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LIFE IN THE CLOISTER; OR, FAITHFUL AND TRUE.

By the Author of "The World and the Cloister," &c., &c., &c.

CHAPTER XVI.—DO ROLLING STONES EVER GATHER MOSS!—THE TORQUAY LODGING HOUSE.

Back in England—back to the old familiar place; this going back to the old place comprises a great deal that is very sad and painful sometimes, as you well know, gentleman or lady reader, if you have left that old place with the hope of mending your health or your pockets. Ah, it is not at all a pleasant thing, I can assure you, this coming back, especially if you have old scenes with the hope of doing better in the new.

As long as the world lasts there will be censorious, uncharitable people, who must find fault with their neighbor, and the way he manages his affairs; and, at the same time, these sort of people are the very last who will give him a helping hand, though they can make a dozen trite remarks—such as that of the amiable Rochefoucauld, who said that 'misfortune was but another word for impudence; or the well-known proverb, 'Rolling stones gather no moss,' &c. &c.

Well, you see, Marion had a little of this sort of thing to endure. She had been a bit of a rolling stone in her way; and there were some two or three self-styled friends who, having previously ridiculed the idea of going to Ireland, and dragging old Mr. Craig with her, when she could as easily have got a situation in England, were now quite ready to find out that she had best have stayed at home, till she proved to them that she had really gathered a little moss, as she had a hundred pounds in her possession.

'And what was she going to do with it! surely stay quietly in London, and seek another situation.'

'Nothing of the sort; my health is breaking under constant exposure to the weather. I shall buy a little furniture, take a small cottage in the country, let part of it, and give lessons;—thus I can live comfortably, and support my father till better days shall come.'

'All very foolish,' growled the catechist;—'you'll not be able to bear strangers about you when you get them. Suppose your father were to become very ill, or your own health should break up still more than at present, what then?'

'Ay, what then, suppose the moon were to fall from the sky?' rejoined Marion, though, annoyed at the discouragement given to her, she immediately added, somewhat gravely, 'Do you not think it a better thing to encourage young people, than cast down their spirits by a thousand suppositions which, after all, may never come to pass? I may not succeed; if I do, I shall prefer a quiet country life to that which I must lead in London. Therefore, please don't imagine for me horrors which may never exist.'

The end of it all was that, a fortnight after her arrival in London, Marion prepared for her journey into Devonshire, Herbert and Lillian having vainly endeavored to make her change her resolution, and, leaving Mr. Craig on their hands, retire immediately to Namur, as the good aunt had consented to receive her without a pension.

Marion, however, would not hear of it; the poor old man, half in his dotage, clung to her with a childlike confidence. Should she leave him, when perhaps a little, only a little longer endurance would settle everything without any interference on her part?

Poor Mr. Craig, he had overheard this offer, so kindly meant on the part of Herbert; he had heard, too, Marion's rejection of the offer; still he was uneasy, she might be over-persuaded, he thought; what if she should have tired of him? And so, when evening came, he sat apart thinking of the past—of old days, when he was a rich man in Manchester—of his rash speculations, by which he had risked his large property in the cotton trade—his own bankruptcy—and then of all the dark trying scenes of the last two years—and he asked himself the painful question, 'Was he living too long for Marion? But no; he dashed away the thought as quickly as it had entered his head; his Marion was true as steel. He was confident she would not desert him in the evening of his days, to follow out her views just a little quicker. Herbert was very good, and Lillian was his Lillian as well as Marion; but Lillian is married, and cannot do in her husband's home just as she would do were she single; he should not like, he was sure he should not like, to live in the house of his son-in-law, however good he might be. Thus much, and a great deal more, the poor old gentleman had thought as he sat there beside the window, a few

nights before they left London, with his venerable head bent down on his hands, buried in deep and bitter thought; whilst Marion, whose active mind never allowed her to be idle long, was busying herself in those various occupations which have to be made when about to leave home.—At last her work was finished, the sunlight was dying away, tinting with its golden radiance the clear blue heavens, clear despite the London smoke, and shedding a bright crimson tint over the bowed-down head of her father.

'What makes him so triste to-night?' she said to herself; 'he is seldom so quiet; and I have been so busy both with head and hands, I have quite forgotten my poor dear charge.'

Then advancing to his side, and stooping down so low that her bright golden curls mingled with his silver locks, she kissed his brow saying—

'What is the matter, papa? What makes you so sad to-night? Why, shame on me to have so long forgotten to talk to you.'

'Nothing is the matter, love, except that my heart is very sad.'

'And why sadder than usual?' she said. 'I think we ought to be more cheerful.'

'I am thinking about this change, Marion;—Herbert is very good, but only a son-in-law after all. I feel my poverty now, Marion, more keenly than ever.'

