

# MERLE'S CRUSADE.

BY ROSA NAUGHTON CAREY.  
Author of "Barbara Heathcote's Trial," "Queen's White," "The Search for Basil Lyndhurst."

CHAPTER IV.—MERLE'S LAST EVENING AT HOME.

"So it is all settled, Merle?"  
"Yes, Aunt Agatha," I returned, briskly, for she spoke in a lugubrious voice, and as one sad face was enough beside the family hearth, I assumed a tolerably cheerful aspect. "I only wish I could see you for your good." "That's all right," she said, sighing, and then, as I remained silent, she continued, in a few minutes, "I wish I could rescind myself more to the idea, but I cannot help feeling a presentiment that you will live to repent this strange step you are taking."  
I found this speech a little dampening, but I bore it without flinching. One can never set out down some new road without a few friendly missiles flying about one's ears. "Remember, I told you such and such a thing would happen if you did not take my advice. I am only warning you for your good." "That's all right," she said, sighing, and then, as I remained silent, she continued, in a few minutes, "I wish I could rescind myself more to the idea, but I cannot help feeling a presentiment that you will live to repent this strange step you are taking."

I found those last few days of home life singularly trying. Indeed, I am not sure that I was not distinctly grateful when the final evening arrived. When one has to perform a painful duty there is no use in lingering over it; and when one is secretly sympathizing, a spoken and too disinterested sympathy only irritates our mental membrane. How could Job, for example, tolerate the sacking and ashes, and, worse still, the combative eloquence of his friends?  
Aunt Agatha's pathetic looks and pining words fretted me to the verge of endurance. I wished she would have been less mindful of my comfort, that she would not have insisted on helping me with my sewing, and loading me with little surprises in the shape of gifts. But for the better color that kept me an unwilling prisoner by the fireside, I would have escaped into my own room, to avoid the looks that seemed to follow me everywhere.

But I would not yield to my fabled irritability; I hummed a tune, I even sang to myself, as I hemmed my new blue apron, or quilted the neat border for my cap. Nay, I became recklessly gay the last night, and dressed myself in what I termed my nurse's uniform, a dark navy-blue cambric, and then went down to show myself to Uncle Keith, who was reading about the paper to Aunt Agatha. I could see him start as I entered, but Aunt Agatha's first words made me blush, and in a moment I repeated my misapprehension of fun.

"Why, Merle, how pretty you look! Does not the child look almost pretty, Ezra, though that cap does hider her nice smooth hair? I had no idea that dress would be so becoming." But the rest of Aunt Agatha's speech was lost upon me; for I ran out of the room. "Why, they seemed actually to believe that I was play-acting, that my part was a becoming one! Pretty, indeed! And here such a strange revelation of feeling took possession of me that I absolutely shed a few tears, though none but myself was witness to this humiliating fact."  
I did not go down stairs for a long time after that, and then, to my relief, I found Uncle Keith alone; for men are less sharp in some matters than women, and he would never find out that I had been crying, as Aunt Agatha would, but I was a little taken aback when he put down his paper, and asked, in a kind voice, why I had stayed so long in the cold, and if I had finished my packing.

"Oh, yes," I returned, promptly, "everything was done, and my trunk was only waiting to be strapped down."  
"That is right," he said, quite heartily, "always be beforehand with your duties, Merle; your aunt tells me you have made up your mind to leave us in the morning. I should have thought the afternoon or early evening would have been better."  
"Oh, no, Uncle Keith," I exclaimed; and then, oddly enough, I began to laugh, and yet the provoking tears would come in my eyes, for a vision of sundry school domestics arriving toward night with their goods and chattels, and the remembrance of their shy faces in the morning light seemed to evoke a sort of dreamy mirth; but, to my infinite surprise and embarrassment, Uncle Keith patted me on the shoulder as though I were a child.

"There, there; never mind showing a bit of natural feeling that does you credit; your aunt is fretting herself to death over losing you—hir-rumph; and I do not mind owing that the house will be a trifle dull without you; and, of course, a young creature like you must feel it too." And with that he took my hands, awkwardly enough, and began warning them in his own, for they were blue with cold. If Aunt Agatha had only seen him doing it, and me, with the babyish tears running down my face!

"Why, look here," continued Uncle Keith, cheerily, with a sort of cricket-like chirp, "we are all as down as possible, just because you are leaving us, and yet you will only be two or three miles away, and any day if you want us we can be with you. Why, there is no difficulty, really; you are trying your little experiment, and I will say you are a brave girl for venturing on such a brave scheme. Well, if it does not answer, here is your home, and your own corner by the fire-side, and an old uncle ready to work for you. I can't say more than that, Merle."  
"Oh, Uncle Keith," I returned, sobbing remorsefully, "why are you so good to me, when I have always been so ungrateful for your kindness?"

