

BOYS AND GIRLS

Black Rock.

(A tale of the Selkirks, by Ralph Connor.)

CHAPTER XII.—LOVE IS NOT ALL.

Those days when we were waiting Craig's return we spent in the woods or on the mountain sides, or down in the canyon beside the stream that danced down to meet the Black Rock river, I talking and sketching and reading, and she listening and dreaming, with often a happy smile upon her face. But there were moments when a cloud of shuddering fear would sweep the smile away, and then I would talk of Craig till the smile came back again.

But the woods and the mountains and the river were her best, her wisest, friends during those days. How sweet the ministry of the woods to her! The trees were in their new summer leaves, fresh and full of life. They swayed and rustled above us, flinging their interlacing shadows upon us, and their swaying and their rustling soothed and comforted like the voice and touch of a mother. And the mountains, too, in all the glory of their varying robes of blues and purples, stood calmly, solemnly about us, uplifting our souls into regions of rest. The changing lights and shadows flitted swiftly over their rugged fronts, but left them ever as before in their steadfast majesty. 'God's in His heaven.' What would you have? And ever the little river sang its cheerful courage, fearing not the great mountains that threatened to bar its passage to the sea. Mrs. Mavor heard the song and her courage rose. 'We too shall find our way,' she said, and I believed her.

But through these days I could not make her out, and I found myself studying her as I might a new acquaintance. Years had fallen from her; she was a girl again, full of young warm life. She was as sweet as before, but there was a soft shyness over her, a half-shamed, half-frank consciousness in her face, a glad light in her eyes that made her all new to me. Her perfect trust in Craig was touching to see.

'He will tell me what to do,' she would say, till I began to realise how impossible it would be for him to betray such trust, and be anything but true to the best.

So much did I dread Craig's home-coming, that I sent for Graeme and old man Nelson, who was more and more Graeme's trusted counsellor and friend. They were both highly excited by the story. I had to tell, for I thought it best to tell them all; but I was not a little surprised and disgusted that they did not see the matter in my light. In vain I protested against the madness of allowing anything to send these two from each other. Graeme summed up the discussion in his own emphatic way, but with an earnestness in his words not usual with him.

'Craig will know better than any of us what is right to do, and he will do that, and no man can turn him from it; and,' he added, 'I should be sorry to try.'

Then my wrath rose, and I cried—

'It's a tremendous shame! They love each other. You are talking sentimental humbug and nonsense!'

'He must do the right,' said Nelson in his deep, quiet voice.

'Right! Nonsense! By what right does he send from him the woman he loves?'

'He pleased not Himself,' quoted Nelson reverently.

'Nelson is right,' said Graeme. 'I should not like to see him weaken.'

'Look here,' I stormed; 'I didn't bring

you men to back him up in his nonsense. I thought you could keep your heads level.'

'Now, Connor,' said Graeme, 'don't rage—leave that for the heathen; it's bad form, and useless besides. Craig will walk his way where his light falls; and by all that's holy, I should hate to see him fail; for if he weakens like the rest of us my North Star will have dropped from my sky.'

'Nice selfish spirit,' I muttered.

'Entirely so. I'm not a saint, but I feel like steering by one when I see him.'

When after a week had gone, Craig rode up one early morning to his shack door, his face told me that he had fought his fight and had not been beaten. He had ridden all night and was ready to drop with weariness.

'Connor, old boy,' he said, putting out his hand; 'I'm rather played. There was a bad row at the Landing. I have just closed poor Colley's eyes. It was awful. I must get sleep. Look after Dandy, will you, like a good chap?'

'Oh, Dandy be hanged!' I said, for I knew it was not the fight, nor the watching, nor the long ride that had shaken his iron nerve and given him that face. 'Go in and lie down; I'll bring you something.'

'Wake me in the afternoon,' he said; 'she is waiting. Perhaps you will go to her'—his lips quivered—'my nerve is rather gone.' Then with a very wan smile he added, 'I am giving you a lot of trouble.'

'You go to thunder!' I burst out, for my throat was hot and sore with grief for him.

