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1911.

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Empire Annual

For GIRLS.

Edited by A. R. BUCKLAND, M.A.

With Contributions by

LADY CATHERINE MILNES-GASKELL.	SOMERVILLE GIBNEY.
Mrs. CREIGHTON.	EDITH C. KENYON.
Mrs. MACQUOID.	M. E. LONGMORE
Mrs. BALFOUR MURPHY.	MAUD MADDICK.
Mrs. G. de HORNE VAIZEY.	M. B. MANWELL.
A. R. BUCKLAND.	FLORENCE MOON.
FRANK ELIAS.	E. B. MOORE.
AGNES GIBERNE.	MADELINE OYLER.
	HENRY WILLIAMS.

Etc., etc.

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and Sixteen Black and
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Edited by A. R. BUCKLAND, M.A.

With contributions by Morley Adams, W. Grinton Berry, Tom Bevan, A. W. Cooper, W. S. Douglas, Frank Elias, Laurence M. Gibson, W. J. Gordon, F. M. Holmes, Ramsay Guthrie, C. H. Irwin, J. B. Knowlton, W. C. Metcalfe, A. J. H. Moule, Ernest Protheroe, Gordon Stables, C. E. Tyndale-Biscoe, etc., etc.

RACE FOR LIFE. ***See page 72***

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The Christmas Child

BY

Mrs. G. de Horne Vaizey

Jack said: "Nonsense! We are all grown up now. Let Christmas alone. Take no notice of it; treat it as if it were an ordinary day."

A happy thought, a cross-country journey, a

Margaret said: "The servants have all begged for leave. Most of their mothers are dying, and if they are not, it's a sister who is going to be married. Really, it's a servants' ball which the Squire is giving in the village hall. Mean,

I call it, to decoy one's maids just when one needs them most!"

strange discovery, another happy thought, and many still happier thoughts hereafter!

Tom said: "Beastly jolly dull show anyhow, to spend the day alone with your brothers and sisters. Better chuck it at once!"

Peg said firmly and with emphasis: "*Heathen!* Miserable, cold-blooded, materially-minded *frogs!* Where's your Christmas spirit, I should like to know? . . . If you have none for yourselves, think of other people. Think of *me!* I love my Christmas, and I'm not going to give it up for you or any one else. My very first Christmas at home as a growed-up lady, and you want to diddle me out of it. . . . Go to! Likewise, avaunt! Now by my halidom, good sirs, you know not with whom you have to deal. 'Tis my royal pleasure the revels proceed!" [10]

Jack grimaced eloquently at Margaret, who grimaced back.

"With all the pleasure in the world," he said suavely. "Show me a revel, and I'll revel with the best. I like revels. What I do *not* like is to stodge at home eating an indigestible meal, and pretending that I'm full of glee, when in reality I'm bored to death. If you could suggest a change. . . ."

Margaret sighed; Tom sniffed; Peg pursed up her lips and thought. Presently her eyes brightened. "Of course," she remarked tentatively, "there are the Revells!"

Jack flushed and bit his lips.

"Quite so! There are. Fifty miles away, and not a spare bed in the house. Lot of good they are to us, to be sure! Were you going to suggest that we dropped in for a quiet call? Silly nonsense, to talk of a thing like that."

Jack was quite testy and huffed, for the suggestion touched a tender point. The Revells were the friends *par excellence* of the family of which he was the youthful head. It seemed, indeed, as if the two households had been specially manufactured so that each should fit the wants of the other. Jack was very certain that, in any case, Myra Revell supplied all that *he* lacked, and the very thought of spending Christmas Day in her company sent a pang of longing through his heart. Margaret cherished a romantic admiration for Mrs. Revell, who was still a girl at heart despite the presence of a grown-up family. Dennis was at Marlborough with Tom; while Pat or Patricia was Peg's bosom chum.

What could you wish for more? A Christmas spent with the Revells would be a pure delight; but alas! fifty miles of some of the wildest and bleakest country in England stretched between the two homes, which, being on different lines of railway, were inaccessible by the ordinary route. Moreover, the Revells were, as they themselves cheerfully declared, "reduced paupers," and inhabited a picturesquely dilapidated old farmhouse, and the problem, "*Where do they all sleep?*" was as engrossing as a jig-saw puzzle to their inquisitive friends. Impossible that even a cat could be invited to swing itself within those crowded portals; equally impossible to attempt to separate such an affectionate family at Christmas-time of all seasons of the year. [11]

Peg Startles Everybody

And yet here was Peg deliberately raking up the painful topic; and after the other members of the family had duly reproached and abused, ready to level another bolt at their heads.

