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or at least we may behold the work wrought in Acadian lands, that has been accomplished in a neighboring country by Howells, Cable and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps. Far be it from the writer to attempt to vie with such eminent ones as the above in this simple tale. He just offers it as an experience of his life among a lowly yet pure and true people. It brings back to him a roll of breaking icy surf upon a boulder-strewn shore, and a sonorous answer from dark pine woods above; where cold and loneliness, and fierce tempests could not chill the glow of loving hearts, which were happy in the ways of simplicity and duty in the cabins all along among the rocky nooks.

The shores of Nova Scotia present every variety of coast scenery. In some places we find the utmost grandeur of cliff and crag. Who that has sailed upon the basin of Minas has failed to be impressed with the castellated and battlemented towers of Blomidon, the island heights of Parrsboro, the elegant lines of Cape Split, and the strange abruptness of Isle of Hawke, lying there when I saw it last—black against the glorious evening light—like some wave washed fortress or Sanctuary.

Or again we find regions of sand stone with recurring rounded dunes gleaming in a most peculiar way when seen from ship-board. Then again there is the "barren" coast, where rock and clay, and tree and pool are flung together chaotically, and men must set things to rights, ere they can put a foot down.

The homes of the fisher folk rise and fall with the coasts that are their life. But they rarely fail along those long wavering, winding, changing, billow-sculptured ramparts. We behold them from passing decks, clinging far up where scarce a tree will brave the decaying, blasting salt winds, and lying low down where white waves seem to break over their thresholds. It must be so. Semi-amphibious, watching and searching over those whitened harvest fields after day, yet fluttering in like worn sea birds, at night for roost and rest, they yet wrest from the rugged marge in scant uncertain harvests the vegetable food they need. The sun of their joys is never great, but who shall tell the sum of their sorrows. Toil, waiting, chance, blight, famine, these are the heritage of those who "go down to the sea in ships," and therefore of those who wait and watch for them at home. And then there is that awful lowering, merciless fate of the sea, shadowed in the short sudden smile of the men, and the wistful absent gaze of the women.

It was my part once to be for two years in a fishing settlement on the west coast of Shelburne Harbor. The houses numbering a hundred or so are scattered about



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upon lot succeeding lot, just wherever huge rocks and boulders leave room. Sometimes the shed or barn has one entire wall rock, and occasionally the high tides will make of one homestead a little splintery island. It would not be easy to describe the delightful variety, the almost grotesque diversity, the abandon of nature, all about these cottage homes of the fisher people of Churchover. Up above the settlement was a heavily wooded pine and spruce forest. For miles along this road no house could be seen, but every few furlongs little roads branched into the woods, denoting the dwellings. On the very top of the hill, among the tallest pines stood the church, hence the name given to the district. Here for long years a pioneer priest had taught the Christian faith, and exemplified it by holy and devoted life. Accustomed to the elevating influence of the Church of England liturgy, and forms of prayer from childhood, these people were pure and refined, and respectable beyond the common standard. Well do I recall that crowd of stalwart men standing on a bright Sunday morning in the burst of brilliant light where the heavy woods suddenly broke into the clearings.

Among other families were one named Palmer. The man, formerly a sea-captain, was one of the kindest hearted, most honest, genial, hospitable men I have ever met. His wife was a helpmate for him, a shrewd, plain-spoken, humor-loving motherly soul, taking greatly to young people and loving their society. Their house was a perfect marvel of quaintness and picturesqueness as regards formation and situation. It was on a little hill at the foot of another higher hill, and it was perfectly embosomed in apple boughs, and guarded by hedges of sweet brier and golden rod, and fire weed.

The two Palmers were well advanced in life and had no children. But they welcomed to their wide hearts other destitute orphaned ones, to whom they gave all the care they would have showed upon those heaven had denied them. They had "reared" to use a local phrase, several boys and girls, and seen them settle down in neighboring homes of their own. When I knew them they had a young girl of seventeen in their care. This girl was one of a number sent from England by one of those philanthropic women who find homes for the friendless and helpless in these new countries. One could not desire to see a more interesting and trim maiden than Bess. Her complexion was a clear brown with a rose touch on the cheeks, and a streak of almost scarlet upon the nether lip. Soft brown hair with reddish gleams in the sunlight, covered a merry little head. Her figure was softly rounded with indications of strength and suppleness, in the easy and prompt movements of arms and shoulders. With all this Bess had a pair of large, soul-full, limpid grey eyes, with pathetic light in them that formed a fascinating contrast to the liveliness of her movements, and her constant cheery smile. As may be supposed both from her charms and from the fact of her being a stranger, Bess was much sought after by the lads of the settlement.

