

Poetry.

LABOR IS HONOR.

Labor is honor! God's spirit hath spoken: This is the song that His universe sings: Through the vast fields of creation unbroken, Loudly and clearly the universe rings. Up from the hills and the green valleys stealing, Seeking the light of the bright stars above; From the song to the blue heavens pealing, "Labor is honor, and labor is love."

All the grand deeds that are grand in story, Living through centuries treasured and bright; All the great lives that are dearest to glory, Filling the world with flashes of light; Words from whose utterances ages are dated, Thoughts that have held the whole world in control, Names on whose echoes the proudest have waited, Are but the offspring of labor and toil.

Not to the eye that glanceth there lightly Both the bright look of the heaven unfold; Not to the spirit that tremeth there rightly, Are all its wonders and mysteries told: And at each step to the soul upward springing, Cometh new radiance, new light from above, While in the heart is an angel voice singing, "Labor is honor, and labor is love."

Not on her brow doth the earth bear all brightness, Deep in her breast do the rich diamonds shine, Down in the wave is the pearl's soft whiteness, Hiding the gold in the dust of the mine. Beauty and power, and riches and pleasure, Safe in her bosom lie hidden to-day; Toil is the key that will open her treasure, And at each touch she will give them away.

Light to the mind that in darkness was clouded, Strength to the spirit that weakness had touched, Joy to the soul that in sorrow was shrouded, Life to the heart when its life-string was touched, Truth as their foothold who seek it sincerely, Skill to the hand when it toiled to live, Eyes that can look up to heaven's light clearly— These are the honors that labor can give!

Tales and Sketches.

DERRICK HALSEY.

"Life has been a rare gift—a rich gift to me. So dear to me, in fact, that I care very little when or how I lose it. It's a play not worth the candle." And Derrick Halsey, as he spoke, lifted a pained, almost defiant face to the skies above him.

Trell Saunders, who was busy putting aside plow and harrow, now turned sharply around, looking his brawny arms over a chest that might have served as a model for a Hercules, while his broad-brimmed hat, pushed off his forehead, brought out in full relief his square, honest face.

"I am sorry to hear ye say that, Derrick," a perplexed look struggling on his kindly features; "ye've got health, and a good bit of this world's goods."

"But I haven't happiness, Trell. I am a lonely, miserable man. I've had a tough job of it all my life"—his voice dying in a husky whisper, his face deepening in its pallor—"ye can't know—it's no use to try to tell," with a sudden gesture of impatient pain.

Trell looked humbly away. For the dumb, sad, grief mirrored in that face he could find no consolation.

"I feel fur ye, Der," he said at last, very gently. "But I must be gone." Molly's getting the supper ready by this time, and the cows are waiting to be milked; and that's the lady-a-waigh fur me. You'd think me foolish, Der, if ye knew how much store I set by that little mite of flesh and blood. I tell you, now—putting on his coat, and taking his tin dinner-pail in his hand—"it's a pleasant thing to have a home and family. You see, I go home after working hard all day to find the house tidy and bright, and Molly, rosy-cheeked and smiling, glad to see me home again; and our baby—a little tottler, so high, just findin' out what his feet were made fur—crows and laps his hands, and goes him mad out of pure joy at seein' me. And seein' all this makes me feel, here fur loved, here I'm wanted; the world is wide and selfish; but no matter fur that, here's my mite, my world; here's where God has placed me, and I'm thankful fur it every day of my life."

Trell stopped suddenly, conscious of a vague remorse that his words were best said another time. "I must go now, Derrick. Good-night, and God bless you!"

The simple heartiness of the benediction touched Derrick deeply.

"I can't quite lose my faith in humanity while Trell lives," he said, watching his retreating form. "Hello, Jennie!"

A beautiful blooded mare, who was pasturing in the meadow near by, came to him as he stood leaning negligently against the fence, and rubbed his head on his shoulder. He passed his arms around her glossy neck as if she were human, and laid his cheek to hers.

