Rosie's Decision.

BY MARIE WINGROVE BATHON.

By Mary Wingrove Bathon.
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"MAMMA."

"Please do not disturb me now, dear. I am very busy." Mrs. Carson sat in a low chair in the dingy back bedroom of a boarding house not remote from the sacred precincts of Gramercy park, trying to catch the last beams of the fast fading daylight, as they struggled through the small window overlooking neighboring back yards.

She was trying to make one yard of material do the work of a yard and a half, so that there might be no delay in finishing the gown which lay on the bed within easy reach. A soft gray gown it was, almost bride-like in appearance, and belonged to the rich Miss Mulford, an old schoolmate of Rosie Carson. Miss Mulford had been very particular that it should be finished at once, and Rosalie felt that she could not afford to disappoint her. Her needle's success meant bread and butter for herself and child, to say nothing of clothing and medicine, and having gained the approbation of Miss Mulford meant the probability of more work.

As Rosalie bent lower and lower to catch the now rapidly disappearing light, she sighed more and more wearily. Finally, she laid the last sleeve alongside of the gown on the bed and dropped heavily back into the chair from which she had just arisen.

"Come over here to the window, dearie, and let me see what the difficulty is. Is it something about your lessons again, girlie?"

Instead of replying, little Rosie nestled close to her mother's cheek and hid her face.

"What is it, dear? Let me help you at once, before I take up my sewing again. Miss Mulford's servant will come for her frock this evening, you know. Why, dearie, you are crying. What is wrong with you, Rosie? Tell mamma, dear!"

"It is nothing now, mamma. The other girls are going to have a new dress for the May party, and I want one, too; but I can wear my old one, just as well as not. Indeed I can, mamma." The little girl wiped away her tears and smiled bravely at her mother as she did so. But Mrs. Carson sighed wearily and tears filled her own eyes.

"I am very sorry, dear, not to be able to give you a new one, too, but it is impossible now."

She clasped the little girl closer to her to hide the tears which by this time were streaming down her own face. She was comparing her own sunny childhood with the forlorn one of her dear little girl. But soon more quieting thoughts came to her.

Perhaps there might be a change for the better soon. She had promised Ralph Wilson last night that she would give him an answer in a week's time. He had proposed to her one year ago and she had refused him, but since then she had seen him daily—two or three times a day—and they had learned to have a great liking for each other.

Did she love Ralph Wilson, she asked herself, as she sat holding her child in her arms?

Her face colored in the twilight as she answered the question affirmatively to her own soul.

Then why not give him his answer at once and set her own, as well as his, mind at rest? The reason for not doing so was an intangible, undefinable one. She could only feel it without being able to explain it to her own heart.

It was one that was connected with Rosie, somehow, which was all that there was to be defined, even when she questioned herself.

Suddenly there came to her an inspiration. She would, as adroitly as possible, put the question to the child herself.

"Rosie, dear, do you like Mr. Wilson?" she asked the little girl presently.

"Yes—mamma, I—I like him right well." Mrs. Carson's heart sank at the little one's tone.

"But not very much, dearie, eh?" trying to speak indifferently.

"Well, I like Mr. Mulford better. Oh, I do like him, mamma."

"Why, dear?" wishing to get at the child's real opinion.

"Oh, he is so good to little girls and boys. Sometimes when we are coming home from school he will take as many of us in his carriage as he can crowd in, and stop at each one's door. And he buys us soda water and all sorts of good things, and sends them to the school at recess, sometimes."

"Cupboard love,' smiled Mrs. Carson to herself.

"And one day," went on little Rosie, "I saw him give a dollar to a poor little newsboy who was crying with cold. He is a real nice man, mamma."

"Yes, dear, he is. I know that, although I have not seen much of the family since poor papa died. It is very good of Miss Mulford to try to help me as she is doing. She couud get an experienced dressmaker to make her frock for just what she is paying me, and she is going to recommend me to her friends, too."

"But mamma, why do you always say 'Miss Mulford' to her? She calls you Rosalie."

"Because I feel that there can be nothing in common between the rich Miss Mulford and the poor seamstress, dear, and I do not want her to think that I am presuming upon her kindness. You will understand when you grow older, dear child," said the mother sadly.