"S—uppose we went a burst—hired a car, drove over early in the morning, and marched into church before their very eyes!"

Silence! Sparkling eyes; alert, thoughtful gaze. Could they? Should they? Would it be right? A motor for the day meant an expenditure of four or five pounds, and though the exchequer was in a fairly prosperous condition, five-pound notes could not be treated with indifference. Still, in each mind ran the echo of Peg's words. It was Christmas-time. Why should they not, just for once, give themselves a treat—themselves, and their dear friends into the bargain?

The sparkle deepened; a flash passed from eye to eye, a flash of determination! Without a word of dissent or discussion the proposal was seconded, and carried through.

"Fifty miles! We can't go above twenty-five an hour through those bad roads. We shall have to be off by nine, if we want to be in time for church. What *will* they think when they see us marching in?"

"No, no, we mustn't do that. Mrs. Revell would be in a fever the whole time, asking herself, '*Will the pudding go round?*' It really wouldn't be kind," pleaded Margaret earnestly, and her hearers chuckled reminiscently. Mrs. Revell was a darling, but she was also an appallingly bad housekeeper. Living two miles from the nearest shop, she yet appeared constitutionally incapable of "thinking ahead"; and it was a common experience to behold at the afternoon meal different members of the family partaking respectively of tea, coffee, and cocoa, there being insufficient of any one beverage to go round. [12]

Margaret's sympathies went out involuntarily towards her friend, but her listeners, it is to be feared, were concerned entirely for themselves. It might be the custom to abuse the orthodox Christmas dinner, but since it *was* a national custom which one did not care to break, it behoved one to have as good a specimen as possible, and the prospect of short commons, and indifferent short commons at that, was not attractive. *Who* could be sure that the turkey might not arrive at

the table singed and charred, and the pudding in a condition of *soup?*

Schoolboy Tom was quick with a suggestion.

"I say—tell you what! Do the surprise-party business, and take a hamper with us. . . . Only decent thing to do, when you march in four strong to another person's feed. Dennis would love a hamper——"

"Ha! Good! Fine idea! So we will! A real old-fashioned hamper, full of all the good things they are least likely to have. Game pie——"

"Tongue—one of those big, shiny fellows, with scriggles of sugar down his back——"

"Ice-pudding in a tin——"

"Fancy creams——"

"French fruits——"

"Crackers! Handsome ones, with things inside that are worth having——"

"Bon-bons——"

Each one had a fresh suggestion to make, and Margaret scribbled them all down on the ivory tablet which hung from her waist, and promptly adjourned into the kitchen to give the necessary orders, and to rejoice the hearts of her handmaidens by granting a day's leave all round.

[13] On further consideration it was decided to attend early service at home, and to start off on the day's expedition at eleven o'clock, arriving at the Revell homestead about one, by which time it was calculated that the family would have returned from church, and would be hanging aimlessly about the garden, in the very mood of all others to welcome an unexpected excitement.

Christmas Day broke clear and bright. Punctual to the minute the motor came puffing along, the youthful-looking chauffeur drawing up before the door with an air of conscious complaisance.

Despite his very professional attire—perhaps, indeed, because of it—so very youthful did he appear, that Jack was visited by a qualm.

"Er—er—are you going to drive us all the way?" he inquired anxiously. "When I engaged the car, I saw . . . I thought I had arranged with——"

"My father, sir. It was my father you saw. Father said, being Christmas Day, he didn't care to turn out, so he sent me——"

"You are a qualified driver—quite capable. . . ?"

A Good Start

The lad smiled, a smile of ineffable calm. His eyelids drooped, the corners of his mouth twitched and were still. He replied with two words only, an unadorned "Yes, sir," but there was a colossal, a Napoleonic confidence in his manner, which proved quite embarrassing to his hearers. Margaret pinched Jack's arm as a protest against further questionings; Jack murmured something extraordinarily like an apology; then they all tumbled into the car, tucked the rugs round their knees, turned up the collars of their coats, and sailed off on the smooth, swift voyage through the wintry air.

