

Choice Literature.

GRANDFATHER'S FAITH.

BY JULIA A. MATTHEWS.

Timid little Mr. Husted was a noted mountaineer; he knew every beautiful or curious spot in the neighborhood, and was always ready to take his visitors in any direction and to any distance; and as he was a cautious and reliable man, Dr. Mason allowed the young people to go where they would in his company, while Miss Harriet and he contented themselves with less adventurous expeditions.

And sharp, crisp Mrs. Husted proved herself the best of hostesses, even though she did murder the Kink's English so pitilessly. Never so busy but that she could lay aside her present employment to attend to something which was wanted by her guests; as kindly in her actions as she was hasty in her words; her kitchen always open even to those two peering inquisitive boys, who wanted to know the how, and the why, and the natural result of every thing that she was doing, and every thing new that they saw,—she was a veritable wonder of scolding good-nature.

XIV.

BUTTERMILK FALLS.

"Well, young folks," said Mr. Husted, as they sat at breakfast one bright, sunny morning, "what are we going to do to-day?"

"Let's go off somewhere," said Harry, "on a tremendous tramp. We've only three days left before we go home, and we want to make the most of them."

"You must not let these tireless boys wear you out, Mr. Husted," said Dr. Mason; "there will be no end to their exacting if you give yourself up to them."

"Oh! it won't hurt him," broke in the hostess, in her sharp voice; "he's no good to home, and he might just as well be off with the youngsters. Not that there's any harm in him, ma'am," she added, as Miss Mason looked at her, evidently much surprised by her extreme freedom of speech, considering that the subject of her remarks sat directly before her; "but Stephen Husted never was up to much as to business. tling things generally, why, dear me, Stephen Husted's nowhere. Stephen, dish them berries. Blackberries, stewed down to a jam, Miss Mason. You'll find them very tasty after your steak."

"What is the best place that we have not seen, Mr. Husted?" asked Charlie, but as to business and accounts, and set-for the mountains now, he can't be beat; speech.

"Well, there's Buttermilk Falls," said the little man, very humbly.

"Buttermilk Falls!" exclaimed his wife. "Well, Stephen Husted, is it possible that you mean to drag these children to that place? Why, nobody goes there."

"That's just as they please," said her husband. "Only as to dragging, if they run, and jump, and spring as they generally do, I don't see as I'll have much call to drag 'em. These youngsters beat all for climbing, doctor, that ever I did see. Why, even Miss Hattie here never wants more than a helping hand. I haven't had to lift her more than once or twice in all the tramps we have been on. They're good for Buttermilk, Martha. They'll do it, and come down as fresh as daisies."

"Well," said Mrs. Husted, with a sigh of resignation, "I never set myself against Stephen on the mountains. It's just the one point on which he knows more than I do; but I'm safe to say that they'll all come back with skinned hands and blistered feet. You'll cost me half a dozen fresh eggs, too, for it'll take the lining skins of all of 'em, if not more, to mend your broken toes, you see if it don't."

But it was decided to start on the expedition in spite of Mrs. Husted's remonstrances; and shortly after breakfast, with their dinner neatly packed in a large basket which their leader slung on a stick over his shoulder, the little party set off

in high glee, jubilant over the fact that the excursion which they had planned was one which was so seldom undertaken.

They had quite a distance to traverse before they reached the path which led up the face of the Falls; for Mr. Husted's house was situated more than a mile north of the mountain, down which the tumbling cataract rushed, fall after fall, in ten or twelve separate cascades.

Leaving the road at length, they struck directly up the face of the mountain, and soon found that there was hard work before them; for huge rocks, which must be clambered over, unless they chose to spring through the dashing, laughing water, which gurgled round them on every side, rose above them in all directions. But the boys could climb like monkeys, and Mr. Husted, being as tough and wiry as he was small, swung Hattie easily over every obstacle which she could not master; and these were not many, for the light little feet tripped and sprang from point to point, as if they were winged.

"Hallo! look at this monster!" cried Charlie, who was somewhat in advance of the rest of the party. "I don't know how you're going over this, Hattie."

Hattie looked in some dismay at "the monster." A rock five feet high lay in their path; a square mass, the only means of surmounting it the barkless trunk of a tree covered with a light moss which, being soaked with the spray of the dancing water, only added to the difficulty of crossing it in safety.

"What will we do?" asked Charlie.

