

Choice Literature.

MISS GILBERT'S CAREER.

CHAPTER XI.—Continued.

An obstruction placed in the channel of a strong will, and abruptly checking its flow, raises, by the reflux, a power that climbs and plunges till the current of life becomes turbid and unwholesome. It goes thus madly back to sweep the obstruction away, and when it finds it unyielding, it dashes over its verge with broken voice and volume, and ploughs up the filth that sleeps in the beds of the purest streams. It was thus with the strong will of Dr. Gilbert. He had made up his mind to the step he had taken. All the strong currents of his life had, for the time, taken this new channel; and when the irrevocable word was dropped into it, the tide of a powerful life was stopped. It swelled and piled, and then plunged madly over it, and lost, at once, its music and its purity. But as streams thus stopped and thus started, though still complaining, grow pure again, so Dr. Gilbert's anger and mean jealousy subsided at length, and left him subdued, sad, ashamed and acquiescent. If he could not have Miss Hammett's love, he must not lose her respect. If her hand could not be his, her society should not be sacrificed, and she should see that he could not only be generous, but chivalrous and brave.

Mrs. Blague had been made aware by Miss Hammett's rapid passage through the hall that Dr. Gilbert was alone, and as he lingered, she walked into the parlour, and found him standing where Miss Hammett had left him, with the marks of strong emotion still upon his features.

"Madam," said the doctor, "you will oblige me by never alluding to what you have witnessed, and by bearing a message to Miss Hammett." He knew he could rely upon his old friend, and, without waiting for her reply, he advanced to the table, and wrote, in pencil, a note to the schoolmistress. It was brief and characteristic: "Miss Hammett: Whatever you deny me, I know you will not refuse me the privilege of apologising for my inexcusable rudeness. Come down, and permit me to bear away with me a measure of self-respect."

Mrs. Blague took the note to Miss Hammett's chamber, and the lady immediately appeared in response. Her face was clothed with an expression of pain, and her eyes were full of tears. The doctor advanced to meet her, and held out his hand. "Miss Hammett," said he, "I have been mean and unmanly. Will you forgive me?" Her cold hand was in his strong grasp, and smiling sadly, and looking gratefully and trustingly in his face, she answered, "Yes." As the doctor looked into her deep, honest, blue eyes, down into the true soul which shone through them, and thought in one wild moment of the treasure for ever swept beyond his winning, his frame shook with powerful emotion. Oh! rare intuition! The small, cold hand grew uneasy, and was slowly withdrawn, and again folded over her heart.

"Will you be seated, Dr. Gilbert?" said the young woman, pointing to a chair, and taking one herself. "As between ourselves, Dr. Gilbert," she continued, "everything is settled. You know my wishes, and respect them. I take your apology very gladly, for I did not wish to part with you, so that we might not meet again; but you have made an allusion to some one as a favourite of mine, and, that no other person may suffer injustice, I think I should know to whom you allude, and be allowed, for his sake and my own, to set you right."

The doctor blushed. In fact, he was never so thoroughly ashamed in his life. "Miss Hammett, I beg you not to humiliate me further," said he. "I spoke wildly and meanly—outrageously, if you will. Will not that do?"

"I think I have a right," pursued the young woman, "to be more particular. You could not have said what you did without some conviction, and I wish to put your mind for ever at rest on the subject. Tell me, Dr. Gilbert, do you imagine that my hand belongs to any man here in Crampton?"

The doctor fidgeted. "We talk in confidence, of course," said he. "I knew that Arthur Blague was interested in you, very deeply. I knew that, at his susceptible age, he could not be much under the same roof with you without being impressed by you. I did not know how far the matter had gone, and very naturally thought of him when you so readily and so decidedly replied to my proposals. It irritated me, of course, to feel that an undeveloped youth, without means and without position, should be able to win that which was refused to me."

