

Tales and Sketches.

RACHAEL NOBLE'S EXPERIENCE.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SOME weeks after this, when I was quite recovered, only not so strong as could be wished, the doctor recommended change of air, and I was on the point of setting off for West Valley, to visit the Acroyds, when intelligence came of Mrs. Morgan's serious illness. She had fallen on a corner of a piece of furniture in her room. It was supposed at first that the injury was insignificant, but inflammation had set in, and the medical men were apprehensive. Within an hour, Mr. Morgan and Fanny left I—, but their haste and their journey were alike idle; before they got to their destination, Mrs. Morgan was gone—dead. I make no remark. Death—sudden death in any case is sufficiently appalling. Every other event stands utterly beggared in importance alongside of this one. If finite capacities could take in the full significance of this monosyllable, the whole business of earth would come to a stand.

Fanny bore up bravely till she and her father got home again, then she gave in, fairly overwrought in body and mind; it was some days before she was able to be out of bed.

Mr. Morgan's friends rose up to comfort him, but I question if he was comforted. I daresay some of them privately remarked that it was not a death to be lamented; rather, it must be a relief. So did not her husband and family feel it; it was to them a bitter bereavement, much more so than if she had gone from among them in full honour.

John and Mary, with their children, came from New Broom—I had little expected a visit from them so soon—and Miss Betsy Morgan returned also.

We were all in the drawing-room except Fanny, who was not able to be down stairs; Mrs. Myles was with us, and Charles Brown was present, in virtue of the relation in which he stood to Fanny—have I said, no, I don't think I have, that by this time they were engaged to be married. It was the evening Mrs. Morgan's remains were brought home previous to burial. We were all sitting hushed and silent, expecting that mute arrival. We heard wheels stop outside, then doors open and shut, and all was still.

Suddenly, the door of the room in which we were was flung open, and in walked a man. We all looked up and looked around except Mr. Morgan—he was sitting in an arm-chair, with his face bent down between his hands—he never moved. The new comer advanced into the room, looked around, and said, "Quite a family party; I'm just in the nick of time."

Mr. Morgan raised his head, apparently without being surprised, the shock of his wife's death had killed lesser emotions; and he said, "Sandie, do you know that your mother is dead?"

"To be sure I do. I came in with her, and saw her go up stairs quietly, and steadily enough this time."

"Think shame!" burst from Miss Betsy's lips; "d'ye no see the distress your father's in?"

"Doesn't he see the distress I'm in?"

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I don't know, but they went away together, leaving behind as woe-begone a party as I think ever sat in a handsome room, with all the external appliances of comfort.

I felt glad to betake myself up stairs, and Mrs. Myles soon followed me. She sat down in her old seat and began abruptly as of yore; "Rachel, I've had two concealments from you—the one about George Myles, and the other about my unfortunate brother, Alexander. I have often wondered you did not ferret both out, especially about Sandie, after that memorable night at Leerielaw."

"Of the first," I said, "I never had the faintest glimmer, the other I had turned over and over in my mind repeatedly, but certainly the right explanation never occurred to me."

"It was curious you didn't come to know of him some way, for, of course, his existence is no secret, although he is too painful a subject for us to speak of—even Fanny did not know of him for long. He is nearly ten years older than John, and he was quite young when papa put him into one of his shops, and how soon he went to destruction I dare not tell; at last, he had to be banished from the house, that was when Fanny was a mere child, and after that his name was never mentioned. But he wrote continually asking money. Papa gave him a regular, stated sum, and forbade us all to give him another penny. John and David stood firm, and mamma was kept short enough for her own wants, but he worked upon my feelings and fears till I gave him every penny and pound almost that I could scrape together. Oh! Rachael, it has been a history dismal beyond conception; I don't think one solitary spark of kindly generous feeling is left in him. One day, it was before you came, Fanny came in from school in a dreadful state. Some of the girls had taunted her with her blackguard brother; she had never heard of him before, and rushed to me to hear that it wasn't true. I couldn't say that, and it was long before I could get her soothed into any kind of composure. I had to tell her the whole story; she has never spoken of him since I have the idea that she thinks he is dead, and if she does, it is as well; it is a mercy she wasn't down stairs to-night, so don't speak of it at all to her."

