

## Choice Literature.

## GRANDFATHER'S FAITH.

BY JULIA A. MATTHEWS.

His voice was low, but so firm and determined, that Perkins hardly recognized it as that of the undecided, vacillating boy of the morning.

"You've done what?" he exclaimed, catching him by the shoulder, and holding him back so that he could gain the better view of his face.

"I have made up my mind to tell Mr. Braisted that I have deceived him."

"Then you'll betray us all; for he'll know you never could have moved that heavy thing yourself; and you have given me your word to keep our secret."

"I know I did, but I had no right to do it, and now I must take it back."

"That miserable Clifford has got you under his thumb again," exclaimed Will, in a passion. "I wish he was in Calcutta! What has he been saying to you since I left you?"

"To persuade me to be true? Nothing, until after I had told him what I have told you. He didn't need to say any thing after what I saw this morning. I never felt myself such a scoundrel in my life as when Clifford lay on that stone beneath you, refusing to be cowed, as I had been. I must and will confess my own share in this thing, whatever comes of it. I have promised my grandfather I'd do it to-night. I have written to him."

"Then it will be traced home to us all, and I shall lose every thing by it. If you will but keep quiet, all will go right; for Clifford won't tell unless he's asked; and, of course, Mr. Braisted won't bother him now. Brownie, just listen to me; and I'm sure you won't be the one to bring me into trouble. I am going home in a week. At least, wait until I am gone."

And then, with all the persuasive art of which he was master (and that was not little), he told him of his plans and hopes, of his father's stern severity, and of the certain loss of his bright prospects in the event of the discovery of his misdeeds. But for the first time, his words fell powerless on the ear of the boy who had, for weeks past, been so easily led by his arguments and his wishes. In vain he called him by his pet name; in vain he told him that he leaned on him, trusted him, clung to him; in vain, at last,—growing furious with rage, finding that although the face into which he looked seemed to grow whiter with every breath, the brown eyes never faltered in their fixed, resolute gaze,—he called him a traitor, a spy, a viper who had crept into his bosom and then stung him.

At length, breathless with his own vehemence, he paused; and Charlie said, quietly,—

"My telling Mr. Braisted my own part in it to-night won't really make any difference to you, Perkins. It must all come out to-morrow morning. When he asks us if we know who was in it, I shall have to say, 'yes.'"

"And you mean to say," cried Will, carried beyond all self-control, "that you will tell him who was in it besides. Charles Stockton, you had better take care of yourself. I don't often get into a rage; but when I do"—

Fairly choked with passion, he hesitated for words to finish his sentence, but there was no need for them. No words could have spoken more plainly than the crimson face, with its flashing eyes, and the white teeth biting hard into the lower lip.

Charlie Stockton was not a brave boy. His early years had been too much controlled by mere brute force for him to have escaped altogether the craven spirit which such a training fosters in a child, and the fear of physical suffering had always been sufficient to lead him in one way or the other; the dread of punishment had either kept him back from sin, or, if the fault were committed, as more frequently hap-

pened, had driven him to deception and falsehood. But now, a new power had taken possession of him; a strong, unalterable determination to carry out, through every thing, his purpose of atoning, so far as he could, for the errors of the past. Not a feature nor a line of the firmly-set face moved or faltered beneath the angry gaze which was fixed upon it.

"Do you mean to say," asked Will at last, in a low, concentrated tone, "that you have fully made up your mind not to stand by us?"

"I have fully made up my mind not to tell another lie, cost what it may, to whom it may."

"Even including me?"

"Even including you."

"Take that back, or you'll suffer for it," and Perkins lifted his closed fist above the brave, resolute brow.

Charlie made no answer.

"Will you take it back?"

"No."

The heavy fist fell full upon the upturned face. A crashing, blinding pain went throbbing through his head, and with a low groan, Charlie bent his face into his hands. But the next instant, the crimson tide which had gathered beneath the force of that tremendous blow, burst its bounds, and his agony was relieved in a moment. He stood erect again, a pitiable object, but as determined and dauntless as before.

Will had not released his hold of him. He had waited, sure of his victory, until Charlie's head was lifted. The bruised, stained face woke no pity in him. It was too resolute yet.

"Will you take it back?"

"No."

"Then I'll thrash you," said Perkins, infuriated by his want of success. "I'll thrash you till you do."