The doctor stumbled through his explanation, and Miss Hammett received it with a smile of amusement, touched with sadness and apprehension. When he closed, she said: "I thank you, for myself, and on behalf of Arthur Blague. I confess to you that he is a young man whom I very warmly esteem. It seems to me that he possesses the very noblest elements of manhood, and yet there is nothing that would give me more pain than to know that he has other feelings toward me than those of friendship. He has been very kind to me, and I pray God that nothing may happen in our intercourse to make my residence with his mother unpleasant to either of us."

Dr. Gilbert rose to his feet. The reaction had come, and it was a healthy one—honourable to the rugged nature in which it had taken place. Whether a lingering memory of the shipping in New York harbour, or a reminiscence of some great naval battle that he had read about in history, rose to him on the moment, under the spur of association, will never be known; but he said: "Well, Miss Hammett, the deck is cleared, I believe; the dead are thrown overboard, and the wounded are taken care of, and doing well." Then he laughed a huge, strong laugh, that showed that his physical system, at least, was unshaken.

Miss Hammett smiled—glad that the battle was over, and particularly rejoiced that the "wounded" were doing so well. She gave him her hand at the parlour-door, and shaking it heartily, she said, "Let the past be buried. We shall get along very well together."

As he turned to leave her, he saw, standing in the street-

door before him, Arthur Blague in his working dress. He knew that Arthur had overheard his last words. The poor fellow stood like one paralyzed, and gave the doctor his hand as he passed out in a state of the most painful embarrassment. The doctor knew what it meant, and went away (what an exceedingly mean and human old fellow!) glad from the bottom of his heart that the young man had got to pass through the same furnace that he had.

It was Saturday night, and the young man had come home to pass the Sabbath. Miss Hammett met him cordially, but saw at once that there was something in the words of Dr. Gilbert that oppressed him. In her sweet endeavours to erase this impression, she only drove still deeper into his heart the arrow by which he had long been wounded. Ah! what charming torture was that! What a Sabbath of unsatisfactory dreaming followed it! How he listened for her steps in her chamber! How like the singing of an angel sounded her morning hymn! How her face shone on him as he sat near her at the table! How did heaven breathe its airs around him as he walked by her side to the village church! How did he lean back for hours in his easy chair at home, with his eyes closed in delicious reverie! Arthur Blague was nineteen. Poor fellow!

CHAPTER XII.—ARTHUR BLAGUE IS INTRODUCED TO A NEW BOARDING-HOUSE, AND DAN BUCK IS INTRODUCED TO THE READER.

We left Arthur Blague, some chapters back, sitting on his bed in the long lodging-hall at Hucklebury Run, having the previous evening left his bed and board at the house of the proprietor, under circumstances that forbade his return. The lodgers had all turned out, and were commencing their work in the mill. The more Arthur thought of the uncomfortable night he had passed, and of the low and degrading associations of the human sty into which circumstances had forced him, the more unendurable did his position seem. There were others at the same moment thinking of, and endeavouring to contrive for him, and when, at his leisure, he entered the mill, he found three or four men, including Cheek, gathered around big Joslyn, and apparently urging upon that eminently cautious and impassive individual some measure of importance. As Arthur came up, they made room for him, and then Cheek, as the readiest spokesman, announced the matter in hand. "We've been trying," said he, "to make Joslyn take you into his house, and board you."

Joslyn was overshadowed by a great doubt. He "didn't know what the woman would say;" and the setting up of his will over hers was a thing he never dreamed of. Like gentlemen with delegated authority, acting under instructions, he found great difficulty in appearing to act on his own personal responsibility and, at the same time, keeping within the limits of his power.

"I'll agree to anything that the woman will," said Joslyn; and it was at last arranged that Arthur should walk home and breakfast with the discreet husband and father, and make his application in person.

On this conclusion, Cheek took Arthur aside, and touching him significantly over the region of the heart, said, "Are you loose here?"

