

Choice Literature.

BY A WAY SHE KNEW NOT.

The Story of Allison Bain.

BY MARGARET M. ROBERTSON

CHAPTER XXII. (Continued.)

She had been enduring this trial—this great dread, in one way worse to meet than suffering itself would have been; while he, full of himself and his own plans and disappointments, had been taking no heed.

"I have great reason to be thankful," said Mrs. Beaton, softly; "and, John lad, what could I do, but keep my fears to myself till I was quite sure? You had your own trouble to bear, as I could well see, and it would have made mine none the less to add to your pain."

"Oh! mother! mother!" was all her son could say.

"John," said Mrs. Beaton, after a time, "I think you might tell your mother!"

John raised his head and laughed, but there were tears in his eyes as he came over to her, and stooping, he softly kissed her.

"Do you need to be told, mother?" said he.

These were the very first words which had passed between them concerning the sorrow which had come to them both through Allison Bain, and they were nearly all that were ever spoken.

"I grieved for you, John, and I feared for you; but I trusted Allison Bain. If she does not love him he is in no danger, I said. If she loves him, she will withstand him for his own sake."

"Be content, mother. She withstood me, whether she loved me or not."

"I thank God for you both. May He ever lead you in His own way!"

Of course a voyage was to be taken. There was some hesitation as to whether John should avail himself of the opportunity offered by a ship which was to sail at once to bring home timber from Norway, or wait a little longer for the *Griffin*, an emigrant vessel, bound for Quebec. There were already great steam vessels crossing the ocean—not many of them, however, at this time, but the long voyage would be rather an advantage in John's case, and he made up his mind to go by the *Griffin*. But he said nothing to make any one suppose that he did not intend to return with her. There would be time enough to decide as to the length of his stay, when he had seen the country.

So the mother and son bade one another farewell for a while, and Mrs. Beaton was the more courageous of the two when it came to the last words between them. But they did not linger over last words. Robert Hume had come to say good-bye to his friend, and to take care of Mrs. Beaton on her homeward journey to Nethermuir, and he was amazed at John's "down-heartedness."

"Oh! man! if I only had your chance! Or if I were going with you!" said he, and John echoed his wish.

He had been a good many days out of sight of land, before he began to take himself to task for his utter inability to feel, or to profess an interest in that which was going on about him. He was, indeed, very down-hearted, as Robert had said. He said in his foolishness:

"My days are past. My purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart."

And he told himself that, except for his mother's sake, it did not matter whether he made his home in America or in Scotland, or whether he should ever make a home at all. But this melancholy did not continue long. Little by little the salt winds brought him health and strength. They blew away his foolish fancies, and soothed the smart of a pain real, and ill to bear. Then he began to see and to interest himself in that which was going on in the little world around him.

There were all sorts of people in it—fathers and mothers, and little children, young men and maidens. There were doubtful characters among them, it is to be supposed; some of them seemed to be poor enough, and some were evidently "well-to-do." All were alike cheerful and not afraid of the future, for they were all looking forward to having land of their own and a fair chance in the new world.

John made acquaintance with many, and made friends with a few, and got good, and tried to do good among them. There is time to make acquaintance during a voyage which lasts for weeks, and the seventh week was over before they anchored within sight of the citadel of Quebec.

There are letters still in existence in John's handwriting—great sheets, larger than common foolscap, written in small, even characters, like "copper-plate," and so written that every available hairbreadth of space is covered, except that part which, when the elaborate process of folding was accomplished, was left blank for the address. There are a good many of these letters, and there is great variety both as to matter and to manner among them, some of them being addressed to his mother and others to the minister and to Robert. Altogether, they might afford material for a very full account of John's first impression of the scenery, the climate, the character of the people, the state of morals and manners, of education and religion in the new country to which he had come.

When they fell into John's hands many years after they were written, he enjoyed the reading of them greatly. He was very proud of the handwriting for one thing, and pleased with the evidence they gave of his patient and faithful efforts to satisfy his correspondents, both as to the quantity and the quality of the information conveyed.

His descriptions of natural scenery, of the grand river St. Lawrence, the mountains, the islands, the great falls of Niagara, were very fine—"perhaps a little too fine," he acknowledged. But his opinions as to the state of morals and manners, education and religion, the American institutions generally, were greatly modified by the time he read his letters again, his "first impressions" may therefore be omitted in his story, and his adventures also, which were not of extraordinary interest, even to himself, until he came to the town of Barstow in the United States, the only town in all America which at that time had any special attraction for him.

In those days Barstow used to be spoken of as a Western town, but so many new States have been made since then, and so many towns and cities have risen up far to the westward, that it is now regarded as belonging to the eastern part

of the great republic. It was not a large town when John Beaton first saw it. It had a few long, tree-shaded streets, where the great square, white houses stood far apart, with pleasant lawns and gardens about them. Even the business streets were wide and clean, and had trees growing in them; and, altogether, "the place gave one the idea of plenty of elbow room," as John told Robert Hume in the first letter which he wrote there.

