

WILD MAG.

II.

BY KATHERINE PEARSON WOODS.

The Wyvern Tenements, with the exception of one or two houses scattered here and there through the city—houses once the cradle of home and happiness, now hotbeds of vice and misery—were Fairtown's only outbreak of the tenement house evil. They stood at the very gate of the Dives—a great railroad contractor—who had erected them as a monument to his belief that such cheap lodgings for working men would prove a capital investment, but Fairtown was too richly blessed with small, low-priced houses to make the investment a paying one. The respectable, well-to-do mechanic could afford to live elsewhere, and did. Rents had fallen as the character of the renters declined and the tenements were now chiefly used as a shelter for such as Lem and Maggie, who had some reason for hiding themselves, or as the last refuge for those who could go no other where. Externally their appearance was most forbidding—a double row of grim, blackened, brick erections, 150 in number, their continuity broken by one cross street, facing each other in sullen blank defiance, glowering hatred through all their curtainless windows, Ishmaels indeed, whose heart was against the city and the world. An evil, O *doctrinaire* philosophers, incurable by political economy while men are human and humanity is selfish. For what sociological precept can cure selfishness?

Drink-sodden, bestial Margaret Minton lay on her sordid bed; the room reeked with the fumes of alcohol and the smoke of the ill trimmed, flaring lamp, and under the window paused the feet of two passers-by. One was a tall, sweet-faced woman, with nothing very remarkable about her save a strange stillness of manner and a singular thrill in her voice, which, perhaps, came from a heart on whose strings the divine hand had been laid, as saith the poet, lest the lingering vibration of one sweet note should mar the whole delicious melody.

Her companion was a short, chubby man, with a nautical roll in his gait and plenty of sea tan on his round, smoothly shaven face, a face whose original, rollicking good fellowship had been transmuted into something infinitely higher and purer, and with eyes in which burned a vivid enthusiasm. Let me grant at once—they were the eyes of a fanatic. What else but fanaticism might avail in the Wyvern Tenements?

"Ah!" said the man, glancing up at Margaret's window, "if one could but know now how that poor girl gets on! But God knows, Rachel; He can save her."

"She needs a friend," said Rachel Fern, thoughtfully; "we can do so little, Roy, coming here only a few nights in the week; even if we came every night, what would that be? We ought to come and live here—come and neighbor with these people—you and I and Ruth; O Roy, *think of Ruth* here!"

"Praise the Lord!" said Captain Royal Fern. His hat was off, his face shone with enthusiasm. "I could not ask it of you or of Ruth," he said, "so I asked the Lord for a sign, and the sign has come."

Forgive him, reader, he meant it so fervently, and, besides, he was only a fanatic. Rachel's great gray eyes shone with a light less vivid but quite as intense as that which flashed from the blue suns that lit her brother's face.

"Is the sign complete?" she asked.

"Should it not come from Ruth as well? O, Roy, is it doubting the Lord to ask further?"

"He knows," said Roy, confidently. "Is not Ruth His child as well as we? Why should He not also speak to her? Or if we doubt Him, Rachel, if our faith is weak, He knows how to strengthen it before we put our hands to this work. We will wait for Ruth to speak."

It was a long walk (but the Ferns could not spare money for car fare) to the little home where Ruth awaited them—a pretty little six-roomed cottage, with a tiny front yard, where in the trimly-kept borders the Easter flowers showed as hard green knobs amid their long shining leaves. Over the porch was trained a honeysuckle, as yet only a bare brown tracery; the freshness of the gray painted house and the red painted pavement between the beds, the exquisite neatness of all the surroundings, were as nautical as the captain's gait. The two paused a moment to contemplate the home they had so quietly talked of leaving.

Was there a shade of reluctance in their hearts?

"It has been a happy home, brother, since your return."

"So it has! Praise the Lord!"

"Something like, perhaps, no richer and not much poorer than the little home at Nazareth that He left for us."

"Praise the Lord!" said Captain Royal.