His eyes wandered wistfully to the forests so lovely in their greenness, the level meadows, the mountains doined darkly purple against the gold of the western sky. There was a hum of insects in the air, a twitter of birds down in the reedy marshes. Jennie, pricking up her delicate ears, suddenly started, a little restive at something, and Derrick, turning to see the cause of her fright, confronted a woman hurrying past.

"Why, Hetty," he said, hastily; "are you a ghost or reality?"

"There is nothing supernatural about me," she answered, in a pleasant voice. "It is all flesh and blood that frightened your horse."

"You have been to the village," he said, glancing at the packages she carried.

"Yes, and came back across lots—a saving of time and muscle."

to make hay while the sun shines. And how is Rene?"

"Well for him, and preaching me a sermon of content daily!"

"You are a good sister to that boy, Hetty."

"No better than I should be. He's mine—mine only. Mother left him to me. 'Be kind to him,' was her latest prayer. Life will always be a thorny pilgrimage to him, carrying about as he must his maimed, misshapen body; and it is my duty to shield him with tender love. It may take the cruel bitter from his life somewhat."

"You may be thankful that he has a pure soul in his misshapen body; you may be thankful for it. You may go down on your knees and thank God that it is no worse—that he is not maimed in both soul and body." He checked himself suddenly.

"Trell Saunders has a pretty little place," he continued, as they passed a white frame house standing back from the road; greenness around it, flowers blossoming along the pathway, roses and honey-suckles clambering up the stoop. "Who'd think, to see Trell standing in the door kissing and tossing that youngster of his, that he'd been working like an ox all day? He is hard-working and poor, and yet a king might envy him. I envy him at times. Hard and rough as I am, I have longed for wife and children of my own—my own flesh and blood. I've longed for a love that would bear with my weaknesses and faults, cling to me whatever might betide, and go with me to the portals of the grave. I know such a love once when I was a little slaver so high," reaching out his brawny hand to show her. "What other love could it be but a mother's? She was a hard-working, golly woman—a saint, if ever there was one. Hers was a slavish life. She gave her brain, blood, and muscle to her work, used up her vitality, and went down to the grave years before her time. She loved me with the true, unselfish, mother-love. I never had a childish grievance she was not willing to sympathize. I was working at Squire Decker's the summer she died. It was father's idea that I was old enough to help myself a little. 'A big sturdy lad of ten,' he called me, 'far too old to be babied by her,' so I went that summer to the Squire's as a sort of chore-boy, doing light jobs, and going home two or three times weekly. Well, one Monday morning I went away from home as usual, and mother walked with me to the turn of the road. 'Be sure and come home Wednesday night, Derrie,' she said as we parted."

"Wednesday came, and that morning the Squire came to me as I was picking apples in the orchard. 'Derrick,' said he, 'your mother is dead!' That's the way it came upon me; a thunder-bolt; no warning, no preparation, only the cruel, cruel word that she, who was all the world to me, was dead. You can imagine my feelings—I can't describe them. But how can you imagine them? You have never had all brightness, hope, and life almost, struck out of your existence so suddenly that a breath of joy ended in a gasp of anguish; a struggling against an adversary who held you down, pinioned, throttled. Ours was a strange home to me after mother was carried out from it forever. Father never understood or had patience with his children, and Susie and I feared and crept away from him. Susie was a shy, tender little thing of six, mother's baby and pet."

"Mother said you must be kind to me, Derrie," sobbed the baby, nestling her pink cheek against my rough jacket. "She said, 'Always love me for her sake, Derrie.'"

