

## CHOICE LITERATURE.

## A GAME OF FIVE.

George Clyde was superintending the mining works at Winding Lake and living with his only and orphan sister, Carol, at the Blue Cove House. He invited his friend Stanfield to come out for a month and Stanfield went out of his way to pick up Frank Severn at Seaport. Severn could not leave at once but asked Stanfield to wait, and introduced him to his cousin, Ottalie Larch, who was in the city on a visit and with whom Stanfield sat and walked a good deal in the week or two that followed and found it very pleasant. When he and Severn took the train at last for the north, Ottalie Larch had become a large part of Stanfield's meditations, in fact he was thinking rather sore-headedly what an extremely intelligent, modest, humorous, good girl she was, when Severn turned abruptly and asked if he didn't like her.

"Yes, very much," was Stanfield's reply.  
 "I knew you would," Severn commented; "I think I'm a lucky fellow, Stan. We don't gush, you know; I've always been friends and sort of fallen heir to each other; but regard and confidence are better foundations for a house than passion." And more to the same effect.

Stanfield looked round in his face and asked sharply, "Severn, what are you talking about?"  
 "Why, didn't I tell you? Don't you know? Ottalie and I are going to be married next spring!"

Stanfield looked at him a moment, then turned away and was very quiet the rest of the journey.

They and the Clydes sailed and rode and climbed about the beautiful lake and the hilly bordering country, drank the inspiring air, and snuffed the odours of pine and white clover.

Carol Clyde, was a straight, handsome, eager girl, quick as light to catch the infection of merriment and echo it with flashing, involuntary laughter, but as quick to turn sober at a grave word. Young as she was she had had much grief, and its effect was visible though her natural buoyancy remained. With Severn she was all gaiety and spirit. It was pleasant to see her brilliant face kindle and her eyes flash, and hear her quick laugh and retort to the merry fellow's banter. With the soberer Stanfield she evinced both gravity and an insatiable curiosity. She would listen to him while he talked and ask question upon question, with a surprising simplicity and directness of eye and speech and unflinching interest in what he had to tell her of the world, but always turned away and changed to a lighter humour when Severn appeared.

And for his part, Severn showed an immediate and increasing relish for her company, which Stanfield observing did not find distasteful but the contrary. He did not let himself dwell upon it, but kept it apart as a sweet morsel to be enjoyed without reflection. And so swift weeks passed. But upon a certain Saturday morning, as he sat on a huge rock he had climbed, the sudden sight of Severn and Carol together below among the trees and the sound of their voices and laughter heard fitfully, brought him a quick and keen remorse which stayed by him all day and with it a tender, regretful impression of the presence of Ottalie Larch. That evening the four friends went rowing and loitered late. As they parted for the night on the shadowy lawn before the house, Stanfield and Severn stood close together and Severn's eyes followed Carol up the steps and in at the door, and even then they remained fixed on the place where she had disappeared. Finally he turned slowly, as if drawn by some fascination, and met Stanfield's steadfast gaze. And Stanfield spoke, his words turning harsh without his intending it.

"Have you forgotten Miss Larch?"

Stanfield could see, dim as it was, that that challenge staggered him and his features settled with a certain heavy solidity, as loose earth will when jarred together; but his eyes did not drop and he said not a word in reply.

And Stanfield added sternly,

"It's time you went back to her."

"Go back yourself," he answered in a low, unnatural voice.

Stanfield dropped his face and swung off. Indeed, he would! He went plunging down the road toward the city half-a-thousand miles away. He stared on drunkenly for hours, held back and yet impelled resistlessly, as if the elemental forces grasped him and would tear him asunder. At last the road wound up a long and weary ascent and, gaining the summit, he turned aside, worn out, and threw himself down under the lee of a great rock and fell asleep. The night was dry and warm and already it was nearly dawn.

The land slept steeply in a broad Sabbath morning crept palpitating upon a village far below. The stir of life, faint and sweet with distance, came up to him and mingled with his dreams, the lowing of kine, the bark of a dog, the tinkling of sheep bells, the softened clatter of barnyard fowls. Then the east flashed, and over the boundless, billowy green ocean came the radiant sunrise.

By and by Stanfield woke out of dreams of peace and joy, and looked down on a world miraculously fair and full of the habitations of care and desolation. In his sleep he had walked among city streets and parks and beside him went Ottalie Larch, modest and happy. He felt the touch of her hand, the very brushing of her garment; heard her soft voice and light tread. And he woke with a mighty love and longing. He went on down the road toward the south, walking unweary, torn by contending doubts and instincts but driven by the overpowering yearning of his heart.