"Nay, nay, we will leave by-gones alone," he answered, a little huskily. "I never minded your tantrums, knowing you was a good heart at the bottom. I only wished I was not such a dry old fellow, and that you could have been fonder of me. Perhaps you will understand me better some day, and—" Here he stopped and cleared his throat, and said "hir-rumph" or so twice, and then I felt a thin crizzling bit of paper underneath my palm. "It will buy you something useful, my dear," he finished, getting up in a hurry. A five-pound note, and he had lost so much money and had to do without so many comforts! Who can wonder that I jumped up and gave him a penitent bang?

It was long before I slept that night, and my first waking thoughts the next morning were hardly as pleasant as usual. A premonitory symptom of homesickness seized me as I glanced round my little room in the dim winter light. Aunt Agatha had made it so pretty; but here a certain suspicious moisture stole under my eyelids, and I gave myself a resolute shake, and commenced my toilet in a business-like way that chased away gloomy thoughts.

"Never had the little dining-room looked more inviting than when I entered it that morning. One of Uncle Keith's carefully hoarded logs blazed and crackled in the roomy fire-place, a delicious aroma of coffee and smoking ham pervaded the room. Aunt Agatha, in her pretty morning-dress, was placing a vase of hot-house flowers some old nurse had sent her in the center of the table, and the butler, who was whistling as merrily as ever, while old and new were exceedingly unappreciative. My dear, you are leaving us with a sore heart, I can see that, and it only makes me love you all the better. Yes, indeed, Merle, for I was clinging to her now and sobbing softly under my breath; and however things may turn out, whether this step be a failure or not, I will always say that you are a brave girl who tried to do her duty."

"Are you sure you think that, Aunt Agatha?"  
"Then she smiled to herself a little sadly."  
"You remind me of the baby Merle who was so anxious to help every one. I remember you such a little creature, trying to lift the purple chair, because your mother was tired; and how you dragged it across the room until you were red in the face, and came to me rubbing your little fat hands, and looking so important. The chair hurtled baby down, but it might have hurtled poor mamma worse!" that was what you said, I think you would still find yourself 'dreadful' if you could help someone else."

"It was nice to hear this. What can be sweeter or less harmful than praise from one we love? It was nice to sit there with Aunt Agatha's soft hand in mine, and be petted. It would be long before I should have a cozy time with her again. I put fresh heart in me somehow; like Jonathan's taste of honey, 'It lightened my eyes,' so that when the final good-bye came, I could smile as I said it, and carry away an impression of Aunt Agatha's smile, too, as she stood on the steps, with Patience behind her, watching until I was out of sight. I am afraid I am different to most young women of my age—more imaginative, and perhaps a little morbid. Many things in every-day life came to me in the guise of symbols or signs—a good-bye, for example. A parting even for a short time always appears to me a faint type of that last solemn parting when we bid good-bye to temporal things. I suppose kind eyes will watch as they stand hand in hand, as we start on that long journey they will bid God help us, as with falling breath and, perhaps, some natural longings for the friends we love, we go out into the great unknown, looking for the Divine Guide to take us by the hand. "In my Father's house are many mansions." He who gave the promise and who died to make it true, will lead us to those other rooms, where the human drops will be wiped away, and where pain and trouble are unknown."

### How He Saved His \$9,000.

Father Malone had just put the finishing touches to one of his excellent sermons yesterday when his housekeeper announced that a couple of individuals were waiting in the adjoining room to have the nuptial knot tied. The task is always a pleasing one to his reverence. So running a brush a few times through his hair and assuming his most pleasant smile he proceeded to perform the ceremony. On reaching the waiting room, however, there was a surprise in store for him. There sat John C. McGraw and his good wife Sophie—no one else.

"We came to be married," quoth John.  
"Married, you say? Why, you must be crazy, John McGraw. This is not a matter to joke about."  
"Joke, your reverence? I ain't no funny man, and you ought to know it by this time. We want to be married, and no mistake about it."  
"Then where is the lady?"  
"Lady! There she is," pointing to his wife.

By this time Father Malone had concluded beyond all doubt he had a couple of lunatics on his hands, and just as he was about to dispatch a messenger for a policeman McGraw explained.

"Father, perhaps you didn't hear about it, but Sophie has been going back on me an' all I could say to her, she must have a divorce. Well, your honor, she got it, had luck to her, and it cost like the—excuse me, father—but it made me hot, especially considering that the court gave her \$9,000 alimony—nine thousand dollars! father, think of that. Why, it would ruin me twice over. So I says to Sophie, sez I, 'Can't this little matter be arranged for you an' I, Sophie dear, have lived together for twelve years and surely yer not goin' to desert me now?' With that she burst into tears, and so we agreed to get married agin. It isn't the \$9,000 I care about, father, but it nearly broke my heart to think I would have to live without her."

