

# MERLE'S CRUSADE.

BY SONA HAUCHETTE CABRE.

Author of "Barbara Heathcote's Trial," "Joan's Whim," "The Search for Basil Lyndhurst."

## CHAPTER XVIII.—THE RED FARM.

I perceived a great change in Mrs. Markham after my mistress's visit. She took less notice of the children, sent fewer messages to the nursery, ceased to interfere in the nursery arrangements, and often ignored my presence if she chanced to meet me in the hall or garden. Her manner convinced me that she was deeply offended by her sister's patronage of me. Very probably Mr. Morton had spoken a few forcible words in my defense. They made her understand that they trusted me implicitly, and that any interference in my department would be displeasing to them. It was easy to read this from her averted looks.

Now and then I heard a word or two about "Violet," "ridiculous infatuation," when I passed the open drawing-room door. Rolf once asked me curiously why his mother disliked me so. "You are not so very wicked, are you, Fenny? Is it very wicked to be stuck up? Mother is so fond of using that word, you know." I tried not to listen to Rolf. I could afford to be magnanimous, for I was very happy just then. Gay's partiality for me was evident, and I soon conceived the warmest attachment for her. She seized every opportunity of running up to the nursery for a few minutes chat, and she often joined us on the beach. One afternoon she asked to accompany us in a country ramble. Hannah had come to Wheeler's Farm to have tea with Molly, and Luke was to walk home with her in the evening. I thought how they would enjoy that walk through the corn-fields and down the dim, scented lanes. Life would look as sweet to them as to richer lovers; youth and health and love being the threefold cord that cannot lightly be broken. Gay made the excuse that she would be useful in taking care of Joyce while I wheeled Reggie in his perambulator. I overheard her saying this to Mrs. Markham, but her speech only elicited a scornful reply.

"If Miss Penton encourages Hannah in gadding about, there is not the slightest need for you to take her place, Gay; but, of course, you will please yourself."

"Oh, I always please myself, Addie," returned Gay, cheerfully, "and I shall enjoy a ramble among the lanes."

And, indeed, we had a delightful afternoon gathering wild flowers, and resting ourselves in any shady corner where a fallen tree or style invited us.

We were gathering some poppies that grew among the corn when Gay called me. She looked a little anxious.

"Merle, I am really afraid there is a storm coming up. You were noticing just now how close and sultry it felt; those clouds look ominous, and we are a mile and a half from Marshlands."

I felt conscience-stricken at her words. We had been talking and laughing, and had not perceived how the sunshine had faded. Certainly, the clouds had a lurid, thunderous look, and the birds were flying low, and seemed fussy and uncertain in their movements. True, the storm might not break on us for another half hour; but we should never get the children home in that time. I thought of Reggie with dismay.

"What shall we do, Miss Gay?" I returned, hurriedly. "It would be nearer to Wheeler's Farm. We might take refuge there."

"Wait a moment," was her answer; "we shall be drenched before we get there. The Red Farm is not half a mile off. I think we had better take the children there, and then Mr. Hawtry will send us home in his wagonette. Come! Why do you hesitate, Merle? He is father's old friend; and even Ateleah would find no fault with us if we took refuge at the Red Farm."

I held my peace, for of course Miss Cheriton must know what her father and sister would approve; but I did not like the notion at all, and I followed her somewhat reluctantly down the field. I would much rather have gone to Wheeler's Farm, and put ourselves under Molly's protection. Most likely they would have placed a covered cart or wagon at our disposal, and we should all have enjoyed the fun. Gay was so simple and uncalculating that she saw no harm at all in going to the Red Farm; but I knew what Aunt Agatha would say, and I took all my notions of propriety from her.

But the Fates were against us, for just as we reached the stile there was Squire Hawtry himself, mounted as usual on brown Peter, trotting quietly home. He checked Peter at once, and spoke in rather a concerned voice.

"Miss Cheriton, this is very imprudent. There will be a storm directly. Those children will never get home."

He spoke to her, but I fancied he meant that reproachful look for me. No doubt I was the one to blame.

"It was very wrong," I stammered; "but we were talking and did not notice. I want Miss Cheriton to hurry to Wheeler's Farm."

"Oh, nonsense!" he said, abruptly; but it was such a pleasant abruptness that the Red Farm is a mile nearer. Give the little girl to me, Miss Penton, and then you can walk on quickly. I will soon have her under shelter."

