

## Choice Literature.

## IN A QUIET CORNER.

## A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS.

## CHAPTER II.—Continued.

It did not escape him that Content, although she enjoyed his society, contrived to have Effie always present. This puzzled him, until he recollected that her keen eyes, during his former visit, had evidently taken in the situation. Probably now, in her benevolence, she wished to give her sister and him a chance of improving each other's acquaintance. This view of the case amused him exceedingly, and he was tempted to confide in her how complete was his change of heart. Reflection, however, showed him that this would be in poor taste, especially as Effie was her own sister.

Almost the first time he saw Content alone was during the week after her mother's return, when he met her on Church Street, and persuaded her to walk home through the cemetery.

"I want you to find me those lines of a poem you called a Volkslied," he said, "that you translated for me when I was here before. I have looked for them in vain. I have been studying German since."

"Let me see—was it this?"

"Es ist bestimmt in Gottes Rath  
Dass man vom Liebsten das man hat  
Muss scheiden!"

"Yes, thank you. But now, Miss Content, is that true? Is it right to talk so dolefully about being forced to part from our dearest, and all that?"

"Why, it's true enough; isn't it?" she returned, lightly. "Sooner or later we must let go of whatever is best on earth—leave it, or let it leave us—of course."

"Yes; but—Miss Heath, don't you see? it sounds as if it were a cruelty—just done to hurt us—all that German poetry does; as if our best were torn from us."

"Yes," assented the girl, with a cautious reluctance, he fancied, to being drawn into serious converse. "They are so sentimental, you know. But, to do it justice, this poem ends in a better spirit:

"Nun musst du mich auch recht versteh'n;  
Wenn menschen aus einander geh'n,  
So sagen sie, Auf wiederschn."

"A very Teutonic saving clause! I must confess, I believe, that I can't go much farther, myself. If you and I should part to-day, we know we must surely meet some day. But there are other things that are dear, besides friendship. There are ideals and hopes and dreams that have no resurrection. Perhaps it is enough make one feel sentimental."

They had found the inscription now, and stood over it, Content looking up at him with steady, smiling eyes.

"Oh! have you forgotten?" she cried, joyously. "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him"—something purer, brighter than our ideals and dreams, in that resurrection. Do you remember, in the old myth, the rainbow rested one end in the ocean, the other on the heavenly hills? We are always making voyages out to the downward end of the rainbow to seek the treasure that is sunken in the sea; but our rainbow has a foundation on the everlasting hills, and when we get there we shall find 'a treasure in the heavens that faileth not.' The comfort is, that it is what is given up here that we may hope to find there. It is not quickened except it die."

"You go far beyond me. How much you have learned in these few years!"

She shook her head, laughing. "That is only the second sight. I told you about that. It does not benefit the seer, you know only those who listen. I see lots of things which don't make me any better."

Gazing down into her pure, bright face, he had a swift revelation, which he did not at the moment comprehend, it was so startling. How was it that, in his infatuation for Effie, he had not discerned, even in her eyes and voice, which had not changed, what a rare woman Content was to become? There are discoveries made in our maturity, more wonderful than any dream of our youth.

"Ah! Content, how well you have earned your name!" he exclaimed. "It is only those who wear His likeness here who are content."

He was surprised by the effect of his undesigned speech. Hitherto, through all the range of his moods, no word of his had ever stirred her dignified composure. Now a wave of hot colour swept over her face, and she made a quick movement, so that the wide brim of her hat concealed it from him. As she moved away he went beside her in silence, occupied with his new emotion, the soft stir and flutter of a joy he felt no desire to define. He glanced toward her once or twice, but her face was still averted.

"You give me so much to think about always," he said at last. "I sometimes wonder where I have been living, while you have been finding out so much."

Her voice was low, but quite strong and even. "You forget that I am a woman."

"I may have forgotten it when we have been in discussion," he retorted, raising his hat to Effie, who sat rocking lazily on the porch, "but I shall never do so again. May I come up for a moment, Miss Effie, I have a lovely scheme, and I want you to aid and abet me."

"Which I shall certainly do, if it's anything nice," said she, leaning forward smilingly. It struck him for the first time that she was steadily growing more like her old self, gayer and prettier, and this afternoon, he was very sure something had happened to please her.

"I wanted to go to Mauch Chunk and up the Switch-back, and to that Glen. What do you call it? I hate to go around alone. I've been forced to it these three years; but

before that I always had a sister. Couldn't we give a day to it, you, and your sister and I?"

Content had gone into the house, so Effie answered with something of her old manner: "Mr. Etherege, don't say a word; just let me fix it." So, with a laugh, he raised his hat again, and was off; down the street and over the bridge into West Bethlehem, and back by way of the other bridge, to walk off his surplus energy.