'What do you mean, papa? What has Herbert to do with us, or why should you feel our poverty more than ever? It has been much worse than at the present moment, gloomy as the future may be.'

'It has thus much to do, child, that now, when age is creeping fast over me, I have to give up even the poor home I have enjoyed with you, and reconcile myself to seek a home with Herbert.'

'With Herbert, papa! what can you be thinking of?' exclaimed Marion.

'Did I not overhear Lillian saying this very afternoon that she and Herbert wished I would live with them, and that thus you could get to Namur at once?' said the old man, looking up at his daughter with a something of anger in his face.

A sudden light flashed upon Marion; she was, however, much shocked at the utter want of intelligence now betrayed by her father, who had evidently taken it into his head that she was making preparations to go into a convent, instead of to take him with her to Devonshire, and, throwing her arms around his neck, she exclaimed—

'My dearest father, what can have made you think that this idea of poor Lillian's would ever be acted upon! It was her wish, not mine.—Why make yourself so miserable? Never have I been otherwise than cheerful and contented, leaving the future always in the hands of God; besides, do you forget that we both leave London together for Devonshire on Wednesday morning?'

For a moment the old man mused, as if striving to collect his scattered thoughts, then he placed his hand to his forehead, and suddenly his face lighted up.

'Ah, yes,' he said; 'I remember now, love; how very stupid of me to forget it. And here have I been making myself so miserable, because I thought you were going to leave your poor old father. Yet, darling,' he added, a sorrowful look again passing over his face, 'it is a sad, sad thing to keep you struggling on with me, instead of your being happy in your own way.'

'You, dear old father, will you be quiet, and let me talk?' said Marion speaking in the coaxing tone one would adopt when talking to a child. 'I am happy in my own way; there, will that content you? I am quite happy at thinking that we are both going to the beautiful country. It is only you who will make me the reverse, if you take such silly ideas into your head.'

Thus gently combatting with her father's infirmity, the good Marion soothed away his trouble; and the next day but one, early in the bright spring morning, they left London for Exeter, on the way to Torquay.

It had been a moot point with Marion whether she should not have selected some watering-place in Lancashire—such as Lytham or Blackpool—as the scene of her future labors; but, on second considerations, she changed her mind.

You see she was no saint, this Marion that we are telling you about. I question whether, if in the end she does get to Namur, she won't find that there is a terrible amount of work to be done; for the plain fact was, she would not return to Lancashire lest she should come in contact with any of their former Manchester acquaintances, who had all of a sudden forgotten, when his bankruptcy took place, that they had ever styled themselves her father's friends, and been sumptuously regaled by him in his rich house at Bowden. It was very natural, you know, though not in accordance with Marion's standard of perfection, that she should feel in

this way; but then, poor girl, she was so often below the mark. 'Bad enough,' she thought, 'for those cold-hearted people to know that I have to give lessons; but more terrible still, were I to get them, or any of their friends, into my own house.'

So it was, then, that she determined on removing to Torquay—a place to which she was quite a stranger, but of the beauties of which she had heard much.

Those who know the road between Yeovil and Exeter will bear witness with us as to the beauty of the scenery; but can there be a lovelier scene than that between Exeter and Torquay, with the noble sea and over-hanging cliffs greeting the eye at every turn in the road?

At last the journey is over; and, gazing from the window, Marion beholds, a little distance from the station, cliffs covered with creeping plants, and crowned with a cluster of white villas, hanging as it were between earth and heaven.

'What a lovely spot!' involuntarily burst from her lips; and lovely it was, especially viewed in the soft sunset of that fair May evening, the light fleecy clouds breaking here and there, and the clear blue of the horizon, dyed with its own gorgeous hues, shedding a golden light on the broad and beautiful bay.

For that one night Marion put up at the Queen's Hotel, facing which arose a cliff covered with the wild primrose and profusion of creeping plants.

Early in the morning she sallied forth to explore the place, and engaged a cheap lodging in the Avenue Road till she could meet with a habitation, which she very quickly found on the cliffs. It was a pretty cottage, affording just sufficient rooms for herself, her father, and a servant, and also for one family. This cottage she furnished in the simplest manner; but everything was neat and clean, so that her rooms did not stand long unlet, and even fetched a good price.

So far all was *couleur de rose*, and Marion's spirits were high; but of course her new life had its drawbacks, and she will find out what they are quite soon enough.

Marion was wholly inexperienced, had never been accustomed to have strangers about her before. It won't exactly do, she thinks, to take for a guide as to charges that hard woman with whom she had lodged herself in the Avenue Road. Marion considered her charges extortionate, and so they were.

'Would she not make a reduction in her bill?' Marion suggested, somewhat timidly.