There was no disputing this sensible advice, and as soon as Peter was trotting on with his double burden I followed as quickly as possible with Reggie. We were only just in time, after all. As I wheeled Reggie under the porch of the Red Farm the first heavy drops pattered down.

I was in such haste that I only stole a quick glance at the low red house, with its curious millioned windows and stone porch. I had noticed, as we came up the gravel walk, a thick privet hedge, and a yew walk, and a grand old walnut tree in the center of the small lawn, with a circular seat. There were seats, too, in the porch, and a sweet smell of jasmine and clove. The door opened, and there stood Mr. Hawtry, with a beaming face, and Joyce beside him, evidently pleased to welcome us all to the Red Farm.

I lifted Reggie out of the perambulator and carried him into the hall. It had some handsome oak furniture in it; heavy carved cabinets and chairs, and a tall clock. There was a tiger skin lying on the fire-place. An open glass door led into a charming old-fashioned garden, with a bowling-green and a rustic arbor, and a long, straight walk, bordered with yew-trees.

A tall, thin woman, with a placid face and sunny hair, shook hands with Gay. "Oh, there is no accounting for Ade-

Hawtry introduced her to me as "Mrs. Cornish, my worthy housekeeper," and then bade her, with good-humored peremptoriness, "to get tea ready as soon as possible in the oak room."

"I am afraid the drawing-room has rather a chilly aspect," he continued, throwing open a door. "Should you like prefer sitting in my den, Miss Gay, until Mrs. Cornish tells us tea is ready?"

I was sorry when Miss Cheriton pronounced in favor of the den. I liked the look of that drawing-room, with its three long, narrow windows opening on to the bowling-green. It had faint, yellowish paneled walls and an old-fashioned blue couch, and there was some beautiful china on an Indian cabinet. No doubt that was where his mother and Miss Agnes used to sit. Perhaps the room held sad memories for him, and he was glad to close the door upon them.

Mr. Hawtry's den was a small front room, with a view of the privet hedge and the walnut tree, and was plainly furnished with a round table, and well-worn leather chairs, the walls lined with mahogany book-shelves, his gun and a pair of handsomely mounted pistols occupying the place of honor over the mantel-piece. Joyce called it an ugly room, but I thought it looked comfortable and home-like, with its pleasant litter of magazines and papers; and Gay said at once:

"I do like this old den of yours, Mr. Hawtry; it is such a snug room, especially in winter, when father and I have come in after a long, cold ride."

"You do not come as often now, Miss Gay," he said, looking at her a little keenly.

She colored, as though the remark embarrassed her, and seemed bent on excusing herself.

"I am such a busy person, you see, and now I spend all my leisure time with the children. Am I not a devoted aunt, Merle?"

"You are very good to give us so much of your company," I returned, for I saw she wanted me to speak; but just then a flash of lightning frightened Joyce away from the window, and she came to me for protection. Reggie, too, began to cry, and I had some trouble in pacifying him.

Gay good-naturedly came to my assistance.

"Suppose we take the children into the other room and show them the shells; it would distract their attention from the storm. We will leave you to read your paper in peace, Mr. Hawtry." But he insisted on going with us. The cabinet had a curious lock, and as no one could open it but himself.

The children were delighted with the shells, and a little green Indian doll perfectly fascinated Reggie. He kissed the grinding countenance with intense affection, and murmured, "Pretty, pretty." My attention was attracted to a miniature in a velvet frame. It was a portrait of a round-faced, happy-looking girl, with brown eyes, rather like Mr. Hawtry's.

"That was my sister Agnes," he said, with a sigh, and for a moment his face clouded over. "She died two years ago, after years of intense suffering. That miniature was painted when she was eighteen. She was a bright, healthy creature then. Look, that was her couch, where she spent her days. There is a mystery in some lives, Miss Fenton. I never understood why she was permitted to suffer all these years."

"No, indeed," observed Gay, who heard this. "Violet and I were so fond of her; she could be so merry, in spite of her pain. I think some of my pleasantest hours have been spent in this room. How pleased she used to be when I had anything new to tell her or show her. I do not wonder you miss her, Mr. Hawtry; I have always been sorry for you."

I thought he seemed sorry for himself, for I had never seen him look so sad. I wished then that Gay had not brought us back to this room; it was evidently full of relics of the past, when womanly hands had busied themselves for the comfort of the dearly loved son and brother.