For the first hour all went without a hitch. The youthful chauffeur drove smoothly and well; he had not much knowledge of the countryside; but as Jack knew every turn by heart, having frequently bicycled over the route, no delay was caused, and a merrier party of Christmas revellers could not have been found than the four occupants of the tonneau. [14] They sang, they laughed, they told stories, and asked riddles; they ate sandwiches out of a tin, and drank hot coffee out of a thermos flask, and congratulated themselves, not once, but a dozen times, over their own ingenuity in hitting upon such a delightful variation to the usual Christmas programme.

More than half the distance had been accomplished; the worst part of the road had been reached, and the car was beginning to bump and jerk in a somewhat uncomfortable fashion. Jack frowned, and looked at the slight figure of the chauffeur with a returning doubt.

"He's all right on smooth roads, but this part needs a lot of driving. Another time——" He set his lips, and mentally rehearsed the complaints which he would make to "my father" when he paid the bill. Margaret gave a squeal, and looked doubtfully over the side.

"I—I suppose it's all right! What would happen if he lost control, and we slipped back all the way downhill?"

"It isn't a question of control. It's a question of the strength of the car. It's powerful enough for worse hills than this."

"What's that funny noise? It didn't sound like that before. Kind of a clickety-clack. . . . Don't you hear it?"

"No. Of course not. Don't be stupid and imagine things that don't exist. . . . What's the difference between——"

Jack nobly tried to distract attention from the car, but before another mile had been traversed, the clickety-clack noise grew too loud to be ignored, the car drew up with a jerk, and the

chauffeur leaped out.

"I must just see——" he murmured vaguely; vaguely also he seemed to grope at the machinery of the car, while the four occupants of the tonneau hung over the doors watching his progress; then once more springing to his seat, he started the car, and they went bumping unevenly along the road. No more singing now; no more laughing and telling of tales; deep in each breast lay the presage of coming ill; four pairs of eyes scanned the dreary waste of surrounding country, while four brains busily counted up the number of miles which still lay between them and their destination. Twenty miles at least, and not a house in sight except one dreary stone edifice standing back from the road, behind a mass of evergreen trees. [15]

"This fellow is no good for rough roads. He would wear out a car in no time, to say nothing of the passengers. Can't think why we haven't had a puncture before now!" said Jack gloomily; whereupon Margaret called him sharply to order.

"Don't say such things . . . don't think them. It's very wrong. You ought always to expect the best——"

"Don't suppose my thinking is going to have any effect on rubber, do you?" Jack's tone was decidedly snappy. He was a lover, and it tortured him to think that an accident to the car might delay his meeting with his love. He had never spent a Christmas Day with Myra before; surely on this day of days she would be kinder, sweeter, relax a little of her proud restraint. Perhaps there would be mistletoe. . . . Suppose he found himself alone with Myra beneath the mistletoe bough? Suppose he kissed her? Suppose she turned upon him with her dignified little air and reproached him, saying he had no right? Suppose he said, "*Myra! will you give me the right?*" . . .

No wonder that the car seemed slow to the lover's mind; no wonder that every fresh jerk and strain deepened the frown on his brow. The road was strewn with rough, sharp stones; but in another mile or two they would be on a smooth high-road once more. If only they could last out those few miles!

A Puncture

Bang! A sharp, pistol-like noise rent the air, a noise which told its own tale to the listening ears. A tyre had punctured, and a dreary half-hour's delay must be faced while the youthful chauffeur repaired the damage. The passengers leaped to the ground, and exhausted themselves in lamentations. They were already behind time, and this new delay would make them later than ever. . . . Suddenly they became aware that they were cold and tired—shivering with cold. Peg looked down at her boots, and supposed that there were feet inside, but as a matter of sensation it was really impossible to say. Margaret's nose was a cheery plaid—blue patches neatly veined with red. Jack looked from one to the other and forgot his own impatience in anxiety for their welfare. [16]

"Girls, you look frozen! Cut away up to that house, and ask them to let you sit by the fire for half an hour. Much better than hanging about here. I'll come for you when we are ready."