"Hetty!" Derrick started suddenly, and pointed to a hill just beyond them, upon whose eminence grassy mounds and simple grave-stones were burnished by the red gleams of the setting sun, and pictured forth in melancholy beauty. "Mother sleeps there," said he, huskily; "and I tell the simple truth when I say that grave has kept me from becoming a blasphemer and profligate. That dust resting there was once animated with love for me; and that love—her love—could never meet with eternal annihilation. She could not die as the brute dies. Yes, I speak the truth when I say her memory has kept me from running into terrible wickednesses—wickednesses a woman like you don't think of. When goodness dropped out of sight in my mind the remembrance of her purity and truth still remained. I was her boy—the grave could not sunder us; somewhere she was keeping watch over me still. There isn't a Christian man in this neighborhood who reverences his mother more than I—poor sinner—do the memory of mine. Ay, Hetty; and there she sleeps—she sleeps!"

"Asleep in Jesus—blessed sleep!" said Hetty, softly.

"Mother's death never came so hard on me as on Susie; that is, in one way," said Derrick, taking off his hat, and nervously passing his fingers through his heavy masses of dark hair. "You know I was a boy, and could tussle my way far better than a shy, timid little thing who'd cry for an unkind word. She wasn't one of your plucky little creatures—clear girl to the back-bone. She would receive injuries meekly, and grieve over them when alone. Many's the time I've run, breathless and angered, to comfort her, and found her, her pink cheeks wet with tears, her golden curls—the curls mother was so proud of, and which I curled daily, rough boy that I was, over my freckled fingers—all ruffled and matted together, and her little body convulsively shaken with the sobs she was trying so hard to repress. And then I'd take her in my arms—for the mother arms which would have clasped her so tenderly were cold and stiff under the coffin-lid—and I'd try to comfort her, and by-and-by, when the sobs had died away in low gaspings, she'd whisper, cuddling closer to my breast, 'Mother said you'd always be good to me, Derrie.'"

"Our step-mother! I don't want to libel her, Hetty, for she's dead and gone now; her faults have been long buried, and God knows, after the seal of eternal silence has been laid on our lips we should be left to His judgments; the grave should shelter our imperfections and shortcomings. Still, if ever there was a hard, grasping woman, totally devoid of sentiment and motherly compassion, it was she. The world was to her only a vast money-making machine, human beings puppets played upon by the magic of the mighty dollar."

"That big, lubberly Der ought to work out and earn his salt," she told father; "and as for Susie, the little curled doll, she'd have to make herself handy."

"The child was only eleven when she sent her to Boston to learn a trade. The knowledge that she was going away among strangers excited her terribly. The thought was torture. She came to me trembling and weeping. 'I can't go away from you, Derrie, to strangers. Oh, I can't go. I shall die.'"

"What could I do for her? My getting into a passion and defying our step-mother roundly

mended matters not one whit—rather precipitated affairs. So Susie was taken to Boston, and placed under the supervision of a long-headed, scheming woman—hustled in with a crowd of apprentices, some of them wild, rude girls, unfit companions for my lily-bud. It all came about as I know it would. She was overworked, snubbed, and bullied, and she grew mature prematurely. She was a woman in feeling and appearance when she should still have been a guileless child."

"She was a wonderfully pretty creature, and I tell the plain, impartial truth when I say I've never seen the girl or woman whose beauty could rival that of my little sister when she was fifteen. Her head seemed fairly burdened with curly, gold-brown hair, and her eyes were deep violet, a color beautiful as rare, and her features were faultless. You may think I was proud of her, and how I loved her! She was mother's legacy to me. My love was idolatry almost. I would have died for her had it been necessary."

"I was working very hard about that time. My first aim being to gain a home for Susie and myself. Such a home as I meant that to be, and we could be so happy together! I was a youthful, hot-blooded enthusiast then; my visions of our future lives were noble indeed," a fine, sad smile crossing his face as he thought of those long-gone hopes and early dreams.