"You can't do it," said Charlie, all the boy force and power in him roused to resistance; "for I'll never take it back;" and with a sudden jerk he tried to twist himself from Perkins' hold; but the other was too strong for him.

He caught him as he would have sprung away, and struck him; not once or twice, but twenty times; till the struggling little figure lay helpless across the arm which held him fast. Then he paused in his cruel work.

"Will you take it back now?"

"Nev—nev—never!" gasped the feeble voice, exactly as Clifford had uttered the words before.

Something in the recollection sickened the miserable tyrant; and with a fierce exclamation, he flung the boy from him, and rushed away, never recking that the brown head, in its descent, had struck the stump of a fallen tree, that the brown eyes had closed, and that a red stream was flowing slowly down from a deep, jagged cut made beneath the clustered curls by the hard wood against which Charlie had fallen with terrible force.

The players on the ball-ground had all gone, and the sun shone across it, its long, slant beams unbroken, save when a bird dipped its bright wings to bathe them in its golden glory; and the evening stillness began to settle down over the lawn and the adjoining fields; for the merry company which had made the air ring with their happy voices were all busily engaged within doors in satisfying the strong appetites which their exercise had sharpened. Within the shaded copse, the daylight was fast fading into twilight dimness; but the figure lying with its head upon the old stump was as indifferent to the growing darkness as it would have been to the brightest rays of the sinking sun.

"Where are Perkins and Stockton?" asked Mr. Braisted, missing them from their seats. "Is Charlie with Clifford, Mary?"

"No," said his wife; "he left him about four o'clock. Harry is asleep, and Bridget is watching him."

"Perkins and Charlie are off somewhere together, sir, I think," replied Tom Meredith. "I found Charlie looking for Will, and sent Will after him. They were up in the copse. Perhaps they are out still, for we can't hear the bell there."

"But they know they should be at home at this time. Perkins must be more careful," said Mr. Braisted with a thought of Will's former delinquency. "There is Barney; I will send him over for them."

A servant was passing the window, and Mr. Braisted despatched him to the copse in search of the missing boys.

Barney, Norah's brother, was a good-natured, honest Irishman, a great favorite with the whole school, but especially with Charlie, to whom he had taken a strong liking. Knowing that a failure to appear at the table at the proper time was a great offence in Mr. Braisted's eyes, and noticing that he had looked annoyed when he had spoken to him from the window, he hurried on his errand in order that the boys might reach home as soon as possible.

"They're discoorsin' on some of their pranks, no doubt," said he to himself, as he walked hastily through the long, narrow pathway. "Gettin' up some bit of a trick to play off on their mates. Hey, Mr. Perkins, sir! Hallo, Master Stockton! Are yez there at all?"

"Ah, now! Just look at him, the crayther!" he said the next moment, catching sight of the form which lay upon the ground before him as he entered the copse. "He's tired out, and fell asleep just. Wait a bit," he added in a whisper, with a knowing smile. "Belike it's a trick on me. Wait till I get a look at the face of him."

The boy lay with his back towards him; and, with his countenance beaming with a broad, good-natured smile, Barney crept around him, making quite a circuit in order not to rouse him if he were really asleep. "I'd like to get a look at him afore he wakens, sleepin' there so peaceable," said he, in his habit of talking to himself when alone. "Och, presarve us! What's this?"

For the face into which he looked, as he bent over the boy, was not quiet in sleep; but it might have been quiet in death for any sign of life it gave, as he lifted it to his broad knee, and laid it down gently there. "Och, but they've been havin' a fight, and the little one's got the worst of it. The mean brute to touch him; and he a big sthrappin' chap, and him but a small, little feller. Wouldn't I like just to put me hand on him. Master Charlie, dear, Master Charlie!"

But no answer came from the closed lips, and, lifting the boy in his brawny arms, Barney prepared to carry him to the house. Not until he raised him, did he see the gash in his head, and the ugly sight made him start back so suddenly as almost to drop the child upon the ground.

"Och, but he's just murdered him intirely, the sarpint!" something of the truth flashing upon his mind. "What was he at, bad luck to him! It's all wrong, I warrant ye; for it's a bad eye he has on him I never took to the looks of him since first I laid eyes on him; and it's meself as was always a lamentin' over the friendliness betwixt 'em for I knowed it could come to no good for the little one. Oh, Master Charlie, dear! Why couldn't ye be aisy wid Mr. Clifford, just? And what has he done to ye at all, at all? Nothin' but just kilt ye intirely!"

