

GRAIGSE LEA AND ITS PEOPLE.

CHAPTER III.

ANOTHER FALL.

"Still there was virtue; but a rolling stone—
On a hill's brow is not more easily gone;
The slightest motion ceasing from our care
When down it rolls and at the bottom lies."

—Crabbe.

The baby had been sick and fretful all night, and Maude awoke with a dull aching pain in her head, ill prepared for the duties of the day; and these, as her dying mother had foreseen, were many and onerous. Her father procured a servant to do the heavy wash, and saw that his children were clad and fed, and thought he did all that was necessary. He was a very affectionate father, too, caressed and petted his children more even than is frequently seen; but he did not think of their having little griefs and joys, troubles and cares, in which they wanted sympathy, help, and encouragement. Mrs. Hamilton had always been her children's confidante; they came with all their trials and laid them at her feet, and she had soothed them. And now they came to Maude; and she—who was she to go to in her's! To none but God—the Friend her mother had directed her to. It is one of the strangest things in the complicated mechanism of hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, that make up our life, this yearning for sympathy, for human sympathy. It is stranger still in its effects. "Telling won't make it any better," we all say when we are not in trouble; but when we are we feel that it *does* make it better. Our trouble is as great when we finish recounting it, but then we don't feel it as much. It is true, though, perhaps, not creditable to human nature, that "Misery loves a fellowship in grief." We can keep our joys much better to ourselves. We gloat over them in secret, and think there are surely none so happy as we are; but when trouble comes then the mirth and gladness of others jar on us, and we inwardly wish, if we do not

acknowledge it to ourselves, that they felt as we do.

This particular morning it seemed as if there were everything to worry poor Maude. The coffee was muddy, and her father spoke harshly and unthinkingly to her. He did not mean what he said, but Maude felt as if every rough touch wounded her deeply. Robert wanted his kite sewed, and she sat down to do it for him. He was very well pleased with it, and privately thought he had the best little sister in the world; but he did not tell her so,—forgot even to thank her, and with an uncared, unappreciated feeling she commenced the duties that devolved upon her. Hughie was to wash and dress, the baby to feed and take care of, and she would much rather have gone upstairs to cry. Her heart longed for her mother. If she could see her but for half an hour, tell her all her troubles, be caressed by her, she felt she would be better but she remembered her mother's last words, "I leave my babes with you." She must live for them, not for herself, and the old meek, submissive spirit came back. While she still thought, a quick, cheerful rap came to the door and in another moment Graham Drummond, flushed with his morning's game at ball, with a merry look on his honest face, came in. In a moment the bright joyousness faded as he saw Maude's, wearied, desolate look. He was shocked to see how thin and pale the cheek, that used to be so round and rosy, had become.

"Is there anything the matter with you? Can I do anything at all for you?" he asked gently.

The touch of sympathy opened the fount of tears, and Maude burst into an uncontrollable fit of weeping. Very much alarmed, Graham, in his anxiety to relieve her, would have gone for her father, but she prevented him.

"There's nothing wrong,—nothing more than usual at least," she said when she had found her voice; "Only I am so lonely,