But it became evident that Bess had made her choice. About half a mile south, upon a small headland, dwelt a family named Munro. Robert, familiarly known as "Bub" was the second son, among four, all almost giants in stature. Six feet in his socks, lithely, yet gracefully formed, with a splendid head, perfectly formed features, blue eyes and yellow curling hair, he was one to win the heart of

any woman. And he and Bess went both straight forward into love. Everyone saw how matters must be. "Bub" suddenly developed a taste for clearing land. He then invested his savings in a new boat, and finally he shamefacedly went about and invited the neighbors to a "frolic," which was for no other purpose than to raise a house frame.

"Bub" went off to the banks for the first "catch," with great pangs in his honest heart, leaving a disconsolate sweetheart behind. He returned, however, safely, and in late summer when the sweet brier was a mass of pink, and the golden rod wrapt the hillside in cloth of gold, Robert and Bess stood at the altar in the little church and were made one till death should them part by the old rector, who though unfit for active duty, was always in demand for weddings, the young folks refusing to be married by any but Dr. Brown. They were a handsome pair as they stood reverently side by side, and in quiet hearty tones made to each other their vows. And then they went out through the throng of crowding friends and neighbors along the woodpath, the incense of the pines breathing about them and robins carolling their evening songs above to the new cottage, the smoke wreath above whose chimney told the sweet, wonderful, thrilling fact of another heart, kindled among the homes of earth.

Christmas came on and foremost in the the church greening were Robert and Bess in that exquisite leisure and perfectness of companionship which adorns the first months of married life. Their faces shone out among the rest, as they sang the old hymns on Christmas morning, with a realized happiness and a sober peace.

With opening spring the men began to leave for the banks upon the first fishing voyage of the season. Many go upon American vessels which call at the ports and fill up the roll of hands wanted. A Gloucester schooner had come in in the afternoon of an early April day, and Munro had engaged to sail in her. Bess with a heavy heart got ready his clothes, such heavy shirts and socks that he should need in that cold early season. Robert had picked up the bundle and gone on board with it, saying, that as the weather was rough the vessel would not sail until next day. His wife, anxious to put off the hard moment of the first separation from her young husband welcomed their respite. But it happened that about two hours after the gale ceased, and the wind set in from a favorable quarter, so that the captain ordered the anchor weighed, and the ship off. There was no time for return, and Munro must lose his trip or else go without returning to bid farewell to his wife. And as a poet of the sea wrote "since men must work, and women must weep," poor Munro was obliged to join in the cheery voices that sang "Heave ho!" and set the very sails that bore him off, stricken at heart from his unloved, unloved wife, left alone for weary months certainly and perhaps forever.

Bess had lingered about, struggling with tears and forebodings, such as the most hopeful will have at such times—till, expecting her husband shortly she had lain down upon her bed. Tired and worn she slept till daylight, and the brilliant sun was streaming across the cottage floor. She opened her eyes looked hurriedly about her, and running to the window saw where last night the schooner had lain at anchor, only empty, sparkling waves. In a moment she realized the truth. With one wild moan she rushed

out of the house down to the shore. There was the little blue boat with "Bess" in white letters along the bow, painted a year ago by lover hands.

There was the fall of stone steps where they had so often met, after the two days short fishing their glad eyes and well coming voices meeting along ere the shore was won. There were his paraphernalia of fish curing, everything associated with their mutual labors, even to a suit of old overalls which yesterday he had worn at some task. But the harbor was wide and bare, with neither mast nor sail upon its glittering expanse. Stunned, shocked, stupefied, she sank down for a few moments, then starting up rushed off through the woods and fields, over stiles and fences to the home of her foster parents, the Palmers. She burst into the kitchen frightening the old lady out of breath and speech, threw her arms around her and cried in a broken hearted voice.

"Oh mother, 'Bob! Bob!'" Finding voice after a few seconds the woman managed to gasp out. "My soul! child what's the matter, adding. 'You've most scared the life out of me.' But what's the matter? What about Bob?" "Oh, mother he's gone, he's gone!" "Gone where?" then with the common dread, "you don't mean anything has happened to him!"

"Oh! he's gone!" wailed the girl, gone without saying "good bye!" without a word to me," and then in broken tones, Bess told to her listener the story of her trouble.

Considerably relieved, the good dame strove to comfort her, while freely sympathizing with her in her disappointment and agony of mind.

"Why Bess, my girl don't take on so. It had to be so. The schooner had to go with the turn of the wind. Let it be just the same as if he had come back."

But fresh tears and cries were the only response.

"Oh! but it's the first time, and I've looked to it so. I could not see how to bear it! But I thought if I could have remembered his arm around me and heard his voice say: 'Bess be brave,' I could have borne it. But just those careless words about being back in a couple of hours, and that run down the hill without one look back! Oh! Oh! my heart will break, I cannot bear it! I cannot!"