She said no more about Ralph Wilson to the child, thinking "She is only ten—she may learn to love him yet." But she sighed to herself. Life had been very dreary this last five years, with no one to help her fight her battle. Still, if Rosie did not like Ralph, there was an end to the question of her marriage.

"My child shall not be made unhappy, even at the price of my own happiness," she reflected.

She lit the gas and resumed her sewing. In an hour's time she was ready to lay it aside, completed. It was with a sigh of relief that she folded and placed it in her box ready for Miss Mulford's servant, who would shortly call for it. Then she set herself to the tidying of her room, and getting herself and little girl ready for the boarding house dinner. Her preparations were scarcely completed when a ring at the bell announced the arrival of the Mulford coachman with a note for Mrs. Carson, asking her if she would be good enough to return with the coachman in the carriage and try the dress on Miss Mulford.

Rosalie had hoped for a quiet evening with a book which she had long been wishing to read, but without a further thought of self, she quietly put on her outdoor garments and, with a word of affectionate advice to her little one, hastened after the coachman.

To her surprise Mr. Mulford sprang from the carriage as she descended the steps and himself helped her in.

As he seated himself at her side he remarked pleasantly: "I hope you are not putting yourself to any inconvenience in indulging my daughter's whim, Mrs. Carson?"

"Not at all, Mr. Mulford. It is very proper that I should see Miss Mulford's dress on her before she goes out in it. There might well be some alteration necessary, you know."

"Well—er—the fact is, that I asked Grace to write that note, Mrs. Carson. I wanted to see you—to—er—speak to you, and the parlor of a boarding house is—well not conducive to privacy, to say the least."

"Speak to me, Mr. Mulford?" Rosalie asked in a wondering tone.

"Pray pardon my subterfuge, Mrs. Carson. The fact that I have taken my eldest daughter into my confidence, is sufficient to assure you that I—er'e—Mr. Mulford paused in an embarrassed way, and finally resumed.

"You know, Mrs. Carson, the death of my wife about the time of your marriage to young Carson left Grace at the head of my household, but you perhaps do not know that she sacrificed her own happiness to my needs. The youngest child was a cripple, and she felt that she must take her dead mother's place to that child. In doing which she had to postpone her marriage to Walter Scott. No one knew of the engagement at the time, but it is to be announced now, immediately, and there will be a very quiet marriage. The death of my poor little Nellie has done away with any further necessity for sacrifice on the part of Grace, and made it desirable that she should have a quiet wedding."

"Dear me, I never dreamed of dear Grace having such a romance in her life. She deserves to be very happy, now, I am sure. And you are going to ask me to prepare her trousseau, immediately, are you not?" replied Rosalie warmly.

"Well—not quite—er—Rosalie. I want you to prepare your own, and come and take Grace's place at the head of my house, but as my dear wife, instead of daughter. And I want your little Rosie, to fill that of my poor little Nellie. Come, my dear," gently taking the hand of the bewildered woman, "you will find me very good to your little girl. I think that if you asked her advice she would bid you accept my offer, for I believe she already loves me."

Rosalie sat in dumb astonishment. Words would not come. After an effort, she found voice to say in a self-reproachful tone, "I am so sorry—so very sorry."

"Sorry for what, my dear?"

"That you should have wasted a thought on me. But, indeed, I am not to blame. I never dreamed that you were learning to care anything for me, Mr. Mulford."

"No one has any thought of blaming you, my child. But is it, then, impossible?"

"Oh, quite impossible, Mr. Mulford."

"Am I then so old that you could not learn to care for me, Rosalie? Or—perhaps there is some one else—tell me, Rosalie, are you already promised to some one else?"

"Not that. Oh, no! not promised to anyone; but"——

"Wait, then, my dear, until you have given the matter some thought. Do not decide now, because I want you to think seriously over what I am going to say to you. A younger man might woo you more ardently than I, but not more earnestly, and he might not succeed nearly so well in making you happy, because of your child. If there is any young man in the case I want you to consider little Rosie well before deciding. I have known the love of a father, and have known the sorrow of losing the object of that love. Your little girl would in a great measure compensate me for that loss, and would be very near my heart. No younger man would ever be more devoted to your child's mother than I, either, Rosalie, even if I am an old man, old enough to be your father. Besides, my child, money is not to be despised. Little Rosie needs it, if you do not."

