

## BY A WAY SHE KNEW NOT:

## The Story of Allison Bain.

BY MARGARET M. ROBERTSON

## CHAPTER XIX (Continued.)

"I made haste over my work after that," went on John, "for I could not trust myself to listen. If he had named your name—"

John rose and went to the window, and stood there long, looking out into the darkness.

The unhappy story did not end here, but Allison heard no more. Brownrig appeared again in the early morning, and John was asked to go with him to see what repairs might be required on the outbuildings of a farm that was soon to pass to a new tenant. Something would need to be done, and the matter might as well be considered at once.

On their way they passed by the manse, and Dr. Hadden's name was mentioned.

"He has a son in America who has done well there. There are two or three other lads from this parish who have gone out to him, Willie Bain among the rest;" and then Brownrig muttered to himself words which John could not hear, but he answered:

"I have heard of several who have done well out there. Land is cheap and good, and skilled labour is well paid," and so on.

But Brownrig came back again to Bain.

"That will not be the way with him. An idle lad and an ill-doing was he. Folk said I was hard on him. He thought it himself. I would have been glad to help him, and to be friends with him before he went away, but he didna give me the opportunity. I respected his father, and would gladly have helped him for his sake. If you should hear word of him, ye might let me know."

"I might possibly hear of him," said John, "but it is hardly likely."

He was glad to get away from the man. If by any chance he had uttered the name of Allison, John could not have answered for himself. But he was not done with him yet. Late at night Brownrig came again to the inn and asked for him. John had gone to his room, but he came down when the message was brought to him. The man had been drinking, but he could still "take care of himself," or he thought so. He made some pretence of having something more to say about business, but he forgot it in a little, and went off to other matters, speaking with angry vehemence about men and things of which John knew nothing. It was a painful sight to see, and when two or three men came into the room John rose and wished him good-night. Brownrig protested violently against his "desertion," as he called it, but John was firm in his refusal to stay.

He was afraid, not of Brownrig, but of himself. He was growing wild at the thought that this man should have any hold over Allison Bain—that the time might come when, with the help of the law, he might have her in his power. But he restrained himself, and was outwardly calm to the last.

"Ye're wise to go your ways," said the inn-keeper, as John went into the open air. "Yon man's no' easy to do wi' when he gets past a certain point. He'll give these two lads all the story of his wrongs, as he calls it, before he's done. He's like a madman, drinking himself to death."

John would not trust himself to speak, but he stood still and listened while the man went on to tell of Brownrig's marriage and all that followed it, and of the madness that seemed to have come upon the disappointed man.

"She has never been heard of since, at least he has never heard of her; and it's my belief he would never hear of her, though half the parish kenned her hiding-place. It's likely that she's safe in America by this time. That is what he seems to think himself. I shouldna wonder if he were to set out there in search of her some day."

John listened in silence, catching every now and then the sound of Brownrig's angry voice, growing louder and angrier as time went on.

It was of all this that John was thinking now, as he stood looking out long into the darkness. Then he came and sat down again, shading his eyes with his hand.

"I am glad to be going away," said Allison, after a little: "and I thank you for all your kindness."

"Kindness!" repeated John. "I would like to be kind to you, Allison, if you would let me. Allison, I think I could make you a happy woman."

He rose and stood before her. Allison shook her head sadly.

"I cannot think of myself as being a happy woman any more;" and then she added: "But when I am fairly away, and not afraid, I can be content. I have my Marjorie now, and when she does not need me any more I can go to Willie. Oh! if I were only safe away."

John went to the window again. When he came back his face was very pale, but his eyes were gleaming. He sat down on the sofa beside her.

"I am glad—yes, I am glad you are going away. That will be best for a time. And I am glad you have Marjorie. But, Allison, what is to come after? You have your brother? Yes, but he may have some one else then, and may not need you. Oh! Allison, will you let me speak?"

Allison looked up. She grew red, and then pale, but she did not withdraw her eyes from his.

"Speak wisely, John," said she.

"Allison! You cannot think that you owe duty to that man—that brute, I should rather say? Is there anything in the laws of man or of God to bind you to him? Would it be right to let him claim you as his wife? Would it be right for you to go to him?"

"Even if it were right, I could not go to him," said she.

"And will you let him spoil your life? Will you let him make you a servant in another woman's house—a wanderer on the face of the earth?"

"He cannot spoil my life if I can only get safe away."

"And do you not hate and loathe him for his sin against you?"

"I do not hate him. I would loathe to live with him. I think—that I pity him. He has spoiled his own life, though he cannot spoil mine—if I only get safe away. It was my fault as well as his. I should have trusted in God to help Willie and me. Then I would have been strong to resist him."

John bent toward her and took her hand.

"Will you use your strength against me, Allison?"

"No, John. If I have any strength, I will use it in your behalf."

