

## THE SLIGHTED STRANGER.

A STORY FROM PLUTARCH.

By Lillie E. Barr.

Athens was keeping holiday; with song and rose  
Her fair youths lounged beneath her porticoes  
Discussing Sophocles, or Cæsar, or the place  
Sparta and Corinth took in the last race.  
The circus held a crowd of idlers bright and gay  
With expectation eager, as to-day  
Each had his favorite horse or wrestler, each was wise,  
And knew exactly who would win the prize.

The proud Athenians, with insolent disdain,  
Sat by themselves; the Spartans, poor and plain,  
Took lower places; they but came to see  
The races run, or hear some tragedy.

Each waited for the moment, some with jest and gibe,  
And some, like the Athenians, with still pride,  
As sure of nothing wonderful, but quite content  
To pass all blunders with a calm contempt.

Just then into the crowded circus slowly came  
An aged Lydian, with long wandering lame.  
He bowed to the Athenian youths; they surely knew  
He was their guest, and what to him was due.

But no one said, "Be seated," and all coolly saw  
The slighted stranger to the Spartans go;  
They rose with one assent the aged man to meet,  
And every youth cried, "Stranger, take my seat!"

Then with the dignity that years and wisdom give,  
The old man answered, "Long may Sparta live  
To teach Athenian youths 'tis not enough to say,  
'Give place to age, honor the head that's gray'—

"'Tis not enough to know what it is right to do,  
Unless the action make the precept true;  
Old Athens to young Athens, nobly preaches,  
But Sparta practices what Athens teaches."  
—*Harpur's Young People.*

## QUINCE, AND HOW THE LORD LED HIM.

(By Miss L. Bates)

CHAPTER IV.

## QUINCE STARTS OUT IN THE WORLD.

Day after day went by. It was well for Quince that his hands were not left to hang listless. He met Hugh frequently. The latter, with less intensity of thought, had more lines leading outward. Hugh was resolute to bend circumstances and make them stepping-stones for himself. Quince also was resolute, but he did not think so much of going over the road as he did of clearing it up as he went along. He was one to suffer and grow strong, but he must know that he was on the right track.

At length, reflecting on Hugh's words, he determined that when night came he would ask grandmamma what it all meant. With this consideration he set about his duties with a light heart. Doubtless she would know; and, with his heart at rest about that matter, he could go on, feeling that God would help him to do right. A light heart makes light duties; Quince could not remember when he was better satisfied.

The sun went down in a flood of golden light, and Betty's soft lowing sounded musical, inasmuch as the milking was the only thing new between him and the solution of his doubts. The supper-table was scarcely put aside, however, before a neighbor and his wife came in to solicit Rachel's name and a contribution for a certain benevolent object, the agent for which would be with them on the following Sunday. Then followed a discussion with reference to missions, the neighbor running over the islands in the sea and dotting them off, with the

countries and peoples yet to be brought under the influence of the gospel; while Rachel, with a tongue quite as eloquent, spoke of the home-work and the necessity of first caring for one's own household. After this, reference was made to a new movement in Scarborough with regard to temperance.

"About time, I should think," remarked Rachel, "I am with you there heartily; anything that I can do I will do. It is scandalous, the way Ashley is going on. His place is a perfect trap for boys and men."

"A combination not particularly fortunate," rejoined the neighbor, "this grocery and saloon business all under the same roof."  
"I cannot imagine what our people mean," flashed up Rachel. "If liquor was not sold, there would not be any one to drink it. And this morning I learned that still another license has been taken out."

"That is so; and I did all I could to prevent it. But here, as elsewhere, the majority rule."  
"There is temptation enough already for those who may have appetites and inclinations that way," was the next remark.

"Yes, but—"  
Rachel did not finish the sentence; that was something in Quince's face that averted her. With a quick thought she turned upon him:  
"If you don't mind, Quince, run down and get a few apples; Captain Leathers hasn't tasted our pippins. You will find a candle on the shelf; and mind you don't set anything on fire."

Grandmamma raised her eyes with an expression of gratitude.

"That boy studies too hard; he doesn't take any time to himself; never wants to go into the village like other boys," she said to the visitors.

"I have noticed him sometimes coming in for groceries; he has such a serious, old look in his face! I wonder if he remembers anything about his father!" remarked the captain.