"What do you mean?" inquired Arthur.

"Have you hitched on anywhere yet?" said Cheek.

"I don't understand you," replied Arthur.

"I mean have you got a girl?" exclaimed the young man. "You see," continued he, "all we factory fellers have a girl. We may marry 'em, and we may not; but we are all kind o' divided off, and when we go out anywhere, we have an understanding who we are going to wait on."

Arthur smiled, and said that, so far as he knew, he was without any incumbrances of the kind.

"Well, all I want of you is not to go to hitching on to Joslyn's oldest girl," said Cheek. "She belongs to me. She isn't grown up yet, but I spoke for her when she was a little bit of a thing. You see, when I was a boy, I used to hold her in my lap, and have all sorts of talks with her, and then she told me she was going to wait for me; and, by George! I've always stuck her to it! I tell her of it now, whenever I get a chance, and she's got so big that she begins to blush about it. Oh! she's right, I tell you, and she's got one of the mothers—regular staver."

"I give you my pledge," said Arthur, "not to interfere with any of your rights."

"That's the talk," said Cheek. "If I was going to be cut out, I'd rather have you to do it than any of these other fellers; but I've set my heart on it, and I'm bound to win. Now mind—none of your tricks," said Cheek, with a good-natured shake of the finger; and then he went off down stairs whistling to his work.

When the breakfast bell rang, big Joslyn rolled down his sleeves, took off his apron, and intimated to Arthur that he was ready. All the way to his house Joslyn did not speak a word. He felt that he was running a great risk in taking a stranger to his breakfast table, without first consulting "the woman," as he always called his wife. As he raised the latch, Arthur heard from the inside the caution—"Sh-h-h-h!" Instantly the husband and father rose to his toes, and entered his door as noiseless as a cat. Arthur had seen Mrs. Joslyn before, and shook her hand in silence, as if he had come to attend a funeral. "The woman" gave him a polite greeting, and then directed to her husband a look of inquiry. Arthur's eyes hastily surveyed the breakfast apartment. Everything was as neat as wax, and as orderly as the little clock that ticked in the corner.

"I have brought him home to breakfast, and he wants to talk with you about board," said Joslyn, in an undertone.

"Jenny, get another plate, and another knife and fork," said Mrs. Joslyn, and straightway the little girl that was "waiting" for Cheek—a second edition of her spirited and enterprising mother—obeyed the command, and the family at once sat down to their meal. Jenny was the only one of the large family of children visible; the remainder were not allowed to wake up until Mr. Joslyn could be got out of the way for the morning, and she was only permitted to open her eyes because she could assist her mother.

Mrs. Joslyn was one of those high-strung creatures that are occasionally met with in humble life, endowed with

quick, good sense, indomitable perseverance, illimitable endurance, administrative faculty sufficient to set up a candidate for the federal presidency, and abundant good-nature, whenever she could have everything her own way. Besides, she was good-looking, and only needed to have been born under kinder stars, into a more gentle and refined circle of society, to make a splendid woman. What an apparent waste of valuable material there sometimes is in such places!

Now the moment her husband announced the nature of Arthur's errand, she had scanned the possibilities of her little dwelling, rearranged the beds of the children, got a room cleared in imagination, fixed upon the exact number of palm-leaf hats that the price of Arthur's board would relieve her from braiding, and was ready with her answer before her phlegmatic husband had helped Arthur to a plate of the humble morning fare.

"If Arthur Blague can take us as he finds us, we can take care of him," said Mrs. Joslyn decidedly.

"Just as you say," responded Joslyn, greatly relieved; and so the matter was regarded as settled.

Joslyn and his wife ate their breakfast, Arthur thought, with unexampled rapidity, and pushed back from the table, leaving him alone. "Don't you mind anything about us," said Mrs. Joslyn. "I've got to attend to this man's head, and this is the only time in the day I have to do it." So she drove her husband back into a corner, ran a wet cloth over his bald crown, wiped it dry, and then brought the hair up over it from the temples, and braided the ends together in an incredibly short space of time.