The little round table beside the couch, with its inlaid work-box and stand of favorite books, must have been Miss Agnes', but the netting case and faded silk bag on the other side of the fire-place, with the spectacles lying on the closed Bible, must have belonged to the mother. How sorely must he have missed them! Few men would have cared to have preserved these little homely treasures; they would have swept them away with the dead past. But now and then a strong manly character has this element of feminine tenderness.

I think my look must have expressed sympathy, for Mr. Hawtry came up to me as I stood alone by the window (for Gay was still showing the shells to the children) and said, a little abruptly:

"It is good of you to be sorry for me, but time heals all wounds, and, in spite of pain and loneliness, one would not call them back to suffer." And then his voice changed to a lower key. "I wish Agnes could have known you, Miss Fenton; how she would have sympathized with your work! All good women are fond of little children, but she doted on them. There were so many children in the church-yard on the day she was buried."

I was too much touched to answer, but he went on as though he did not notice my silence.

"You seem very happy in your work?"

"Very happy."

"One can see that; you have a most contented expression; it almost makes one envy you. I wonder how you came to think such work was possible."

I do not know how it was, but I found myself telling Mr. Hawtry all about Ann Agatha and the cottage at Putney. I even fell a word or two about my miserable dependence. I am not sure what I said, but I certainly saw him smile, as though something amused him.

I was almost sorry when Mrs. Cornish called us into the oak room, and yet a most pleasant hour followed. Mrs. Cornish poured out the tea, and the children were very good; even Reggie behaved quite nicely. The room was very dark and low, and furnished entirely with oak, but a cheery little fire burned on the hearth; and though the thunder rain beat heavily against the window, it seemed only to add to our enjoyment. Mr. Hawtry had promised to drive us home in the wagonette, but we dared not venture until the storm was over.

When the children had finished their bread and honey, they played about the room, while we gathered round the window.

Mr. Hawtry spoke most to Gay, and I sat by and listened. He spoke about Mr. Rosseter presently.

"I think him a capital fellow," he said, in his hearty manner; "and it quite puzzles me why Mrs. Markham dislikes him so; she is always finding fault with him."

made a sikes and drakes," replied Gay, a little impatiently. "Sometimes I think she would have found fault with St. Paul himself, if she had known him."

Mr. Hawtry laughed. "Rosseter is not a saint Paul, certainly, but he is a downright honest fellow, and that is what I like. Perhaps he is not a shining light in the pulpit, but he is so earnest and painless-eloquence. He is just the companion that suits me; always cheerful and always good-tempered, and ready to talk on any subject. I must say I am rather partial to Walter Rosseter."

Now I wonder what made Gay look so pleased, and why her eyes beamed so softly on Mr. Hawtry. But she said nothing, and Mr. Rosseter's name soon dropped out of the conversation.

Very shortly after that the rain cleared, and the wagonette was ordered. While we were waiting for it, Gay asked me to come with her into the dairy, to see Lydia Sowerby. I was anxious to see Hannah's sister, but I own I was not prepossessed with her appearance. She had red hair, like Molly—indeed, most of the Sowerbys had red hair—but she was far plainer than Molly, and it struck me her face looked hard.

I had to own by and by, however, that my first impressions were wrong, for a few moments afterward when Mrs. Cornish carried Reggie into the dairy, Lydia's hard-featured face softened in a wonderful manner, and such a pleasant smile redeemed her plainness.

"Oh, do let me hold him a moment," she said, eagerly; "he reminds me of little Davie, our poor little brother who died. Hannah has talked so much about him."

And when Mrs. Cornish relinquished him reluctantly, she carried him about the dairy with such pride and joy that Mrs. Cornish nodded her head at her benignly.

"You are a rare one for children, Lydia; I never saw a woman to beat you. She is always begging me to ask Dan, she went on, turning to me. 'She spoils Dan hugely, and so does Molly; they are both of them soft-hearted, though you would not believe it to look at them; but many a soft fruit has a rough rind,' finished Mrs. Cornish.

Reggie was asleep all the way home, but Joyce prattled incessantly. I took them into the house as quietly as I could, after bidding Mr. Hawtry good-night. I thought it best to leave Gay to explain things to Mrs. Markham.

But all that evening, until I slept, a sentence of Mr. Hawtry's haunted me: "I wish my sister Agnes could have known you, Miss Penton." Why did he wish that? And yet—and yet I should have been glad to have known Agnes Hawtry, too.