'No; she should insist on the whole amount,' which Marion paid with great disgust, considering herself imposed on, and no longer wondering that harsh things were said about persons who let their houses not being always very honorable; for the world, unhappily, views things *en masse* but too often.

Owing to her Catholicism becoming quickly known, Marion found it extremely difficult to get pupils, as she had expected, so that you see she was thrown rather too much on the little her house would do for her here; thus was the first shadow thrown over her path, in her otherwise pleasant home.

The once rich Miss Craig, too, could not so utterly forget the past as to like the employment which fell to her lot in the kitchen; she felt herself painfully above her present position; and though she strove perpetually to call to mind the humble employments of those privileged ones in the lowly house at Nazareth, still her sensitive nature shrunk oftentimes from the performance of such servile duties.

'Broken-down rich people!' Alas, alas, how much of human misery do not these words comprehend! Bad enough, hard enough, are the trials of poverty for those who have never known the comfort which wealth can bestow. Very trying is it to the poor lady or gentleman—the clerk, the governess, the artist or the author—to keep up that respectable appearance which they must of necessity maintain, for an outward share of respectability is all the world to them. And there are few who will not deny that such as these have oftentimes more to suffer, and far more difficulty in getting employment, than the working classes, if the latter be but industrious and sober; for it is an undoubted fact, that persons who minister to what we may term the luxuries of those above them in a worldly point of view, have far more to encounter than those whose lot it is to contribute to their necessities. Take, for instance, the domestic servant and the accomplished lady, each in quest of employment. If the former be but industrious and civil, never need she lack a good situation; whilst hundreds of poor governesses and lady artists, with all the refined and delicate feelings which education bestows and strengthens, seek it oftentimes in vain.

But worse, far worse still than this, is the state of those who have been rich, and then by

some hideous catastrophe are plunged in poverty, such as was that of poor Marion Craig. How much to learn, how much to suffer, how much of human feeling to subdue! We have said why she did not choose a place rising to notoriety, like that pretty Lytham, with its almost entirely Catholic population; honest, kindhearted Lancashire folks, who would have welcomed her so heartily amongst them. Well, I have told you why she did not go there; she was not quite humble enough to make up her mind to encounter the Manchester people, her own former acquaintances, many of whom patronise Lytham and Blackpool, and so went to Torquay instead.

Ab, Marion, Marion, all this rebellion of your proud heart is vain; for how true are those words of the author of that inimitable work,—"The Following of Christ."—"Dispose and order all things according as thou wilt, and as seems best to thee, and thou shalt still find something to suffer, either willingly or unwillingly, and so thou shalt still find the cross." So it was that one bright summer evening, just after the traits had come in, there was a sharp ring at the hall bell. The maid was asked what apartments were to let, and, with a burning flush suffusing her cheeks, Marion came forward and recognised an old acquaintance of her father's, accompanied by his wife and two daughters.

An exclamation of surprise burst from their lips; and then the painful question was asked, 'Were they staying at Torquay? how long had they been there? they were so glad to meet them again.'

Come, Marion, it is surely time to lay aside your pride, for you must disclose the truth, and accept the humiliation which has come to you quite without your seeking for it; for you have wandered a great many miles from your old place, lest you should encounter any of those you knew in your rich happy home at Bowden; and yet here they are in Torquay, and, amongst many other houses with bits in the windows, have come to you after all.

A really kind-hearted family, though, were these Howards, and sorry did they feel that they had not at once comprehended that Miss Craig had come down so low in the world, as far as money matters went, as to let lodgings; so, affecting not to notice the confusion of this poor proud Marion, as she faltered out that her father and herself held the house, but that they let part of it off, they asked her terms for the ensuing month. On hearing which, the rooms were immediately engaged; and whilst they returned to the station to give orders about their luggage, Marion, smothering the sigh which rose to her lips, prepared for the accommodation of those who had once felt themselves honored by the acquaintanceship of persons who had been infinitely above them in point of worldly wealth.

There is no doubt, however, but that Mr. and Mrs. Howard would have passed by Torre Cottage, had they known who were its occupants.—'There was something inexpressibly annoying,' said the lady, 'in the thought of that delicate, accomplished Marion having to cook and superintend things for them.' There was no help, however, and before night they were installed in their temporary home.

To their astonishment they were not many days in Marion's house before they discovered that an utter change had come over her. With a kindly wish to save her trouble, Mrs. Howard kept as plain a table as possible; but Marion surmised the reason, and Mrs. Howard expressed her wonder, when several little delicacies occasionally appeared on the table, that the formerly rich young lady knew how to watch over the comforts of her lodgers better than that person in the Strand with whom she lived last year, and who had never occupied the position of a lady after all.