"But," I said, "Charles Brown seemed to know him quite well."

"Yes, but he knows, too, not to speak of it to her,—trust him, he wouldn't let a fly alight if he thought it would annoy Fanny. Alexander once chanced upon lodgings in the house that Charles Brown was living in; he had an illness, and stayed there two or three weeks; Charles showed him much attention, which, like everything else, was entirely thrown away."

"Lizzie, have you any other brother, I don't know of?"

She could not forbear smiling. "Rachael," she said, "you are going to give your imagination the reins now, I think—no, no, one of that kind is surely enough."

Still this "Sandie" must be the same Miss Betsy and the doctor spoke of; there were too many similar points in the history to doubt that, but in my half roused state, I must have mistak-

en about the brother that had been mentioned.

What new arrangements Mr. Morgan made with his first-born son, or if he made any such, I do not know; shortly after this he disappeared; it was believed he left the country, and up to this present time of writing, he has never been heard of again. I have no doubt that some few persons weary themselves in picturing forth his imaginary fate, nor have they persuaded themselves to drop his name from their prayers; it may be that these prayers have been answered,—the day will disclose it.

(To be Continued.)

A LEGEND FOR SUMMER.

Many years ago there lived in the little village of Aldorf, which lay in the deepest recesses of the Hartz mountains, a queer, good-natured old man named Godfrey Steiner, who first made his appearance among the simple hearted rustics of the locality upon one dark, dreary night, some sixteen years previous, carrying in his arms a sweet smiling little girl of about two years of age. Whether they came, or who they were, no one had ever ascertained; yet the strange devotion of the old man to his lovely little charge, and the almost fabulous beauty of the young girl, constituted an endless theme of conversations at all seasons of the year, and at every fireside in the village. Every body loved them and in return for the kind treatment invariably extended to them, old Godfrey took unalloyed pleasure in making neighbors welcome at his neat, hospitable cottage, whilst the best of "klaber," "cream," and "kase" was brought forth by the willing Gretchen from the hidden mysteries of her cool, well kept dairy.

At the merry dance on the green all the young men of the neighborhood would vie with each other in competing for the hand of the village beauty and in the pauses of the giddy waltz, or the fascinating Ländler, would whisper love stories to the winning little enchantress; but the handsome maiden, with her long yellow hair and bright blue eyes would laugh gayly, and shake her head with mock authority at her too willing captives.

But ah! Love is fickle, and when most the little beauty felt herself strongest against the wiles of the treacherous boy-god, the cunning fellow was weaving around her a net, invisible at first, but becoming stronger and stronger, and plainer and plainer each day; until, at length all

the village knew that Karl Kloster, the handsome young "Jager," had won the heart, and love of sweet, pretty Gretchen; and though many less fortunate than he murmured at their lot, they all agreed that a better match or a more proper couple could not be found in all the country round. So all boded well, and the young lovers drank of their cup of happiness to the full.

Heaven, which had been so lavish in its gifts to Gretchen, had also blessed her with a voice so pure, so beautiful and sympathetic, that the honest villagers called her "Nightingale;" and often as she wandered through the bright, green woods her happy heart gave utterance to its joyousness, in silver tones, clear as the water rippling over the pebbly bottom of the little stream which wound its way through the hills and dales of her mountain home. Morning and evening in the beautiful spring time, the ringing notes of her exquisite voice could be heard caroling forth her favorite melodies, in a manner so sweet, and so touching, that even the feathered songsters of the forest would listen in silence, and droop their tiny heads, abashed at their own short-comings.

In the middle of the balmy month of May, on her eighteenth birthday, she and Karl were to be made one, and her bright, red cheeks became a tint deeper as she thought of him she so dearly loved, and of the happy day that was so rapidly approaching. As she roved among the mountains the gentle "May breezes" breathed softly through the green foliage, and fanning her pure white forehead, seemed to whisper in her ear, "happy Gretchen!" The birds, the flowers, the bright running brook, with its clear pellucid wavelets, all seemed gifted with some fairy power, and mingled their tiny voices in gladdening her heart, and murmuring as she passed by, "Happy Gretchen!"