She sobbed heavily for a few moments. Then she started up again, "I know how it will be, I shall never see him again! He will be lost! I've felt it, and last week I dreamt it! He will be drowned without every saying 'good-bye' to me! Oh Rob! Rob! my own dear lad!"

And from that day she changed. All her buoyancy by spirits, her gladness, her laughter left her. Drearily with heavy eyes and listless step she went about her work. She would have days of roaming and restlessness wandering along the shore and about the hills. From apathy she would break into wild fits of weeping and lamentation.

Now no news can be had from the fishermen while they are at the banks, so Munro's wife was left without the consolation of a letter or message. Men are frequently lost and their friends can know nothing of it for weeks or months. Sometimes the news is telegraphed from the first port of call, but frequently a ship entering harbor with flag at half-mast, is the first token of some home stricken, some family bereaved.

One day in early June, during the third

month after Munro's departure, I picked up my daily paper, and among the telegrams read to my horror the following:

"Schooner Moonlight, of Gloucester, calling at Louisburg reports loss on the banks of Robert Munro, of Churchover, N. S. He was separated from the fleet by a sudden squall, and his dory was found floating bottom upward three days afterward. Deceased leaves a wife."

I stood stood staring at the dreadful tidings, the fulfillment of the poor woman's now proven not idle fears and dreams. She must be told. It would never do to have her straining eyes see that dreadful token at the mast head of the returning vessel.

It was time for the bark to be close at hand. To harness my horse was the work of a few moments, and in two hours I was at the Palmers. Bess was there, having sought the hillside for better watching for the looked for vessel. I think she read the awful truth from my face and few

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words were needed, ere she fell in a dead faint upon the floor. Leaving her in the care of her friends I sadly departed homeward, and as I wound up the steep road, I saw among tapering pine tops a moving spar, with the long red streamer floating on the wind, and below a flag at half mast high.

In July a little one was born in the home of the Palmers, and in this new life was the young widow's only solace.

And even this joy could only in small measure break the force of the ever present, ever bitter grief.

"Oh! if he had only said good-bye to me! If he had only kissed me once as he went, I could have anything, even this. But oh it is so hard, so dreadful to think of."

The infant was duly baptised with his father's name Robert, the old pastor's hands trembling with a special feeling, and his voice with even tenderer tones than usual, as he handed back to the weeping mother her fatherless child.

One day in the autumn I had occasion to go to the church among the pines. As opened the door which was never locked,

there was no need for locks and keys in that peaceful spot, I was surprised to see Bess kneeling in the place she and her husband had always occupied in the church. She rose hastily, and coming to me said. "Oh sir, I have found some peace at last. Last night I saw my dear man in a dream. And he said the very words I wished he might have said. I saw the very look of his eyes, and heard his own voice as he said. 'Bess, dear girl, keep a brave heart!' And, dear sir, as I awoke such a sweet feeling of peace and comfort came to me! And it stays, and I think I shall never lose it. But I mourn sometimes that he should never have seen his little child. And do you know sir," here her voice fell "I did not tell him of my hope. I was bashful and backward like, and I could not bring myself to it. And now I wish I had thought perhaps it is better as he would have had more trouble at the last," and here the poor creature's voice was choked, and my own eyes filled in sympathy.

So Bess Munro took new heart from that day. Life began to have some interest for her. She was not forsaken. Many were the gifts and kindness she received on all hands. Her winters fuel was hauled and cut, her small cellar filled, her house banked and repaired. She grew very fond of the church, and never missed a service, bringing her babe, a wonderfully good little fellow with her. She assumed the care of the sanctuary, dusting and cleaning it, and keeping two branches of sweetbrier berries, and late artemisias fresh upon the altar. At length Christmas came round. The young folk were together again among heaps of fragrant cedar, fir and hemlock, and foremost in the work was Bess Munro. All the afternoon of Christmas eve we had worked, but the workers had gone off for tea to return later their careless voices and cheery laughter echoing, and growing fainter in the distance. I, the curate, elected to stay and Bess offered to wait and help, saying she had some tea in a little can, and would heat some for me on the stove.

She had laid her child in a head of teathery, deep green hemlock, where hidden from sight he slept soundly. I was wreathing a support of the chancel-arch when I heard a strange sound between a gasp and a cry. I look round and saw Bess standing in a strained, trance attitude with hands half raised looking toward the door. The door was closed, and no one was to be seen, but immediately in front of it was a heavy arch of fir which brought the portal into relief. I heard the woman's voice in awed, faint dreaming tones say. "What is it! I feel, I feel, as if—as if—oh! what is it." There was a moment's silence and then the door slowly moved. It closed and a man's form stood in the framed passage. There was but one man who looked like that, with that blue gleam of the eyes, and ruddy glow upon the cheek. Robert Munro, or else a very sturdy wholesome wraith of him stood and peered into the gloom of the church ren-



FEEDING THE BIRDS.