

camel at the expense of another; what we must pray for is to have a Bishop of Central India."

Family Reading.

RAYMOND.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Raymond found some little comfort in Mrs. Willis's strong conviction that Estelle would yet be restored to him, though he could not perceive that she had any ground for the idea, excepting one of those unreasoning presentments, which are often apparently as potent for good as for evil. It seemed almost absurd to Raymond that he should begin to cherish hope just when there seemed the least foundation for it, as a last effort which he made by trying to induce Estelle's bankers to forward a letter to her, without revealing her address, entirely failed. They told him that Miss Lingard had especially requested that they would not make themselves a medium of communication with any one who might seek to write to her; and his letter was politely returned to him, and torn by himself into shreds in the violence of his disappointment. There was clearly nothing more that he could do, either in London or elsewhere, and therefore he set his face resolutely to begin once again his life of generous labour, without losing more time in vain regrets.

In less than ten days after he left the lodge of what had once been Carlton Hall, he was established at a point on the south coast, not far distant from Southampton, where a lifeboat was stationed that had done noble service already, and was in frequent request. Raymond chose this station in preference to any other, partly because it was in the vicinity of the port from whence so many vessels sailed to Australia, and partly in consequence of the dangerous nature of some portions of the surrounding coast, which kept the crew of the lifeboat he had joined more constantly employed than those which belonged to less perilous neighborhoods. There he remained, working well and nobly, through the spring and summer, not only on the special service to which he had devoted himself at the uncertain periods when his help was claimed for it, but carrying on steadily and regularly a species of mission throughout the fishing villages for miles around, where he found that the men especially were extremely ignorant, and almost as much in want of an evangelist to open up to them the way of eternal life as the natives of distant lands, to whom our missionaries go for that purpose.

Meanwhile Hugh Carlton had slowly recovered from the dangerous illness which had so nearly put an end to his life without leaving him any time for that reparation of his evil deeds on which he was wholly bent. The angel of death, in its near approach—so near that its touch had permanently weakened the vital powers—had been to him in truth as an angel of life; it had suddenly cleared away from before his eyes the golden mist that had wrapped this world for him in the halo of a false glory, and had shown him how ephemeral and unsatisfying were all the joys he had most desired upon earth; while, at the same time, it had drawn back the veil which hid the ineffable loveliness of the everlasting Home and of Him who is the Light thereof, till his whole soul was drawn out to that Blessed One in love and longing, and he sought no other happiness but to do His will on earth, that he might hereafter abide with Him in heaven. Hugh Carlton was as completely changed by his passage through the furnace of fiery pain and danger as the metal, encumbered with dross, that is plunged into the crucible, and drawn forth from it in the form of pure gold. He had now two special purposes in life which he earnestly desired to accomplish before his summons came: first of all, he deeply longed to repair his errors in the past by finding Estelle and restoring her to Raymond, that he might see them happy together, as they would have been but for his cruel fraud; and, secondly, he hoped yet to be able to make use of the talents God had given him, by fulfilling that true mission of the poet, which consisted in futhering by his gentle art the coming of the righteous kingdom of his Lord. During the time that he was wholly engrossed in his pursuit of Estelle, Hugh had completely neglected the cultivation of his poetic genius; but during the tedious hours of convalescence, he gladly resumed it, with

fairer aims than had ever sanctified his verse before, and the success of his efforts was so great, that there seemed reason to hope he might indeed be able to do good service to the cause for which alone he now desired to labour.

Hugh's relations had moved him from the village inn to London, so soon as it was considered safe for him to travel, and there he remained with his uncle and aunt throughout the whole spring and autumn.

Kathleen had gone to her new home with her husband, and Mr. and Mrs. Carlton were glad to have his society in their loneliness, so that they remained in town long after the season was over, for the first time in their lives, because it was it was thought necessary to keep him under the best medical care.

Hugh bore the confinement and want of amusement very patiently, and as he lay on the couch by the window, in the sultry afternoons and long summer evenings, he occupied himself on a volume of poems, so full of the sweetness of love and gratitude that springs up like a well of water in the pardoned soul, that they seemed to those that heard them read like echoes caught from the melodies that resound for ever and ever among the hosts of the redeemed above. But when the dewy mornings and fresher days of early autumn took the place of the oppressive heat of an unusually warm summer, Hugh regained so much of his former strength and vigour, that he obtained leave to emancipate himself somewhat from the doctor's control, and put in execution a plan which he had formed months before, and over which he had brooded with ever-increasing hope, that it might be the means of securing his great object in the recovery of the poor lost Estelle.

Hugh had been with her so constantly during the two years of their acquaintance that he had become unavoidably cognisant of many of the details of her daily life which were unknown to any one else.

He knew that she had interested herself in the poor for many miles round Highrock House, and that she had been in the habit of visiting them personally, and supplying their wants from her ample means.

