

Shadows on the Snow.

By E. L. FARBER.

Author of "Blades of Grass," "Golden Dreams," "Joshua Marvell," etc., etc.

PART I.—CONTINUED.

It was dark enough to the morose man as he stood by the side of Lis...

"I could be happier—I know I could be happier, if you and the world were different to each other—if you did not regard it as your enemy. But that will never be, father, will it?"

"No, child, it will never be. I can not play the hypocrite, and lie to you."

"Yet you are good and kind to me. Why should you love me so dearly, and be bitter with all others? All men and women are not bad. See, father, there is my angel!"

She pointed upward to a large gray cloud, with white fleecy wings, which her imagination had quaintly fashioned into the figure of an angel.

"I never saw him so beautiful before. He is at his best because it is Christmas. Say that Christmas is a good time, and make me happy."

"Christmas is a good time, child," he said, doggedly.

"No, no! not like that! From your heart—I want you to say it from your heart. You are silent. If I were to say that I suffer more, far more than you can imagine—that my heart is torn to pieces with pain yearning—you would strive perhaps to bring some gladness into my days. Ah, forgive me!" she cried, in an agony of remorse, as a spasm of pain escaped him: "I am ungrateful, ungrateful! You are all that is good to me—all that is kind. But I suffer so! I am so truly unhappy. She rocked herself to and fro, and sobbed, "Sit by my side, father. I must tell you my secret, or I shall die!"

In silence he sat upon the door-step by her side, with face almost as white as hers. When she had sobbed herself into a quieter mood, she spoke again.

"Father, I am very much deformed, am I not?"

"Not to me, darling."

"No, not to you, for when you look at me, your eyes are in your heart. But I am, in reality, very ugly, very uninteresting, deformed and a cripple. No person in the world, seeing me once, would care to see me again. I know from myself. I do not care to look for a second time upon you and uninteresting things. It is very sad."

"The conversation came to an end, which she spoke of her misfortunes was very touching to hear."

"I am not like any other girl I have ever seen. There is Laura Harrild now; she is very, very pretty. When I look at her I feel as glad as when I see the early primroses peep out of the ground, telling me that spring is coming."

Stephen's features assumed an anxious expression at the mention of Laura Harrild's name.

"If you were to ask me my idea of perfect happiness, I should answer, Laura Harrild. She is young, beautiful and good—and she loves, and is loved—Oh, my heart!"

"That's such anguish in the poor girl's voice that I have a feeling for it. Her body quivered in sympathy as she supported her head upon his shoulder."

"Do you guess my secret, father?" she whispered.

"To my sorrow, dear child."

"I can not help it. I have struggled against it vainly, feeling how hopeless it is. I have always loved him, miserable girl that I am! I do not know how I came except that he is so brave and strong and handsome, while I am nothing but a poor ugly cripple. Is life worth having, I wonder, in such a shape as mine? If I were somebody else, and saw such a creature as myself, I would look down with pity upon her, and ask whether she would not be happier if she were dead. I have seen girls, ragged and without a shoe to their feet, and have envied them because they were strong and had straight limbs, and were free from pain—which I seldom am, unless I am asleep."

"They suffer much," said Stephen, attempting to draw consolation for her from the misery of others; "they are often without a meal or a bed."

"But they are free," she cried, "they are free, and I am a slave! Though they have not a shilling in their pockets, their hearts are sometimes light, and they smile and enjoy. I have seen them—I have seen them! What happiness there must be in poverty! You are a rich man, father."

"I have money, child. It is yours to spend as you wish."

"Money can not buy love. Money will not make me different from what I am, and it can not bring sunshine into our house. Are all homes like ours? There is no light in it; it is desolate and deserted, and it has never been otherwise within my remembrance. You and I are like two hermits, shut out from the world. In what way has this come, and must it be always so? Surely there is something better in life than my experience has shown me. Ah, yes; there is something better in it. There is love in it, which I shall never, never have!"

She was speaking to herself now, while he sat watching her, humbly and in silence. Morose and choleric as he was to all others, here he was a slave; and had he possessed the power, he would have laid his heart in her lap, could it have insured her a day's happiness.

"To-night is Christmas," she resumed, "and we shall go round to Mr. Harrild's house, and see so many young people dancing, and laughing, and playing forfeits, while I shall sit in a corner glaring at them, like the envious old witch I have read of in fairy stories. I am quite as hideous, I know; and it is natural and proper that they should not come and pay court to me, as they do to each other. And I deserve it, father," she exclaimed, her mood suddenly changing. "I deserve it for reviling the world and everybody in it, as I am doing. I deserve it for having bad and uncharitable thoughts at such a good and sacred time as Christmas—for it is a good time, after all, is it not?"

No words can express the entreating earnestness with which she strove to urge this belief upon him. It could not fail to soften the hard man's heart, and he said, gently:

"It is a good time, child."

And with his hand touching her neck...

lovingly, they went into the house together.

At Reuben Harrild's there was assembled on this evening as merry and light-hearted a company as ever met within four walls. Genial faces everywhere; smiles and cheerful looks on all sides, from old and young; every person on his best behavior, ready to do any errand from person to person, with as much amiability as can be expressed by the pressure of palms and fingers. And if such a thing as truth exists, hearts accompanied the pressure. As for duplicity, double-dealing, suspicion of motives, artful maneuvering for selfish purposes, such qualities were purely mythical, good enough to put color into a dreamer, but utterly unimaginative almost, compared to think of as to any part they might play in the business of life! The business of life! What am I thinking of! Business, to the right about! It is Christmas-time, and the world is pleasant to heart and eye, sweet and loving and charitable, abounding in truth.

