

THE BEGINNING OF HEALTHCARE OF GRAND MANAN ISLAND

Page 248 – At the Turn of the Tide by Leslie Covert. 1903



Then watching the girl's face, she added: *"But Libby was al'ays a good-tempered, cling in' kind of a girl. She's on th' Lord's side, too, now, an' it 's a-helpin' her out amazin'. I used t' feel as 'f you influenced her, but she's got grace in her heart, un' all we're hopin' for is that Elder Babcock will git down from Th' Head t' immerse her 'fore th' breath O' life leaves her."*

"laurie Ann , she must not be immersed !"

Three of the women were so stunned by this outrageous statement that they forgot the necessity of walking with rapid lightness in a bog, and stood stock-still, with the black mud oozing up in bubbles about their rough boots. Only Laurie Ann, the religious, was composed.

"Was you speakin', Miss Cronk ?" she said, sweetly. "Guess we'd best git 'long to th' house. There ain't too much time for s' to try you r conjurin' an' stuff !"

Caroline's face was white, and she realized the futility of words. The three other women, standing like Lot's wife, looked at her and laughed at the wit of Laurie Ann's sally.

The girl hurried on, and said nothing. At the door through which Laurie Ann had already passed stood Libby's mother. Her mouth was drawn and thin-lipped from her years of cure and trouble. But behind that sterner mask lurked a spirit of unsuspected kindness, and the look she bent on Caroline was more of mute sorrow than resentment.

"Ther' ain't no help for my girl, Car'line !"

Caroline looked on the mother pityingly, and choked back the rebellious tears, *"But with proper care ..."* she began.

"I've seen 'em come, an' I've seen 'em go, Car'line , come an' go like th' tides, an' it ain't no use."

The old woman looked out into the night. *"They're a-beginnin' t' make th' death-cake a'ready,"* she said, feebly.

'When the shadow of death falls across the doorway of a Grand Manan home, the islanders, from time immemorial, have solemnly prepared for the unbidden guest in the making and careful distributing of a death-cake; and Caroline remembered that it was a custom which neither latter-day enlightenment nor religion has driven from the islands.

"An' now we're a-waitin'," went on the mother, quietly, "fr' th' elder, so's t' begin th' immersion."

Caroline caught up her hand-bag and flung on her nurse's apron. *"There shall be no immersion, Aunt Susan."* she cried, defiantly; *"And now I must see Libby! There's been too much of this neglect already! Do you hear, Aunt Susan? I must go to Libby."*

The sick woman's mother looked at the nurse reprovingly.

"Y're forgittin', Car'line, as you're a-blasphemin' th' Almighty in th' house O' death".