The carriage drew up before the door as he concluded.

"One word more, my child, before you go to my daughter. I want you to know that Grace knows and approves of what I have said to you. Go right up to her room, but she will not come up until I have seen her. I shall tell her that you are going to consider, shall I not?"

Rosalie nodded her head in an embarrassed way and hastened up the steps, going directly to her friend's room. It was quite half an hour before Grace entered, and then in a composed manner, which completely restored the confidence of Rosalie.

"Ah, here you are," she said gayly. "And Papa tells me that he has been giving away my secrets, too. Well, what do you think of an old maid like me wanting to get married?" she inquired.

"I think that you deserve every blessing that heaven can bestow, dear," she said earnestly, but quite quietly.

"But, come, now, let me see this gown on you at once. I promised Rosie to hasten back. She will wait her dinner for me."

The dress was tried on, and pronounced a perfect success. Then Rosalie hastily said good evening, and would have gone at once.

"Wait, dear Rosalie. The carriage is still waiting for you, so you need not be in such a hurry, you know."

"That was not necessary, at all, Grace, I could have walked."

"So you could have, dear, but do you not think that a woman who is tired is very foolish to walk when there is a carriage waiting for her? Especially when it may be her own carriage at a word?" said Grace, significantly.

"Oh, please, dear, do not say any more," Rosalie entreated, hurrying away.

As she leaned back on the rich cushions of the carriage bearing her so swiftly and noiselessly along, Rosalie could not help reflecting on the words of Grace Mulford to her as she was leaving.

It was all true. This carriage, with all things else of the world's comfort and pleasure, might be hers at a word. And did it involve any sacrifice on her part? A pang went through her at the remembrance of Ralph Wilson.

"Could I be content as the wife of another man?" she asked herself. But the answer would not come. She had been attracted by the handsome features of the young man two years ago at a social affair in their church, and gradually a warm liking had sprung up on each side. Then, a year ago, he had proposed to her, but she had refused him.

Again, only last night, she had promised to consider another proposal from him. And now, today, she had promised to consider a proposal from another man. But this last promise had really been given in sheer desperation. She had not known what else to say, and had merely acquiesced in what Mr. Mulford had asked her to do.

Nevertheless, the question had to be met and decided. And, for all she could see, it would have to go against both men. For she was firm in her intention not to marry any man who was not pleasing to her child. She had seen some very unpleasant circumstances attend the marriage of some friends where the stepfather was not congenial to the children, and she meant to heed its lesson.

She sighed at the thought of telling Ralph that she could not marry him. Then she brightened again. "After all, Rosie is little more than a baby, Ralph may be able to win her love yet," she reasoned to herself, as she alighted at her own door.

She glanced at the carriage as the coachman drove off, and smiled to herself to think of what she was resigning, humming the meanwhile.

"Douglas, tender and true."

Then she opened the door with her key and entered, to be met in the hall by that very "Douglass" of whom she was thinking.

But to her pleasant greeting Ralph Wilson gave a frigid reply. "Rosie tells me that you went for a drive with Mr. Mulford," he said presently, in a would-be careless tone.

The statement surprised Rosalie somewhat. She had taught Rosie that she must not talk of her affairs to any one. But she made answer pleasantly enough.

"Yes, I went to see Miss Mulford on business, and her father was kind enough to stop for me in his carriage."

"Come into the parlor with me, will you?" he asked abruptly. "I have something that I want to say to you."

He stepped aside for her to pass, and she entered, for she, too, had something to say, and at this hour nearly all of the other guests were almost sure to be at dinner. But she waited for him to begin.

"Rosalie," he said, "I want an answer to the question that I asked you last night. I want it now."

"Why should you wish to hasten my departure, Ralph?"

"Because I am in earnest, Rosalie, and if you are not trifling with me, there is no reason why you should not answer at once."

"It is very unfair to say that to me, Ralph. But as long as you feel as you do I will be perfectly plain with you in the matter. I cannot give you any definite decision until I know how you and my little Rosie would agree."

"Do you mean to tell me that my happiness depends upon the decision of a child of 10 years of age?"

