

Choice Literature.

Still and Deep.

BY F. M. F. SKENE, AUTHOR OF "TRIED," "ONE LIFE ONLY," ETC.

CHAPTER IV.

"Tell me first how my dear father is," said Bertrand, anxiously, when he perceived in the lighted room the red rims round Mrs. Parry's twinkling eyes, which showed how much she had been weeping. "Ah, my dear Mr. Bertrand, you must prepare for the worst; he cannot long be with us; in fact, I believe he would not now be alive if it were not that he has seemed to feel some urgent necessity to see you again, far beyond the mere desire for your presence, with which his love for you naturally inspires him; but it appears so wonderful he should have known you were coming to-night!"

"But did he know, nurse? it seems impossible; for I did not know myself what day I could start, and I did not write or telegraph!"

"He did most certainly, for he told me the very hour when you would arrive, as you may see by the fact that I was waiting to open the door to you; but, my dear, I have seen many a one pass over the mysterious bridge between this world and the next, and I know that just at the last the dying have powers and privileges which we, who have to remain longer on this side of the grave, cannot at all understand. I could tell you of many strange experiences in my life, connected with that subject, but I dare say you would think me a superstitious old woman, so you shall simply hear what occurred with respect to your father. Two days ago we did not think he could last an hour, and dear Mary has sat up with him three nights in succession; she did not mean to have left him this evening, tired as she was, but about three o'clock to-day he fell into a very deep sleep, and when he woke up from it as it was getting dusk, he called me to him after Mary had left the room, and said, in a very solemn manner, and with unusual strength, 'Nurse, my son will be here at midnight, and I wish to see him alone; you must persuade Mary to go to bed; but do not tell her he is coming; he spoke with such decision that I asked if he had had a letter from you; then he smiled, and said, 'No, it is not from Bertrand I have heard of, but I have a certain assurance that he will be here to-night, and I must gather up all that remains to me of life and strength that I may tell him a great deal he has yet to learn from me; arrange with Mary that she shall take the rest she needs so much while you watch by me, and then leave me quiet and alone till Bertrand comes.' I had much ado to coax poor Mary to leave him; she could not bear to quit his side, even for an hour; but she saw at last that he really wished it, and she was deceived, poor dear, by his animation into the belief that he was better, though I could see well enough he was only sustained by an unreal excitement, which will leave him more prostrate than before when it passes away. However, it enabled her to go to bed in peace, and she is sweet asleep, the darling, looking as fair and innocent as a little child."

"I had better go to my father at once then," said Bertrand, hastily; for a feeling of greater awe had been produced in him by Mrs. Parry's words than he cared to show her, and, resisting her pressing entreaties that he would take some supper first, he asked her to lend the way to Mr. Lisle's sick room. She took a lamp, and preceded him along the corridor in silence, making him a sign to tread softly as they passed through the part of the house where Mary lay sleeping, unconscious of the new arrival; a half-open door, through which the light was streaming, showed that they had reached their destination, and Mrs. Parry pushed it gently back, and stood aside to let Bertrand enter.

"It will not startle him, he expects you," she whispered; and he stole softly through the room to the foot of his father's bed, there he paused for a moment struck with the sudden chill, the inexplicable shrinking which we all experience when we draw near to the presence of death.

Mr. Lisle had been propped up in a sitting position in order to relieve the difficulty of breathing, and he was reclining on his pillows in a perfectly motionless attitude, with his hands clasped together over a small black trinket he had brought with him from France so many long years before. There was not the smallest vestige of colour in his face, or in the long thin fingers, as they lay on a counterpane not whiter than they were themselves, and the well-defined lines of his clear cut features had grown sharp and rigid, so that he looked exactly like a figure moulded in wax; the eyes alone demonstrated that he was still a living being, who had not yet escaped the powers of earthly hopes and fears, for they were bright and eager, with an expression of keen expectancy, and he held them turned immovably towards the door; when Bertrand came at last within the range of their vision, so that their gaze fell upon him suddenly, there flashed into them a look of such intense delight that it seemed to bring him back at once to the light and warmth of life, and in a moment the ghastly immobility of his attitude had passed away, and he stretched out his arms with a longing gesture, exclaiming, "Bertrand, my son, my son! I have waited for you when already I could hear the voices calling me beyond the brink; I have waited, and not in vain; now shall my spirit be enabled to depart in peace!"