One beautiful May morning Gretchen wandered on the banks of the little babbling brook, and looking dreamily into its murmuring waters, became lost in meditation, over all her good fortune, and thought of how much she loved her dear Karl, and of the many very happy years they were to pass together, and how contented she would be in the far off time. Thinking and thinking, she stood, becoming deeper lost in her bright reverie, until the balmy zephyr passing by, breathing gently upon her, recalled her to herself. Raising her tender blue eyes, melting with tears, she passionately exclaimed: "Oh, gentle May breezes, teach me to sing of your beauty, teach me to pour forth all the happiness of my heart into your friendly keeping." As if in answer to her invocation, there came to her a power of song, and her clear, sweet voice rang out on the bright morning, in praise of the beautiful May, as it had never done before.

Overcome by the excitement of the moment, she sought the shade of a neighboring thicket, and then, kneeling under the shade of a large tree whose thick branches reached nearly to the ground poured out her heartfelt trustfulness in fervent prayer. With a countenance of celestial happiness, she arose from her knees, and was on the point of wending her way homeward, when she

perceived a Jager's pine cone, and through the forest, and the lovely maiden came to the earth, whilst from her pure white bosom rolled a dark red stream carrying with it her stainless soul to a land of everlasting flowers, where the sweet "May breezes" shall linger around her to all eternity.

Poor Karl, who had fired the fatal shot, under the impression that the movement in the thicket had been caused by the presence of some of the wild denizens of the forest, realized the terrible truth in an instant. Throwing himself on his knees beside the dying Gretchen, he exclaimed in tones of most intense agony,

"Oh, meine liebehen! I have killed thee my pearl! My everlasting soul! Look upon me and say that you forgive me." But no answer came to his earnest entreaty, save the whisper of the breeze as it moved the golden tresses upon her marble forehead, and melted away in the softest sighs.

For years after a wretched man wandered up and down the banks of the little rivulet, ceaselessly searching for something which he could never find. Summer and winter, in rain or snow, he wandered about, searching everywhere, and moaning to himself: "Liebchen Liebchen, where art thou?"

The villagers say that on one bright spring morning, there was heard a voice of heavenly sweetness and as the "May breezes" brought the weird sounds towards them, one man, more bold than the rest, ventured toward the spot, from whence they proceeded, and there found under the large tree, near the banks of the stream, the lifeless body of "Crasy Karl," holding in his stiffened fingers a long tress of bright golden hair, whilst his former careworn face was radiant with a smile of serene happiness, which even death itself could not efface.

JOHNNY AND THE DOCTOR.

BY BEK.

JOHNNY TUCKER'S father lived in a house next to Dr. Mason, and the gardens were separated only by a fence. This being a solid board fence, Johnny seldom got a glimpse of the wonders of the Doctor's garden, beyond a glimpse through a crack in a broken bit of board close beside his own little flower bed. Occasionally Johnny's father, when in deep consultation with the Doctor on the ways and means of making gardens in general and their own in particular, would boost Johnny on the top of the fence where he had the benefit not only of the scientific

conversation of the two gentlemen, but also a grand look over the Doctor's whole garden, which, from the few sights he had of it, seemed to him far more wonderful than his own.

On one of these occasions, as Johnny sat perched on the top of the fence, with one arm holding securely his most precious piece of property, his darling brown horse, a constant companion, and his favorite among all his play-things, notwithstanding it had lost its tail, and one bead eye was sadly scratched. Nobody could make Johnny believe his "horsey" was not in every point beautiful. The loss of its tail was a great affliction to Johnny, but then a great big horse might lose his tail off if he swished it very hard, Johnny thought, and his "own horsey" had been where there were a great many mosquitos.

"What will you take for that horse Johnny?" asked the Doctor. "My horse is lame and I want a new one."

"Oh, my!" said Johnny, "he can't go. I can't spare him—and then he don't want to go and leave me," continued Johnny squeezing him closer at the bare idea of losing him.

"Do you see that dwarf pear tree?" said the Doctor, speaking to Johnny's father. "That's a beauty—three pears, and only set out last year."

