

Choice Literature.

BY A WAY SHE KNEW NOT.

The Story of Allison Bain.

BY MARGARET M. ROBERTSON

CHAPTER XXIX. Continued.

"I was thankful when I heard that he was to go back again to Mr. Strong's house. It has been like home to him a long time. Did he send a letter to me?"

"Yes, but it is a very little one. I am to tell you all the news," said John, taking from his pocket book a tiny, folded paper. Allison opened it and read:

"Dear Allie, it was all a mistake; it was me she cared for all the time. Oh! Allie, you must love her dearly for my sake."

It seemed to take Allison a good while to read it, short as it was. When at last she looked up and met John's eyes, a sudden rush of colour made her hide her face in her hands.

"Don't be sorry, Allie; you would not if you knew all," said John.

"Oh! no. It is not that I am sorry. But—he will not need me now. Oh! I am not sorry. I am glad for him. But her voice trembled as she said it.

"Will he not need his sister? You would not say so if you knew what the thought of you has been to him all these years. You have not seen your brother for a long time, but it is you who have made a man of him, for all that."

"Have I made a man of him? It has been with your good help then."

"Yes, I think I may have helped him. We have been friends, and more, ever since we met that night by the lake shore."

"Ah! he needed a friend then. I seemed to forget my fears for him, after I heard that you had found him. I do not know how to thank you for all you have been to him."

"I will tell you how," said John. But he did not. He rose and walked up and down again. After a little he sat down beside her, and had more to say. He spoke of his first meeting with her brother, of Willie's illness, and of the good fortune that came to them both on the day when they took shelter from the rain in Mr. Strong's barn. He told her much more than that. Some things she had heard before, and some things she heard now for the first time. She listened to all with a lightened heart, and more than once the tears came to her eyes. And then John ended thus, "You will be proud of your brother yet, Allison," she put out her hand, and John took it, and, for a moment, held it closely.

Before Allison came in John had said to Robert:

"You are not to go away, I have nothing to say to Allison Bain to-night that all Nethermuir might not hear."

But for the moment he wished the words unsaid. A wild desire "to put all to the touch" and know his fate assailed him. He spoke quietly enough, however, when he went on to tell, in answer to Allison's questions, why Willie had gone away so suddenly to the West.

"He had always intended to go out there some time, but with the suddenness of his going Mr. Strong had something to do. It never seemed to have come into the father's mind that his little Elsie was not a child any longer, and when he began to notice the look that came into Willie's eyes when they lighted on her, he was startled first, and then he was angry, and he let his anger be seen, which was foolish. I am afraid he spoke to Elsie herself, which was more foolish still. For she became conscious, and shy, and ill at ease, and these two, who up to that time had been like brother and sister, had little to say to one another. When Elsie was sent away to visit an aunt, Willie grew restless and angry, and, in a moment when something had vexed him, he told Mr. Strong that he had made up his mind to go west."

"Mr. Strong said 'all right' a little too readily, perhaps, and gave the lad no time to reconsider his decision, and so Willie went away. It happened when I was in another town, where I had building going on. I heard of the matter first from a letter which Willie sent me, and hurried back as soon as possible, hoping to induce him to wait for a while, that I might go with him, as I had always meant to do. I was too late. But it has all ended well. Willie was glad to get home again, and they were all glad to have him home. Mr. Strong had missed the lad more than he had been willing to confess, even to himself."

"And is that what you call ending well? Is that to be the end?" said Robert, speaking for the first time.

John laughed. "This is as far as it has gone yet, and it as well as well can be. We must wait for the rest."

"Tell me about Elsie," said Allison.

John had a good deal to tell about Elsie, and about other people. He had much to say about Mr. Hadden and his family, and about their great kindness to both Willie and himself. He had something also to say of his own business and of his success in it, and Robin drew him out to describe the house he had built for himself among the maples, by the lake. A pleasant place he said it was, but it would have to wait a while yet before it could be called a home.

Then Robin challenged him to say truly, whether, after all, he was quite content with his life in the new world, and whether he had not had times of being homesick, repentant, miserable?

No, John had never repented. He had succeeded in every way, far better than he had had any reason to expect or hope. Miserable? No. No one need be miserable anywhere, who had enough to do, and a measure of success in doing it.

"As to homesickness it depends on what you call homesickness. My heart was aye turning homewards, but not with any thought that I had been wrong or foolish to leave Scotland. No, I am not sorry I went to America when I did."

And then, turning to Allison he added:

"And yet I had no intention of staying there when I went. If it hadna been the thought of finding Willie, I would never have turned my face to Barstow. Indeed, I think your Willie and his trust in me, and perhaps also my care for him, has had more to do with my contentment, yes, and with my success, than all else together."