"Of course he does; and anything his mother said or did is just gospel to him," rejoined Rachel.

"Peter Brockton was a smart man; none smarter in Scarborough, had he let liquor alone. And his wife was just the best kind of a woman. I should judge the boy to be uncommon smart. No telling which way he'll go, though."

The captain was still talking when Quince appeared with the apples. Grandmamma was not sure that he had heard the last remark, but she hoped he had not.

When the visitors had gone, it was too late to ask questions; and Quince crept up stairs with a strange, new thought to ponder over.

A week after the visit, as Quince was on an errand for Rachel that would take him beyond the village, some lad of his own age stumbled out of Maxon's saloon and invited him to come in and get a drink. As he showed no disposition to comply, they pressed him, when one of them, who was already under the influence of drink, suggested not only that he should come in, but that he should treat. With this, they surrounded him, and notwithstanding his struggles to free himself, brought him by main force up the steps to the very door. Here ensued a conflict. Determined to keep the promise made to his mother, and fearful that if once inside they would compel him to drink, the boy fought like a tiger, finally throwing them off, but with a bruised face and a coat literally torn from his shoulders.

Humiliated by such treatment, and smarting under the taunts that had been heaped upon him, Quince sought his home, making such explanation as he could, and ending by saying that he did not go into the saloon, neither did he drink with them.

"But why did you not run away? You surely were not obliged to stand and take their abuse. And your coat torn to pieces, and it the only one you've got!" said Rachel, in that peculiarly sharp tone that she employed when irritated.

"Five against one!" exclaimed Quince. "If they hadn't been drinking, they would never have done it. And, again, if they hadn't taken too much, I could never have pitched them over and gotten away."

Rumor of the affair circulated through the village, and various opinions were given, not a few admiring the pluck of the lad in

standing up in his own defence against odds, and others denouncing him ready to fight—a regular chip of the old block. Only Hugh Mercer gave him sympathy and promised to stand by him if anything of the kind should again be attempted.

"But they won't try it again. It's the only way to treat such a crew. Show the white feather, and you are gone," he said.

"I thought of my promise, and it helped me," returned Quince.

"They know you now; and they'll know me too, if they try it again. I hate that saloon, and I hate drink; and I'm not particularly careful about showing it," continued Hugh.

The Indian-summer days followed, and grandmamma was out with Quince almost every evening. Once she went with him to the church-yard, and, kneeling beside his mother's grave, he told her of his desire to go away somewhere—any place—where his father's fault would not be thrown at him from every corner. He could not bear it—indeed he could not, breaking into painful sobbing.

The heart of the generous woman was touched. She felt that he had suffered; she had known it for weeks; but now it was plain to her. Yet what would Rachel say? Rachel was expecting him to stay and go to school during the winter.

On the way home the old lady made him promise to say nothing more of it for the present; perhaps something would be done to bring about a different state of things. Besides, school would soon open, and that was a pleasant consideration in itself.

The voice was restful; the lad's tender yearning for his mother found solace in the kindness of the woman, to whom he had spoken freely of what he was now anxious to do. Taught by his mother to reverence God and to look to him in confidence, he hesitated to speak of his doubts, however.

The more Quince considered the matter, the more dreadful it became to him; and at length, sleeping or waking, the words "Unto the third and fourth generation" burned into his heart like living fire.

Hugh Mercer continued to drop in frequently; and when Quince had errands that took him into the village, he showed himself with him, not at all unwilling to have it plainly understood that he was a friend of Quince Brockton.

"Hugh has ambition, and I like him," Rachel said to Quince as he came in one night from bidding Hugh "Good-by" at the gate.

"I am glad you like him," said Quince, simply.

He endeavored to say more, but there was a choking sensation in his throat. He liked Hugh, and he was grateful to Rachel; but it would be easier for him elsewhere. With change of place there would naturally follow a change of thought. He had promised his mother, and he determined to keep his promise. But to do this he must go away. It mattered little where he should go, so that the past would not rise up to make him feel that "Impossible" was written over against his effort to do right.