Johnny started.—pears! why pears of all things in the world Johnny loved the best. He looked, and there on that little tree, three yellow, luscious pears in plain sight. Why had he never seen them before? They were—yes they were close by his own little break in the fence. Johnny's eyes grew big at the sight, and he felt hot all over at the bare possibility that the Doctor might offer one to him. But he cooled off and could not help the least bit of a sigh when the Doctor quietly put his hands in his pockets and walked off in the opposite direction.

"Oh, dear! if I could only just smell one of those beautiful pears!" thought Johnny. "They look so nice," and Johnny sighed another little sigh.

Johnny's father lifted him down and they went into the house, but Johnny kept thinking of those beautiful pears. "Strange I never saw them before," he thought to himself. "I am going out to my flower-bed and will look through and maybe I'll see them." So with his horse on one arm Johnny trotted along the fence to the place where the board was broken, and putting his eyes close up could see a glimmer of green leaves. "O, see!" said Johnny to his horse "that is a real pear-tree and there are three great, great, big pears on it—don't I wish I had one." But something inside said, "Johnny those pears are not yours; they are Dr. Mason's." "Oh, yes," answered Johnny, "But then if I could only see them; they look so nice. I wonder if this little piece of board won't move away." So Johnny stuffed his little, fat hand in between the two parts of the board and—yes, there was a loose piece. Johnny pushed it a little and turned it and out it came in his hand. "Why," said Johnny slowly, "isn't that queer? I did not mean to take that out, but it come itself, so I'll have this thing you see, and look through."

Johnny was a little afraid to look through at first and put his horse up to reconnoitre. "What do you see horsey?—do you—do you see any pears?" The horse did not answer, but seemed to be looking intently. Johnny waited a minute. "I'll bet he sees 'em. It's no harm to look at them—is it, horsey?" So slowly raising himself up, he looked through. Yes, there they were, the three beautiful pears—one of them close by the hole in the fence. Johnny stood still a minute. "I never!" said he. "That's the yellowest pear I ever saw—but then I shan't touch it of course, because it is the Doctor's, and it would be stealing if I took it. I wonder where papa is—mamma has gone down to Aunt Anna's. I wonder if that pear is soft," continued Johnny, looking through the fence again. "There's no harm just to feel it," so through the little hand went and took hold of a tempting pear. "O, how ripe that is!" said he to himself. "I should not think the Doctor would leave it on the tree. I wonder if it would drop off easy." Johnny pushed it gently and then took his hand back. "It's nothing but one little pear, after all. I don't believe he would care if I would take it," said Johnny, thoughtfully scraping the toe of his boot along the side of the flower-bed. Johnny looked at the door where his father had gone in. He did not see anybody. He looked at the window and nobody was there. He forgot that the kind heavenly Father was looking at him all the while.

"I wonder if it sticks on pretty hard," said Johnny; and putting his hand through again he pulled it gently and the pear dropped off the stem, and Johnny felt it really in his hand. He was a little frightened and took it quickly through the fence to see if it was really the pear or if by some means there was a mistake. There it was, yellow and luscious, in his hand all ready to eat.

Johnny stood astonished. Now he had the much longed for pear he hardly knew what to do with it. In fact he was in a dilemma. In the first place Johnny had been sick the day before, and his mother had told him that he must not eat any fruit; and he knew by sad experience that when he disobeyed his mother everything went wrong. In the second place he was not so glad to have the pear as he thought he should be. He stood very still two or three minutes. How uncomfortable he felt! He was afraid all at once that somebody would see him. He wished the pear was back on the tree. Somebody shut a door. Johnny started so that he dropped the pear, and it struck the bit of board he had pulled from the fence and made a hole in one side of it. Johnny hastily picked it up and looked at it rue-

fully. Something seemed to say to him, "Johnny Tucker, what a naughty boy you are!" and Johnny remembered how his mother told him only that morning, how God could look away down at his heart and see even a naughty thought, and he began to think, too, how kind the Doctor was to him and how wicked it was for him to steal his pear. He remembered how, when he was sick last winter, the Doctor carried him about in his arms, and called him "his poor little lamb," and afterwards brought him such nice things, and gave him a ride in his splendid sleigh, with his two gray horses. The more he thought about it the worse he felt.