The girls glanced doubtfully at the squat, white house, which in truth looked the reverse of hospitable; but the prospect of a fire being all-powerful at the moment, they turned obediently, and made their way up a worn gravel path, leading to the shabbiest of painted doors.

Margaret knocked; Peg rapped; then Margaret knocked again; but nobody came, and not a sound broke the stillness within. The girls shivered and told each other disconsolately there was no one to come. Who *would* live in such a dreary house, in such a dreary, solitary waste, if it were possible to live anywhere else? Then they strolled round the corner of the house, and caught the cheerful glow of firelight, which settled the question, once for all.

"Let's try the back door!" said Margaret, and the back door being found, they knocked again, but knocked in vain. Then Peg gave an impatient shake to the handle, and lo and behold! it turned in her hand, and swung slowly open on its hinges, showing a glimpse of a trim little kitchen, and beyond that a narrow passage leading to the front door.

"Is any one there? Is any one there?" chanted Margaret loudly. She took a hesitating step into the passage—took two; repeated the cry in an even higher key; but still no answer came, still the same uncanny silence brooded over all. [17]

The girls stood still, and gazed in each other's eyes; in each face were reflected the same emotions—curiosity, interest, a tinge of fear.

What could it mean? Could there be some one within these silent walls who was *ill*, helpless, in need of aid?

"I think," declared Margaret firmly, "that it is our duty to look. . . ." In after days she always absolved herself from any charge of curiosity in this decision, and declared that her action was dictated solely by a feeling of duty; but her hearers had their doubts. Be that as it might, the decision fell in well with Peg's wishes, and the two girls walked slowly down the passage, repeating from time to time the cry "Is any one there?" the while their eyes busily scanned all they could see, and drew Sherlock Holmes conclusions therefrom.

What the Girls found

The house belonged to a couple who had a great many children and very little money. There was a cupboard beneath the stairs filled with shabby little boots; there was a hat-rack in the hall covered with shabby little caps. They were people of education and culture, for there were books in profusion, and

the few pictures on the walls showed an artistic taste; they were tidy people also, for everything was in order, and a peep into the firelit room on the right showed the table set ready for the Christmas meal. It was like wandering through the enchanted empty palaces of the dear old fairy-tales, except that it was not a palace at all, and the banquet spread out on the darned white cloth was of so meagre a description, that at the sight the beholders flushed with a shamed surprise.

That Christmas table—should they ever forget it? If they lived to be a hundred years old should they ever again behold a feast so poor in material goods, so rich in beauty of thought? For it would appear that though money was wanting, there was no lack of love and poetry in this lonely home. The table was decked with great bunches of holly, and before every seat a little card bore the name of a member of the family, printed on a card, which had been further embellished by a flower or spray, painted by an artist whose taste was in advance of his skill—"Father," "Mother," "Amy," "Fred," "Norton," "Mary," "Teddums," "May." Eight names in all, but nine chairs, and the ninth no ordinary, cane-seated chair like the rest, but a beautiful, high-backed, carved-oak erection, ecclesiastical in design, which looked strangely out of place in the bare room. [18]

There was no card before this ninth chair, but on the uncushioned seat lay a square piece of cardboard, bordered with a painted wreath of holly, inscribed on which were four short words.

Margaret and Peg read them with a sudden shortening of the breath and smarting of the eyes:

"*For the Christ Child!*"

"Ah-h!" Margaret's hand stretched out, seized Peg's, and held it fast. In the rush and bustle of the morning it had been hard to realise the meaning of the day: now, for the first time, the spirit of Christmas flooded her heart, filled it with love, with a longing to help and to serve.

"Peg! Peg!" she cried breathlessly. "How beautiful of them! They have so little themselves, but they have remembered the old custom, the sweet old custom, and made *Him* welcome. . . ." Her eyes roamed to the window, and lit with sudden inspiration. She lifted her hand and pointed to a distant steeple rising above the trees. "They have all gone off to church—father and mother, and Amy and Fred—all the family together! That's why the house is empty. And dinner is waiting for their return!"