Then the young man went forward, and, forgetting the years that had elapsed since the well-remembered days when as a little child he had of an gone to sleep in those protecting arms, he let his stately head fall upon his father's breast, while a great sob burst unrestrained from his lips. The old man folded his arms round him, and held him for a few minutes close to his heart, while Mrs. Parry went softly out and shut the door, leaving those together between whom so soon was to be fixed the great unfathomable gulf, which on the long eyes of human love have no power to penetrate or span.

"Oh, my dearest father, I did not think

it would be so soon!" said Bertrand, when at last he looked up into Mr. Lisle's face; for the seal of death was so unmistakably set on that pallid countenance that it would have been simple mockery to have appeared to ignore the truth.

"Yes, soon—very soon, my son; and I have so much to say to you; I must not delay, or the strength will fail me which has been given to me for this special purpose. Sit down beside me, Bertrand, and let me hold your hand while I make you my confession."

"Your confession! I am sure after such a blameless life as yours has been you have none to make to me or to any one," said his son tenderly.

"So it is that we judge one another in our blindness!" said Mr. Lisle, with a sigh; "how little can the human heart be fathomed, even by those for whom it beats with deepest love; but we are a mystery even to ourselves, and well may be also to others; this I can tell you, however, Bertrand, that the clear illumination which falls from purer realms upon a deathbed, alters strangely to the lights and shadows which lie upon our path of life as we look back upon it; the interests which were dearest to us in the days of activity and strength shrivel away into nothing compared with any fact in our existence, however little regarded before, which trenches in the smallest degree on the eternal laws of righteousness"—he paused for a moment, while his eyes took a dreamy look, as if his thoughts had wandered back over that past of which he spoke; but soon he grasped his son's hand more firmly, and went on—"Bertrand, you know very well what have been the strongest sentiments that influenced me throughout all the time when I formed part of the living, working world—devotion to my king and country first of all; then love, so deep and absorbing that it made me well nigh forget my France, love for your mother, the sweet young bride of my brightest days, the tender faithful wife of a nature years, lastly a father's proud affection for a dear and worthy son—these have been the ruling passions of my life, the engrossing influences which swayed me every hour, and yet now, Bertrand, they have receded from that awful shore on which my spirit waits its summons, like the swelling waves when the tide is going out, and left behind them as it were the ghastly corpse of one dead hour, in which a deed was done that never in all the eternal ages shall I have power to recall. Oh, my son! this is in truth the most terrible of all the conditions of our mortal life, that it is possible for us by the act, the rash unthinking act, of one single instant, to destroy our whole existence, and even our whole eternity, and yet the moment in which it was committed once gone from us, borne away upon the wings of time to swell the irrevocable past, never never can we call it back, or undo its fatal instantaneous work, though we might be ready to offer in exchange for it the entire future of our earthly years, with all their golden possibilities of hope and joy! Yes, it is indeed a dread attribute of our complex nature, that we should have the tremendous power to freight a single instant with the most momentous issues, and yet be so utterly, so helplessly incapable of reversing the character we have stamped on it for ever, one second after its record has been written! Ah, my Bertrand, one such moment there has been in my long past, and it stands out before me now, vivid, menacing, filling up all the foreground of my memory, while the vacant throne of discredited France has vanished in the shadows, and the sweet face of my only love shows dimly through the unknown darkness, and you, my noble son, from whom I am about to be parted overmoss, can scarce draw tears from my eyes with the thought of our separation, because of the drops of very blood that I would shed if only I could bring back that one instant from the inexorable past!"

Mr. Lisle paused, exhausted, and as Bertrand gently wiped the death dew from his brows, he said to him, soothingly, "Dear father, whatever you may have to regret in the past, I am sure you have ample expiation at by the sorrow you have felt for it; will you not let it rest now with the mercy of our God, and turn your thoughts to these celestial hopes which come out like stars in the firmament when the sun of life is going down?"