"It's something like that, I suppose, Ralph. For, you see, my happiness depends upon my child's, and I could not make you happy, were I unhappy myself."

"Then you refuse to give me an answer now?"

"I must remind you that you promised me to wait a week and give me time to consider your proposal. I can only say now that I will endeavor to decide at once, but it is impossible for me to promise to do so. I really do not know myself what the decision may be—I am not trying to deceive you, Ralph. Good evening for the present."

Rosalie hastily left the room to prevent further argument, and in a little while she and Rosie entered the dining-room together. After dinner, they returned to their room, where they remained the balance of the evening.

Mother and daughter were cheerful enough in their retirement. It was no hardship to Rosalie to be shut in with her little girl, for Rosie was the one object she had to love.

Besides, she had two reasons for this retirement. One was to avoid Ralph Wilson's importunities; the other, to discover, if possible, whether Rosie's indifference amounted to more or was likely to amount to more than indifference for young Wilson.

It required little diplomacy to lead the subject up to her thoughts this evening, for Rosie seemed to be thinking of Ralph herself. After lessons were prepared for the morrow she cuddled as usual in her mother's arms. Suddenly she asked:

"Mamma, why did Mr. Wilson get so angry when he found that you had gone to Miss Mulford's?"

Rosalie looked at the child with sudden enlightment, as she answered with another question.

"Did he get angry, girlie? Who told him that I had gone to Miss Mulford's?"

"I told him, mamma, but he asked who was with you—no, he asked if anyone else was with you, and I told him that Mr. Mulford was in the carriage waiting for you."

"I see. All right, dearie, but do not forget that mamma does not like her little girl to talk about the affairs of another. It grows on one, dearie, and you might say something some day which would hurt someone, without the intention of doing so."

"Yes, mamma, but you do not want me to tell a story, either?"

"Certainly not, dear. But it is your bedtime now, and mamma wants to read and think a little." She was tucking the little one in bed with an affectionate murmur of goodnights, when, as an afterthought, she said to the child:

"Rosie, dear, don't you think that you could like Mr. Wilson if he was your own papa?"

"I don't think that Mr. Wilson would want to be any little girl's papa, mamma. I don't think he likes little girls."

"Why, dearie?"

"Oh, he always speaks so cross to us when we are on the stairs if we get in his way. But Mr. Mulford doesn't. Sometimes he calls me Nellie—I think he must be thinking about his little girl that died, don't you, mamma? And I always feel so sorry for him that I cannot help liking him, you know, mamma."

"Yes, dear, I understand. And he likes you, too, dearie—he told me so this evening. Good night, now."

As Rosalie dropped wearily into a chair by the side of a little table, her hand struck a photograph lying there. She picked it up and studied the features carefully. They were those of the man of whom she was thinking—Ralph Wilson. Tears filled her eyes as she dwelt upon each separate feature. It was no light thing to her to have the man she loved prove unworthy. Yet he had so proved himself this evening.

"I could never trust him with my own happiness, or Rosie's, now that I have discovered him capable of small meannesses. I could sooner believe in a man who had committed a crime."

For an hour she sat in the dark shadow by the window, burying her hopes. Then, all at once, came courage.

"How much better to discover it now than after I had married him?" she thought. "After all, life is still before me, and I have my dear little girl. But I will not keep him in suspense. I will write at once, and tell him the truth."

She did so, going out to post the letter so that no one might comment upon it in the morning, as would certainly be the case if she sent it by hand.

"But I shall have to change my boarding-house, now. It would be very unpleasant to both of us to meet daily, after this," she reflected.

In pursuit of this intention, she started for an early walk the next morning. She had not much time to spare to the search for a new home for herself and child, for her sewing called her, even now, so she hurried along at her best speed, making for an address which she had selected from the morning paper.

Turning from a side street into Fourth avenue, she waited for a string of vehicles to get out of her way. Then she attempted to cross, only to be run down by a heavy truck which came dashing around the corner. With great presence of mind she threw herself aside as the great horse struck her, and immediately, woman-like, fainted.

When she came to, she was being carried, on an improvised stretcher up the steps of a house in Gramercy Park. Attempting to raise herself on her elbow, she fainted again. This time she was on a coach when she recovered her senses, and Grace Mulford was standing over her.

