

# MERLE'S CRUSADE.

BY ROSA MACHETTE CAREY.

Author of "Barbara Heathcote's Trial," "Queen's White," "The Search," "of Basil Lyndhurst."

## CHAPTER XVII.—A PLEASANT SURPRISE.

The next day I had a delicious surprise. We were sitting in the orchard before the children's dinner; they had taken their noonday sleep early, and I had brought them out again.

We were all huddled together on a little grass hillock, for I was telling Rolf and Joyce a story; Reggie was talking to the fowls he had gathered. He had quite a little language of his own to supplement his scanty stock of words. I heard "gurgle-da" very often, so I knew he was happy, my bonny boy, whom I loved better every day. All at once I looked up, and there was my beloved mistress standing by the little white gate, watching us, and she looked so pale and lovely, with the sun shining upon her brown hair, that a curious fear crossed me that she was too good and beautiful to live. Why do we always say that, as though things of beauty were rare upon earth?

"Run, darlings, there is mother!" I exclaimed, and Joyce gave quite a shout of joy as she raced down the orchard. It was pretty to see Reggie following her as fast as his fat legs could carry him. He fell down, but picked himself up, still holding his fowls, and then thrust them in his mother's face as she stooped to kiss him. I detailed Rolf by me until Mrs. Morton had greeted her little ones, but she soon came up to us, holding out her hand to me with such a kind look.

"How are you, Merle? But I need not ask; you are almost as rosy as the children. How fat and well they look! Reggie is lovelier than ever, and as for Joyce—and she could hardly turn her attention to Rolf, who was regarding her with great curiosity.

"Don't you wish you were rosy, too, Aunt Violet?" he asked, as she kissed him.

I thought she smiled a little sadly as she answered.

"My rosy cheeks days are over, Rolf dear; I would rather the children had them. Oh, I am so pleased to see the improvement in my little Joyce, Merle; she looks a different creature. You told me of course, but I wanted to see her with my own eyes. You have been so good to them all this time; oh, I know that."

She sat down beside me on the hillock, and lifted Reggie on her lap, and Joyce nestled close to her.

"Is it not good of my husband, Merle, to bring me down here just for a few hours to see my children? I asked him last night if he could spare me, and he promised that we should come together. We are going to Scotland to-morrow by the night mail, and I could not have gone happily without seeing my darlings."

"I am glad you are going, Mrs. Morton; you are not looking well," for she had grown very thin during these five weeks, and there was an air of delicacy about her that I did not like to see. "It is quite time you should have some rest."

She looked a little amused at that.

"That is the last thing I shall get in Scotland. If we were going alone, my husband and I, there might be some probability of getting a little time to one's self, but we are to stay with the Egertons. They are very gay people, and have a large party for the shooting season. Lady Florence Egerton is one of the most incessant talkers I know."

I did not like to hear this. If only she could have stayed in this sweet place, among her own people, she would have been rested and refreshed.

She echoed my sigh merrily, for she seemed in excellent spirits.

"Don't be so anxious about me, my good Merle. I have the best husband in the world to take care of me. If I do fall ill, which is very unlikely, I shall be able to get the blindfold of an affectionate woman when her husband is concerned."

"I think I am very fortunate to be able to leave my children so comfortably. You are a tower of strength to me, Merle. Now you will be quite happy to remain here for another month or six weeks, until we come back from Scotland?" looking at me rather wistfully.

"Quite happy," I returned, frankly. "If only I could give Mrs. Markham satisfaction, which I always fail to do; for Rolf, finding us dull company, had decoyed Joyce down the orchard to hunt for a gray rabbit they had lost, and I could speak without reservation."

"Tell me all about it," she said, gently. "I am going to talk to Adelaide, but I should like your version first."

Oh, the comfort of pouring out all my little grievances and worries into my mistress' attentive ear! She listened with such patience, and though she said little, one was so sure with whom lay her sympathy.