### The Legend of Paracelsus.

The Trick by Which He Became a Celebrated and Distinguished Man.

It once happened, says a book on German folk lore, that Paracelsus was walking through a forest when he heard a voice calling to him by name. He looked around and at length discovered that it proceeded from a fir tree in the trunk of which there was a spirit inclosed by a small stopper, sealed with three crosses.

The spirit begged of Paracelsus to set him free. This he readily promised on condition that the spirit should bestow upon him a medicine capable of healing all diseases and a tincture which would turn everything it touched to gold. The spirit acceded to his request, whereupon Paracelsus took his penknife and succeeded, after some trouble, in getting out the stopper. A loathsome black spider crept forth, which ran down the trunk of the tree. Scarcely had it reached the ground when it changed, and became, as if rising from the earth, a tall, baggard man, with squinting, red eyes, wrapped in a scarlet mantle.

He led Paracelsus to a high, overhanging, craggy mound, and with a hazel twig which he had broken off by the way he smote the rock, which, splitting with a crash at the blow, divided itself in twain, and the spirit disappeared within it. He, however, soon returned with two small phials, which he handed to Paracelsus—a yellow one which contained the tincture which turned all it touched to gold, and a white one, holding the medicine which healed all diseases. He then smote the rock a second time, and thereupon it instantly closed again. Both now set forth on their return, the spirit directing its course toward Innsbruck, to seize upon the magician who had banished him from that city. Now Paracelsus trembled for the consequence which his releasing the evil one would entail upon him who had conjured him into the tree, and he thought how he might rescue him. When they arrived once more at the fir tree he asked the spirit if he possibly could transform himself again into a spider and let him see him creep into the hole. The spirit said that it was not only possible but that he would be most happy to make such a display of his art for the gratification of his deliverer.

Accordingly, he once more resumed the form of a spider and crept again into the well-known crevice. When he had done so Paracelsus, who had kept the stopper all ready in his hand for the purpose, clapped it as quick as lightning into the hole, hammered it in firmly with a stone, and, with his knife, made three fresh crosses upon it. The spirit, mad with rage, shook the fir tree as though with a whirlwind, tried to get drive out the stopper which Paracelsus had thrust in, but his fury was of no avail. It held fast and left him there with little hope of escape, for on account of the great drifts of snow from the mountains the forest will never be cut down, and although he should call night and day, nobody in the neighborhood ever ventures near the spot.

Paracelsus, however, found that the phials were such as he had demanded and it was by their means that he afterward became such a celebrated and distinguished man.

### The Hotel Columbia.

The mammoth new American hotel in London, on the site of the Waterloo house, will be worked at a rental by an American syndicate, and is expected to be opened eighteen months hence at the Hotel Columbia.



TALK IS CHEAP.

but it will only take a minute in which to state a few facts, that, if heeded, will prove invaluable to many. It's well-known that the press remedies for which great claims are made. They are generally represented as sure cures. But there is one medicine, and only one, the claims for which as a cure for all lingering diseases arising from torpid liver or biliousness, or from impure blood, are backed up by a positive guarantee! If it don't do just as represented in every case, the money paid for it is promptly refunded.

### CATARRH IN THE HEAD,

no matter of how long standing, is permanently cured by DR. SAGE'S CATARRH REMEDY. 50 cents, by druggists.

### Langtry's Silver Bath.

A curious story is told as to the origin of Mrs. Langtry's silver bath. Some few wealthy people have corner baths plated with silver, but the one is but a trifle compared with the one article. Some wealthy people, who go in for luxurious bathing, fill their bathrooms with statuary, have painted the walls and the bath is fitted into a case of carved oak. Then there are marble baths. They are high and costly.

The most novel things in baths, however, is one fitted with a shower bath overhead, a needle spray bath at the side and a wave bath that rushes out at the foot. These are in addition to the ordinary hot and cold taps; so the possessor of one of these ingenious things can have five styles of bathing. They cost about \$125.

### Perfect Patience.

In certain people patience has accomplished its perfect work. "Why, she was such a patient woman," said a son, eulogizing his mother, "that she'd let me eat eighteen hot pancakes as she fried 'em, and then go and mix another batch!" Whether such long suffering is altogether to be desired would probably be disputed by a dyspeptic.

### A London Custom.

In the Pall Mall Gazette appears this account of a curious custom: "The London road car-drivers have a grievance which approaches the ludicrous. If they do not wear high hats they are suspended for a week. Last Monday a driver's hat was blown off, and a cart went over it, so that he was obliged to resort to a low felt hat for the remainder of the day. For this heinous crime he was stopped and suspended."

### An Old Ticket.

A resident of Murfreesboro, Tenn., presented a ticket issued in 1855 on the Nashville & Chattanooga railroad the other day and rode in a palce-car on the same bit of pasteboard that would have secured him passage in one of the clumsy coaches of thirty-four years ago.