"Yes, my son, I must indeed trust all my regrets and all my hopes alike to that one and only compassion which has no limits; but I may not so much as claim it till I have made all the reparation that is in any way possible for my fault, and it is you, my Bertrand, who must accomplish it vicariously for me; for the power to attempt it in ever so slight a measure ends with my life. It is for this cause that you have been sent to me in time; for this reason that my soul, when already cast loose from earth, was held back by a single thread of life, that I might see you face to face, and win, as I trust, your acceptance of the charge I would confide to you; but to make my meaning clear you must know the whole, dear Bertrand, and I think that I can tell it you, though to do so I must rake up all the ashes of a long dead past, if only you will have patience with my failing breath and feeble utterance."

"Oh, my dear father, I prize the faintest whisper from your voice! would that I might but hope to hear it longer; but it is the exertion for yourself I fear—will it not try you too much?"

"Strength will be given me for this task, my son, and then haply it will fail for ever."

CHAPTER V.

Bertrand re-arranged the pillows so that his father could recline in an easy position, with his face turned towards his son, and then, once more taking the wasted hand in his, he sat down by the bedside to listen.

"How strange it is to recall the sunny days of youth at this hour!" said Mr. Lisle—"sad and strange. But I must go back to the opening years of my existence to find the first link of the chain which binds me even now: I was educated at the Lyceum in Paris, and amongst my numerous comrades there was the son of an Englishman who was holding some temporary official position in the capital. I found Robert Trevelyan the most charming companion in every sense whom it was possible

to conceive, and he and I became fast friends, with that strong vehement attachment which sometimes binds two young men together, when each has given to the other a hearty confidence and trust. The friendship between us never knew change or abatement till, alas, the most awful moment of my life! When Trevelyan returned to his home in England with his father, it was arranged between us that we were to interchange visits every year. I spent a month with him each spring in London, and Robert passed his autumns always at our estate—the dear old home which you, Bertrand, will never see. It was in the Trevelyan's house that I first saw your lovely mother, and it was there that when I had come to live in England as a permanent home, I met her again, and won her to cast in her lot with the impoverished exile—he sighed deeply as he spoke.

"He never repented it," said Bertrand, gently pressing his father's hand.

"No; love such as ours can fill all life with inexhaustible riches, and make a home and country everywhere; and we were happy; ah, how perfectly happy we might always have been but for that one dark cloud of which I have to tell you now! Some years after my marriage, Robert Trevelyan also became the husband of a gentle young girl, whom my sweet wife learnt to love very dearly, and the intimacy between the two families became even more strongly cemented. The Trevelyans had, however, not been married many months when symptoms of delicacy showed themselves in Robert's wife, and he was advised to take her to Madeira for the winter. I was myself at the time suffering from the results of a neglected cold, and I was told that it would be a great advantage to me to escape an English spring; it was therefore decided that we were all to go together to enjoy six months' sunshine in the beautiful island, and it became to the whole of us an almost perfect party of pleasure. We were none of us rich, for Robert's Trevelyan's father died almost bankrupt, leaving him but a slender income, and he depended for the support of his family almost entirely on an office which he held in London, and from which he had obtained six months' leave of absence; and myself, as you know, having been finally deprived of my estates, had little or nothing except your mother's fortune, which was just sufficient for our bare subsistence, but we had enough, for we desired no luxuries, and we were rich indeed in love and happiness."

(To be Continued).

The Cardinal's Prophecy, or, a Vatican Vision.

The Cardinals at (in his brand new hat), and he dreamed a lugubrious dream. He heard Europe's battle-drums beating for war, he beheld all her bayonets gleam: And he says, says he, one may easily see a catastrophe cannot be far:

Seven millions of men, and all armed to the eyes, must portend a most terrible war!

Rejoice, it is sad, yet the world is so bad that it calls for this bloody self-scourging, For which, unawares, all the nations prepare, as directed by Heaven's own urging. The ill wind of war, which I sniff from afar, shall blow good to the Sea of St. Peter, And, I establish, I hope, the sole sway of the Pope. Could a Nemesis well be completer?