"We must be very careful, Merle. No, I am not blaming you, you have done nothing wrong; but Adelaide, as mistress of my father's house, needs a certain amount of consideration from us. If she wishes you to consult her about the children's walks and drives, I suppose we must give in, for the sake of peace; but do not permit any interference in the actual management of the children; use a little tact when you have to contest an order you feel is not judicious. Do not worry yourself if she blames you unjustly; whatever Adelaide thinks of you, you are right in my eyes. I will tell her myself that I have no objection to your taking the children to Wheeler's Farm. Molly is as good a creature as ever lived, and I remember how my father used to take me when the other Molly, Hannah's mother, was alive, and what a treat it was to my childish eyes to see her skim the cream in those great yellow pans in the dairy."

We sat talking in this way for some time, and then Mr. Morton and Mrs. Markham joined us. I thought she looked a little taken aback when he came up to me and frankly shook hands. He had never done so before, but I had noticed lately a growing interest and cordiality in his manner to me. He was a cautious man, who never let enthusiasm run away with him. He would sit a person there on his knees before he manifested any degree of liking; neither would he endorse his wife's opinion of me until I had proven myself worthy of his respect.

It was pleasant to hear him address me as Miss Fenton, and praise the children's looks. He stood talking to me apart for some minutes, much to Mrs. Markham's chagrin. No doubt she had armed herself with a list of grievances, and was highly displeased to find that I stood so high in my employer's favor. Prejudice is all ways hard to overcome, and Mrs. Mark-

nam was strongly prejudiced against my humble self, but when I remembered Uncle Keith, and my girlish distaste for him I was ready to admit that I deserved some sort of punishment.

We had a delightful afternoon on the beach. My dear mistress accompanied us, and shortly afterward Miss Cheriton and Mr. Morton made their appearance, accompanied by Mr. Hawtry. He had ridden up to Marshlands on business, and had been decoyed into an hour's idleness.

What a pleasant time we had. Mrs. Morton and I sat under the breakwater, watching the children sand-fortress. To our great amusement, Mr. Hawtry worked too, while Gay assisted Reggie to fill his bucket with smooth white pebbles for the ramparts.

"Isn't Alice ridiculously busy?" laughed Gay, as she passed. "I do believe he is quite happy to find a spade in his hand again. And do look at Farmer Roger," for she sometimes naughtily called him by that name; "he is working as hard as though he were among his haymakers."

I wonder if Mr. Hawtry heard her, for he threw down his spade and came up to us with a droll, ashamed sort of look.

"I believe I am half a child still," he said, throwing himself down on the sand. "I have often envied the little rogues digging their trenches; they do seem to believe in their own work. You are laughing at me, Mrs. Morton, but your own husband is just as bad."

"If you knew how glad I am to see him with the children!" she returned, with a sort of misty smile. "I do not think grown-up people's play half so sensible. I know Miss Fenton agrees with me, do you not, Merle?"

I saw Mr. Hawtry looking at me inquiringly, and I said, quietly, "We often think the best people are those who never outgrow their childhood. We are apt to laugh at children," I went on, for my mistress was near me, and I was talking to her more than to Mr. Hawtry, "and yet their perfect faith teaches us many lessons; they have to contend with so great a difficulty."

"What special difficulty do you mean, Miss Fenton?"

"The difficulty of expression. Their language does not allow of full expression; their wonder bubbles over, and they find no word to convey their wonderment."

"Miss Fenton is a philosopher," observed my mistress, softly. "We often talk about these things, Roger" (she called him Roger quite as a matter of course); "thinking aloud is very pleasant in company, sometimes."

"Miss Fenton seems to think to some purpose," interposed Mr. Hawtry. "I thought he seemed a little amused. It would be a good thing if she could teach other young ladies to be as unconventional and useful."

I found this speech a little embarrassing. He evidently knew all about my theory, and his words seemed to imply perfect approval of it, but I was not sufficiently at my ease to meet his meaning half-way; on the contrary, I was rather provoked at his breaking in on our conversation. I made an excuse, and went down to the margin of the water, where Miss Cheriton and Reggie were playing touch-last with the waves, and there we stayed until Mr. Morton looked at his watch and gave the signal for our return, and then we all went home together.

On our way Miss Cheriton took me by the arm, and said, merrily: "We are all going to have a nursery tea this evening. Alice and Mr. Hawtry are both coming up. Don't you think you had better hurry home to prepare for us, Merle?" for she always called me Merle now.