"I am glad," said Allison, and her impulse was to put out her hand again. But she did not. She only said:

"How long do you think of staying in Scotland?"

"Only as long as my mother needs to make ready for the journey."

"And when you go will you pass this way? I should like well to see your mother, and say good-bye before she goes away."

"You must go home for a while to the manse, Allie. That is what you must do," said Robert.

"No," said Allison, "I would like a quiet day with her here far better."

"And you shall have it," said John heartily, "That will be far better than to be there in the confusion of leaving."

Then John rose, saying it was time to go, and Robert, who was to see him a few miles on his journey, remembered that there was still something to be done, and hurried away.

He might as well have stayed where he was, for the parting between these two was as undemonstrative as their meeting had been. But when the young men had gone a few steps down the pavement, John turned back to the door where Allison was still standing.

"Allie," said he, "say a kind word to me before I go. Tell me you have forgiven the presumption of that night."

"I have had none but kind thoughts of you since then John," said she, giving him her hand.

He stooped and kissed it.

"I am not going to ask anything from you just now, because — But I must tell you that I love you dearly, — so dearly, that I can wait patiently till you shall bid me come again."

Laying her hand upon his shoulder, Allison whispered softly:

"Will you wait till the year is over, John?"

CHAPTER XXXI.

*'And I will come again, my love,
Though 'twere ten thousand mile.'*

A year and a day Mr. Rainy had given to Allison Bain, in which to reconsider her decision as to her refusal to be benefited by the provisions of Brownrig's will, and now the year was drawing to a close. "The next of kin" had signified his intention of returning to Scotland immediately, and as he was an officer in the army, who might be sent on short notice to any part of the empire, it was desirable that he should know as soon as might be, what chance there was of his inheriting the property which his uncle had left.

Mr. Rainy had written cautiously to this man at first. He had had little doubt that Brownrig's widow, as he always called Allison in his thoughts, would be brought to her senses and hear reason, before the year was out. So he had not given the next of kin much encouragement to believe that more than his five hundred pounds would fall to his share.

It was a matter of conscience with Mr. Rainy. Whatever anyone else might think or say, or whatever his own private opinion might be, it was clearly his duty to use all diligence in carrying out the expressed wishes of the testator. In the meantime he left Allison to herself, believing that frequent discussion would only make her—womanlike—hold the more firmly to her first determination.

But after all was said and done, this "troublesome business," which had caused care and anxiety to several people besides Allison, was brought to a happy end. Mr. Rainy's house was the place appointed for the meeting of all those who had anything to do with the matter, either officially or otherwise; and on the day named, shy and anxious, but quite determined as to what she was to say and do, Allison took her way thither. She told herself that she would have at least one friend there. Doctor Fleming had promised not to fail her, and though he had never spoken many words to her about the will, she knew that he would stand by her in the decision to which she had come. She had confidence in his kindness and consideration. No word to deride her foolishness would fall from his lips, and even Mr. Rainy's half-contemptuous expostulations would be restrained by the good doctor's presence.

She reached the house at the appointed hour, and found all who had a right to be present on the occasion, already there. It was her friend Doctor Fleming who came forward to the door, and led her into the room.

"Mrs. Esselmont," said Allison, as the lady advanced to meet her.

"Yes, Allison, I am here," said she gravely.

There was a number of gentlemen present, and voices were heard also, in the room beyond. Mrs. Esselmont's presence and support were just what Allison needed to help her self-possession, as Mr. Rainy brought one after another to greet her, and she went through the ceremony of introduction with a gentle dignity which surprised only those to whom she was a stranger. The last hand that was held out to her was that of "the next of kin," as Mr. Rainy announced gravely.

He was a tall man, with a brown face and smiling eyes, and the grasp of his hand was firm and kindly. They looked at each other for a moment, and then Allison turned a triumphant glance on Mr. Rainy.

"Miss Allison," said the new comer, "I have been hearing strange things about you."

"But only things of which you are glad to hear," said Allison eagerly. "I have heard of you too, though I do not remember ever to have heard your name."

"I am Allan Douglas, the son of Mr. Brownrig's eldest sister."

He had no time to say more. Allison put her other hand on the hand which held hers.

"Not Captain Douglas from Canada? Not Miss Mary's husband?" said Allison, speaking very softly.

She saw the answer in his smiling eyes, even before he spoke.

"Yes, the husband of Mary Esselmont—the daughter of your friend."

Allison turned with a radiant face to those who were looking on.