"By-and-by I heard that Joe Sharply was waiting on Susie. That put me in a white-hot rage, for I knew Joe well—a miserable, licentious fellow, handsome enough to turn a silly girl's head, heartless and unprincipled, living on his wits. You must have known such men, stolid and cunning, thoroughly bent on carrying out their inclinations, at once bullies and cowards. But for once Susie turned a deaf ear to my admonitions, counselings were of no use, and then I forbade her to receive his attentions. She coaxed, cried, and treated me coldly, with no avail. For once I was stern with her. God knows I had her interest at heart, and thought only of her welfare. I had never thought another could come between us; but so it proved. Susie was cold and martyr-like. I was deeply hurt. She took no more of the home we were to share together, the pleasures in store for us. Still I kept up a brave heart. I felt by-and-by she would see the danger from which I had preserved her."

"That summer I went away to Boston for Squire Decker. He had business there that required seeing to; but he was poorly, and trusted me in his stead. I found my old Susie when I bade her good-by. She threw her arms around my neck in her impulsive child-fashion, and cried bitterly: 'You've been so cross to me lately, Der,' she sobbed, 'and I want to be good friends again, for I do love you, Der.'"

"And you know I do all for your good, my child," I could not help saying.

"Yes, Derrie. I believe you do. You have always been a good brother to me!" No music was ever sweeter to my ear than those sobbingly-spoken words.

"Well, I was gone for a couple of months, and came back in good spirits. I began to see my way clear now to build the home I had so often dreamed of. Squire Decker seemed out of sorts when I squared up accounts with him. 'It's too bad, Derrick, that that pretty sister of yours has married so miserably,' he said, irritably."

"Another thunder-bolt! How I found words to utter forth the emotions convulsing me I could not tell."

"You don't mean she has married Joe?" "Eh?" with a keen, surprised look at me: "unknown to you? worse and worse! and, to beat all, he's taken that foolish little thing out West pioneering. Why, any stronger-framed, stronger-willed woman would break down under the hardships she'll have to endure. It's a sin; it's a shame!"

"I could have fallen prone on the floor, weeping and moaning like a child; but stronger will achieved a victory over the weaker flesh. I had trusted and been deceived. The child had wrecked her life, and I had vainly tried to stay her from it. She had bartered my true love of a lifetime for the sensual, selfish affection of a profligate. But I knew, when the idol of her fancy stood unveiled in the broad glare of reality—the cruel, dissolute heart showing itself in its true colors, its mask of sentiment and tricky garb of kindness cast aside forever—then her shipwrecked heart would give its first and last thoughts to me, and the blue eyes grow dim with bitter tears, and the fair head ache with its wild longing to rest on my breast again."

"It was useless to try to put aside her memory from my heart, and I settled down to a dull, plodding existence—all my old enthusiasm was dead—my life was paltry and meagre. Four years dragged by. I never heard from Susie—not one line. And this was the child I had so often gathered to my heart, who had been to me the purest and dearest of all God's creatures. The longing to see her—to know how her life had weathered the storms it must have met—if it lay stranded, bare, and tattered—dumb in the resignation of despair—so grew upon me that I could struggle against it no longer. Mother's words, 'Be kind to her for my sake, Derrie,' rang in my ears."

"I'll go, mother," I said at last. "I'll put aside the past and seek her out."

"It was not a difficult task. I traced Joe quite easily—he was notorious, you see, as a drunkard and scoundrel; he was a hard case even in that wild Western land. Susie's home! I was dumb when I looked upon it. A log-hut, surrounded by bogs, prairie, and unsettled land. A taint of miasma polluted the air; the very clouds hung gray and leaden. This was my girl's home. I remember how I stood leaning against a battered post, looking in at the slimy yard, the gaping chinks in the house, the paneless windows. A lank, hungry cur squatted upon the threshold, snapped its white teeth viciously at me, then sneaked away; and a woman, skeleton-like, and with eyes dim and sunken, came forward to view the intruder. She looked at me earnestly; then cried, in a low, pathetic way, 'Oh, Derrie! Derrick!' And then I had the poor, faded creature in my arms once more. I had found my sister at last."