Presently, up from the east, as if calling to him, came sweet and solemn the clangour of the village bells. He stopped and listened to the resonant swell and decadence of the pealing tones. He had heard many sermons in his time, and many a great bell and carolling chimes had flung out their invitation to him; but now the thought of the simple, rustic people gathering at that summons, each with his care or fear, his weakness, his ignorance, his humbled pride, to confess and pray for light, for solace, for help, guidance,

pardon, release, affected him as never before. A great humility and loneliness came over him, a powerful drawing toward his kind assembling there, and he desired to mingle his own confession of impotence and blindness with theirs. Might there not be some message for him? He left the road and struck straight across country, down steep, over rock and ravine. He passed through the quiet, shady village streets and came to an old-fashioned meeting house, slipped in and sat down near the door.

There was nothing rotund or polished in the preacher's words, but the first sound of his voice had the fire and power of conviction and enthusiasm, and it took hold of Stanfield like the steadying of a strong hand, before he knew a word that was said. The simple exhortation was nearly at its close. Apparently he had been comforting and stimulating his people in some wide-spread trouble. He paused as Stanfield entered, and took breath for the final words. His eyes passed over his hushed and affected audience and were arrested by the pale, haggard, unkempt young stranger, whose dishevelled dress only set off in incongruous relief his character of a student and a gentleman; and they remained fixed upon him while he began the delivery of the quoted verses with which he closed, and which he made his own by a strong, fervent sympathy and a natural power and pathos of expression:—

"Poor people scattered abroad,  
 Poor people of God, who would fain see His face,  
 Hardly ye follow the road;  
 So much to hinder the race;  
 Poor people of God!"

And yet why are ye weak?  
 This God whom ye serve, is not He your support?  
 Do not His promises speak?  
 Can ye not trust as ye ought?  
 Say, people of God!

What! has His hand lost power?  
 Is that arm shortened which holdeth the spheres?  
 Gives He a broken tower  
 To shelter ye from your fears?  
 Oh no, people of God!

Yes, His promise shall stand,—  
 Yes, the Lord heareth His people's cry;  
 His grace shall reign in the land,  
 The power of hell shall die,  
 For you, people of God!"

Stanfield was stirred and affected inexpressibly. He hardly heard what followed, but speedily the benediction was said and he came out with the dispersing congregation. He took no heed of the curious eyes that scanned him with excusable wonder, but he turned aside out of the press instinctively, till the throng should pass, and leaned against a tree. Full of his own emotion, he neither saw nor heard anything else till suddenly the clergyman's pale, fine, eager face appeared close before him and gazed intently into his.

"Can I do anything for you, sir?" he asked.  
 "You have," Stanfield answered. "I am one of God's poor people." Unconsciously he took off his hat and his tumbled hair straggled over his forehead; and he repeated in a low tone, "One of His weak, blind children!"

"You have been tempted?"  
 "Yes."  
 "And you are going straight now, with God's help?"  
 "Yes, I should like to promise you that."  
 He offered his hand, and the minister took it with a quick, firm grasp, still looking him steadily in the face and adding a few urgent words, to which Stanfield only bowed his head. And then the two brother-men, who had never seen or heard of each other before, parted and will not probably meet again.

That afternoon, sitting before the Cove House, he saw a sail boat come round Hammerhead Point and dance in toward the wharf, then dance away again. A lady came over the rocky causeway alone, turning often to look back at the boat, then turned her back upon it and came slowly through the trees. It was Carol. Presently she saw him and hesitated, coming a little way and then looking back. He went to meet her. She saw that he was grave and pale and met him gravely.

"We have been at a camp-meeting across at Red Gap," she told him. "They have gone round with the boat to a more sheltered anchorage."

They sat on a bench under the trees, and were silent, looking off at the white-capped waves and the shallows that ran across them. He asked her what they had heard at the camp-meeting and that led to some serious talk, and when Severn and Clyde came over the hill, presently and down the slope, Severn caught sight of them, Stanfield talking earnestly and Carol standing before him with her eyes fixed on his face. Severn stopped a moment and then turned off and went into the house. Stanfield saw him as he turned away and just spoke to Clyde, left the brother and sister together and went in after Severn; but he was already gone out another way.

Stanfield searched and inquired for him in vain, then waited, anxious and conscience-smitten for his return. In the evening he grew impatient and walked away by the mountain road toward Catlin village. Looking in at a lighted place there, to his own surprise he saw Severn with some loud new acquaintances and went in and brought him out. They walked side by side a little way; Stanfield's head was bowed. Suddenly he turned and took hold of Severn and said in his face,

"Frank, go home."  
 Severn exclaimed at him savagely and then answered:  
 "Yes, go home; go home and leave the coast clear for you,—why don't you finish what you mean?"

The blood flew into Stanfield's head so that it sank and swam, but he would not let go of Severn's shoulder or be moved to anger. And when the blackness went out of his eyes he lifted them and said as before,—

"You are mistaken; I don't want to stay. Come home; come home with me—did I say so?"