"And is not this the best way? Is not this as right as right can be?" said she, still speaking low.

Not one of them had a word to answer her. But they said to one another that she was a strange creature, a grand creature, a woman among a thousand. Allison might well laugh at all this when it was told her afterward. For what had she done? She had held to her first determination, and had taken her own will against the advice and even the entreaty of those who were supposed to be wiser than she. She had only refused to take up a burden which she could not have borne. What was there that was grand in all that?

"As right as right can be," she repeated, as she went over

to the sofa where Mrs. Esselmont was sitting. "And now you will have your Mary home again," said she.

Her Mary was there already. A fair, slender woman with a delicate face, was holding out her hand to Allison.

"I am glad to see the Allison of whom my mother has so often told me," said she.

"And I am glad you are come home for her sake," said Allison.

There was no long discussion of the matter needed after this. Mr. Rainy might be trusted to complete all arrangements as speedily as might be, and it was with a lightened heart that Allison saw one after another of those concerned take their departure.

Captain Douglas had still something to say to Allison, and he came and sat down by the side of his wife.

"Have you heard from your brother lately? Do you know that I went to see him before I left America?"

"No," said Allison in surprise. "I have had no letter for a month and more. Was it by chance that you met in that great country?"

"Oh! no. When Mr. Rainy told me of your decision, he also told me that you had a brother in America, and gave me his address. The place was not very far away from the town where we were stationed, and I made up my mind to see him before I returned home. Mr. Rainy could not tell me whether you had consulted with your brother or not, and I thought it was right for your sake as well as for my own, that I should see him and learn his opinion of the matter."

"Well?" said Allison anxiously.

"Well, he answered me scornfully enough, at first, and told me I was welcome to take possession of a bad man's ill-gotten gains, and more angry words he added. But that was only at first. He had a friend with him who sent me away, and bade me come again in the morning. From him I heard something of the cause of your brother's anger against my uncle. We were on better terms, your brother and I, before I left."

(To be continued.)

CLOSE HOME AT LAST.

CLOSE home at last! After long days
Of travelling o'er many ways,
Ocean and wind alike his foes,
How glad the mariner who knows
Home's dawning on his anxious gaze!

No thought of danger now dismays,
For, peering through the spray and haze,
He sees the harbour light that glows
Close home, at last!

So, too, when health no longer stays,
When limbs that fail, strength that decays,
Tell life's long journey near its close,
Trustful may we await repose,
Rejoicing in Heaven's guiding rays,
Close home at last! The Quiver

CENTRAL AFRICA.

Beyond a few exploring invasions by the Dutch and the French in the eighteenth century, nothing was really done to examine the unknown land to which the great River Zaire or Congo led until Captain Tuckey, in 1816, an expedition led which was soon broken up by sickness and the death of the leader. The record of the travels, well known as "Tuckey's Last," contained the only knowledge of that district for the next fifty years, Owen, Grandy, Bastian and others tried to penetrate the country, but were more or less unsuccessful. In 1867 Livingstone found a great river-source from the Zambesi country in the east, and, believing it to be the spring of the Nile, followed it for about 1,500 miles. After that explorer's death, Stanley, in 1876, followed this river for 1660 miles more, and found it to be the Congo. The result of Stanley's expedition "Across the Dark Continent" opened the eyes of the world to the immense possibilities of commercial aggrandizement in the Congo District and indeed all Central Africa.

The International Association, founded by King Leopold, of Belgium, in 1876, aimed at acquiring as much African territory as possible for trade purposes, and sent out several expeditions to the West Coast to further its designs. Portugal, the old occupier of certain seaboard lands, not liking this aggression of European powers in what it foolishly considered its privileged domain, sought the alliance of England, and in 1884 Earl Granville committed Great Britain in a treaty with that country to recognize its rights on the Congo. This was a most unwise and unnecessary step, and provoked great opposition both in and out of England. It was certainly strange that free-trade England, with her traditional policy of just government, should ally herself with a country that had always maintained a policy of utter hostility to other traders than its own, and was as arbitrary with the natives as it was exclusive of foreigners. The International Association had by this time acquired considerable territorial and trading rights on the Congo, and regarded the Anglo-Portuguese treaty with aversion and suspicion.

It is unfortunate that the spirit of retaliation overcame the international spirit professed by the association, and led it to make an agreement with France, appointing that country heir to all its privileges and possessions should it cease to exist. In the meantime Germany had developed a colonizing policy, which is still on trial and not unlikely to fail. Prince Bismarck created the German Empire; but the unification of the states did not altogether assure the unity of the people. The rather iron-glove policy of the Chancellor placed many restrictions on individual