The racial apostle of Red Revolution have pulled down the temporal power, Heaven's justice must send Hampty-Dumpty again, while his enemies growl and cover. But chastisement dire and a scourge as a fire are a sine qua non for redressing

That hellish wrong, and so armaments strong claim a Cardinal's sorrowful-blessing!

Threat is not my intent; 'tis a pious lament. I'm exceedingly grieved to foresee it. But the great Dies Irae of "Reds" is at hand, tis too late they'll discover to flee it, I plainly perceive that the counsels of heaven have settled the term of their tethor.

Scour of blood must atone, and the Pope have his own—then all shall be happy together. Not in Dollinger's fashion—the mooning schismatic! how dars he to prate about Unity? Those blundering babblers at Bonn must be shown That they can't shunt the Pope with impunity. The Sirens of Schism sing vainly of peace, though they warble as sweet as Patti can. The only true pan-tipe to marshal the flock of the Church is that played at the Vatican

On woe men must sup, Messrs. Armstrong and Krupp are preparing the meal most unwittingly, Big gun and torpedo shall 'establish our Credo, so Providence fashions it fittingly Saltpetre shall fume for St. Peter—an incense, unpleasant, but yet an oblation Supplied unawares by those foes of the Church who are destined to self-immolation

Steel, powder, and shot, they will soon make it hot For thy spoilers, Infatiable Vicar!

On that deluge of blood the Sole Ark of the Faithful shall float on its haven the quicker.

It is sad—that of course!—but if murderous force prove the backer of church, school, and nunnery, No doubt it is true that, from this point of view there's a sort of a Gospel in Gunnery.

Love Deo—yet stop! No, the mask must not drop I'm a peace-loving man and a pastor.

No fibroad and I, though I see in Fate's sky all the omens of woe and disaster.

The role of Cassandra I give o' assume, and lest any should find it alarming.

To put up a pious and fervent petition for—Unity Peace, and Disarming!

The Degeneracy of Man.

There are people, says the *Liberal Review*, who assert that never has there existed in any country such a happy state of things as may be found in Great Britain at the present moment. Here we are permitted to see man, they tell us, in the enjoyment of these blessings which wealth, art, and a rational system of religion can bestow upon him. According to them, seldom has a country been so prosperous as Britain is now, and rarely has a nation possessed so much intelligence as she does. As a rule it will be found that these sunny philosophers are people of the comfortable sort, that they are people who are rich in the possession of the fruits of a more or less liberal education, and that they possess the means of supplying all their reasonable requirements. Unfortunately there are philosophers of a different school who sing a much sadder

song concerning the condition of this sea-girl isle. According to them there is little in its state upon which we may congratulate ourselves. It is true, they admit, that the country is rich, and that its aggregated intelligence is very great. But what of that, they ask in scorn, when the riches and intelligence are confined to a few, and the great majority of the people of the state are in a condition of the most miserable destitution in both the respects indicated. It is not a good thing, they point out, that while one man is making himself gouty or dyspeptic by stuffing himself with good things eatable and drinkable, ten men should be compelled to drag on a miserable existence on the hardest of hard fare; nor is it well they declare that, while a few score of individuals are thanking God that they are not as the heathen are, hundreds of others should be roaming about the courts and alleys of large towns, and the lanes of the country, in a condition of almost complete savagery. Most disinterested thinkers will not have much difficulty in deciding between these two schools of philosophers, for they will see that those of the sunny order are living in a fool's paradise, and that though their opponents may occasionally be betrayed into putting their case rather too strongly, there is a great deal of truth in what they allege. As a matter of fact, it is not easy to contemplate the social condition of Britain without becoming cynical. In the great centres of industry—which, by the way, are quite as much the incorrigible idleness—at least half the inhabitants are in a state of discomfort and mental darkness, while a great portion of them are vicious, to the core, and of so wild and desperate a character that they have to be kept in order by a formidable array of policemen and a rigorous administration of the law. The well-to-do portion of the population do not concern themselves greatly with the reckless and miserable section so long as the latter keep to the dens and holes in which they make their homes, but when they emerge from the dark places in which they generally hide and do some mischief, the "comfortable" people are much concerned if the services of the hangman and those of the "cat" are not called into requisition. It would be an abuse of terms to say that there is any sympathy between the so-called upper classes and the so-called lower classes of large towns. Indeed, it is not going too far to assert that the two classes hate, despise, and fear each other; that the upper classes seem to look at the lower classes as disagreeable necessities, who must be permitted to live in their miserable fashion since they are presumptuous enough to wish to do so, and that the lower classes regard the upper classes as enemies who are to be deceived and plundered whenever opportunity offers. Being thus in sympathy as far as the poles are asunder, the two classes go their own way, each ignoring as far as possible the existence of the other. The upper class pays much attention to its stomach, preserves an intensely respectable appearance, does its best to make money, and goes to church with praiseworthy regularity on Sunday. The lower class, on the other hand, drinks whenever it can beg, borrow, or steal the money wherewith to buy the liquor, lounges about street corners, fights, stabs, murders, indulges in horrible blasphemies, and not only refrains from going to church, but laughs at all the attempts which are made to induce it to do so, as well as those efforts which are made by a few enthusiastic persons to improve its condition. In a word, it is poor, degraded, vicious, and strongly prejudiced against those who might—if they chose—do it good.