'I think I'd rather go to sleep,' he replied, still smiling. I could not speak, and was glad of the chance of being alone with Dandy.

When I came in I found him sitting with his head in his arms upon the table fast asleep. I made him tea, forced him to take a warm bath, and sent him to bed, while I went to Mrs. Mavor. I went with a fearful heart, but that was because I had forgotten the kind of woman she was.

She was standing in the light of the window waiting for me. Her face was pale but steady, there was a proud light in her fathomless eyes, a slight smile parted her lips, and she carried her head like a queen.

'Come in,' she said. 'You need not fear to tell me. I saw him ride home. He has not failed, thank God! I am proud of him; I knew he would be true. 'He loves me'—she drew in her breath sharply, and a faint color tinged her cheek—'but he knows love is not all—ah, love is not all! Oh! I am glad and proud!'

'Glad!' I gasped, amazed.

'You would not have him prove faithless!' she said with proud defiance.

'Oh, it is high sentimental nonsense,' I could not help saying.

'You should not say so,' she replied, and her voice rang clear. 'Honor, faith, and duty are sentiments, but they are not nonsense.'

In spite of my rage I was lost in amazed admiration of the high spirit of the woman who stood up so straight before me. But, as I told how worn and broken he was, she listened with changing color and swelling bosom, her proud courage all gone, and only love, anxious and pitying, in her eyes.

'Shall I go to him?' she asked with timid eagerness and deepening colour.

'He is sleeping. He said he would come to you,' I replied.

'I shall wait for him,' she said softly, and the tenderness in her tone went straight to my heart, and it seemed to me a man

might suffer much to be loved with love such as this.

In the early afternoon Graeme came to her. She met him with both hands outstretched, saying in a low voice—

'I am very happy.'

'Are you sure?' he asked anxiously.

'Oh, yes,' she said, but her voice was like a sob; 'quite, quite sure.'

They talked long together till I saw that Craig must soon be coming, and I called Graeme away. He held her hands, looked steadily into her eyes and said—

'You are better even than I thought; I'm going to be a better man.'

Her eyes filled with tears, but her smile did not fade as she answered—

'Yes! you will be a good man, and God will give you work to do.'

He bent his head over her hands and stepped back from her as from a queen, but he spoke no word till we came to Craig's door. Then he said with humility that seemed strange in him, 'Connor, that is great, to conquer oneself. It is worth while. I am going to try.'

(To be Continued.)

The Power of Prayer.

(By Mr. George Muller, in 'The Christian'.)

The language of Psalm cxvi. 1, 2, might be the experience of every one of us, so far as God is concerned. Each might be able to say: 'I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice, and my supplications; because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.' I strongly recommend young believers to keep a memorandum book, in which to set down the subjects of special prayer, and note the answer side by side. The great secret in prayer is on no account to give way till the answer is given. It is a grace which all may exercise. There were gifts in the days of the Apostles, of which faith was one. The grace of faith will increase in proportion to its use. When I began the life of faith in 1829-30, at Teignmouth, I remember how weak I was in faith as compared with now. I could then trust God for a shilling or a pound, but as time went on I found there was no limit to the degree in which I might trust Him, and I learnt to trust Him for hundreds and thousands of pounds. If I now knew that God had called me to a work needing £200,000, I should trust and expect God would give it; and thus invariably during the past sixty-six years. What I mention this for, is to impress upon you that there is nothing to prevent everyone having the like privilege, so far as God is concerned.

It has been a great joy to have been able to give instruction in schools to 123,000 children, many of them being under our care for as much as ten years; but the most precious answer to prayer in connection with that work has been that thousands of them have been brought to Christ, the spiritual blessing of the children being the great thing with me from the beginning. As many as sixty have been saved in one school in half a year, and many of those saved in these schools are now preachers of the Gospel at home or missionaries abroad. It was much laid on my heart to circulate the scriptures, and in answer to prayer I have had the joy of circulating 274,000 Bibles, 1,425,000 New Testaments, besides very many thousands of portions of Scriptures, in various languages, so that these books have been scattered in almost every country.