"Shin it," cried Harry; and, suiting the action to the word, he sprang upon the log, and, raising himself by that peculiar mode of locomotion which is dignified by that name, was soon standing triumphantly, waving his hat, and shouting "Excelsior," on the summit of the rock.

"But Hattie, I meant Hattie," said Charlie, doubtfully.

"Oh, I'll take care of Hattie," said Mr. Husted. "Go up to the top yourself, and hold your staff down so that she can cling to it, for I'm afraid to trust Harry's lame arm, and I'll manage the rest. Now, Miss Hattie," when Charlie had reached Harry's side, "we'll walk up together. As soon as you can reach the staff, take hold of it."

Lifting her upon the fallen log, and keeping his hands firmly on either side of her slender waist, he guided her safely up the sharp and slippery slope, instructing Charlie to draw the staff slowly backward as they advanced, and in a very few moments Hattie stood beside the two boys.

"Now turn around, and look about you," said Mr. Husted, as soon as they were all gathered on the top of the rock.

Even these noisy, thoughtless boys stood silent, gazing at the beautiful picture. Rock piled on rock, in magnificent confusion, covered with moss of the clearest, brightest green, rose before them; and over all the limpid water dashed merrily down, leaping from point to point as if wild with joy in its freedom and beauty, the diamond-like spray burning and gleaming in the sunlight.

"Oh!" said Hattie at last, with a long deep breath of perfect enjoyment.

"Pretty nice, ain't it?" said Mr. Husted, in a tone of admiration as strong and heartfelt as if his pleasure had been expressed in sentences of rounded eloquence. "Wait one minute till I show you the echo."

He took a pistol from his pocket, and fired it into the air. Report on report followed each other in quick succession; and even when the sound had lost its first sharpness, it went booming on from rock to rock, and from hill to hill, until it lost itself among the distant peaks. "I always did think that this was the nicest place in all the Catskills," he said, when it was quiet again; "but there's just one out-look here that's better yet, and if we're to see it, we must be on our way."

On again, over the rocks and the stones, turning aside from the bed of the brook oftentimes into the woods on one side or the other where the water ran so deep as to prevent their passage; over huge, fallen trunks which had lain for ages in those deserted woods,—lain so long that

the hard wood had slowly, year by year, turned soft and yielding, so that when a foot or hand of some one of the party did but touch the beautiful cushion of moss which covered it, it sank and crumbled beneath the weight.

A little after mid-day they sat down to rest, and to unpack the tempting-looking basket which Mrs. Husted had prepared for them,—prepared most lavishly too, her objections to the proposed expedition not having expressed themselves in her provisions for its needs.

A large, flat rock, which lay at the foot of a high fall, but quite out of the reach of the leaping water which looked, as it sprang merrily down the height, as if it were trying to dash them with its sparkling spray, made an excellent table. Hattie and Charlie unpacked the basket, while Harry went to the basin of deep water which was found at the foot of the fall, to fill the tin cups, and Mr. Husted rolled up four large stones for chairs. Comfortably seated around their table, they discussed cold chicken, eggs, biscuits, pies, etc., with the strongest interest and attention; and then lay back upon the sunny rock to rest for half-an-hour preparatory to another hard scramble.

"See my hands," said Harry, holding up two palms from each of which he had in some way taken off the skin near the wrist. "I didn't know I had done that."

"Oh, you bark easy, this crisp weather," said Mr. Husted. "You'll have a chance to use some of Martha's egg-skins," and he gave a long, low chuckle, his limbs meanwhile shaking with a peculiar motion which always seemed to seize upon them when he was amused.

"Mr. Husted wasn't really vexed by our deciding to take this tramp, was she?" asked Hattie.

"No, child. Martha feels she must have her say, that's all. She's the best-hearted creature you ever did see; it's only her tongue that's so sharp. Why, she wouldn't go to hurt a fly, Martha wouldn't; and yet, to hear her talk, you'd think she was the ugliest-tempered woman in the country; but, why, she's just the finest. She ain't got her match in this township, nor I don't believe, in the whole United States, Martha ain't. All the while I was courtin' her, she was a'most snappin' my head off from day to day. But I held on, for I could see it wasn't only but skin deep; and it's been so ever since. She's splay outside, and no mistake; but you get inside of her, and she's all right there. Now if we're to see the highest fall, we must be off."