We should not like to assert that things are very much better in country places generally than they are in large towns, though there does prevail an impression to the effect that the villages of Great Britain are, for the most part, so many Arcadias, in which society is conducted upon the patriarchal principle. No doubt it is true that many villages are dominated by their squires, and parsons, and other great men; but it is unfortunately, also true, that the rule of these individuals is often the reverse of paternal. While curtailing the liberties and privileges of the subjects, they do not make it their duty to see that their subjects want for nothing that is necessary to their physical and intellectual well-being. In a word, there is now a great deal of despotism but very little benevolence. The landowner does not allow the common herd to wander through his enclosures, picking up such trifles as fall in their way at it is believed he was once in the habit of doing; he has gradually curtailed their perquisites, and taught them that what is his is most emphatically his own. And the various lesser rights that hover round the great luminary have done the same. As for the people, if they are less vicious than town prototypes, it is only because they are less sharp, they being in the matter of intelligence scarcely superior to the cattle which they tend. In point of fortune they are frequently inferior to these animals. Many horses and dogs have better homes than they have, and many horses and many dogs are fed better than they are. Indeed, their miserable habitations are the blots which disfigure many a fair landscape; they are the things—often the only things—which offend the senses of refined lovers of the beautiful who are visiting the Arcadias in which they are located. And why? Simply because they are not only miserable in themselves, but are often filthy in the extreme, and surrounded by unpleasant and unhealthy objects. Yet men and women live and die in them, and are sometimes said to be contented. How is all this? How is it that man and his home should be unsightly things to gaze upon? The beasts of the field impart an additional charm to a landscape, and may ever be looked at with pleasure; so may the homes of the birds of the air. Why, then, should man and his home under any circumstances become obnoxious? There must surely be something wrong somewhere. Who are failing in their duty?

There is so much work to be done in the way of social reform that the would be reformer may well pause abashed, especially as he must know that whatever course he adopts he will be branded as a Communist, a Radical, and other dreadful things by

that numerous class who think that what is for the best, and that the hewers of wood and drawers of water should always be kept in their proper place. But he should not be deterred from taking such action as his judgment may dictate in order that the deplorable state of things now existing may be mended.

Man-Eating Tree of Madagascar.

