

MARGRET HOWTH.
A
STORY OF TO-DAY

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Margret Howth. A Story of To-Day by Rebecca Harding Davis

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REBECCA HARDING DAVIS

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"My matter hath no voice to alien ears."

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TICKNOR AND FIELDS.
1862.



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TO MY MOTHER.



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CHAPTER I.

LET me tell you a story of To-Day, — very homely and narrow in its scope and aim. Not of the To-Day whose significance in the history of humanity only those shall read who will live when you and I are dead. We can bear the pain in silence, if our hearts are strong enough, while the nations of the earth stand afar off. I have no word of this To-Day to speak. I write from the border of the battlefield, and I find in it no theme for shallow argument or flimsy rhymes. The shadow of death has fallen on us ; it chills the very heaven. No child laughs in my face as I pass down the street. Men have forgotten to hope, forgotten to pray ; only in the bitterness of endurance, they say “in the morning, ‘ Would God it were even!’ and in the evening, ‘ Would God it were morning!’” Neither I nor you have the prophet’s vision to see the age as its meaning stands

written before God. Those who shall live when we are dead may tell their children, perhaps, how, out of anguish and darkness such as the world seldom has borne, the enduring morning evolved of the true world and the true man. It is not clear to us. Hands wet with a brother's blood for the Right, a slavery of intolerance, the hackneyed cant of men, or the blood-thirstiness of women, utter no prophecy to us of the great To-Morrow of content and right that holds the world. Yet the To-Morrow is there; if God lives, it is there. The voice of the meek Nazarene, which we have deafened down as ill-timed, unfit to teach the watchword of the hour, renews the quiet promise of its coming in simple, humble things. Let us go down and look for it. There is no need that we should feebly vaunt and madden ourselves over our self-seen rights, whatever they may be, forgetting what broken shadows they are of eternal truths in that calm where He sits and with His quiet hand controls us.

Patriotism and Chivalry are powers in the tranquil, unlimited lives to come, as well as here, I know; but there are less partial truths, higher hierarchies who serve the God-man, that do not speak to us in bayonets and victories, — Mercy and Love. Let us not quite neglect them, unpopular angels though they be. Very

humble their voices are, just now: yet not altogether dead, I think. Why, the very low glow of the fire upon the hearth tells me something of recompense coming in the hereafter,—Christmas-days, and heartsome warmth; in these bare hills trampled down by armed men, the yellow clay is quick with pulsing fibres, hints of the great heart of life and love throbbing within; slanted sunlight would show me, in these sullen smoke-clouds from the camp, walls of amethyst and jasper, outer ramparts of the Promised Land. Do not call us traitors, then, who choose to be cool and silent through the fever of the hour,—who choose to search in common things for auguries of the hopeful, helpful calm to come, finding even in these poor sweet-peas, thrusting their tendrils through the brown mould, a deeper, more healthful lesson for the eye and soul than warring truths. Do not call me a traitor, if I dare weakly to hint that there are yet other characters besides that of Patriot in which a man may appear creditably in the great masquerade, and not blush when it is over; or if I tell you a story of To-Day, in which there shall be no bloody glare,—only those homelier, subtler lights which we have overlooked. If it prove to you that the sun of old times still shines, and the God of old times still lives, is not that enough?