She turned again to the table, her housekeeper's eye taking in at a flash the paucity of its furnishings. "Peg! can this be *all? All* that they have to eat. . . ? Let us look in the kitchen. . . . I must make quite sure. . . ." [19]

There was no feeling of embarrassment, no consciousness of impertinent curiosity, in the girls' minds as they investigated the contents of kitchen and larder. At that moment the house seemed their own, its people their people; they were just two more members of a big family, whose duty it was to look after the interests of their brothers and sisters while they were away; and when evidences of poverty and emptiness met them on every side, the two pairs of eyes met with a mutual impulse, so strong that it needed not to be put into words.

In another moment they had left the house behind and were running swiftly across the meadow towards the car. The chauffeur was busily engaged on the tyre, Jack and Tom helping, or hindering as the case might be. The hamper lay on the ground where it had been placed for greater security during the repairs. The girls nipped it up by its handles, and ran off again, regardless of protests and inquiries.

It was very heavy, delightfully heavy: the bearers rejoiced in its weight, wished it had been three times as heavy; the aching of their arms was a positive joy to them as they bore their burden into the little dining-room, and laid it down upon the floor.

What shall we do with it?

"Now! What shall we do now? Shall we lay out the things and make a display on the table, or shall we put the pie in the oven beside that tiny ghost of a joint, and the pudding in a pan beside the potatoes? Which do you think would be best?"

But Margaret shook her head.

"Neither! Oh! don't you see, both ways would look too human, too material. They would show too plainly that strangers had been in, and had interfered. I want it to look like a Christmas miracle . . . as if it had come straight. . . . We'll lay the basket just as it is, on the Christ Child's chair. . . ."

Peg nodded. She was an understanding Peg, and she rose at once to the poetry of the idea. Gently, reverently, the girls lifted the basket which was to have furnished their own repast, laid it on the carved-oak chair, and laid on its lid the painted card; then for a moment they stood side by side, gazing round the room, seeing in imagination the scene which would follow the return of the family from church . . . the incredulity, the amaze, the blind mystification, the joy. . . . Peg beamed in anticipation of the delight of the youngsters; Margaret had the strangest, eeriest feeling of looking straight into a sweet, worn face; of feeling the clasp of work-worn hands. It was imagination, she told herself, simple imagination, yet the face was alive. . . . Its features seemed more distinct than many which she knew in the flesh. She shivered slightly, and drew her sister from the room. [20]

"Now, Peg, to cover up our tracks; to leave everything as we found it! This door was shut. . . . Have we moved anything from its place, left any footmarks on the floor? Be careful, dear, be

careful! . . . Push that chair into place. . . ."

The tyre was repaired. The chauffeur was straightening his back after the long stoop. Jack and Tom were indignantly demanding what had been done with the hamper. Being hungry and unromantic, it took some little time to convince them that there had been no choice in the matter, and that the large family had a right to their luxuries which was not to be gainsaid. They had not seen the pitiful emptiness of the Christmas table; they had not seen the chair set ready for the Christ Child. The girls realised as much and dealt gently with them, and in the outcome no one felt the poorer; for the welcome bestowed upon the surprise party was untinged by any shadow of embarrassment, and they sat around a festal board, happy to feel that their presence was hailed as the culminating joy of the day.

---

[21] It was evening when the car again approached the lonely house, and Margaret, speaking down the connecting tube, directed the chauffeur to drive at his slowest speed for the next quarter of a mile.

Jack was lying back in his corner, absorbed in happy dreams. Never so long as he lived could he forget this Christmas Day, which had seen the fulfilment of his hopes in Myra's sweetness, Myra's troth. Tom was fast asleep, dreaming of "dorm." suppers, and other escapades of the last term. The two sisters were as much alone as if the only occupants of the car.

They craned forward, eager for the first glimpse of the house, and caught sight of a beam of light athwart the darkness of the night.

The house was all black save for one window, but that was as a lighthouse in a waste, for the curtains were undrawn, and fire and lamp sent out a rosy glow which seemed the embodiment of cheer.

Against the white background of the wall a group of figures could be seen standing together beneath the lamp; the strains of a harmonium floated sweetly on the night air, a chorus of glad young voices singing the well-known words:

"The King of Love my Shepherd is!"

With a common impulse the two girls waved their hands from the window as the car plunged forward.

"Good-night, little sisters!"

"Good-night, little brothers!"