He felt sure that she would not leave the neighbourhood without providing for the continuance of this assistance to them; and Mr. Derwent had, in fact, told him that she had left considerable funds in his hands for this purpose; but one day, after Hugh came to London, when he was earnestly recalling every incident of the past, in the hope of finding some link in the chain of events which might still retain a hold on Estelle, he suddenly remembered a family whom she had greatly assisted under circumstances which made it nearly certain that she could not have continued her gifts to them through the parish clergyman.

It had been quite accidental that he had discovered her acquaintance with them. One evening in the spring of the preceding year he had been riding home over the mountains from some distant excursion, when, very much to his surprise, he met Estelle Lingard alone on horseback, in an extremely unfrequented part of the country.

He had been so astonished and almost alarmed at her boldness in being so far from home without an escort, that she had felt obliged, rather reluctantly to tell him where she had been, making, however, a condition that he should not himself intrude on the very peculiar family she had been visiting.

She told him that in a hut, on the mountain-side there lived an old labourer, with his wife, and his son who was a cripple, and that she had come to know of their existence from the fact that in one of her mountain rides she had encountered this poor lame boy, who had fallen down and broken one of his crutches, so as to be unable to regain his home. They lived in such a perfectly solitary region, that if Estelle had not so fortunately discovered him, he might have lain there all night unaided.

She had managed to get him mounted on her pony, and walked by his side to the cottage, where his father and mother were found in great anxiety respecting him. They were full of gratitude to Estelle, and made her welcome in their miserable hut, where they seemed barely to possess the necessaries of life; yet she could see that there was a good deal of uneasiness in their manner, and when

she left them they entreated her not to mention to any one that she had seen them. She agreed, provided they would let her come to them again, and bring some comforts for the poor sick boy as well as for themselves.

Soon she got into the habit of visiting them frequently, as she found they were almost starving.

They lived almost entirely on the produce of a little garden which the old man cultivated, and by the sale of some little wooden toys which they manufactured together, and which the wife went twice a year to sell in the country town; but they most carefully abstained from coming in contact with their distant neighbours, and strove to live in so absolute a solitude that their very existence should not be known to any one.

Estelle afterwards discovered that the cause of this strange desire of concealment was simply the fact that, many years before, the old man had committed some offense which had brought him within the power of the law, but he had managed to elude the penalty of his evil deed, and lived in perpetual dread that justice would overtake him at last, so that he would rather have starved outright than have allowed his identity to be discovered by any one.

They were at first dreadfully alarmed by Estelle's visits, but when they found that she always came alone, and had no intention of betraying them, they willingly admitted her, and soon came to look upon her as a sort of beneficial angel—for she not only supplied them with necessaries and comforts which made their hard life far easier, but she undertook to teach the cripple boy to read, and give him some idea of religion, which opened to him a new world of hope and consolation.

Hugh felt certain that Estelle must have made some arrangements to continue her help to this poor family, and thought it possible she might communicate with them directly, trusting that their perfect isolation would prevent the least risk of her present abode being discovered through them.

At all events, it was well worth making a journey to see them, and ascertain if any clue to her could be found through them.

On a bright October day, therefore, Hugh travelled down to his old quarters at the village inn, and next morning found himself at the door of the solitary hut.

By giving his name as Miss Lingard's friend he gained an entrance without difficulty, and after explaining his motives for making inquiries, he found that she had desired the poor man and his wife to call at stated periods at the country post-office for a letter containing money.

They had done so, and, although no address was given in these letters, they had the envelopes, on all of which Hugh found unmistakably the post mark "Jersey." The last bore date only a week previously. Hugh Carlton's heart leapt. "Found! dear sweet Estelle!" he exclaimed, and laid his head on the rough cottage table with a burst of thankful emotion.

Yes, she was found at last; and what a wealth of varied blessings was contained in that discovery for them all! For him it meant that he could go to her and tell her the whole truth of his past wicked conspiracy, and fling himself on her compassion for pardon, so that the load of his guilt might be lifted from his soul; for Raymond it meant the fullness of earthly joy, following as a bright reward on his magnanimity and pure self-sacrifice; and for dear Estelle herself, so long tempest-tossed and sorrowful, so habitually self-forgetting, it meant the sweetness of rest, and protection, and bliss, safe sheltered in the noble heart that beat for her alone.

Hugh's first impulse was to go and tell Raymond at once that Estelle was to be found in Jersey, but, on second thoughts, he felt there was a risk, if Raymond tried to see her before she was undeceived as to the fraud which had been practised on her, that she would seek to elude him, and again escape out of their reach.

Hugh resolved, therefore, to go at once to Jersey himself, and having ascertained where she lived to send her a letter, containing a full confession of his fault, which he would follow up by visiting her personally when she would no longer fear to see him. Then, when all was explained, he would return and send Raymond there, to find not only Estelle, but Estelle his own for ever.

(To be Continued.)

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