Once deciding, it was easier for him; but how was he to bring it about? To go away was only to follow Hugh's example. Yet he felt that Hugh would not approve of his going; neither would Rachel. He could not endure to have his motive misunderstood; he did not want either of them to judge him harshly. Still, he could not but feel that if he stayed it would only be in the end to disappoint them both. He would not say "Good-bye;" he could not; but he would leave a note to explain his reasons, as well as he could explain them, and to show them that he was not ungrateful.

It was a bitter struggle; in his endeavor to write, tears blinded him. He had not thought it would be such a difficult matter. Once he was on the point of giving up; then the remembrance of what he had suffered served him. He must attempt it. At first he had a half-sheet written closely and blotted with tears; then he rewrote it, making it less than half of the original, and the third time still less, only saying that he felt it was right for him to go and begging them not to censure him.

Then he made up his small bundle and dropped it down by the window, while he leaned his head on the casement and wept. The one dear spot consecrated to him because it was his mother's grave, he was about to leave. He realized that he would want to see it again, and he resolved that if God

spared his life he would some day return. Then he went to sleep, and wakened fully an hour before the dawn. As he went noiselessly down the narrow stairs and stepped out into the cool, crisp air a feeling of awe impressed him. Why was he stealing away like a guilty thing? Would it not be better to go back and say "Good-bye"? Could he do it without breaking down, and so remain and have it all to live over again?

Just then there was a crowing of cocks in the stable, together with a whirr of wings in the branches over his head. Picking up his bundle, he walked down the path and through the gate. There was a sound as of some one opening a window. Could it be grandmamma? He turned to look. No; all was silent. He had said "Good-bye" in his heart the previous night; now there was nothing but to go forward.

Once outside the town, Quince's courage gave way. He threw down his bundle and seated himself on a log by the wayside. The purple hush of dawn was soft and beautiful; from the distance there came to his ear noises not unlike the tinkle of sheep-bells and the lowing of cattle waking for the day. The old life was all behind him; henceforth it would be a new experience. A moment he sat with his face buried in his hands, low sobs shaking his slight frame. Even then, but for his promise to his dead mother, he would have given it all up. He felt so weak and worn, so unfit to cope with difficulties! No, no! The remembrance of that buried love gave him courage. He must not fail, and God, his mother's God, must be honored.

There was strength and hope and courage in the thought. He raised his head; a strange protective influence enfolded him. The gray dawn was breaking; golden lances shot through the tree-tops; then a rim of gold appeared, and an instant later the orb itself. It was the beginning of a new day and a new life. The lad started up, grasped his bundle firmly, and walked rapidly along the deserted road.

## CHAPTER V.

## FINDING A NEW HOME.

At the close of the third day Quince found himself too thoroughly exhausted to go farther. With the exception of a lift in a farmer's wagon, he had walked from early morning until night, sleeping in a hay loft and breakfasting on a bowl of bread and milk, for which the good farmer's wife would not accept money.

"I have a boy of my own somewhere. What I have done for you God grant that some other mother may do for him," she said, with a sad, weary look on her face.

The next woman he saw was disposed to shut the door against him.

"No, indeed!" in answer to his question for work. "As a general thing a boy to work and go to school at the same time is a nuisance—a regular nuisance." Then softening a little as she saw his eyes fill with tears, she added, "there's Farmer Daxhill lives straight along this road. He's 'most always wanting somebody. You might see him as you go along. He's every way forward; and if he wants anybody, it'll be a good place for you."

Bidding the woman good bye, Quince trudged forward. The air was healthful, the trees were flaming with color. Grandmamma Evans enjoyed such a day. She would miss him; and she would shed tears as she read his note. Rachel would be angry one minute, and the next she would forgive him; at least, he hoped she would. More than this, he hoped she would find some one who would be in every respect as faithful as he had endeavored to be.

The little village of Barnston was in sight. It had been in sight for half an hour, but Quince was thoroughly tired; he could hardly drag himself along. The last red rays touched the slant spires and made the windows glitter beneath. It was a pretty picture, but the night was coming. Slowly winding down the hill, he dropped into a narrow valley, through which ran a shallow stream spanned by a rustic bridge. The leafless twigs were barren of beauty, and the appearance of the whole landscape was zero and dun colored.

Beyond, on elevated ground, he came to a white cottage with an orchard of fruit trees and a garden, from which, apparently, the vegetables had just been taken. A few bright-colored blossoms defied the frost, standing erect where others less hardy had succumbed weeks ago.

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