So away they went again, refreshed and invigorated, winding up the long, steep, rough slopes; or, where the water was more shallow, going up the bed of the brook, as they had done before, coming out, from time to time, face to face with another beautiful cataract.

"Here's the beauty of them all," said Mr. Husted, as they stood looking up at one of these cascades which the rays of the sun struck at such an angle that a magnificent rainbow hung above its sparkling waters. "Not that it's really so high a fall as some of the others, but the sweep you get from the top of it is surprising. Come up, and we'll sit there awhile, for it's a hard place to get away from."

Passing up at the side of the fall, they found themselves upon a table-rock, and, pushing their way through the thick growth which had sprung up from the crevices, came out upon the verge.

No wonder the simple countryman had called it "a hard place to get away from."

Looking directly down before them, they saw, stretching far away, the path over which they had come; the gray rocks, with the foaming water dashing over them, or plashing musically against their sides; the huge stones covered with brightest moss, or white and gray lichens, with long, drooping ferns waving their graceful leaves in the clear sunlight. All around them were the grand old mountains, rising serenely in their magnificent beauty on every side, wrapped in their flowing robes of crimson, green, and gold, standing out majestically against the brilliant blue of the autumn sky, while at their feet knelt the soft, smooth valleys.

Awed into silence, the little group stood gazing out upon the beautiful scene, breathless with delight.

"That's a neat little mountain, that little, green fellow over there," said Mr. Husted, touching Hattie's shoulder, and pointing toward the west where a wooded hill lifted its green head still untouched by a single autumn hue.

The words grated on Hattie's sensitive ear, but they were spoken in a low, soft voice; and, turning to look at the speaker, she saw that his uncultivated face bore a refined, elevated expression which she had never seen in it before.

"Yes," she said, gently, "it is beautiful. It is all beautiful. It is so grand, and yet it is so lovely and so sweet."

"I don't know how it is," he said, in the same low voice; "I always feel like a child, somehow, when I get up here. It makes one feel so very little, so very much as if there was nothin' to 'em. It always makes me think of Moses standing on Mount Nebo; for it seems as if God spoke out, kind and gentle, from the sky, 'Come, Stephen,' to me, I could lay me down here just as easy, and die so peacefully."

Hattie's heart smote her for her impatient thought of his first words. There was something so touching in this plain, ignorant man's deep appreciation of the matchless scene. Many a time, through all her after life, when she was tempted to think lightly of those less refined and less fully educated than herself, there would come to her the recollection of Stephen Husted's rapt face, and the echo of the tone of that simple, "Come, Stephen."

But they could not stand for ever entranced by that glorious view, and Mr. Husted was the first to waken from the spell, and suggest their departure; for the afternoon was speeding on, and they must descend the mountain before nightfall. So they turned away, slowly and reluctantly, toward home.

"Wait a minute," said Mr. Husted, "I don't feel quite sure of the path, for it's more than a year since I've been up here. There is a high tree on the top of a knoll out yonder, and I'll just climb it, and see if I'm all right. We're so shut in here, I can't see my bearings."

They had been walking down the mountain-side for some minutes, and were now in a thick piece of woods. Leaving the two boys and Hattie together, with injunctions not to move from where they stood, their guide walked rapidly away, only pausing to lay his pistol down at the root of a tree, saying, "Don't touch that, boys, it's loaded with ball now. I'll leave it here lest it shouldn't approve altogether of climbing trees."

He was scarcely more than fairly out of sight, when a low, growling sound came through the woods behind the little group.

"What's that?" said Hattie, turning quickly.

She was not a particularly timid girl, but the woods were very lonely, and the sound was anything but reassuring.

"What is it, Charlie?"

"I don't know, Hattie."

But he had a strong suspicion, nevertheless; a suspicion so strong as to make him a step nearer to the pistol which lay at the foot of the tall pine-tree.

"Oh, Charlie, look!"

She grasped his arm tightly, pointing forward with the other hand; but the boys had both seen the shaggy, brown bear whose sudden appearance among the trees had wrung that cry from the startled girl.

In a moment Charlie had pushed her behind the tree, seized the pistol, and planted himself before her, Harry taking his place at his side.

"Mr. Husted! oh, Mr. Husted!" screamed Hattie in terror.

But Mr. Husted was up among the topmost boughs of a high tree many rods away from her, and the cry did not reach him.

"Hush, Hattie. We'll take care of you," said Charlie, in a low, constrained voice.

(To be continued.)