"I can't tell you what a wreck she had become. You'd never have thought she was beautiful once. I can't begin to tell you other what a life that wretch had led her. 'The way of the transgressor is hard,' that's a text I've heard preached from; but I never wanted a sermon on it again after I caught sight of my sister. Joe had drank, gambled, fought, swindled; in short, gone through the whole list of crime, and was the worst scoundrel out of prison. He had threatened her life more than once, she told me, in a frightened sort of way; looking furtively around, if perchance his cursed

presence might be near. Her third child lay dead in the room, a little mite of a creature with a ghastly, pinched face. She pointed to it daily—no tears, no complainings."

"I wasn't strong enough to raise it," she said. "I've had three children, and not one has lived to call me mother. But I am glad they are dead, for life is cruel."

"If ever man burned with desire to thrust a scoundrel out from a world he had burdened with his presence I did at that moment. If Joe Sharply had thrust his bloated body in my sight then, in my misery I would have hurled him into eternity. 'Oh, Derrie, I have wanted you so much—I have needed you so, Derrie!' That was what my poor girl spoke, crouched low beside her dead baby, her face hopeless in its despair."

"But I can't dwell on these things. Joe was off on a drunken bout—had been gone for days—so I took and buried the dead child; buried it out on the prairie, the arch of sky above it, two little graves beside it. And that picture of those three little graves, alone and uncared for, will haunt me forever. Susan clung to me like a child. 'Take me home with you,' she pleaded; 'you know we were going to live together, once Derrie. Oh, that dead past! it seemed sacrilege to bring it up beside the present.'"

"That journey home with the poor, heart-broken woman, it seemed like a horrid dream. She wasn't the same she had been—she never could be again. Constant association with that creature had at first shocked and horrified her, then dragged her insensibly at last to his level. I procured a divorce for her with little difficulty; she could furnish enough proofs of his brutality to render it an easy matter; and I warned him never to cross our paths again. I've heard since he was stabbed in a drunken affray. If so, there's one more lost soul. This was six years ago when I brought Susan home. I've had her with me ever since, and we'll live together after this until death separates us."

"This is my poor girl's story; and, Hetty, when you hear vague rumors and waifs of scandal, remember her history, and temper judgment with mercy."

"Hetty Dean looked up with saddened eyes—she even extended her hand, her warm, soft hand, and clasped his strong, browned one. 'I want to tell you, Mr. Halsey, how—' But her sweet voice faltered here, and the sentence was left unsaid, while Derrick, with strangely-flushed face, shut the gate after her as she passed into her yard, and then walked on with his quick, firm strides up the long hill before him and down into the cool, gray valley beyond. It was in this valley, in the old stone farm-house standing back from the road, that the greater part of Derrick Halsey's life was lived."

It was the old homestead which, when John Halsey died, in his selfish, mercenary old age, had passed into the possession of his only son Derrick. There was a sunny slope of clover before the house, stretching down to the apple-orchard beyond, and stately old trees guarded the roadway leading to the gate. There was a wide, roomy piazza encircling the house, and the turf below it was neatly kept, the flower-beds nicely trimmed. But from the house itself issued no sound of voices; no breath of song or merry laughter. It seemed sleepily dozing off in the twilight, unwarned by solid home-comfort. An old black dog curled up before the door, curled to the last degree and stiff with age, feebly wagged its tail as its master approached, then crouched closer, with a wheezy sigh, upon its mat of husks, looking pitifully up as if to say—"Take the will for the deed, if you please, Sir. I am glad to see you, even if I can't frisk and frolic as in my younger days." He understood its mute appeal, and stooping patted him kindly, stroking his shaggy ears.

A black, comely face suddenly thrust itself from the door.

"That you, Master Derrick! Your supper be waiting."

Derrick went on into the spacious, heavily-raftered kitchen. There was no cozy-home-picture here to greet him, only the table with its solitary place for him.

