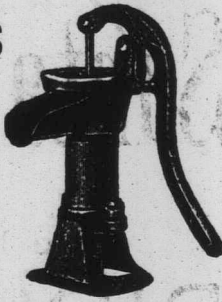


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Literature.

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BY EUGENIA B. BIGHAM.

(Concluded.)

He wheeled about and looked into Rayda's sympathetic eyes. She stood beside a grave on which she had just placed fresh flowers—the grave of Henry Hess.

Richard wondered if it would forever separate them.

"I thought something serious had happened to you," Rayda said. "You looked—well, absorbed and displeased."

"Did I?" he asked. "I was studying a problem, Mrs. Hess. Do you believe one love can so occupy any human heart that no other love can ever enter it?"

"No," she answered. "A real love but fits one for loving others, so that all the world seems closer."

"Not that," he said, almost reluctantly. "Forgive me if I dare too much, but do you believe that any woman, having loved and lost as you have, for instance, could ever give such love again?"

"I cannot say. I only believe I never could."

Then she looked at him, and something in his face made her feel strangely troubled.

Instinctively she moved nearer to the grave, as though to gain strength from the memories connected with it.

"Why do you ask me this?" she said. He saw her uneasiness, and it gave him hope.

"Because yours is too noble a life to waste in grief," he said, boldly. "Love is possible—"

"Stop!" she cried, sharply. "I will not listen—it is treason. My life is not wasted—it belongs to him."

She pointed to the mound, yet, strangely enough, moved a little from it. "I can never love another—I shall be true to the end."

"Her words were a spur to the heart of the man at her side.

"You may believe that, but I believe you will change your mind because I will that you shall," he said within his soul.

Aloud he said, "But you—you are one woman in a million."

Just then footsteps beat the hard roadway, and they saw a man from the foundry making directly toward them.

"The boss sent me for you, Mr. Patterson," he cried. "The river has risen so much since morning that all our part of town is in danger."

"I will come at once," Richard said; and bowing to Rayda, he was gone.

That night he at Belville slept and hundreds of lanterns twinkled here and there, neither gas nor electric lights having yet blessed this mountain town. Women and children watched the rise of the waters, while men worked heroically to make directly toward them.

The scene was weird and exciting, and shortly after midnight screams for help added to it a tragic element. They came from people who, trying to save their household effects, had dared too much, and were caught in the swirling, unruhing waters.

But for the darkness of night, everyone so entrapped might have been rescued.

As it was a panic-stricken over the throng and mothers called "hastily for their children, husbands for their wives," and men for each other, the many calls misleading rather than guiding.

The remainder of the night was fraught with agony. The dawn, gray, and sullen, revealed wreckage everywhere, and terror-stricken faces looking questioningly at other faces. Here and there family groups clung together, glad no one was missing. But other groups moaned and wept.

Presently it was whispered that no one could find Richard Patterson.

During the early part of the night he had been seen running hither and thither helping this one and that, working like a Hercules.

As nearly as could be recalled, he had been seen last helping the foreman to save his goods. Since then, two o'clock, how many long hours had passed!

"Oh, he'll come directly!" trembling lips would say. But the hopeful words always faltered, the speakers being weighed with fear that the best friend Belville had ever known would never again be seen in the place.

The morning dragged over the wrecked portion of the town and over the un-wrecked portion. The afternoon dragged after it. Another black, rainy night set in, and Richard was still missing. His uncle sat in his library, his face was hidden in his hands, and every few minutes he murmured—

"I won't be the one to tell the boy's mother. I can't do that—no!"

The great anxiety about Richard so far outweighed regret for loss of property, that almost unheeded the muddy waters soaked the carpets and lower walls of many a home.

The foundry itself was flooded; new dangers threatened, yet Richard's absence made other matters insignificant. Mounted men followed the river for miles telegrams flashed to many places, and every time a newcomer approached a group he was hailed with the question: "Any news of him?"

Three days passed, and despair settled on the town.

Rayda Hess' never lost hope. The rumor of Patterson's death had caused her a curious shock, the nature of which she did not herself recognize. With gleaming eyes and set mouth she went among the people, counselling, assisting, but ever on the alert for tidings of the man so universally mourned.

"He is not dead," she said. "God would not let him die. He will come back to us, and be all he ever was. Somewhere Richard Patterson lives."