At the click of his key in the door there was the tap of a crutch on the floor within as Ruth Fern came hobbling to meet them. Her soul came faster than her poor, deformed body, and sprang from the love in her eyes and the smile on her lips straight into their hearts before the hands could meet. To look into Ruth Fern's face was to forget her form. There was no mark of sorrow or suffering upon it, yet it was full of that unearthliness which sorrow and suffering alone seem able to impart; it had not the still peace of Rachel's countenance nor the fervid enthusiasm of her brother's, but shone with radiant happiness.

"Home already!" she exclaimed, and was almost disconcerted when Royal's huge silver watch proved that it was slightly past the usual hour.

"Well," she said, laughingly, "perhaps I was too busy thinking to take any note of time."

"Thinking?" asked Roy.

"Or dreaming or seeing visions," said Ruth. "O, Roy and Ray, if I could only see the Tenements! Can't you take me there, somewhere, somehow?"

"Easily, Ruth," said Rachel.

"I sit here and knit and think of the people whose names you tell me until I could fly to be with them," said Ruth. "Ray and Roy, we could easily rent this house; could not we three go and live at the Tenements?"

"Praise the Lord," said Captain Royal.

And so they did, right heartily.

What? Nothing very remarkable that three people with the same tastes and habits of thought, who were interested in the same thing, should almost simultaneously hit upon the same plan? Nothing to be pious about, that you can see? I shall not quarrel with you about that. He that hath eyes will see; he that hath none, let him still hug his blindness.

But was there nothing remarkable in the dirt, misery and degradation of the Wyvern Tenements, nothing remarkable in the lofty purity, the unconscious self-devotion, the

intense, faith-absorbing love for their Master of these three Ferns? Call them fanatics, if you will! And if it required a special providence to bring together these extremes—the sin and the holiness, hate and love, earthly misery and the joy of the redeemed—well, why not? There is no providence but God's providence, and natural selection and the survival of the fittest—yea, and also correspondence with one's environment—are but the prophets and the servants of providence. Has the watershed between religion and biology yet been discovered? If not, how are we sure that it does not exist, and that these streams are aught but arms of the river of life—arms that embrace the world?

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BY REV. WILLIAM B. FORBUSH.

It was a service just before the coming of an evangelist. The pastor aroused the good people suddenly from their anticipations by announcing that he was about to call for a subscription. A worried look stole to several godly faces, for the financial arrangements were supposed to be already settled. Then it was explained that a voluntary pledge was to be taken of those who would give within one week a definite number of personal invitations to the meetings. The pastor headed the list with forty, others followed. Then a smaller number was called for, down to five. Several hundred were given in five minutes—enough to invite every family in town twice. Two who were not church-goers pledged. Some one who had not had Endeavor training would not pledge, except to do their best.

The result. More invitations were given than had been pledged. The largest number was fifty-nine by one who had pledged fifteen. None were reported by those who were simply "to do their best." The ingathering was large, but the church was most especially and richly blessed. The community was astonished at the interest shown by Christians—in one case a man was invited by five different ones. The State missionary was present and tried it afterward in his work with success.

It is worth making permanent. It is simple, practical, apostolic. It would help to solve the problem of reaching the masses.

The *Christian Leader* has timely words for the hour: "For half a century, under the lead of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson—particularly the latter—the changes have been rung on individualism; the community, the society, the organism to take care of itself. The 'insist on thyself' has had full sway, and being glorified was also glorifying. . . . Now the wind blows from the opposite quarter and the cry is, organize, get under leadership, do as others do and let the doing be organic and communal. Individualism has had its day. Man not as man but as a constituent of a body of men must take the lead. It is not in dispute, at least by thoughtful people, that each of these 'trends' is legitimate, only either trend *must respect limitations*. Everything handed over to the individual is simply anarchy. Everything handed over to the society is strangulation. As centripetal and centrifugal the two forces are in nature, and each, having its own and no more than its own, is essential alike to the individual and to the state. We have reached a crisis where it becomes the duty of those who take in the whole field, who are able to manage a force without being wholly managed by it, to rise to the high and imperative responsibility of stimulating the trend that is being neglected and of restricting the one that is being over-worked."