Margy came in after his supper was finished. "She's had one of her worst spells to-day, Sir. The appetite is on her strong."

He looked up, a trifle pale, his fingers nervously playing with the knife before him.

"She's been begging for you, Master Derrick; here she comes now."

There was a shuffling of feet in the hall, then the door was cautiously opened, and some one peered in with a low, gurgling laugh. Some one who had been a woman once, but was now the mere mockery of one, with her bent figure and cunning, torpid face.

"I'm coming, Der, coming from the bottomless pit. I hate Margy—I want brandy, Der—I will have it—I will have it!"

The creature came nearer to him, throwing her arms around his neck with a maudlin cry. The man trembled, his lips growing white under his mustache, but he never once repulsed her or pushed aside her clinging arms.

"Not that now Susan. It's growing dark; come out and see me light the lantern."

Her quick, insane eye caught the black woman's furtive shake of the head. "I won't go!" she cried. "Margy, I hate you! Der, I want some—I want some!"

He looked pitifully at Margy. "Take her back and give it her—she has to have it. Go with her, Susan."

She followed the woman like some hungry animal, and Derrick was left alone. This, then, was the cross Derrick Halsey bore; the living grief that corroded his life. The secret that for six weary years he had striven to hide from the harsh judgments of the world. People dimly imagined all was not as it should be, a mystery enveloped the Halseys. The public was conscious there was a skeleton in their closet, and it had a natural desire to bring the uncanny thing to light. However, it had to own up to baffled curiosity, and in revenge it circulated strange stories and surmises until Derrick was surrounded by a misty, bluebird sort of atmosphere; and a mild flavor of something provokingly intangible added peculiar attractions to the Halsey homestead.

In those years of Susie's toil, neglect, and discouragement she had sought relief in the use of anodynes and stimulants, until she came at last, in a painful degree, a slave to the terrible habit. Never strong-willed, she had succumbed insensibly when put to the test; had entered the direful path abutting into hers. Spasmodic attempts at reform died away, the dignity and beauty of life was lost to her forever, and she was going on to the end trammelled soul and body. And for six intolerable years Derrick Halsey had tenderly cared for this misused, diseased woman. His pain and disappointment had been terrible at first;

God and his own soul only know how that man had suffered. As he had despairingly told Trell, "He had had a tough job of it all his life." Poor fellow! underneath his constrained, un-democratic exterior he was tender and sensitive as any woman; craving love and sympathy, wanting to feel himself linked to the great human family by an indissoluble chain. But as his years dragged on a cruel famine of the heart preyed upon him; there were no lives opening broad and happily into his. Humanity was selfish, occupied to the section of all else with its own individual cares. Men simply tolerated, not loved, one another.

"I feel adrift," he said; "the world's as empty to me as a last year's nest." And yet in the blank, featureless reaches of his life he had grasped one sunbeam. He had tried to put it away from him, doggedly striven to live down this weakness of the flesh as he called it; but in vain, for Hetty Dean, with her fair face and fairer soul, had nestled deeply in his heart; and looking at her it was not to be wondered at that this solitary, hurt man should have given to her the true, fervent love that comes but once in a lifetime.

People had wondered, as they always will, why Hetty Dean, an orphan, and not over-rich, with a little deformed brother dependent upon her, had not married before this. It wasn't for lack of chances; even the most envious were forced to acknowledge that; and once a loquacious gossip was forcibly silenced by Hetty's saying she did not, and never would, think that woman's chief mission in life was to secure a husband; life should hold for them higher, nobler aims. Not that she undervalued a true marriage, for if she ever met with one to whom she could truly pledge her fealty and love, whose hopes and beliefs she could share, and to whom she would be a visible Providence, then, and not till then, would she marry.