And her faith was rewarded. On the fourth day after the flood the postmaster received a letter from a village some fifty miles south.

It stated that a man and two children had been taken from a piece of flooring floating on the river; that one child was dead, the other uninjured; that the man was unconscious when rescued, but had revived long enough to give his name as Patterson and his town as Belville.

When asked whom he would like to see he had answered "Rayda."

This last item filled Rayda with surprise and a certain kind of alarm.

She asked her heart a dozen questions, failing to find answers to some of them. But she was one of the large party that boarded the noon train to go to the town where Richard was suffering. A wet and apprehensive silence dominated the people during the trip. All felt that Richard had risked his life to save the children. And now would he himself be dead when they should reach him?

A crowd of wondering villagers watched the little company of strangers who walked in silence from the station across the street to the hotel. But the hotel keeper allowed no one to enter with them.

Richard, he said, was still delirious, and his kind eyes readily singled out the parents of the children. Another minute and he saw a living child snatched from the arms of her parent, while a man and a woman knelt, sobbing, by a rude casket wherein lay their little one. And Rayda looked on with brimming eyes, not knowing for whom she felt the more, the parents who rejoiced or the parents who wept.

But for Rayda herself the next few days were full of anxiety, wonder, revelation.

In his delirium Richard insisted that she should stay by him, and other sentences of his made her guess correctly the state of his feeling for her. She was sincerely glad when he was pronounced out of danger and she was free to go home.

It was several weeks before Richard himself returned to Belville, but he ordered the routine at the foundry to go on as if he were there, and with right good will the people went to work.

The place showed not the faintest sign of the fresh when at last he did return, and he was cheered until he was compelled to mount a nail keg and make the workmen a speech.

He was very white and weak, and leaned on his uncle's walking cane; but his eyes were luminous, his smile radiant, and his whole bearing full of the old-time magnetism.

His first private interview with Rayda Hess took place several evenings later. The hour was late when he at last stood on the front steps bidding her good night. The moonlight fell on his bare head and upturned face, and on Rayda, standing on the porch looking down on him. He was saying—

"This is true. You never gave me so much as a word, so little as a look, on which to build a hope. Yet, thanks to you, my nature has been lifted from low to high estate, and I have been so enabled through my love for you that I am strong enough morally, even spiritually, to keep foothold on my present plane without the possession of your love. But, oh! with your love, what could I not dare! May the God your pure life taught me to reverence guide you when you write me the decision you are to make to-morrow."

He put out his hand, and Rayda said good-night as she placed her own in his clasp. For a moment they looked silently into each other's eyes; then Rayda turned, passed slowly into the hall, up the stairs to her own room. Looking the door she went directly to her trunk, took therefrom a case of gold about the size of a man's watch, opened it, and sat down to gaze at the pictured face of Henry Hess. Tears were in her eyes, but she smiled even as she wept.

"You will understand, Harry," she murmured. And when she at last put away the locket her face was bright with a new hope.

Can you guess what answer she gave Richard Patterson on the morrow? (The End.)

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There will be sold at Public Auction, in front of the Office of the Registrar of Deeds, in Gagetown, in the County of Queens, on FRIDAY, THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF FEBRUARY next, between the hours of twelve o'clock noon and the hour of two o'clock in the afternoon.

All the right title, interest, property, possession, claim and demand whatsoever either at Law or in Equity of Rebecca J. McDonald of and in and to the following described lands and premises, viz.: "All that certain piece or parcel of land situate in the Parish of Waterborough, in the County of Queens, southeast of Wiggins Cove the northerly part of Lot No. 5 Second Tier and bounded as follows, on the north by lands occupied by Gilbert Wiggins, on the east by the road leading from the Union Settlement to Young's Cove on the south by the road leading from the Union Settlement to Wiggins Cove, and on the west by lands occupied by James F. Roberts, containing twenty-six acres more or less, it being part of Lot No. 5 granted by the Crown to William Walton bearing date 25th September, 1805. Together with the buildings and improvements thereon and the privileges and appurtenances thereto belonging."

The same having been seized by me under and by virtue of an Execution to me directed issued out of the Saint John County Court at the suit of Nathaniel C. Scott against the said Rebecca J. McDonald.

Dated at Gagetown, Q. C. the fourteenth day of November A. D. 1898.

JAMES REID,
Sheriff of Queens County.

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