Mr. Craig's helplessness and imbecility, too, won their hearty sympathy. It was shown after their departure from the house in the shape of a hamper containing three dozen of choice wines for himself, and a token of friendship for his daughter. Marion had perforce made a step in advance; she would now as soon have any of the Manchester people as strangers—perhaps sooner; for they might exercise a little more forbearance towards her than the latter would be ready to do.

However, let us leave her for a while, merely adding, that there is nothing which brings not its own peculiar difficulties—and Marion gradually finds out what hers will be. She will not always meet with kind-hearted souls, chary of giving trouble, or with those whose minds are refined enough to treat with her as an equal. No; far oftener, poor Marion, will your delicate frame, so unused to such active employment, bend beneath the yoke imposed by those who will never think of sparing you;—far oftener, unless you become utterly dead to self, will your proud heart, owing its own weakness, fail, because you cannot brook being addressed as an inferior to those now above you as to worldly means.

CHAPTER XVII.—HOW HERBERT'S FIRST ESSAY WAS REVIEWED—A FEW WORDS TO YOUNG BEGINNERS.

Slowly, though surely, the Leslies began to break in the clouds that had hung over their fortunes, and a bright gleam shone through, revealing the silver lining of the storm.

Mr. Richmond was proved himself a warm friend; had recommended others to Herbert's studio; and, moreover, had labored so strenuously in his behalf, that he had procured from a friend an introduction, to one of the leading periodicals, and thus the first of Herbert's papers on the *Esquarts* was already in type. For these he was to be paid a given sum weekly, which sufficed to remove them to a more comfortable lodging; and Lillian consoled herself with the hope that, at every great distance of time, she should be able to release Marion from the hard life she was aware she was leading at Torquay; and, if her father should still cling to her sister as hitherto, she could at least, have the happiness of knowing that her own brighter prospects would help considerably to the amelioration of their sorrows; for she had determined that they should share one common home. Mr. Richmond had also let them into much of the manoeuvring which, as in everything else, lies hidden under the surface in the literary profession; had bid him not be discouraged, but push energetically forward; telling him to remember that true talent never exists without a corresponding energy and perseverance.

At last the first portion of the article written by Herbert appeared. The first! and remember, O reader, how much depended on his success for the long future spread before him—either one of three things; a sort of mediocre success, which should snatch him from the misery which surrounded himself, his beloved Lillian, and her family, and establish his claims in some degree as a worthy claimant on public favor, both as an artist and an author; an utter failure, the result of which would be extremely hurtful to him in both capacities, and would even leave him worse off than in his original position; or a brilliant success, such as falls to the lot only of a favored few, and is too often not so much the result of any peculiarly striking talent as of some fortuitous chance, unusual good fortune, or even of some powerful interest, in a country in which so very little is accomplished, unfortunately, without it.

It happened, then, that on one pleasant September morning, just as Herbert was making his preparations for going to his studio, the first number of the *Magazine* was sent him, per post, from the publisher, accompanied by a couple of newspapers. He opened, of course, with the nervous eagerness which a young author is sure to feel, the magazine in question; whilst the delighted Lillian, her big black eyes beaming with pleasure, leaned over his shoulder; for not content with hearing Herbert read his article aloud, she needs must read it too. They had opened one of the newspapers, feeling confident that he should there see, as indeed there was a review of that article of his which he had just perused with so much delight. What did he see, however but half a column pregnant with all the spiteful satire with which the reviewer's pen becomes envenomed when he wishes to 'cut up' as the term goes. Not only was poor Herbert's article abused through thick and thin, but where praise ought duly to have been meted out it was withheld. He knew nothing of the subject concerning which he wrote; he was wrong on every point; and the reviewer ended by advising him to study the matter at issue from its first elements before he should venture to present paper again.

All know how that poor, talented creature Keats was affected by the lash of the reviewer; how he allowed the unmerited abuse he had received to have such an effect upon him that he was the cause of his death; how that noble Byron, gifted as he undoubtedly was, was treated by them, and how keenly he felt their spiteful abuse; and as Lillian noticed the effect the atrociously false article had upon her husband, she dreaded what the consequences might be, remembering as she did how similar articles had affected those to whom we have alluded. Fortunately, just as Herbert's fit of anger subsided into one of melancholy, she heard a double knock at the door, and immediately afterwards their kind friend Mr. Richmond entered the room, before whom she placed the obnoxious paragraph.

'Why, Leslie, you surely don't mean to let me see, you cast down for a piece of low spite like that,' he said, tossing the paper to the further end of the room; 'I thought you too wise.—Why, any person can see from the wholesale castigation levelled at your work, that there is personal feeling at the bottom of it; one-half of these wholesale sweeping condemnations are emanations from disappointed authors. And after all, the public really go so little by the reviews, many persons never troubling to read them.'

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