There was a young fellow over at Stonington who, if report spoke truly, had singled out Hetty as a prize worth the winning. He was straightforward and spicy, tender-hearted as a woman, yet keen and decisive if need be. As a matter of course it was not to be imagined that she could prove indifferent to his suit. Doctor Hurlbut's son, and so wealthy! therefore gossips kindly settled the matter to suit themselves. The rumor of her probable engagement had come somehow to Derrick's ears, and a vague restlessness had haunted him ever since. What was Hester Dean to him, that he should be rendered miserable at the thought of her marrying another? Fool that he was not to have lived this passion down, and repressed nature as sternly now as he had done all his life! George Hurlbut was a fine fellow; rather immature, but still possessing a kind heart and quick brain. Hetty needed a home and a protector, and he would give her these.

"Let her be happy," Derrick said, a quiet, decisive look on his face; "let her life radiate into his; she'll make of him a better, purer man; her life will develop his nobly. I have known all along that I never could marry while Susan lived. I could never willingly ask another to bear with me the shame and pain. I could bring no woman here. I knew that all the while. And Hetty'll marry George!"

There was a sudden wrench at his heart; then, and he stood dumbly looking into the black night without. What good could life hold in store for him now? His tired, stricken soul refused to look further into the shadows. In this out-of-the-way corner of the world his life must creep on paltry and meagre.

Meanwhile the summer drifted slowly on, bringing the sultry August heats, and all the while Susan was verging nearer to the abyss of hopeless insanity. It was no wonder, then, that the days passed terribly to Derrick, leaving him haggard-faced and hollow-eyed.

Margy, best and most faithful of servants that she was, felt herself worn down. "I'm afraid we'll have to send her to an asylum," she said to him. "I don't see how we can keep her; I feel sometimes as if I'm going mad myself."

Derrick looked up with white, set face. "It is hard on you, Margy; and yet I can not send her from me. No one else can manage her; she will be abused. She's my flesh and blood; she's my mother's child. There was a time when we were all the world to each other. I've given up all for her, and I can not put her away from me now; and, burying his face in his hands, he gave vent to tearless, choking sobs.

"That nigh broke me down," said Margy, months later, as she was relating the story to a compassionate listener. "I hadn't the heart to say more after that; so I left him goin' on in that awful way, and went back to that blasted, raving critter we tented atween us. Ef our keepin' her could comfort the master any, she should be kept."

But the sore fastened too deeply for faithful Margy's healing. She could not allay Derrick's heart-sickness and desolation. Once he had exulted that he was strong-brained, self-poised—so much so that if all the world were to trip off in a giddy dance to some far planet, leaving him in the awfulness of an unbroken silence, he could still commune with himself, and not become an imbecile. Now that presumptuous belief was painfully shattered. He craved human sympathy. In all the vast world of humanity did no heart but poor, black Margy's beat pityingly and kindly for him?

Well, be it so! He had failed into an unmeaning lay-figure. The world did not need him. After a short space of time the seal of eternal silence would be pressed on his weary lips, and kindly mother earth would take him to her breast. There would be no living ones to care for his grave; but nature's tears would rain upon it, and the wild grasses and weeds, "the green things growing," would cover with verdure his resting-place.

Weak, paltering fancies these, perhaps, but they accorded well with the state of his feelings now. He felt apathetic; there was a dull, nameless pain stealing at times over him, a longing like that of a weary child for rest.

"You don't appreciate life as you ought to," said Margy one day, squaring her sturdy shoulders and scanning Derrick shrewdly kindly, with her bright eyes. "Remember this, Master Derrick, 'The Lord is good to and his tender mercies are over all his work.'"

He looked at her fixedly, as if trying to a clearer insight into her words. "Margy! do you believe that for the true woman?"

"Yes, I do believe—it's Divine. We all hev our crosses to bear; but if we love trust the One who sends 'em, we can't des. And of our poor little lives ain't just want them to be, we must rememb. directs 'em, and that we hev our duties the same. We don't none of us live to selves."