"Allison, I love you dearly. Let me speak, dear," he entreated, as she put up her hand to stop him. "Yes, let me tell you all. From the first moment that my eyes lighted on you I loved you. Do you mind the day? Wait, dear; let me confess all. I did not wish to love you. I was in love with myself, only seeking to satisfy my own pride and vain ambition by striving to win a high place in the world. The way had opened before me, and some day I was to be wise and learned, and a great man among men. I fought against my love. Are you angry with me? Do you despise me? But love conquered. Love is strong and true."

Allison's colour changed; and, for a moment, her eyes fell before his; but she raised them again, and said, gravely and firmly:

"John, when a good man loves a woman whom he believes to be good, what is due from him to her?"

"Ah! Allison. Let me have a chance to show you. It will take a long life to do it."

"John, let me speak. Does he not honour her in his heart? And does he not uphold her honour before the world?"

"We would go away together across the sea."

"Hush! Do not say it. Do not make me sorry that you love me. Do not make me doubt it."

"Ah! but you cannot doubt it. You will never be able to doubt that I love you. Allison, do you love me, ever so little? I could teach you, dear, to love me."

He sought to take her hand, but she would not yield it to him.

"And your mother, John?"

"She would forgive us, if it were once done."

"And my mother, up in heaven? What would she think if she were to know? No, John, it cannot be."

"You do not love me. You would not hesitate if you loved me."

"Do I not love you? I am not sure. I think I might learn to love you; but I could not go with you. No, I could not."

"Allison, I could make you a happy woman," said John, ending where he had begun.

"And would you be a happy man? Not if you are the good man that I have aye believed you to be. You would be wretched, John; and seeing it, could I be happy, even if my conscience slumbered?"

"Allison, do you love me, ever so little? Whatever else is to be said, look once into my face and say, 'John, I love you.'"

She looked into his face as he bade her, and her own changed, as she met his eyes. But she did meet them bravely.

"I think I might have learned to love you—as you said—but I will not do you that wrong. You may suffer for a while, but your life will not be lost. God be with you, and fare ye well."

She rose as she spoke. John rose also, pained and angry. He did not take the hand she held out to him.

"Is that all you have to say to me?"

"We shall be friends always, I hope."

"Friends! No. We have got past that. It must be all or nothing between us. You must see that."

She looked at him with wet, appealing eyes.

"It can't be all," said she, speaking low.

John turned and went away without a word.

That was not the very last between them. John came in the morning in time to carry Marjorie to the carriage, and to place her in Allison's arms. Something was said about letters, and Marjorie exclaimed:

"Oh! Allison, will it not be fine to get letters from Robin and John?"

John looked up to see the tears in Allison's sad eyes, and his own softened as he looked.

"Good-bye, my friend," said she, "Good-bye."

Even if he had wished he could not have refused to take her hand this time, with Marjorie and Robin looking on. But he did not utter a word, and in a moment they were gone.

John stood on the pavement looking after the carriage till it disappeared around a corner of the street.

"And now," said he, "I must to my work again,"

## CHAPTER XX.

"Will I like a fule, quo' he,  
For a haughty hizzie dee?"

There was work enough waiting him if he were to carry out the plans he had pleased himself with making, before ever he had seen the face of Allison Bain. In one year more he had hoped to get to the end of his university course. If not in one year, then in two. After that the world was before him and hard work.

"It has happened well," he was saying to himself, as he still stood looking at the corner of the street. "Yes, it has happened well. I am glad she is gone away. If she had been staying on in Nethermuir it might not have been so easy for me to put her out of my thoughts. It has happened well."

And then he turned and went down the street "with his nose in the air," as was said of him by a humble friend of his who saw him, but whom he did not see.

"I must have my turn of folly like the lave (the rest), as auld Crombie would say. And 'it's weel over,' as he would also say, if he kenned all. I must to my work again."

Then he turned the corner and came face to face with the husband of Allison Bain. John's impulse during the space of one long-drawn breath, was to knock the man down and trample him under his feet. Instead of this in answer to Brownrig's astonished question, "Have you forgotten me?" John met his extended hand and stammered:

"I did not expect to see you. And for the moment—certainly—"

"I have been at Mr. Swinton's office to see him or you. You are late this morning."

"I am on my way there now. Have you time to go back again? That is, if I can do anything for you?"

"I'll go back with you. It is business I came down about. I am sorry to hear from Mr. Swinton that you are thinking of leaving his employment. I was hoping that ye might have the overseeing of a job that the laird has nearly made up his mind to."

"Oh! as to that, the matter is by no means settled yet, though I have been thinking about it. I may stay on."

"A place in the employ of a man like Swinton, and I may add, after what I have heard him say,—a place in his confid-

ence also, must make good stepping-stones to fortune for a young man. Where were you thinking of going, if one may ask? To America, I suppose, like so many other folk in these days."