"Don't attempt to talk just now, Rosalie. You are here in our house, and we will take care of you. Don't worry, dear. We think your arm is broken, but cannot tell until the doctor comes."

"Rosie"——

"Papa has gone for her, dear. Don't fret."

"You are so good," she whispered, and closed her eyes as if in great pain.

As they had surmised, it was a broken arm, which was soon set. But the doctor insisted that Rosalie be kept very quiet, as she had received a severe shock. Her pleas that she be sent to a hospital, however, was met with indignant refusal.

"How can you ask us to be so brutal to an old friend, Rosalie?" asked Grace Mulford in an injured tone. "Papa is here now and wishes to ask how you feel. Are you equal to seeing him, dear?"

"Oh, certainly; by all means. Do let me thank him for dragging me from under those heavy wheels, Grace. Why, my little Rosalie would be motherless, as well as fatherless, by this time, if he had not so opportunely come along."

"Nonsense, my child. Some other man, younger and quicker than I perhaps, would have been there if I had not rushed in at the moment," said the voice of Mr. Mulford, as he entered the room, holding little Rosie by the hand.

With a scream of delight, the little girl threw herself sobbing into her mother's arms, but Mr. Mulford quietly restrained her.

"You promised to be very good and quiet if I brought you in to see mamma, dear little girl. You will make her ill if you are noisy. Come, be good."

The child put her arms around his neck in reply, and gave him a loving kiss. Then she sedately sat down by the side of her mother and took her hand.

Mr. Mulford gave her a smile of approval. His eyes were a bit misty as he looked from the tear-stained little face to that of the pale one on the pillow in front of him, and he leaned over and gave the little girl another kiss to hide his emotion.

After a moment of intense quiet, during which Rosalie's eyes wandered from the strong features of the big man to those of the little girl beside her, Mr. Mulford spoke quietly.

"May I say something without giving offense, Rosalie?"

She nodded without speaking, but her face, lately so pale, colored hotly, and she turned away her eyes.

He hesitated for a moment, then asked.

"Would you be willing to let Rosalie decide that question?"

She laughed outright, then paled with the pain.

"What a brute you must think me," said Mr. Mulford, holding a restorative to her nostrils. She shook her head gently.

"Believe me, my child, I was thinking then of your interest only. I heard what you said to Grace about little Rosie being fatherless, and I thought to set her mind at rest by asking you to let her decide——" he paused.

Rosalie looked up at him understandingly and smiled.

"I know what you meant," she whispered at last. "Well, let her decide."

"Do you mean it, Rosalie?" he asked eagerly, his face flushing like a boy's.

She nodded again by way of reply.

Big John Mulford turned to the little girl and took her in a tender embrace, his voice trembling with emotion.

"Rosie, dear, would you be willing to have me for your father, to live here and be my own little girl, like little Nellie was?" he asked gently.

The big blue eyes of the child were turned inquiringly on her mother's face for a moment before she replied. Then she asked:

"Would my mamma live here too?"

"Oh, yes, dear, by all means. And Grace would be your big sister."

"Then I'll stay," said Rosie, emphatically, and forthwith she marched to the window where Grace discreetly looked out on the park and said:

"Miss Mulford, your papa says that he is going to be my father, and you are going to be my big sister. Please take off my bonnet now. And may I call you Sister Grace?"

"Surely, my darling," said the big sister. Then she went to the bed and stooping over, said, as she kissed Rosalie:

"I am so glad, little mother. Let me be at once, will you not? Papa, persuade her to let us send for a minister and have it over at once. Then we will have a right to keep her and nurse her here."

"Will you, my dear—will you do that much for me—for all of us?" he asked quietly. "It will save comment and fuss, you know, dear," he urged.

Rosalie hesitated, looking from one to the other in uncertainty and confusion.

Then a generous thought struck Grace. In a moment she had gone to the phone and was calling up Walter Scott.

"Walter," she asked when he had answered, "would you like to be married immediately, here in the house? Yes, I mean it. I am not joking at all. Come up at once and talk it over then. Goodby."

"There Rosalie, you see what I have done. Now you must agree to be married right here in the library with me as soon as Walter can arrange with the clergyman. And when you are better we will all go off on a wedding trip and take Rosie with us."