## Bringing the Bank of England to Terms.

A wealthy New Yorker had an exciting parley in the Bank of England when he presented a number of notes for exchange into American money, says Eugene Field in a London letter to the Chicago News. "We don't know you, sir," said the teller. "You must be identified." "I shall not be identified," said the New Yorker. "You must cash your notes or I shall make trouble."

The cashier came up and tried to smooth things over; he spoke about the time-honored custom, etc. "At least," said the cashier, "we shall require you to put your name on the back of the notes." "I shall do no such thing," vociferated the New Yorker. "I am solvent and entirely responsible; I shall not endorse your paper, and taking out his watch-chain, you accept your notes in five minutes' time I shall send them to protest." This heroic treatment created a great sensation in the sleepy old bank; but the notes were cashed and the New Yorker went his way triumphantly. He was Jay Gould's secretary, Morosini.

## Why Booth is Careless.

From time to time I have noticed that the critics have deplored a tendency, in Mr. Edwin Booth to walk through his parts in a careless way. Several times recently New York papers have contained allusions to the great actor's lack of fire and enthusiasm, perhaps this little story may explain why Mr. Booth does not take as much pains as usual with his work.

When Mr. Lawrence Barrett severed his acting alliance with Mr. Booth at the close of the season of 1888-9, retaining only the business partnership, he said to a friend of mine: "You will see a falling off in Mr. Booth's work next season, or I shall be greatly surprised. As long as I was acting with him he felt the stimulus of rivalry. Not for a moment do I pretend to think that I am a rival of Mr. Booth, but there are a good many people in all the places we visited who take an interest in my work, and Mr. Booth knew this. It acted upon him as a stimulant to make him do his best to show his wondrous power as an actor. Next season he will not be brought into anything like competition with Madame Modjeska. She will play characters which cannot be made to rival those in which Mr. Booth appears. There will be no pressing reason for him to exert himself, and the consequence will be, as I have said, that he will not let out all that is in him."

This theory is very reasonable, and it accounts for the phenomenon which so many eastern dramatic critics have remarked. The influence of Mr. Barrett was good upon Mr. Booth in many ways beside the one indicated above. Mr. Barrett was his companion and friend in the best sense; he checked Mr. Booth's appetite for cigars and high living—not drinking, bear in mind, for Mr. Booth is not intemperate—but as to the late appetizers and unwholesome habits in diet, and so on. Next season, if Barrett recovers his health fully, he will act again with Booth, to the advantage of all concerned.—Pittsburg Dispatch.

## Pointing for Life.

The walls of the former palace of the bey of Constantine, says Ueber Land and Meer, are adorned with extraordinary frescoes of the rudest and most inartistic design. The story of their origin is curious enough. Ahmed, the last bey of Kaentina (Constantine), was anxious to have the walls of his palace decorated with oil paintings, but notwithstanding the most diligent search in the city and neighborhood, no native artist could be found who was capable of carrying out his wishes. In this dilemma it occurred to him to intrust the execution of this difficult task to a French prisoner, a shoemaker by trade, who was employed as a slave in the palace. He promised to restore him to liberty. The poor wretch, who knew well how to ply the awl and the "wax-end," but had not the faintest notion how to mix colors or handle a brush, humbly and piteously declared over and over again that he was utterly unworthy of the great honor. It availed him nothing, for the bey exclaimed: "You lie! All 'Frangi (Frenchmen) can paint, so I am told; get to work this instant or I will have your head lopped off."

In fear and trembling our new-fledged artist took up the brush and paint pot and spurred on by mortal terror his laboring fancy produced those truly wonderful frescoes. With anxious expectation he now waited to hear what his master would say to his performance. The bey came, he saw, and approved. "This fellow wanted to deceive me," he said, "but I knew that all 'Frangi were liars."

And, true to his word, he set the honest cobbler free.

## A Girl's Presence of Mind.

A whole village was thrown into excitement not long ago by an ignorant, uncontrolled young mother, who ran screaming into the street "Jack is bleeding to death! Run for the doctor, quick!"

The father walked the floor in a panic of terror; the children cried; the neighbors flocked in; the mother went into hysterics, and little Jack was fainting from loss of blood. The "blood spurts" showed that an artery had been severed. His father was trying to plaster up the wound in his arm, when a young girl of sixteen, from the high school, came rushing in. She snatched a pillow case off the bed, cut it into strips and bound them tightly above and below the wound.

The doctor came soon, and simply said: "My dear, you have saved the boy's life. Your knowledge of physiology was as good as mine, in this case."—Home Magazine.

