

So tired—
Must the road wind uphill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.

Selected Serial.

SHILOH: WITHOUT AND WITHIN.

BY W. M. L. JAY. CHAPTER XLV.

THE SPIRIT OF HEAVEN.

Francesca to her Husband.

It is a little more than a week since I wrote you—the one being the literal fact; the other the felt truth.

At Prescott's letter herein enclosed, will tell you all it told me. Before I had well finished it, I was thrusting indisparably into a travelling-bag.

In half an hour I was on board the express, dashing southward. Two changes of cars and eight hours of travel brought me to Shiloh station at dusk.

A tall, erect, broad-shouldered, gray-headed man, keen of eye, benignant of face, with an enormous black dog at his side, stood on the platform, expectantly.

The answer came through quivering lips, ending with a sound akin to a sob: "Sinking fast."

Recovering himself, the farmer asked, "Are you the only one?" And he looked behind me as if I should have been leader of a troop.

"The only one. I am Francesca Golden. Is not Mr. Frost arrived?"

"I telegraphed him at once," said I. "He should have been here first. He had not half the distance to come."

"The worst of it is that this is the last time," he cannot get his mind off till morning," said he. "And I'm afraid—"

But the fear, whatever it was, would not "out." No need.

I got into the wagon without another word. The station was on a hill, lit dimly by the latest glimmers of the west.

Clay Corner, with its clustering lights, its hum of business, its murmur of falling water, its red glow of a blacksmith's forge, was quickly reached, and left behind.

In the darkness beyond, the farmer found voice, and even a degree of eloquence. Winnie's goodness, Winnie's gentleness, Winnie's gracefulness—these were the words upon which he enlarged, as if enamoured of the subject.

"Come right into the kitchen," said Mrs. Divine. "There's nobody there. The rest of the house is pretty much filled up with people waiting to see how the fever turns out."

"You're not fit to go just yet; and there's no hurry—thee won't know your tea and get up your strength; you want to be able to stay when you do."

"I tried to decline the refreshment; I desired to go to Winnie at once. But there was no resisting Mrs. Divine's mingled kindness, penetrativeness—and good sense."

"I own I didn't want to take 'em much," said he. "There was more 'fine feather' than 'fine bird' about 'em, I reckoned. They came and went among us like comets in the sky; no great shakes for light, and no account at all to steer by."

"Now, Miss Frost, wasn't you one of that sort. She was a real lady through and through. She didn't leave her head behind her religion behind, when she came into the country. She was just as polite and respectful to Uncle True's gray hairs and eyes, as if they'd grown on a Jew's nose."

mitte stuck up, to anybody. She spent all her time and strength in our service; and she carried her talents and education in her hand, ready for anybody that wanted 'em."

"In the little entry above, on a large chest, in a position to command the entrance of the sick-room beyond, a boy sat motionless, somber, mute, watchful."

"Stirred to the depths, I passed on. A large, wainscoted room, with the bed drawn near the middle, for greater convenience and freer air. On one side, a tall, gaunt woman, her finger on the patient's pulse, her head shaking feebly."

"The girl rose, and turned round. No lovelier countenance ever lit the interior regions of a painter's imagination. With a soft, sweet smile, she turned to me."

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just caught sight of Winnie's corpse-like figure. He stood for a moment silently regarding her. Then he turned away, drawing his hand across his eyes.

"He went straight to the bedside, gave the patient a rapid, comprehensive glance, tasted the contents of the phials on the stand, asked Aunt Vin a question or two, and vanished. In a moment he appeared with a flask; Alice brought him a spoon; he administered a dose to the patient with his own professional hands. Then he sat down, expectant."

"Now, first, I discovered, with a start, that still another spectator had been added to the scene. By the window, out of everybody's way, yet where he could command a full view of Winnie, a young man had quietly planted himself. Dark hair, a square brow, a calm, clear face; an attitude really, resolved, and patient; these traits struck me at a glance."

"Who could he be, I wondered. A son of Mr. Frost's? No, he had grown up poor. A friend of the family, perhaps."

"I suddenly, my mind swooped upon the traitor, and I turned to him with a start. 'You received my letter?'"

"Yes, I know not how to thank you. It confirmed what I had begun to suspect. For I met Frederick Thorne in New Orleans, the patient of Dr. Benson."

"I met your telegram there. I am here," said the young man, "because she is mine, as I am hers. Here to save her if I may; to yield her to God's hands, if I must."

"Another hour went by—alway, as if stretching its elastic length across an age. Time in the patient's room seemed to have taken the form of a solid block of granite—capable of compression into a nutshell, or of expansion to cover a kingdom."

"Dead silence, now. Even Dr. Heartwell and Aunt Vin were silent. They understood well enough without words. A look, a gesture, a nod—these sufficed for concert of aim and action."

"As Winnie's strength declined, their vigilance and activity increased. There was something thrilling, thrilling, sublime in that struggle with death, in which they were plainly engaged. No inch of ground was to be yielded without a fight, no point left unguarded, no resource untaken. Again and again they rallied Life's forces to the battle."

"Of the two, Aunt Vin seemed most persistent, most indetachable. Holding fast by the hem of Hope's garment, she would not once turn her eyes toward the Medusa-head of Despair. Worn out by the woman's intuition, woman's trust, in the long run, often came out ahead of manly strength, reason, independence."

"Nevertheless, the battle was going against them. 'I feel that truth in their set lips, their anxious faces—' read it with alternative fever of revolt and chill of despair. In my heart, continual beginnings of fervent prayer, losing themselves in vagueness, ending in stony despondency."

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preparing, comforting, word. All these, I felt, took me directly into their hearts, for Winnie's sake, and made common cause with me. My sorrow was theirs. One prayer was in all our hearts—"Spare her, good Lord!"

"Alice led me up stairs. Leo followed us, with a faint, ungratified aspect."

"In the little entry above, on a large chest, in a position to command the entrance of the sick-room beyond, a boy sat motionless, somber, mute, watchful."

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