If you can imagine a pineapple, eight feet high and thick in proportion, resting upon its base, and denuded of leaves, you will have a good idea of the trunk of the tree, which, however, was not the color of an anana, but a dark dingy brown, and apparently as hard as iron. From the apex of this truncated cone, (at least two feet in diameter,) eight huge leaves sheer to the ground, like doors swung back on their hinges. These leaves, which were joined at the top of the tree at regular intervals, were about eleven or twelve feet long, and shaped very much like the leaves of an American agave or century plant. They are two feet through in their thickest point, and three feet wide, tapering to a sharp point that looked like a cow's horn, very convex on the outer (but now under) surface, and on the under (now upper) surface slightly concave. This concave face was thickly set with strong thorny hooks, like those upon the head of the teasle. These leaves, hanging thus limp and lifeless, dead green in color, had in appearance the massive strength of oak fibre. The apex of the cone was a round white concave figure like a smaller plate set within a larger one. This was not a flower, but a receptacle, and there exuded into it a clearly treacly liquid, honey-sweet, and possessed of violent intoxicating properties. From underneath the rim, so to speak, of the undermost plate, a series of long, hairy, green tendrils stretched out in every direction towards the horizon. These were seven or eight feet long, and tapered from four inches to a half in diameter, yet they stretched out stiffly as iron rods. Above these, (from between the upper and under cup,) six white, almost transparent palpi reared themselves toward the sky, twisting and twisting in a marvellous incessant motion, yet constantly reaching upwards. Thin as reeds and frail as quills, apparently, they were yet five or six feet tall, and were so constantly and vigorously in motion, with such a subtle, sinuous, silent throbbing against the air, as to suggest of serpents slayed, yet dancing on their tails. My observations on this occasion were suddenly interrupted by the natives, who had been shrieking around the tree with their shrill voices, and chanting what Hendrick told me were propitiatory hymns to the great devil tree.

With still wilder shrieks and chants they now surrounded one of the women, and urged her with the points of their javelins, until slowly, with despairing face, she climbed up the stalk of the tree, and stood on the summit of the cone, the palpi swirling all about her. "Tsik! tsik!" ("Drink! drink!") cried the men. Stooping, she drank of the viscid fluid in the cup, rising instantly again, with wild frenzy in her face, and convulsive cords in her limbs. But she did not jump down, as she seemed to intend to do. Oh, no! The atrocious cannibal tree, that had been so inert and dead, came to sudden savage life. The slender, delicate palpi, with the fury of starved serpents, quivered a moment over her head, then, as if instinct with demonic intelligence, fastened upon her in sudden coils round and round her neck and arms, and while her awful screams and still more awful laughter rose wildly, to be instantly strangled down again into a gurgling moan, the tendrils, one after another, like some great green serpents, with brutal energy and infernal rapidity, rose, protracted themselves, and wrapped her about in fold after fold, ever tightening with oral swiftness and savage tenacity of anaconda fastening upon their prey. It was the barbarity of the Laocoon without its beauty—this strange, horrible murder. And now the great leaves rose slowly and stiffly, like the arm of a derrick, erected themselves in the air, approached one another, and closed about the dead and hampered victim with the silent force of a hydraulic press, and the ruthless purpose of a thumb-screw. A moment more, and while I could see the bases of these great leaves pressing more tightly towards each other, from their interstices trickled down the stalk of the tree great streams of the viscid, honey-like fluid, mingled horribly with the blood and oozing viscera of the victim. At sight of this, the savage hordes around me, yelling madly, bounded forward, crowded to the tree, clasped it, and with cups, leaves, hands, and tongues, each one obtained enough of the liquid to send him mad and frantic. —Dr. Jay, in the *South Australian Register*.

THE OLDEST BIBLE MANUSCRIPTS.

The two most ancient manuscripts of the Bible known are the Codex Sinaiticus of the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg, and the Codex Vaticanus of the Vatican Library at Rome, both of which are believed to be written about the middle of the fourth century A.D. The Sinaiticus, so called because it was obtained (in 1859) from the Convent of St. Catharine on Mount Sinai, is supposed by Tischendorf, its discoverer, to be one of the fifty copies of the Scriptures which the Emperor Constantine directed to be made for Byzantium, in the year 381, under the care of Eusebius of Caesarea. It consists of 945½ leaves of very fine vellum, made either from the skins of antelopes or of asses, each leaf being 14½ inches high by 13½ inches wide. The early history of the Vatican manuscript is not known, but it appears in the first catalogue of the Vatican Library in 1475. It is a quarto volume, containing 146 leaves of fine thin vellum, each 10½ inches high and 10 broad. Both manuscripts are written in Greek uncial, for capital letters, are without spaces between the words, and have no marks of punctuation. —Appleton's *American Cyclopaedia*, revised edition, article "Manuscript."