The persistent affection of the tone, glance and grasp wrought upon Severn, and he sank together and shook so that he had to sit down on a step. Stanfield stood beside him and waited for him to lift his head. He did so presently and spoke,

"Take me away, Stan. Don't leave me; don't let go of me; don't go back there."

They set out for Trestleton at once, waited there for a train, and by morning were on their way cityward.

The day afterward Severn came into Stanfield's room at Seaport. He looked black and unrefreshed. Stanfield spoke of starting west again immediately.

"If you do I'll go back," Severn said. "You've got to help me through this, Stan. How am I to go back to Ottalie? I've made a horrible blunder there; that was nice stuff I was talking on the train the night we went out, wasn't it?"

"I should think it was," Stanfield growled.  
 "Anyway I can't put on a smug mouth with her as I used to, and it would be lying to her if I did," Severn went on. "Have I any right to deceive her by silence either? Things are not the same and I can't make them. I'm more than half inclined to be honest with her and tell her the truth at once."

That seemed very plausible doctrine to Stanfield at first and carried his sense with it powerfully. He sat with his face away, but presently a scornful expression grew upon him and he looked up and answered sneeringly,

"That's very fine logic, Severn. What do you mean by truth? You'd keep your word as long as it's pleasant and convenient. There's only one side to a bargain and there's no such thing as a binding obligation. There was no consideration in the contract and you're going to be honest and declare you won't be bound by it. You'd give your note, like Micawber, and thank God that debt was paid."

"No," Severn thundered back, "but when I had lost the money or had it stolen and was sure I couldn't get it back, I wouldn't go sneaking on, pretending I was going to pay in full at date. I'd swallow my pride and walk up and tell the truth and ask the creditors what they wanted."

"Yes," pursued Stanfield, "and you'd feel justified in gambling with the money or carrying it round in your pocket and showing it in public places. It would never occur to you that you ought to put it in a safe place and shun avoidable risks."

In the end Stanfield stayed.

Two or three weeks later he was still in the city. Walking one morning, moody and alone, he came opposite a little park; it looked green and cool with its fountain playing up among the trees and flashing with a ceaseless, streaming sound, and the voices of children were heard, high and happy. As he looked across, some passer stopped and he turned round and saw Carol Clyde standing beside him. She smiled quietly.

"It looks like a pleasant place," she said.  
 "Yes," he answered; "shall we walk through it?"  
 "Very," she replied, and they crossed over. He asked about her brother and when they came.

They strolled round the basin, watching the graceful jet flash and foam in the sunshine. At the farther side the breeze carried the spray over the walk.

"It's too damp for you there," Stanfield said; "here is a seat where we can watch it."

He sat down but she stood beside him, looking up steadfastly at the tossing water. And, handsome as he remembered her, Stanfield was astonished at the brilliant beauty of her face; he thought he should not be surprised if he saw it shining in the dark. There was a fascination in it, so that when she turned, her eyes met his full upon her. And she said,

"Will you tell me why you went away?"  
 He did not answer for a minute, but he met her gaze with steadfast gravity.

"No," he said then, "I don't think I have a right."

She looked up at the fountain, then back at him.

"At least you can tell me whether I was the cause?"

Her remarkable simplicity and directness or some vaguely felt power behind them stirred an answering frankness in him.

He replied,— "Yes, you were."  
 Her eyes did not turn from his, but a deeper fire burned in her cheeks and lips when she spoke again.

"I am sorry for that; I did not mean it, I am sure."

"I know you did not," Stanfield answered. "But I suppose we often do harm without knowing it."

"Then I have done harm?" she queried.

"Did I say that? I did not mean to say that."

"But it is true," she continued, "and if I have hurt anyone, ought I not to know it? Have I made trouble between you and Mr. Severn?"

"No, we are good friends." Then a sudden impulse moved Stanfield and he added rapidly,— "I was mistaken if I said you did harm; if any wrong was done it was richly deserved, unless indeed, it was you that suffered it. You were the innocent one of the three."

She sat down on the bench and her eyes drooped.

"Have I a right to know more?" she asked softly.

(To be continued.)

## THREE TYPICAL PREACHERS.

It has been my recent privilege, says a correspondent of the "Examiner and Chronicle," to hear three London preachers who enjoy a world-wide renown. Poles apart in their ecclesiastical relations, schools of belief and methods of thought, they agree in the fact that each after his kind is a leading and representative man.

CHARLES H. SPURGEON.

Not much need be written of him who was first in the order of my hearing. It goes without saying that Mr. Spurgeon is a most royal preacher—considered merely as a preacher, probably the foremost man in Christendom. His Tabernacle constitutes one of the very biggest institutions in big London. It is now all but universally recognized as