"You forget that I am a woman." How much that might mean! It might mean that strange look in her eyes at times. It might mean—what were the words she had said in the cemetery that first time? "God has been teaching me, by loneliness and by pain." Why had he taken so little note of them? Had he come back to Bethlehem, and found out all too late?

The excursion was decided, and put off from day to day, while from evening to evening the young minister came to the porch steps to talk it over. Finally, however, the day was appointed, and kept; and, after an early breakfast, he sallied forth to meet the young ladies and the stage.

They looked very pretty and fresh in their close fitting, undraped excursion suits. Content's was navy-blue, and the blue velvet front of her little bonnet brought out the forgotten golden lights in her brown hair, and reminded him of the rosy girl in the alcove of Lehigh University Library.

"That is the colour you wore when I first saw you," he said.

She laughed. "What a memory for detail! What did Effie have on?"

"She was in white, and very charming. Is this the basket I am to take in charge?"

It was still early when they reached Mauch Chunk, and wound slowly up the hill to the small, deserted station of the Switch-back. It was enough to make one wish for another breakfast, to sit there in the keen morning air, looking out over the mountains. The sisters had not been there in seven years, and to him it was entirely new. They pointed out to him a pair of tall, pale chimneys on a mountain-top, belching forth streams of smoke, and a black hole between them, "That is where we are going," they told him.

An open car, in which sat a number of passengers well fortified against a gale by closely buttoned coats and securely fastened veils, suddenly appeared around a curve, and slid easily toward the platform, over what seemed a level rail. It paused long enough to be quickly emptied and refilled, then slid on down a slight incline. It stopped at the foot of a long, steep slide, up which the rails seemed to run at an angle of forty-five degrees right up into the skies. He could not see how the car gripped firmly a pair of steel belts which lay all along between the rails; but he saw the belts tighten and then glide upward with a loud rattling, and the car crawled slowly up the hill. Content called his attention to the straight-boled forest trees beside him, which leaned toward the abrupt mountain-side, and seemed to cling to it, while rising vertically toward heaven. Up, up, they laboured; the pale chimneys moved nearer, the trees slipped back and back on each side. At last there was a righting of their position, a resumption of the natural relations to Mother Earth, a panting and gasping and puffing of the stationary engine, a murky shade within the black hole he had seen from the valley, and the car slid out and down a slope almost imperceptible.

"We are fifteen hundred feet above sea-level," said Effie, who sat beside him. "This is Mount Pisgah, and in a few seconds you will view the landscape over."

Slowly, slowly, the car glided out upon the high, light trestle-work, seemingly out into the air, and there came to a stand. It was a wide prospect. Beneath, a valley so deep that the eye shrank from it; beyond, and still beyond, mountains and mountains; dark green, and darker green, and blue-green, and blue, far away, against a sky crowded with flashing white clouds.

"Those are really the Blue Mountains; are they not?" he asked of Content, who was sitting in front of him.

"Yes; but so are these, you know, although they are locally called the Kittatinny Range. That blue line is sixty five miles away." It was hard to realize; it lay so calmly before him; it slept so softly below him.

And now the car moved on again, gliding softly downward through the woods.

"I must confess to being somewhat disappointed," he said, leaning forward to speak over Content's shoulder. He had not seen her face when he began to speak; when he did, he was sorry to have broken the spell. It was full of a restful and rapt enjoyment of the swift, easy motion and the wild scene.

"Wait; you are not half through. We are going up again. But it is a pity you had not come here when you were a boy. It is rather late."

"Ah! if I were as young as you! You needn't laugh. I don't mean in years. You have not lost the capacity of enjoyment in any degree."

"No; I have gained it. It takes long years to learn to enjoy, though we can suffer without learning."

Now they came to the foot of the Mount Jefferson Plane, and once more the rails ran upward, and two tall chimneys rose against the sky, and breathed twin columns of smoke. They toiled upward, higher than before; and again the recovery of the level, and the panting and gasping and puffing of the engine, and the murky shade of the black hole, and the easy slipping out and downward. Downward, slowly, smoothly; a little faster, faster still, and the trees slid away backward. The wind seemed to freshen and strengthen, and tugged at all available points. He found it necessary to hold his hat. Effie took off hers, and let her fair, soft hair blow about in ravishing confusion. Content, equally in character, had tied over her close bonnet and her hair a strip of silvery gauze, the long ends of which flapped about the young man's face and into his eyes, until she discovered this, and drew them around her neck, to his regret.

Down, down! The trees fled backward, the car sped onward. Faster, faster! The air smote them with keen blows. Swifter, swifter! Fleeing, dashing, whirring through the still forest, which whirled by in a green blur.

On! ever on! The air whizzed past like a rain of bullets, yet on they flew. Here a brook came into view at the road side, flowing the wrong way, as at the sound of Orpheus's playing; here they swept out upon a sudden ledge, and Mauch Chunk and the river lay at their feet. At the end, when Content's bright face again turned toward him, he confessed himself satisfied. Yet, afterward, looking back, it was disappointing after all.