"I do hate to have my husband look like a great, bald-headed baby," said Mrs. Joslyn, "and it all comes of his wearing his woollen cap in the mill. I wish men knew anything. There! Off with you! The bell is ringing. Sh-h-h-h!"

Mr. Joslyn went out on tiptoe, leaving Arthur to arrange matters with his wife. She wished to have him understand definitely, what the size of his room would be, what privileges he could have in the family, how late he could be admitted at night, and how much she expected for his board. While she was talking, her children, who seemed to understand exactly when they were expected to wake up, came tumbling in, one after another, in their night-dresses, until the room seemed to be full. The last fat little fellow that appeared came in crying. He was hardly old enough to walk, yet the enterprising mother said, "Sh-h-h-h! don't wake the baby!"

"Do you like children?" inquired the prolific mother.

"I like them—yes. You know I have not been much used to them," replied Arthur.

"I was going to tell you that there's but one way to do in this house," she continued, "if you don't like 'em, and that is, not to pretend to like 'em. They'll be all over you like leeches when you've been into the river, if you make much of 'em. Less racket! Sh-h-h-h!"

Arthur departed, uncertain as to whether the place would be entirely to his liking and convenience, but quite certain that he would be more comfortable there than in the house of the proprietor, or at the short commons of the boarding-house, with the accompanying lodgings.

While these operations were in progress, there was an animated and angry consultation going on between Mrs. Ruggles and her hopeful daughter Leonora. "I tell you we want to get father real wrathful over this," said Mrs. Ruggles. "The more I think about it, the madder I get. I never took such impudence from anybody in my life, and to think that that great saucybox that we took in, and tried to do for, should presume to set himself up to put us down, and then to say that both of us was fools! As for that Hammett girl, if we don't make Crampton too hot to hold her, then it'll be because she's got brass enough in her face to make a kettle, that's all. I tell you, I won't be put down—not by a couple of factory hands, I tell you. I know what belongs to my persition, and I'll allow no understrapper to call me a fool, nor to say: Why do ye so?"

Leonora was quite as angry as her mother, but, when thrown upon her own resources, was wiser—at least more cunning. She had made up her mind to write to her father in New York a discreet account of the occurrences which we have recorded, insisting particularly on the wound which Arthur had inflicted upon her feelings by calling her a fool. She would not mention the fact that the same epithet had been applied to her mother, because she knew that that would rather please than offend him, and because she knew that the more she mixed her mother's name with the affair, the more reason he would have to suspect that Arthur's insult was not altogether without excuse.

The letter was written and despatched—decidedly the most powerful and well-considered literary missive that had ever left Miss Leonora's hand. The shot told admirably, and produced the precise effect desired. Old Ruggles, as he sat in the little dirty hotel which he always lived in when in New York, read the letter, and was very angry. The result of his anger made itself manifest in a letter he wrote to Arthur, directing him to meet the Crampton stage-coach on a certain day, with two seats in the waggon.

(To be continued.)

THE OPEN-AIR SACRAMENT IN CAPE BRETON.

The sacrament in the open air originated with the Covenanters, when they met by stealth in the fields or woods for their forbidden worship. It was thus established in the Lowlands with the organization of Protestantism, and it still continues to be a characteristic feature of the Highlands after its discontinuation in the Lowlands. The sacrament begins always at eleven on Thursday. This day is regarded as one of preparation; the spirit of it is that of fasting and humiliation, expressed in the usual services; the singing of the psalms of David, prayers and a sermon—all in Gaelic. The singing is what first impressed me as perfectly unique. The precentor sings in a low and exceedingly plaintive voice, a soft pronunciation, and a timid expression; his recitatives are as austere as Gregorian chants, but full of little notes and slurs, and by contrast his phrases are rendered still more