"To America! Oh! no; I have no thought of leaving Scotland at present, or even of leaving Aberdeen. I intend taking a while at the college. I began it when I was a lad. But my plans may fall through yet."

"It would take time and it would take money," said Brownrig.

"That's true, but I have plenty of time before me."

"Well, ye may be up our way after all. The laird has ta'en it intil his head to have a new wing put to the house. It has as muckle need of a new wing, as a collie dog has o' twa tails," said Brownrig—falling into Scotch, as some folk have a way of doing when they wish to be contemptuous or jocose, or indeed are moved in any way. "But if it is to be done, it is to be done well, and Swinton is the man, with you to oversee."

"There could be little done this year," said John.

"Plans and preparations could be made. The work must be done in the summer."

Brownrig seemed to be thinking of something else, for when they came to the corner of the street he stood still, looking out toward the sea. John paused also for a moment, but he grew impatient and moved on. All this time he had been saying to himself:

"In some way I must keep this man in sight through the day and through the night as well, as long as he shall stay in the town. If he were to see her now! If he were to follow her!"

John drew his breath hard at the thought.

"There was a long stair to go up before Mr. Swinton's rooms could be reached, and when they came to the foot of it Brownrig paused.

"I am not quite myself this morning," he said; "I'll wait till later in the day before I try to see Mr. Swinton again. There's no special hurry."

"You are not looking very well," said John, gravely. "It would be as wise for you to wait a while and refresh yourself. I'll go with you a bit of the way."

They went back together till they came to the door of the inn. John refused Brownrig's invitation to enter, and left him there. Then he took his way to Robert's lodgings. Robert had not returned.

"Can they be lingering yet?" said John to himself. "I must see that they are fairly away."

In the street opposite the house where Mrs. Esselmont had stayed, no carriage was standing. John slowly passed the house and turned again, waiting for a while. Then he went toward the office. Looking in at the inn parlour on his way thither, he saw Brownrig sitting with a friend. There were a bottle and glasses between them, and judging that he was "safe enough for the present," John went to his work. Brownrig paid another visit to Mr. Swinton the next day, but nothing was definitely arranged between them as to the work which was to be done, and in a day or two he went away.

It must be owned that it went ill with John Beaton about this time. He had been in the way of saying to himself, and of saying to others also, whom he wished to influence, that the thing which a man desired with all his heart to do, that he could do. Of course he meant only such things as were not in their nature impossible to be done. But after a while he was not so sure of himself.

While Brownrig had lingered in the town, John had been more or less occupied with thoughts of him. He had kept sight of him at most times. He had known where he was and what he was doing, and in what company. He had done this for the sake of Allison Bain, declaring to himself that whatever might be done to prevent her falling into the hands of the man who called her his wife, it was right for him to do.

But Brownrig showed no sign of knowing that Allison had been in the town, and in a few days he turned his face homeward again.

Then John had time to attend to his own affairs, and it went ill with him for a while. He faced his trouble like a man, and "had it out with himself," as he might have "had it out" with friend or foe, with whom a battle was to be fought for the sake of assured peace to come after.

Yes, he loved Allison Bain—loved her so well that he had been willing to sacrifice a hopeful future at home, and begin a life of labour in a strange land, so that she might share it with him. He had not tried to shut his eyes as to the right and wrong of the matter. He had seen that which he had desired to do as other men would see it, and he had still spoken.

But Allison Bain did not love him. At least she did not love him well enough to be willing to do what was wrong for his sake. And now it was all past and gone forever.

What, then, was his duty and interest in the circumstances?

To forget her; to put her out of his thoughts and out of his heart; to begin at the work which he had planned for himself before ever he had seen her face; to hold to this work with might and main, so as to leave himself no time and no room for the cherishing of hope or the rebelling against despair, and he strengthened himself by recalling the many good reasons he had seen for not yielding when the temptation first assailed him.

He ought to be glad that she had refused to listen to him. She had been wise for them both, and it was well. Yes, it was well. This momentary madness would pass away, and he had his work before him.

And so to his work he determined to set himself. So many hours were to be given to Mr. Swinton and so many to his books. In these circumstances there would be no leisure for dreams or for regrets, and he would soon be master of himself again.

And he must lose no time. First he must go and see his mother. He hung his head as he owned to himself how few of his thoughts had been given to her of late.

All this while she had had many thoughts concerning him; and when, one night, he came at last, wet and weary, through the darkness of a November night, she welcomed him lovingly, and uttered no word of reproach or even of surprise at his long silence, or at his seeming forgetfulness of the plan which he had himself proposed. She was just as usual, more glad to see him than she had words to tell, and full of interest in all that he had to say.

(To be continued.)

DR. MACÉWAN, of Clapham, is at St. Petersburg, where his son lies very ill.