In the cars on the way to Glen Onoko, Effie was by his side again. He knew that Content had contrived it; but this was to be a perfect day, and he would not risk spoiling it by opposing her. His best policy, for the moment, was to turn his attention to Effie; so he began:

"If only Miss Grace were here—I beg her pardon—Mrs. Doddridge."

"I like to hear you say Miss Grace; it is like old times. It is so long since anybody has said it. You know she was married shortly after your first visit here. Why, she was engaged then."

"Was she? I didn't suspect it. I thought all the time that Mr. Eckhardt would be the fortunate man."

"Christian? Oh! did you?" laughing; then, in a lower tone. "Why, he was Connie's beau, though she would never hear of it. It didn't break his heart, though; it is otherwise occupied now, according to rumour. He wasn't nice enough for Connie. She is an angel."

"I am inclined to be of your opinion, Miss Effie."

"Oh! yes! but you don't really know how nice she is. After that trouble three years ago—I suppose you heard all about that?"

"No. What was it, please?"

She hesitated, and answered in a constrained way: "Please ask Connie about it. I don't mind your knowing; but I can't tell you."

At the entrance to the Glen they opened their basket and refreshed their very keen and impatient appetites with a plentiful repast. Then, to the surprise of her companions, Effie announced a cheerful determination to spend a couple of hours in the depot, while the others explored the Glen.

"I never intended to go up," she said. "Oh! I couldn't stand so much climbing, Mr. Etherege, thank you. You must both go and have a good time; and you must not mind leaving me; for Content has a book in that satchel; she always has."

Content would not consent to this without much urging; but at last she yielded.

So the two went on alone. She was light and agile, and stepped steadily up the giddy path of the wild Glen. It was not until she lost her breath that she accepted his offered hand; and then it was that he asked abruptly:

"What is it that Miss Effie wants you to tell me, that happened three years ago?"

She looked up at him in a startled way, allowing him to hold her hand, and forgetting to come up the rock steps.

"Oh! I am afraid I ought to have spoken of it before; but I thought perhaps Effie might not like it, and I thought you would have heard it outside. She had a great trouble. She was engaged, and it was broken off. It wasn't her fault exactly, and I'm not sure it was his. It was to Eugene Lauderbach, here in Bethlehem."

She paused, dropped her eyes, and blushed deeply, while he watched her from above, curiously, wondering what was coming next.

"I'm afraid I ought to tell you. It is different now. Lately, I think perhaps she may marry him, after all."

A gleam of amusement crossed his face, but he did not speak. The girl recovered, begged his pardon for delaying, and went on climbing. As they rested on the next bench, he remarked lightly: "It is gratifying for a man to reflect that once upon a time he was an unmitigated goose."

"It must be. From your fondness for applying flattering titles to yourself, I may be justified in assuming that I take your meaning."

"I think you do. I suppose I proved myself pretty conclusively to be an advanced idiot, when I fell in love with your sister Effie at first; didn't I?"

"Was it at first? That is very interesting."

"Well, happily, I had sense enough to know that I was not in my right mind, and that the best thing for all concerned was to take myself out of the way, which I did before doing any harm to anybody. Wasn't I right?"

"It was very commendable. Thank you, Mr. Etherege; and I won't blunder again. I thought since Effie wanted me to tell you, there might be—shall we go on, now please?"

No one who has visited Glen Onoko can need a description of it. No one who has never been there can form a fair conception of its picturesque wildness. How, amid cliffs and precipices and boulders and trees and stumps, the tiny, twisted, ragged, broken, stony path clammers up the almost perpendicular front of the forest-clad mountain, skipping from side to side of the slender, dashing, plunging streamlet, wherever it can find a foothold for a moment: crossing by frail rustic bridges above lovely falls of white water, crawling up ladders, resolving itself into stone staircases—somehow, anyhow, *everyhow*, reaching the top! Whoever goes part way up will be eager to go again; who ever perseveres to the end will deem it enough for a life time. Weary, warm, dishevelled, every muscle strained, and every joint wrenched, the explorer pronounces the day, with all enthusiasm, a grand success.

On the way down, these two paused on that unexpected ledge, where a turn of the path ushers one suddenly from the depth of the wild glen out into mid air—into the very sky itself, with all the earth below. One might drop a stone with ease only too tempting upon the roof of the railway station, hundreds of feet below; one might toss it (or sight deceives us) into the very midst of the village of Mauch Chunk, miles away. A vast valley lies below, the illimitable mountains beyond.

"This has been a day of days," he said, looking from the landscape to the graceful figure beside him. "Whatever may happen, I shall treasure the memory of it all my life."

"I am so glad you have enjoyed it," she answered, brightly; but concerning her own enjoyment she was silent.

"Is Mr. Lauderbach a Moravian?" he asked her, as they went on.