But he did not tell Robert or any one else why he had turned his face thitherward.

Before Dr. Fleming had ended the sentence which declared that a sea voyage would be the best thing for his patient, John was saying to himself, that to the town of Barstow, where Alexander Hadden lived, and where William Bain was likely to go at last, wherever he might be lingering now, he should first direct his steps when his voyage was ended. If such a thing were possible, Allison's heart should be set at rest concerning her brother.

But now that he was there, for a reason which he could not well have declared to any one, he hesitated to apply to Mr. Hadden for the information which he desired. It would be more natural and agreeable to them both, he thought, that meeting William Bain as it were by chance, he should claim him as a countryman, and strive to win his confidence first of all. Afterward, he might be able to help and influence him. And it was too likely that he would need both help and influence.

That this lad who, not through wickedness perhaps, but but through weakness and folly, had brought sorrow on all who loved him, would have strength and wisdom to resist all temptation, and begin a new life in a new land, was hardly to be believed. Alone, homesick, remorseful, there was little hope of his doing well without help from some one.

"And whatever else I may do, I must first find Willie Bain and help him as he may need, for Allison's sake."

But time was precious, and John's purse was not very deep; and if he were to see anything of this wonderful country, he told himself, he must not linger long in Barstow. But he did linger day after day. He did not seem to care so very much for seeing the country. He was growing well and strong, and to get health and strength was his motive for crossing the sea. He was as well here as elsewhere, and here he must stay. It seemed to be "borne in upon him," that there was something for him to do in the place.

When several days had passed, he made up his mind that he would go to the bank and see Mr. Hadden, and he went. It was too late to see him that day. Mr. Hadden had gone home. On that night something happened. John met the man whom he was seeking, face to face.

It could be no one else, he said to himself. For the eyes which met his for a moment were the beautiful, sad eyes of Allison Bain.

"Now, God guide me!" said John in strong entreaty, and then he followed the lad. He followed him down one street and up another, and out into the country along the lake shore. The stranger moved more slowly as he went on and stopped at last; and, leaning upon a broken fence, looked out long upon the water.

"I'm not so very strong yet," said John to himself, as he paused also, for his heart was beating hard and his hands trembled.

While he hesitated whether he should speak at once or wait a while, the lad turned and began to retrace his steps. John addressed him as he passed.

"Can you tell me if I am on the right road to—to—Jericho?" said he, at a loss for a name.

"No, I cannot tell you. I am a stranger here."

"A stranger? So am I. And you are a Scotchman, I ken by your tongue. So am I. We are both strangers in a strange land."

If John had had time to think, he might not have spoken in this way, but it is very likely he might have said nothing which would have answered a better purpose. The lad turned and looked at him.

"Yes, I am a stranger. I have no friends no one," he said huskily, and the tears came into his eyes.

"I have no friends on this side of the sea, and not so very many beyond it—besides my mother."

This, also, was a stupid sort of thing to say, he owned, when he came to think of it, and then he added:

"I have heard that this is a fine country to get on in."

"Yes, so they say."

They went on in silence, and very slowly, the stranger walking wearily, as John could see.

"I am done out," said he at last, stopping and leaning against a tree.

"Yes, so I see. Have you far to go? I will go with you."

"I have nowhere to go. I came here yesterday, and I slept last night in a boat by the wharf."

"Then ye'll just come with me," said John heartily, giving him his arm to lean upon. He would have liked to ask his name, but he did not. They walked on slowly, till they came to the house where John was staying.

"I have brought a friend," said he to the mistress of the house. "He will share my room, and I will be responsible for him."

"He looks sick," said the woman gravely. "I hope you realize what you are undertaking?"

John thought he "realized" it, but he did not. It would have made no difference, however, if he had. His new friend tossed and muttered all night, and in the morning was unable to raise his head from the pillow, and that was but the beginning. Many days passed before he was able to do so. He was light-headed much of the time, and uttered a great many names, some of them angrily enough, and some of them with love and longing unspeakable. It was, "Oh! mother! mother!" Or, "Oh! Allie! Allie! where are you gone? through the whole of one painful night when he was at the worst, till the dawn brought sleep at last, and a respite.

He grew better after a while, and the visits of the doctor ceased, but his strength came slowly and his spirits failed him often. The house in which they lodged stood near the water's edge. The heat was great in the middle of the day, and at night the wind which came from the lake was damp and chill. John saw that a change of place was needed, and he would fain have carried him away to get the fresh air of the country.

"A change is what he needs. We can manage it for a day now and then, to get somewhere," said John to himself, "and then—I must to work again."

