a toss—"it's beneath no one to turn an honest penny, you know that, Peggy, brought up as ye were with such a savin' mother. O' course, it's not that I hev' to make by sellin' apples, or anything else fer that matter"—with conscious satisfaction—"but 'waste not want not' 's a good motto fer us all, 'n' was alwus the way o' the Greens."

After this peroration she sat down on a step of the ladder and began to finger the apples in her basket in a half ashamed way, as though about to make a confession.

"Besides," she went on in a lower tone, and with that peculiar softness in her face which I had noted, most strongly, perhaps, at the time of my father's death, and which, after all, gave a glimpse of the real goodness in Amanda Might's heart, "besides, me 'n' Adam Might's been talkin' things over lately, 'n' we've come to the conclusion that we've lived too much to ourselves, 'n' never give others the little pleasures we had a right to give them. I s'pose it's the way folks gets into that hesn't neither chick nor child. They jist git into a sort o' rut, 'n' there they are joggin' along, their own two

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