All these hurried ejaculations had been poured into poor Charlie's deaf ear, as his heart-broken admirer moved toward the house, bearing him in his arms. He had bound his head tightly with a handkerchief which he had taken from his pocket, and had laid Charlie's own over his bruised face, lest Mrs. Braisted should be shocked by the sight of it.

"For the saint's love ye, dear," he said, as he covered it tenderly; "but it's a good thing ye haven't a mother to see ye the way ye are, for 'twould break the heart of her intirely, so it would."

It was ten o'clock. Mr. Braisted had come down from the spare bedroom where Charlie lay, still unconscious of all around him; and, entering his private study, to his surprise found Jack Harper and Herbert Demorest waiting there.

"Mr. Braisted," said Jack, coming instantly forward, as the master's eye rested inquiringly on himself and his companion, "of course we know that we ought to be in our rooms; but we have waited for you since nine o'clock, to confess what will

probably result in our expulsion. We had meant to hide it; but this cowardly attack on little Stockton has made us change our purpose. Demorest, Perkins, and I planned and carried out the trick played on Norah last night, and we let Charlie come in. This morning we made him promise not to tell what he knew. He was very unwilling, but we fairly badgered him into it. What has occurred since, we don't know; but we strongly suspect that he has taken back his promise, and that the trouble between him and Perkins has grown out of that. We felt as if we must tell you what we had done, before we went to bed. The little fellow fought hard against us before he yielded; and we are disgraced enough, without doing any thing more."

"Do with us what you may think best Mr. Braisted," said Herbert, as Jack ceased speaking, "and we won't complain. But, however much you may scorn us for trying to lead a younger boy astray, don't think us contemptible enough to aid in any such miserable work as has been made with him since."

"I do not know," said Mr. Braisted, sternly, "that he has suffered more in body than he has in mind. This confession throws light on other things which have puzzled me to-day. I have yet to learn, Herbert, that it is any less contemptible to wound the soul of a child, than to hurt his body. You may go to your rooms. I must have time to think, before I can decide what is the best course for me to pursue."

X1

AUNT HARRIET.

"Harriet, my dear," said Dr. Mason, coming into the room where Miss Harriet sat at work, with an open letter in his hand, and his fine old face all aglow with some heartfelt pleasure, "I certainly think that our boy has taken himself up in a manner that should give us every reason to hope the very best things for him. Here is a letter from himself, fairly brimming over with love and earnestness, and fun too, withal; and it encloses a note from Mr. Braisted, which assures me that he has not yet detected him in any serious fault, nor known him to attempt to deceive him when he has erred in matters of less moment. I do think, I do indeed, my dear, that we may conclude that this change will prove of immense service to him."

He looked wistfully down into his daughter's face as he spoke; for this boyish letter, the simple record of his grandson's efforts, failures, successes, and hopes, had been a great joy to him, and he wanted her sympathy and congratulations.

"It is quite the most encouraging letter we have had," he went on, as his daughter glanced up at him with a smile which had a sad expression in it, as if it said, "Your faith is very beautiful, father; but I am afraid you are still deceived."

"Take it, and read it for yourself, my dear."

He laid the paper in her lap, and with that lingering, longing look still fixed upon her, waited while she read. Watching her so closely, he saw her keen, black eyes soften somewhat, and once or twice a half smile parted her lips.

"She is pleased," thought the doctor. "How could she help it? such a true, honest, brave letter as it is. Well, Harriet?"

She had lifted her eyes from the paper, and the smile which met his questioning gaze was far more cheerful and less pitying than that with which she had listened to his eager words.

"It does sound very earnest," she said, with a real effort to sympathize with him in his delight; "and he seems very happy too."

"Braisted tells me," said her father, "that this young Clifford, of whom he talks so much, is the most hearty little Christian, and the best possible friend for a boy of Charlie's disposition. Yes, yes," and the old man leaned his head down on his hand, looking thoughtfully on the floor; "yes, I do feel very much encouraged. Indeed, I have not felt so happy and so content in years."

(To be continued.)