He knew, or he supposed, that if he applied to Mr. Had-

den, who had the reputation of being a rich man who did much good with his money, all would be made easy to this stranger; but he himself had the best right to have the pleasure of helping Allison's brother; and he said to himself:

"I'll bide a wee. He has not mentioned Mr. Hadden's name, nor his own, for that matter. Yes, I'll bide a wee, and we'll manage it in some way."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Let us be content to work—
To do the thing we can, and not presume
To fret because 'tis little."

And it was managed very much to John's satisfaction, and very easily managed. One morning John hailed an early marketman, returning home with his empty wagon, and asked him if he would take passengers for a little way into the country. The man hesitated only for a minute.

"Well, yes, I guess so—just as well as not. Glad of your company," said he, after a second glance at John's face, and away they went together. It paid to have their company their new friend told them, as he took his leave of them.

"If you think of walking back to town to-night, I guess you've come far enough," said he, when they came to the top of the hill.

He left them on a little knoll, sheltered by a few great maple trees, and having a sloping, stony pasture between it and the lake, and here they spent the morning. John had a book, and he enjoyed it, while his patient slept. But he could not quite put away all anxious thoughts, and he laid it down at last to face them.

What was to be done with this silent lad, who had fallen into his hands? Since the night of their meeting he had spoken no word about himself, except as he had muttered or cried out unconsciously while the fever was upon him. He had not asked a question or hesitated a moment in letting John do with him as he would, accepting all help and tendance as quietly and naturally as they were cheerfully given.

And John liked all this, in a way. But it could not continue. For the lad's sake something must be said, something must be done.

"He must be made stronger, and put in the way of doing for himself, before I leave," said John, thinking rather of the lightness of his purse than of any desire he had to see the country or even to get home again.

"Yes, we must lose no time," he repeated, and looked up to meet the lad's eyes fixed on him.

"You have never told me your name," said he gravely.

John laughed.

"Have I not? Well, it is John Beaton. Did you ever hear it before?"

"No, I have never heard it."

"And you have never told me yours. It is rather queer, too. The name is usually the first exchange made between men meeting as strangers, when they wish to become friends."

There was no answer to this. "Well?" said John, after a little.

"I have been thinking—I mean I call myself William Leslie."

"And is that your name?" asked John gravely.

"Yes, it is my name. It is not all of my name. But what does it matter in this new country? My name is nothing to any one."

"But it is something to yourself. I have na a fine name, but it was my father's before me, and my grandfather's, and I wouldna change it to be called a lurd," said John gravely. "My lad, I hope you have done nothing to make you afraid or ashamed to own your name?"

"I have done nothing that I wouldna do again, ten times over, if it would give me my revenge!" he cried, raising himself up, while his eyes flashed angrily. "It is not for shame, but for safety that I wish to have my name forgotten, and—for Allie's sake."

He lay down again, and after the anger, the tears came. Then John did an extraordinary thing. When he stooped to arrange the plaid over his friend, he kissed him on his lips and on his closed eyelids. Then he rose and turned his back upon him.

While he stood thus the rain began to fall, the first drops of a summer shower, which promised to be a heavy one. What was to be done now? Where were they to find shelter? John ran up the hill to the other side of the grove and looked northward toward the threatening clouds, and down over a wide landscape, which even the glooming clouds could not make otherwise than fair. There were fields of grass and grain stretching as far as the eye could reach. There were men at work among the hay, piling high the long waggons, in haste to get it to shelter before the rain came on. A white farm-house, half hidden by trees, stood near, and great barns with doors wide open, waiting for the coming of the waggons. It did not need a minute for John to take all this in, and in another he was speeding down the hill and over the meadow with his friend in his arms, nor did he pause till he had laid him in one of the barns on a bed of fragrant hay.

"I must go back for the plaid and the basket," said he; and stooping down, he added gently: "My lad, if any one should ask your name, mind that you are Willie Bain."

He came back as a great load of hay drew up at the barn door.

"Drive right in under cover, Sam," said the farmer, who followed. "I expect we'll have to leave it here. We can't unload in time to do much more. Hurry up and cock up as much of the rest as you can. If it had only held up another hour!"

The man slid down from the load and made for the field.

"Well now, it begins to look as though it might hold up," soliloquized the farmer. "I most wish I had let him stay. Halloo, Sam!"

But Sam was out of hearing by this time, though he was not making the greatest possible haste to the field.

"Perhaps I might help you to unload," said John from the dimness of the barn floor. The farmer did not hesitate a second.

"I don't know who you be, but I expect you are to be trusted to pitch the hay back as fast as I pitch it down. Go ahead."

John could be trusted, it seemed. The farmer did not succeed in embarrassing him with the abundance of the great forkfuls which he threw down into the mow, and the team was backed out into the yard in what the farmer called "pretty considerable quick time." And then he saw William Bain