Rosalie smiled through tear-filled eyes.

"What is it, my dear?" asked John Mulford, as he stooped over the bed to take the first kiss from her lips.

"Nothing—you are all so good to me—"

"Rosalie," he whispered.

"John—dear John," she shyly answered.

MODERN HERODS--Mrs. John A. Logan Decries Reformers Who Would Destroy Deformed Children at Birth

By Mrs. John A. Logan.
(Copyright, 1907, by American Journal-Examiner)

IF the suggestions of Dr. Andrew Christian that deformed children be destroyed at birth were followed the slaughter of the innocents under Herod would be eclipsed, because male and female infants would be sacrificed upon the slightest excuse through the connivance of unworthy parents and practitioners.

In innumerable instances many days must elapse before seeming deformities in newly born infants disappear. Vicious persons would readily consent to the putting away of their offsprings but for the restraints of the law. Remove them and provide any kind of an excuse upon which they could base a defense of their murderous deeds and all protection to helpless babes would disappear.

Instead of influencing mothers to the point of consenting to the wilful murder of their children because they are thought to be deficient in physical or mental perfection, every possible means should be employed to try to impress upon them the fact that they are many times responsible for the defects visited upon their children. They may have in ignorance or perversity transmitted to their offsprings the weakness of mind or body with which scores of babes are afflicted. They may have rebelled against being mothers, and refused to practise the self-denial or forego pleasures incompatible with maternity.

They may have disregarded the advice of physicians and friends in matters of dress and diet, and in many other ways caused serious injury to their unborn children. They may have failed to appreciate the sacredness of motherhood and have violated all laws upon which physical, moral and mental perfection depends, and should not be relieved of the consequences of their actions by summarily removing the victims of their thoughtless, selfish, not to say wicked actions.

Physicians are not always correct in their diagnosis of cases, and what might seem at first a mentally or physically deformed child might develop into one in all senses capable. Many such cases could be cited. Therefore, mothers should be urged to greater care before their children are born and to more tenderness and devotion afterward.

If their children are in any way afflicted and helpless, the more responsible they should feel and the greater the obligation for unremitting watchfulness over them. Education of the minds and hearts of the mothers of the future through such instrumentalities as the National Congress of Mothers will do more toward elevating the race and minimizing the birth of degenerates and invalids than can ever be accomplished by the barest methods suggested by Dr. Andrew Christian.

His plans open the way for vicious people to ignore all the efforts for improving the races, knowing that society would countenance the removal of the consequences of the recklessness by the administration of means known to the profession. No more fatal thing could come to the human family than that they should be willing to adopt measures born of barbarism to snuff out the lives of unfortunate creatures who are brought into the world under an unlucky star.

Do not hinder such heaven-inspired movements for the elevation of parenthood and the cultivation of holier aspirations in the minds and hearts of the mothers of the future for the welfare of their children and a higher development of the race by suggesting that they should under any circumstances consent to the murder of their children—even though there should be one among them hopelessly deformed and afflicted. Encourage them to bear such an affliction with patience and fortitude without attempting to evade self-incurred responsibilities, and in His own time relief and merited reward will come.

With all our boasted humanitarianism, it is a strange commentary that so many theorists should have made appearance in the last few years with inhuman suggestions touching incurables, idiots, imbeciles and deformed persons; each providing for the murder of these unfortunate dependents. One wonders whether they are prompted by an actual desire to benefit mankind or whether they may not have been actuated by mercenary motives—because they know that numbers of individuals carrying such burdens would gladly pay the price of a quietus could it be made and the perpetrator escape the vigilance of the law, as proven by the numbers of persons who have been confined in asylums for the insane who were sane and entitled to their liberty.

Eloquent Silence.

Justice Harlan of the supreme court plays golf intemperately and Justice McKenna is only a trifle less devoted to the game. They were taking their accustomed cross-country walk on the Chase links a few days ago when it came McKenna's turn to play. He built a sand tee most carefully, sizing up the distance to the next hole, made his calculations, then raised his driver, made a mighty swing and—missed. For full 10 seconds he stood and looked at the little ball resting securely on its sand pile.

It was Justice Harlan who finally spoke. "That is the most profane silence I have ever heard, McKenna."