I needed no second bidding, and leaving Joyce in her care, very quickly overtook Hannah, and with Susan's help we had soon arranged the tea-table.

I think everyone enjoyed themselves; they would insist on crowding round the tea-table, though it would hardly hold them, and Mr. Morton teased his wife about an incident in her childish days, when she had quarreled with Adelaide about some strawberry jam at this very table.

"I do love this old nursery, Alice," she returned, plaintively. "It is a treat even to drink out of the old blue cups again. Nurse Parfitt used to be so proud of the old blue china."

And after tea she took her husband to see the cot where she and Gay had slept when they were tiny children, and we could hear them laughing together over the prints in the little black frames. I had to fetch something for Reggie, and I found them standing hand in hand before the "Five Senses." I think she was telling him something that touched him, for he was looking wonderfully interested, but there was a sort of pain in his face, too.

Mr. Hawtry was on the window-seat with Reggie, and his horse was at the door.

"Thank you for a very pleasant hour, Miss Fenton," he said, holding out his hand. "I think we are all the better for an afternoon with the children." And then he and Mr. Morton went away.

My dear mistress took leave of us soon after that, for they were going back to town that evening. I could see her heart was full as she bade the children goodbye, but she was very brave, and smiled at us to the last.

Gay came up to us by and by. She said her father and Adelaide were dining out, and she meant to spend the evening with us. I thought she looked just a trifle dull, as though something had gone wrong since tea. I wondered if she were sorry to have missed Mr. Rossiter, who we heard had called that afternoon.

She sat by me very quietly as I undressed Reggie, and listened to Joyce's prayers, but when the children were in bed she asked me to come with her into the garden, as it was a sultry evening. Hannah and Rolf were cutting out pictures to paste in the scrap-book, and I knew I could safely trust them, and might indulge in an hour's enjoyment.

It was just after sunset, and Gay proposed that we should go down to our favorite seat in the orchard—"that is if you are not afraid of the dew, Merle," she added; "but there is such a pretty peep of the corn-fields from there, and if the moon rises early the effect is beautiful." I was too young and strong to be afraid of anything; so we speedily found our way to the orchard; followed, as usual, by Lion and Fidgets.

The sky was warm with that pink afterglow that follows the setting sun, and the evening star was glittering near, the edge of a tiny cloud. There was an indescribable hush and stillness over everything, as though nature were taking sweet rest, and her dreams were pleasant. All sorts of faint scents came to us from flowers and odoriferous shrubs and hedge-rows; far off we could hear the hollow boom of the waves upon the shore.

Gay was very silent as first; she sat stroking Lion's head with an unusually abstracted air, and then suddenly roused up and began to talk.

"Merle, are you very much afraid of people's opinions? I mean, do you let yourself be influenced by them?"

"I am afraid not," I returned, rather surprised at this beginning; "I should hardly be in my present position, Miss Gay, if I had minded very much what my little world said of me."

"I wish I were like you," she sighed. "You are so strong and brave; you carve your own way through life so cleverly. I never knew I was such a coward until now. I do mind Adelaide's sneers so dreadfully. Oh! she can say such bitter things; and then, I should hate to disappoint father."

"This was very ambiguous, and I waited to hear more. She began again presently. "Merle, should you not think I was a very unkind person to be a poor man's wife? How astonished you look! But one must talk of such things sometimes, and I never speak on these subjects to Adelaide. Suppose I am not a bit in earnest, and am only talking for the sake of argument, still, you might give me your opinion."

"I hardly know, Miss Gay," I replied; for this was quite a problem to me, and how are we short-sighted mortals to judge of any human being's possibilities? "You seem to me to fit your present life exactly; you wear your existence as lightly as a glove; your surroundings suit you as much as you suit them."

"You are quite right, Merle; no one could be happier."

"I should think in any change of lot you must suffer loss," I continued, trying to puzzle it out—"unless," hesitating, "you became mistress of a house like Marshlands; a house where there would be plenty and comfort, horses to ride and dumb animals to pet, and a master who would let you do as you like." I did not dare to make my meaning more plain, but, of course, she guessed at once that I was alluding to the Red Farm and Mr. Hawtry, for she colored very much.