But—! I am bound to confess it—there was heart-burning in the kitchen. For in that region of shining stew and sauce pans, in whose polished surfaces the genial reflection of a jolly time was clearly visible, Samuel Meldrum (the man-servant of the establishment) had, by the merest accident, come plump upon Kitty Simons (the maid-servant of the establishment) and had discovered her in the act of being kissed, beneath the miserable pretense of a piece of mistletoe, by a retainer of low degree, who, being especially recommended by Samuel Meldrum, had been temporarily engaged to assist in the general joy, and had thus basely betrayed the trust reposed in him. Now, Samuel Meldrum regarded the kisses of pretty Kitty Simons, both from and for, as his especial prerogative, and most particularly so, solely within his department at Christmas-time. This act of the temporary retainer was clearly, therefore, an act of treachery, and as such was regarded by his patron, who, after treating the treacherous dependent to a "piece of his mind," glared at Kitty with eyes in which love and jealousy were plainly depicted. Pretty Kitty, busy at the dresser, whither she had just returned, after the kiss under the mistletoe, was of course, and was unconsciously of the state of Samuel Meldrum's feelings—which was the reason why she furtively watched him from beneath her dark eyelashes, and wondered when he was going to speak. But Samuel's moral dignity was hurt, and he preserved silence—more from fear of knowing what to say than from any other cause.

"They're playing games up-stairs," said Kitty, taking the bull by the horns; "such games!"

Samuel only grunted.

"They're playing," said Kitty, slyly. "I love my love with a A, because he's amiable, and amusing, and an angel; and I hate my love with a A, because he's aggravating, and absurd, and uninteresting things. It is very sad."

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Whose son art thou, thou young man? The king saw what you and I see, that this question of heredity is a mighty question. The longer I live the more I believe in it. I believe in it as I believe in blood, humble blood, honest blood, blue blood, heroic blood, cowardly blood. The tendency may skip a generation or two, but it is sure to come out, as in a little child you sometimes see a similarity to a great-grandfather whose photo hangs on the wall. That the physical and mental and moral qualities are inheritable is patent to any who keeps his eyes open. The similarity is so striking sometimes as to be amusing. Great families, legal or literary, are apt to have the characteristics all down through the generations, and what is more perceptible in such families may be seen on a smaller scale in all families. A thousand years have no power to obliterate the difference.

The large lip of the house of Austria is seen in all the generations, and is called the Hapsburg lip. The House of Stuart always means in all generations energy and industry and sensuality. Witness Queen of Scots, Witness Charles I. and Charles II. Witness James I. and James II. and all the other scoundrels of that imperial line. Scottish blood means energy, persistence, English blood means reverence for the ancient, Welsh blood means religiosity, Danish blood means fondness of the sea, Indian blood means roaming disposition, Celtic blood means ferocity, Roman blood means conquest.

"I beg your pardon," interposed Mr. Wymer, who was close by, with the other two members of the firm; "I did not quite catch it, Doctor. You were saying—"

"The law was nothing but a breath of wind," repeated Dr. Bax.

"No such thing, sir; no such thing," exclaimed Mr. Wymer, warmly. "Life is a breath of wind, indeed! Pooh-pooh, doctor! you know nothing about it! If everybody took such a light view of it—I beg your pardon; you said Dr. Bax: "taking such a light view of it, you said."

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And Mr. Wymer emitted a dry, chuckling laugh, as though he were in the habit of dealing with many people who were unbusiness-like and impractical, and not sufficiently alive to see, and who were therefore always getting the worst of it.

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Never was there a more unequal fight than that between David and Goliath. David five feet high; Goliath ten. David a shepherd boy, brought up amid rural scenes; Goliath a warrior by profession. Goliath a mountain of braggadocio; David a marvel of humility. Goliath armed with an iron spear; David armed with a slingshot and smooth stones from the brook. But you are not to despise these latter weapons. There was a regiment of slingers in the Assyrian army and a regiment of slingers in the Egyptian army, and they made terrible execution, and they could cast a stone with as much precision and force as now can be hurled, shot or shell. The Greeks in their army had slingers who would throw leaden plummet inscribed with the irritating words, "Take this!" So it was a mighty weapon David employed in that famous combat.

A Jewish rabbi says that the probability is that Goliath was in such contempt for David that in a paroxysm of laughter he threw a stone at him, and that it struck off, and David saw the uncorroded forehead, and his opportunity had come, and taking this sling and swinging it around his head two or three times, and aiming at his uncovered forehead he crashed it like an egg-shell. The battle over, behold a tabernacle: King Saul sitting, little David standing, his fingers clutched into the hair of the forehead of Goliath. As Saul saw David standing there holding in his hand the ghastly, reeking, staring trophy, evidence of the complete victory over Goliath's enemies, the King wonders what parentage was honored by such heroism, and in my text he asks David his pedigree:

Whose son art thou, thou young man? The king saw what you and I see, that this question of heredity is a mighty question. The longer I live the more I believe in it. I believe in it as I believe in blood, humble blood, honest blood, blue blood, heroic blood, cowardly blood. The tendency may skip a generation or two, but it is sure to come out, as in a little child you sometimes see a similarity to a great-grandfather whose photo hangs on the wall. That the physical and mental and moral qualities are inheritable is patent to any who keeps his eyes open. The similarity is so striking sometimes as to be amusing. Great families, legal or literary, are apt to have the characteristics all down through the generations, and what is more perceptible in such families may be seen on a smaller scale in all families. A thousand years have no power to obliterate the difference.

The large lip of the house of Austria is seen in all the generations, and is called the Hapsburg lip. The House of Stuart always means in all generations energy and industry and sensuality. Witness Queen of Scots, Witness Charles I. and Charles II. Witness James I. and James II. and all the other scoundrels of that imperial line. Scottish blood means energy, persistence, English blood means reverence for the ancient,