"How dreadful naughty I was to touch it; What shall I do?" And poor Johnny felt very unhappy. All at once a bright thought struck him. Maybe he could stick it on with mamma's "gum bottle," that under his mother's mother's hand had worked such wonders among his battered playthings; so, carefully hiding the pear under a rose-bush, and leaving "horsey" to keep guard, he rushed up to his mother's room, and, seizing the famous "gum bottle," he sped back in great haste, picking up a bit of rag on the way to mend the bruise; and setting the bottle on a little stone, he went to work in earnest to "repair damages."

First, putting a generous dose of mucilage on the rag, he carefully put it over the unlucky cut, patting down the edges with a "That's the way the Doctor does when he puts on a plaster!"—for Johnny had great confidence in the Doctor's skill. Next he applied the brush freely to the top of the pear; and, carefully putting it through the fence, held it against a large leaf, saying to himself:

"Mamma said when I stuck horsey's ear on I must hold it still till it was dry, or it would come off."

In the meantime, Mrs. Tucker had come home, and looking for her little boy, spied him with one arm through the fence, standing very still.

"What are you doing, my son?" she called from the window. But Johnny could not answer, for if he stirred he was afraid the pear would drop, and his labor would be lost.

"I wish it would dry quick!" sighed Johnny. "My arm aches so, and I want to go in the house."

Mrs. Tucker looked out again, and Johnny was standing in the same position. "What can he be doing?" said she, running down into the yard. "What is my little son doing?" said she, coming up to him and noting with some surprise his general sticky appearance and flushed face.

"Oh! mama," cried Johnny, eagerly, "I did almost."

"Almost what, my son," said his mother. "Oh, dear!" exclaimed Johnny in great distress, while a big tear splashed down on his hot face; "now it's fell down, and I can't reach it, and two more tears started after the first one."

"We can't stick it on, deary," said Mrs. Tucker, with an effort to look sober. "All you can do now is to go and tell the Doctor what a naughty thing you did, and tell him you are sorry. We will go into the house now."

After a half hour's talk with his mamma, Johnny slowly went to the Doctor's study, with "horsey" under his arm to keep his courage up.

"Ah! my little man," said the Doctor, looking up. "Have you concluded to trade on the horsey?"

"No," said Johnny, looking down, and winking very hard. "But I broke it off, Doctor, and I am dreadful sorry."

"Broke what off," said the Doctor, "the horsey's tail?"

"No, the pear," said Johnny, with much shame and a little quiver in his voice. "Mamma said I must do something to make me remember not to do such a thing again," he continued, in a very subdued tone; "and I expect I'll have to give you horsey," and Johnny struggled manfully with a great lump in his throat.

Now Johnny was a great favorite with the Doctor, and I suspect he would have put all three of the pears into Johnny's pocket, only he thought that might not be so well for him, so after considering a minute or two he said, "Well, Johnny, suppose we make a 'compromise' as the men say. You leave your horsey here to-night, and I'll bring him over in the morning."

Johnny bereft of his horse, wandered about dismally the rest of the day, and thought to-morrow morning would never come, and could not help shedding a few tears because "horsey" was not in his accustomed place beside his pillow. But he shut his eyes "tight" and holding his mother's hand, said, "I guess I'll never take a pear again."

The next morning Johnny's eyes flew open with the thought, "Now I'll have my horsey today," and rolling over what should he see but "horsey" himself in a chair. "My!" said Johnny, as his two feet hit the floor, and his two arms went round the horse, but suddenly straightening himself up his eyes opened very wide and standing back he looked at "horsey" in great wonder, for there was a nice, new new tail fastened on with a bright little nail.

Johnny seized the horse and bounced into his mother's room. "Oh! mamma, mamma," he exclaimed, "the Doctor has been and grown the beautiful tail on to my own horsey," and Johnny fell to hugging the horse. "Mamma," said he, after he had vented his feelings a little, "Mamma, I'm almost glad I took the Doctor's pear—but I ain't quite."

"Ah, Mr. Simpkins, we have not chairs enough for our company," said a gay wife to her frugal husband. "Plenty of chairs, dear, but too much company," replied Mr. Simpkins, with a knowing wink.