"Oh, but I know of no such place where I could be happy, Merle," she said, lifting her head a little, and her face was full of delicate scorn. "There may be corn and oil, and plenty of fat kine in Egypt, but we may not want to go to Egypt after all; and then I understood that Mr. Hawtry was not in her thoughts. "But all the same I should hate to be poor," she continued, petulently. "Fancy saying good-bye to Bonnie—my own dear Bonnie—and having to live in a shabby little house with a few feet of ground for a garden, and to trim one's own hats, with a new gown about once a year."

"I do not think you would care for your environment, Miss Gay." And I added, wickedly, not meaning it in the least. "No man, however good, would be worth such a sacrifice."

"I don't know about that," she returned, abruptly. "I suppose if one loved a person, one could be capable of sacrifice, but it must be the real thing, and no mistake about it; and real is one to be sure?" And then she gave herself a little shake and changed the subject; but all the same I could see there were tears in her eyes as she stooped to pat Lion.

(To be Continued.)

## Popular Science.

### TEMPERATURE OF TREES.

From some observations recorded by H. L. Russel in the Botanical Gazette, it appears that as a general rule the temperature of the interior of a tree is somewhat higher than that of the air, except during the warmer parts of the day, the maximum temperature of the air being generally between one and two p. m., and the minimum between six and seven a. m. The comparative tables show that heat is absorbed and radiated more rapidly in the outer layers than in the center.

Experiments made at a time when the buds were starting, in order to determine whether the chemical action carried on in the tissues gives rise to heat, led to the conclusion that it is very doubtful whether the metabolic processes involved generate enough heat to influence the ordinary thermometer. A curious difference, however, was discovered in the wood of the oak and pine in winter, the author having found that the temperature of the pine was lower than that of the oak at all times except during the latter part of the night and early morning. This is attributed to the thick coating of the leaves on the pine preventing absorption of heat by the trunk, since the larch, which has similar wood, resembles the oak rather than the pine in the matter of temperature. The further conclusion is reached that the direct absorption of heat is the main cause of the high temperature of trees, and that it is largely dependent upon the character of the bark, smooth-barked trees being warmer as a rule than thick-barked ones.

### LONGEVITY OF ELEPHANTS.

The journals of Ceylon have recently mentioned the death of an elephant that was well known on the island and had been seen by several generations of Englishmen. He was called Sello and had belonged to the last of the Kings of Kandy. He was one of the hundred elephants that were taken by the English Government in 1815, when the Kandyan Dynasty was overthrown. At this epoch the elephant was said to be fifteen years old. If this is correct, he died a natural death at the age of eighty-nine years.

### RELATION OF PLANTS TO SOIL.

Mr. G. Ville, in a paper read before the Academy of Sciences of Paris, shows that the composition of the soil influences plants in five principal characters, viz: The stature, the color, the amount of carotene and chlorophyll and the quantity of vegetation. A table is given showing the difference in stature and color of plants of the common hemp according to the manure used, from which it is evident that this plant flourishes best in soil without manure, next in manure without potash and in manure without nitrogen. The absence of lime

and phosphate in the manure in the case of hemp did not interfere so largely with the color and stature of the plants. It would appear, therefore, that rich manure is essential, at least to the development of foliage.

### STRUCTURE OF PULPY FRUITS.

To the Annals of Botany Mr. J. B. Farmer contributes an article in which, after pointing out the very different sources of the pulp in different fruits, he gives detailed descriptions of its mode of formation in the elder, dulcamara, black-berry and ivy. The term berry is usually applied to fruits in which the pulp or succulent tissue is derived from the pericarp, but in Daphne mezereum it is formed not only from the pericarp, but from the outer integument of the seed also. In Citrus it is due to hairs which spring into the ovarian cavities and become distended with fluid. In Vitis and Solanum Dulcamara the pulp is formed partly from the placenta and partly from the pericarp. In the latter, after fertilization of the ovary, the cells of the placenta grow out between the seeds, so as to give them the appearance of being sunk in it, and this growth is continued until by a similar growth from the pericarp, so that the cavity of the ovary is then filled up with pulpy tissue. The outermost layer of cells of the ovule also undergoes a change, their inner and side walls becoming lignified and the outer wall becoming mucilaginous and forming part of the mucilage of the pulp, just as it does in linseed. The red color of dulcamara berries is due to the appearance of a large number of chromoplasts derived from the chlorophyll granules. At the same time that this formation takes place the starch in the fruit becomes changed to sugar.

