

# A Daughter of the Covenant.



Down  
the  
Grand  
Path.

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(Complete in two issues)

SOMEWHERE in the mountain fastness of the Appalachian chain, where abounded numerous inland lakes, which tempted the wild deer from their covert on the hillsides to descend and drink of their pellucid waters there was situated a little village which had not yet aspired to the metropolitan airs of the cities which lay beyond the mountains nor had the waters of their beautiful lake been harnessed to the great wheels of manufacture or trade. It was an aristocratic little place: content to lie there, and slumber in the shadow of the mountains, or bask in the sunlight, which travelled slowly over them to convert the lake for a few hours into a sheet of molten gold, before sinking into it at the farther edge, which bounded the horizon.

On the other side of the mountains, lay the world, with all of its hurly-burly, and snares and temptations. The villagers had only to climb the mountain road, in the old fashioned stage coach, which made its daily pilgrimage, to and fro, and descend upon the other side to catch the iron horse and train which would have speedily borne them from their stately solitude, into the thickest of the fray, Pittsburg, or Philadelphia, perhaps. But they did not care to do this, except for some special occasion.

Here they had lived and their fathers before them. They were all thrifty and content. There was not one of them, who had not enough, and to spare of this world's goods. What need then to bother about anything more?

Of course, this was when the present country was quite young; before the greed for wealth, had so filled the minds of the New World people, that they saw in their grand old forests, and lakes and rivers nothing but sinews for work and money making.

This settlement had been founded years ago, by a body of staunch Scotch Covenanters who had set up their "Jacob's Staff" in what was then the mountainous regions of Pennsylvania. In their veins was the blood of peers,

and even princes of their native land, who unable to brook control of conscience had forfeited titles and estates, when they left the homes of their forefathers.

Here they held undisputed possession of lands and doctrines for many years, until latterly a few stragglers from the church of England had somehow crept in among them,—drawn hither no doubt by the great Manor House on the hill beyond the lake, and, growing in numbers as time went on, had set up in the village a church, from which a gilded cross pointing always heavenward, seemed somehow to arrogate to itself, all of the saving power in the gospel of Christ.

So at least thought the descendants of the old Covenanters, who were as full of fight as had been their forefathers, and had for their pastor—insignificant as the little village seemed,—one of the staunchest supporters; one of the most invincible champions of their creed this side of the water and good old Calvinistic doctrines were hurled from their pulpit with an energy calculated to shake the very stronghold of the church itself,—if it had not been "founded upon a rock," and built of stone,—much more the modest little wooden structure, which reared the cross above it, and contented itself with its litany and chants and first and second lessons, and quiet little homilies.

Not far away from the church was the parsonage, of stone also, as severe in outline and unyielding in appearance as were the spirits of the rugged highlanders, who planned it. The rough surface, was however hidden now by a wealth of green vines, of many years' growth, whose tendrils, rooted deeply in the stone, defied the wild mountain storms, clinging only the more closely it seemed to the thick walls which gave them support.

The road leading to the Church and the Parsonage, deeply furrowed by the broad wheels of wagons, wound around the lake, where the shore, now and then reaching into the water, was covered with drooping willows, and slender birches springing erect out of their midst.

Farther down the lake was the little village, and straight across on the other side might be seen

the "Manor House," in the midst of a group of noble old hemlocks with here and there a few lofty firs standing out sharply against the blue sky, like sentinals on duty.

It was an old, old structure, built by one of the Argyles. Many gabled, with high roofs and numerous pointed towers formed of gray stone, it shone like silver in its setting of everlasting green pine forests.

For many years it was untenanted, but of late, having passed into the hands of one of the wealthy denizens of the city—whose vast fortune had been dug out of the coal beds of this mountainous region—it was often the scene of great festivities which proved a never ending source of interest to the worthy villagers and of the animadversion of the irate old Covenanter, of the parsonage and church across the lake. For, were not the "Manor House," and the fashionable folk who in less pretentious houses were gathered about it, the *raison d'être* of the little church of the Episcopacy, with its golden spire; of the rector with his priestly robes; of his spectacled curate who helped him read the litany, and proselyte the villagers?

Picture to yourself, a large square room, devoid of furniture except for the wooden desk in one corner which showed much hard usage, if the generous splashes of ink spread over the top, and sundry marks and cuts on the sides and legs, from a mischievous pen knife might be accepted as testimony. Add to this a round table in the center of the room which served its natural purpose, or for a seat, or rostrum, as occasion might require; a half dozen straight backed chairs around it, and a low rocker in a feeble dilapidated condition at one side, and you have the school room, play room, club room, or prison—whatever you have a mind to call it—of "The Parsonage" of Airly. On that side of the room which overlooked the church yard near by, was a large window which gave a beautiful view of the lofty range of mountains, which shut in the little village from the great world beyond, and of the little lake shimmering and sparkling in the sunlight.

The window was open to admit the delicious air of the late spring day which came to the inmates of the school room, laden with the fragrance of a thousand flowers which were bursting into bloom on the hillsides and in the valley below.

At this window stood a young girl eighteen years of age, perhaps; slender and graceful of outline, despite the ill fitting garment which she had thrown over her best Sunday gown, to protect it from accident, during the wait between the morning and afternoon service. This was Joan.

One could only guess at the fairness of the face which was turned away in contemplation of the beauties of nature, spread out with a prodigal hand before her. She was evidently deep in thought since she paid no attention to what was passing in the room.

Perhaps she was thinking of the stranger—not handsome of face, but good to look at withal—who had made his appearance that day in the Manor House pew, or rather, what had been the "Manor House Pew," when the Argyles owned it and lived there. She would have been justified in so doing, for she had discovered him in the act of casting sundry glances at the Parsonage pew; and well he might for the "Parsonage girls," were well worth looking at a second time.

In the low chair at one side sat Aggie, a motherly little creature not more than fourteen years of age, holding in her lap Margie, the youngest of the quartette of girls; twelve years old perhaps, yet, small for her age despite the wonderful length of limb displayed as she leaned back in her sister's arms and rocked to and fro.

At the table sat Josephine, the second daughter of the household, three years younger than the handsome young fellow who stood alone in the midst of his adoring sisters, all of whom just at this moment were intent upon the books which they held in their hands. He and the young girl at the window, were to all appearances unoccupied save with their own thoughts.

"What is the chief end of man, Taffie?" asked Josephine sharply, laying her book down upon the table spread out, so as not to lose her place.