## LABOR NOTES.

### Railroads and Finances.

To show the importance of the transportation question it is only necessary to state the facts connected with the U. P. railroad as an illustration. The people, through their government, have paid for the building and equipment of this road 12,800 acres of land and \$16,000 per mile. This total fund of the lands and money should have covered the entire cost of the road about twice, and the people should now be using their own road at mere cost of running expenses and repairs. There should be neither stocks nor bonds in existence as charges on the travel and traffic on the road.

But, what do we see as the actual condition of things? The people paid for the road twice its cost, and there should be no out standing capitalization. Yet we find on this road a capitalization of \$105,000 per mile, in the form of bonds and stocks on which interest and dividends must be paid by the people! Over \$100,000 per mile resting as a burden on the shoulders of the people, for use of a road which they have paid for twice! Surely Issachar is a patient ass to meekly bear so great and so unjust a burden.

The Union Pacific is but an example. The condition of other roads of Kansas, and in the country at large, is akin to this. In many cases, if not in most cases, the roads have been paid for by the people in lands, bonds and money direct, or in cash paid for fictitious stocks which cost the companies only the paper and printing. Yet, on the state of Kansas rests a capitalization of nine hundred and fifteen millions of dollars, (\$915,000,000) on which dividends or interest must be paid, for the use of roads in which the companies mostly have no investments of their own in equity! And on the country at large, rests a burden of over nine billions of dollars (\$9,000,000,000) which it is admitted by railroad men pays the holders on an average of four per cent per annum. A tribute from the people to the millionaires of three hundred and sixty millions of dollars (\$360,000,000) per annum, for the use of their own property which, on the average, the people have paid for! Talk of the national debt! Talk of the tariff! Here is a question worth the serious consideration of every citizen! It is, surely, time that this great factory of traps and millionaires should be investigated! Unburden the people of this capitalization and hogs can be shipped one hundred miles at ten cents a head, and people can be transported in the costliest coaches, the same distance at 12½ cents each. These outstanding facts can be verified by the official reports lying on our table.

### THEIR NATIONAL FOOD.

It may be interesting, to many delicate people to know that a popular scientist declares that the Scotch race owes nearly all its vigor and brain and body to its national food. Now everybody is eating oatmeal, and, unlike the majority of fashions, this happens to be one which every one should be induced to follow. One firm, manufacturing a brand known to newspaper readers all over the United States, is even said to have great difficulty in supplying the demand. A member of the firm said the other day that the demand was nothing less than an actual "crisis," and that no man or woman who aspires to live correctly nowadays would think of omitting that savory dish from at least one meal during the day.—New York Telegram.

### A HARD TEST.

Until within a few years a curious custom has obtained in Switzerland. When husband and wife expressed a desire for a divorce they were required to enter a room and live therein together for a fortnight, during which time they were neither to see nor to converse with anybody else; their food was passed to them through a narrow opening in the wall, and all communication with the outside world was shut off. If, at the end of a fortnight of this confinement together, the couple still clamored for divorce, it was granted without further ado.—Cor. Chicago News.



A LOVELY WOMAN

overheard one say of her, "By Heaven, she's painted!" "Yes," retorted she indignantly, "and by heaven only!" Ruddy health mantled her cheek, yet this beautiful lady, one thin and pale, and suffering from a dry, hacking cough, night-sweats, and spitting of blood, seemed destined to fill a consumptive's grave. After spending hundreds of dollars on physicians, without benefit, she tried Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery; her improvement was soon marked, and in a few months she was plump and rosy again—a perfect picture of health and strength.

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people. Senator Plumb states that the mere shrinkage of the volume of the currency has cost three billions of dollars (\$3,000,000,000) in three years! A net loss to the people of one billion dollars (\$1,000,000,000) per annum, in the fall of prices of property!

The money lords of this country believe that they have the people at their mercy. They preside at the financial piano and play the music. The people do the pancing and pay the bills! The only hope of the people is, first to organize for unity of action and then to put their numbers at the ballot box, against the dollars of our tyrants! The Alliance men are coming to understand this very fact!—Hon. JOHN DAVIS in Junction City Tribune.

### Closed Its Doors.

CAMDEN, N. J., May 2.—The Gloucester City national bank closed its doors this morning. The suspension is supposed to be due to the failure yesterday in Philadelphia of the Bank of America, with which it had dealings. No statement of the bank's affairs could be secured today, the officials declining to give any information.

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