### Indications.

White specks appearing on the nails may either be considered to indicate good luck or that the person so affected has told a falsehood. The appearance of a white, foamy spot on the surface of a cup of coffee or tea indicates "money," and should be immediately swallowed intact. Whoever reads epigrams on tombstones will lose his memory. To rock a cradle when empty will entail an injury upon the child who should occupy it. To eat while a bell is tolling for a funeral causes toothache. If a child is permitted to look into a mirror before it is twelve months old it will grow up proud. When children play soldiers on the roadside it forebodes the approach of war. Any one who is about to move into a new house should send in beforehand bread and a new broom. When a stranger enters a room he should be permitted to sit if only for a moment, as he otherwise takes away the children's sleep with him. Owls hooting in the neighborhood of a house are omens of death. A man whose teeth are far apart will seek his fortune in some distant land. The crowing of a hen indicates an approaching disaster. When a mouse gnaws a gown misfortune may be expected.

### The Latest Petticoat.

The latest petticoat is straight from Paris and is untrimmed. It is simply a well-shaped skirt that looks as if it were made of leopard skin, but it is in reality a broad silk representing the skin of the wild beast. It is pleasantly warm to wear and has a barbaric look frightful to the smart girl who likes to imagine that she can have a sweet-heart brave enough to go out and kill wild animals, the skins of which she may use to keep her pretty self warm. Women today are just as fond of thinking that men are brave and capable of manly sports as they used to be sure of it before the dude, the monocle and the absinthe cocktail were in vogue.

### Peculiarities of Ears.

Small and thin ears usually denote delicacy and refinement, and abnormally large, thick ears are associated with a sensual and coarse nature. As age increases the ear becomes more angular and marked. From our youth upward the ear does not receive much consideration.

Beside the peculiarities of shape, the ear may be large or small, protruding or flat, and straight or sloping. Some ears have pointed tops, while others straight.—Pall Mall Gazette.

### Air Castles.

Practical men look upon visionaries with pity and contempt, and yet the dreamers of rose colored dreams are the happiest people the world contains. Among all the inventors and discoverers on earth, there is none so fortunate as he who can fashion out of the air an elysium of his own, believe in it and live on it. Hard common sense may sneer at him, but if it cannot dislodge him from his castle in the clouds the visionary has the best of it.—New York Ledger.

### Waste-Paper Basket.

Select a peach basket of a pretty shape and size (the effect is not as good if the basket is too large). Run a ribbon about two inches in width around the basket just above the middle band, letting it pass between the slats over and under alternately. Having passed the ribbon around the basket, tie a handsome bow on one side. The ribbon may be of any color preferred. Light olive has a pretty effect. To gild it, it is necessary only to buy a little gilt at the drug store and a bottle of medium or gold paint liquid.



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## KISSES.

(A la Romeo and Juliet.)

A prominent physician calls the kiss "an elegant disseminator of disease." He says, "fever is spread by it, so are lung disease." He maintains that if the kissing custom were driven out of the land "it would save one-tenth of one per cent. of human lives" which are now sacrificed. Out upon the garbled and sapless vagabond! Evidently kisses are not for such as he, and the old fox says the grapes are sour. Let him devote himself to making our women healthy and blooming that kisses may be kisses. This can surely be done by the use of Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription which is simply magical in curing diseases peculiar to females. After taking it for a reasonable length of time there will be no more irregularity, backache, bearing-down sensations, nervous prostration, general debility and kindred ailments. "Favorite Prescription" is an invigorating, restorative tonic and as a regulator and promoter of functional action at that critical period of change from girlhood to womanhood, it is a perfectly safe remedial agent and can produce only good results. It is carefully compounded, by an experienced and skillful physician and adapted to woman's delicate organization. It is purely vegetable in its composition and perfectly harmless in any condition of the system. It imparts strength to the whole system. For overworked, "worn-out," "run-down," debilitated teachers, milliners, dressmakers, seamstresses, "shop-girls," housekeepers, nursing mothers, and feeble women generally, Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription is the greatest earthly boon, being unequalled as an appetizing cordial and restorative tonic. It is the only medicine for women, sold by druggists, and under a positive guarantee from the manufacturers, that it will give satisfaction in every case, or money will be refunded. This guarantee has been faithfully carried out for many years.

