



## CHAPTER IX.—THE ORPHANS.

"Daily struggling, though unloved and lonely,  
Every day a rich reward will give;  
Thou wilt find, by hearty striving only,  
And truly loving, thou canst truly live."

MRS. WINKLOW.



WHEN Mysie and Norry retired at their usual early hour, and left Mr. Hope and his daughter alone, the conversation, as they sat together for an hour or so before bed-time, turned very naturally on their circumstances, and led unintentionally to the mention of the brother and sister. The teaching that Mr. Hope had now left him would certainly not suffice to maintain the humble home in which he dwelt. His daughter was the most careful and industrious of household managers, but there must obviously be an income to manage, and if that fails the talent of thrift, however great it may be, must fail also.

Poor Marian Hope had, for a long time past, lived in some dread of what seemed now actually to have occurred. She had nursed her mother through an illness of two years, and, when death ended the long agony, there was left as a bitter addition to the sorrow a heavy debt necessarily incurred, which the honest pride of both father and daughter could not endure should remain. So Mr. Hope had walked, despite his lameness, many miles to his round of daily teaching, and had in the evenings done law copying when he could obtain it from the law stationers, and his daughter, besides dismissing their only servant and undertaking the work of the house, with occasional assistance from a charwoman, had toiled early on summer mornings, and late on winter nights, before or after the rest of the family were in bed, at embroidery, by which all that she had gained had been the means to keep her slender wardrobe in such a condition that it should neither shame her sense of propriety nor make demands on her father's failing income. And fail, indeed, it did most rapidly, particularly in this last year. Just as the payment of the doctor's bill for Mrs. Hope had given some respite to the cares of the survivors, the sources on which they depended seemed to be shut up against them. Marian believing, though she did not utter the painful thought, that her father's wan looks, infirmities, and threadbare dress over weighed, in the consideration of those who employed him, their knowledge of his talents and respect for his character.

It was a hard lesson for her to have to learn in her early womanhood, that a jaunty air and good broadcloth were by some—nay, by most—more valued than worth or talent. It brought with it a bitter sense of wrong and injustice that she had never before experienced.

As for Mr. Hope, despite his cheerful name, he was one of those who seemed born both to bear and dignify adversity. He had been in his youth in a Government office, that by some changes was reduced, he being one of the

clerks thrown out. He had saved from the grave which had taken many of his children one child, this daughter Marian, when the alteration in his position and prospects occurred. By the advice of a few friends, he employed the small sum of money that he possessed in emigrating to, and buying some land in Canada. If diligence would have done, in their new life, in the place of bone and muscle, Mr. and Mrs. Hope, might have succeeded; as it was, he met with the injury that ended in permanent lameness, and his wife contracted in that rigorous climate the pulmonary complaint that made her life one long disease; and it was in the hope of benefiting her health, or rather rescuing her from impending death, that eight years previously, they had returned to England poorer than they left it, bringing with them the two children, Norry and Mysie. Then Mr. Hope, by the recommendation of a friend who had known him in his earlier days, obtained employment as a teacher, for which his fine penmanship and mathematical skill fitted him. The education of the two children had been carried on by himself and his daughter. Therefore, when, after a long pause, as they sat alone in their parlor that night, his daughter said to him, "Was ever anything settled, father, about Norry and Mysie—as to any pursuit in life, I mean?" Mr. Hope sighed heavily, and replied—

"If I had known, my dear, all the anxiety that the charge would involve, I think I should have opposed your dear mother. But she was bent on it, and the poor things were certainly wretchedly neglected when they came to us."

"Indeed they were. Young as I then was not eleven, I think, father—I well recollect the little rough, unkempt things. Those must have been hard people—those Johnstons, father."

"They were rough people, child. I do not know that they were harder to the orphans than they would have been to children of their own. Johnston had been a schoolmaster in Scotland before he emigrated, and used to rule by force of hand more than brain; and his wife was just a maudlin slattern."

"He ill-used her as well as the children, I've heard mamma say."

"There were faults on both sides, doubtless; but the woman suffers most in such cases: I'm certain Johnston's wife did. What with hardships, and quarrels, and—"

"And whisky, father."

"Yes, and whisky, doubtless, she, like many more, did not live out half her days. I shall never forget going into their log hut and finding poor little Mysie lying fast asleep across the feet of the poor dead woman."

"Ah, yes, how that impressed poor dear mamma! She used often to say, 'We literally took her from death—though Norry was in a worse condition.'"

"Norry had been taken on tramp by Johnston, and a tavern-keeper had so pinched the little foot sore when of four years old, that he set the police on Johnson's track, just as the neighbors

came to me to write to him that his wife was dead."

"Did the neighbors think that the children were their own?"

"Yes, if they troubled themselves to think at all about them. Johnston was disliked as a quarrelsome fellow, and his wife as a drunkard. People avoided them; but your mother, Marian, was always drawn towards children."

"It was she that found out the children were not the Johnston's."

"Yes, she discovered it one day when she was giving Mrs. Johnston some little wraps she had made for the bairns. To her surprise the woman said, in a maudering way, 'Ah, we would get proper things for them if we were paid properly. But the money comes so irregularly.' And then, having said so much, she told the truth—not that, as far as I know, they had previously wanted to conceal it; but they had never contradicted people who took it for granted they were their own children. Acquiescing in a falsehood is much the same as telling one, to my mind. However, we had the truth at last. The children's name was Grant, the parents were dead, but some kinsman—uncle, I think—paid for them, when the Johnstons offered to take them; a trifle certainly, but enough to secure the Johnstons from any loss. Indeed, the money, well employed, might have been a help to Johnston; and it roused our indignation to think that the little ones were not better cared for than if they had been beggars. I was resolved to appeal to the magistrate of the district, and went to the cottage to see the state of the children for myself, when I found the end had come, as far as the miserable woman was concerned."

"Johnston was, I think, sincerely horrified when he was recalled to the scene his cottage presented. In a newly-settled place like Villenout, the rougher sort are often for taking the law into their own hands, and I think he was only too glad to make his escape, leaving the children with us. He obtained a situation afterwards in New Brunswick, to manage a farm—for which he was better fitted than for school-keeping; and I'll do him the justice to say, that the stipend for the children, he has always sent regularly—six pounds five shillings a quarter—ever since we took them. I forgave him a quarter or so that winter he was laid up with rheumatism; since then it has come regularly."

"But, father, that sum ought to have been increased as they grew older."



STONEY INDIAN CAMP, NEAR CANNORP, N. W. T.

From painting by F. M. Bell-Smith, R.C.A.