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## LABOR NOTES.

### Getting Together.

Slowly the people of this country are beginning to see that the three general questions of money, transportation and land are those which are coming up for discussion and decision. Government loans at a low rate of interest is the answer to the first. Government ownership of railways and telegraphs answers the second and the exemption of a moderate homestead to each family from all taxation, execution, or other processes of law settles the third.

Then, the producer of wealth would be protected in the possession of the fruits of his toil, labor would rejoice and peace and contentment revisit the homes of our anxious and careworn mothers and fathers.

Get right on these three questions. Or are you too old to learn?—Kansas Commonwealth.

### The Ideal Dollar.

We are told "that a dollar will buy more now than ever before." We are sorry that it is true. We know that as the purchasing power of the dollar increases, the chances for getting the dollar decrease.

This may sound like an old foggy idea, but to prove the proposition and show you how our plutocrats want the purchasing power of the dollar, I introduce the following from the New York Tribune: In Siam you can get good board for forty-six cents a week, and this includes washing, the use of two servants to run errands, tickets to shows, three shaves and all the cigars you can smoke. This sounds delightful until you learn that it is almost impossible to earn forty-five cents a week in Siam.—Progressive Farmer.

### Too Old for Us.

One enthusiast says, the warehouse scheme is a good one, because it was used in Egypt in the time of Moses. Certainly, and the old Egyptians put the laborers to tasks, building pyramids and tombs for kings and nobles. These kings and nobles now enlighten living progressive America in circuses, side-shows and dime museums. This is not our year for taking advice from Pharaohs of 3,000 or 4,000 years ago.—Chicago Express.

### The Battle of The Weak.

New York World: Up in the mining regions of Pennsylvania 1,600 hand-labeled, grimy men are waging a bitter contest with their employers. It is another example of the great duel which the social condition of today not only invites but precipitates. The laborers are always the weaker adversary, because they must eat while they wait, and bread does not grow by the black roadside.

Men with rifles in their hands, hired by the capitalist owners of the mines, are thick about the mine lands, ready to meet any trespassing on the grounds or attacks on the "scabs" by a bullet.

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weakness against strength. But it isals a conflict of right against wrong? It win it must in the long run. But it is danger ahead in these strained feelings between the two bodies. Some day something will come which everybody will deplore. If justice could be done things might be better.

### In a Fix.

Congress is in the fix of the darkey, who did not know what to do, and so did not do it. On one side are the corporations and monopolies who secured for congressmen their nominations and expect them to stand by their special interests and privileges. On the other hand are the farmers and laborers whose votes elected them, and whose votes can leave them at home next time, who ask for some relief for hard times for the poor man. Hereforth congressmen and senators have given the corporations and rich men the laws they asked for and have given the poor men taffy and buncombe, and they are doing it now, but with less confidence in the result than usual. As long as farmers were able to keep the wolf ten feet from the door they seemed to think a little taffy and buncombe sufficient pay for giving their substance to millionaires, but now that the wolf has his nose and fore feet across their thresholds taffy is felt to be too weak a diet for the emergency. It has been the habit of farmers and mechanics to sit idly by while the corporation machine ground out nominations for them to vote, but they propose to help run the machine hereafter.—Jeffersonian.

If you get into the habit of always letting your eyes attend to a thing first you will avoid lots of embarrassing situations. Suppose you have been discussing Miss Belleville's hair, and have committed the indiscretion of calling it red, when a voice sounds close at your side, which to your horror you think you recognize as Miss Belleville's voice—why give a convulsive start, a confused sneeze, and a compromising gurgle of half formed explanation or deprecation? You will be wiser and safer, and more graceful, too, if you just turn your eyes to see if it is Miss Belleville. If it is, your complete repose may make her think she didn't hear right, in case she did hear, and will not arouse her suspicions in case she didn't hear.—New York Star.