How He comes

"Sleep well, little people. The Christ Child is with you. You asked Him, and He came——"

"And the wonderful thing," said Peg, "the most wonderful thing is, that He came *through us!*"

"But that," answered Margaret thoughtfully, "is just how He always *does* come." [22]

Anna

BY

Katharine S. Macquoid

The story of a girl's adventure for a father's sake that may help girls who are at all like Anna.

Three thousand feet up the side of a Swiss mountain a lateral valley strikes off in the direction of the heights that border the course of the Rhine on its way from Coire to Sargans. The closely-cropped, velvet-smooth turf, the abundant woods, sometimes of pine-trees and sometimes of beech and chestnut, give a smiling, park-like aspect to the broad green track, and suggest ideas of peace and plenty.

As the path gradually ascends on its way to Fadara the wealth of wild flowers increases, and adds to the beauty of the scene.

A few brown cow-stables are dotted about the flower-sprinkled meadows; a brook runs diagonally across the path, and some freshly-laid planks show that inhabitants are not far off; but there is not a living creature in sight. The grasshoppers keep up their perpetual chirrup, and if one looks among the flowers one can see the gleam of their scarlet wings as they jump; for the rest, the flowers and the birds have it all to themselves, and they sing their hymns and offer their incense in undisturbed solitude.

[23]

When one has crossed the brook and climbed an upward slope into the meadow beyond it, one enters a thick fir-wood full of fragrant shadow; at the end is a bank, green and high, crowned by a hedge, and all at once the quiet of the place has fled.

Such a variety of sounds come down the green bank! A cock is crowing loudly, and there is the bleat of a young calf; pigs are squeaking one against another, and in the midst of the din a dog begins to bark. At the farther corner, where the hedge retreats from its encroachments on the meadow, a grey house comes into view, with a signboard across its upper part announcing that here the tired traveller may get dinner and a bed.

Before the cock has done crowing—and really he goes on so long that it is a wonder he is not hoarse—another voice mingles with the rest.

It is a woman's voice, and, although neither hoarse nor shrill, it is no more musical than the crow of the other biped, who struts about on his widely-spread toes in the yard, to which Christina Fasch has come to feed the pigs. There are five of them, pink-nosed and yellow-coated, and they keep up a grunting and snarling chorus within their wooden enclosure, each struggling to oust a neighbour from his place near the trough while they all greedily await their food.

"Come, Anna, come," says the hard voice; "what a slow coach you are! I would do a thing three times over while you are thinking about it!"

"Come, Anna!"

The farmyard was bordered by the tall hedge, and lay between it and the inn. The cow-house, on one side, was separated from the pigstyes by a big stack of yellow logs, and the farther corner of the inn was flanked by another stack of split wood, fronted by a pile of brushwood; above was a wooden balcony that ran also along the house-front, and was sheltered by the far-projecting eaves of the shingled roof.

Only the upper part of the inn was built of logs, the rest was brick and plaster. The house looked neatly kept, the yard was less full of the stray wood and litter that is so usual in a Swiss [24] farmyard, but there was a dull, severe air about the place. There was not a flower or a plant, either in the balcony or on the broad wooden shelves below the windows—not so much as a carnation or a marigold in the vegetable plot behind the house.

A shed stood in the corner of this plot, and at the sound of Christina's call a girl came out of the shed; she was young and tall and strong-looking, but she did not beautify the scene.

To begin with, she stooped; her rough, tangled hair covered her forehead and partly hid her eyes; her skin was red and tanned with exposure, and her rather wide lips drooped at the corners with an expression of misery that was almost grotesque. She carried a pail in each hand.

"Do be quick!" Christina spoke impatiently as she saw her niece appear beyond the wood-stack.

Anna started at the harsh voice as if a lash had fallen on her back; the pig's food splashed over her gown and filled her heavy leather shoes.

"I had better have done it myself," cried her aunt. "See, unhappy child, you have wasted food and time also! Now you must go and clean your shoes and stockings; your gown and apron are only fit for the wash-tub! Ah!"

She gave a deep sigh as she took up first one pail and then the other and emptied the wash into the pig-trough without spilling a drop by the way. Anna stood watching her admiringly.

"Well!" Christina turned round on her. "I ask myself, what is the use of you, child? You are fifteen, and so far it seems to me that you are here only to make work for others! When do you mean to do things as other people do them? I ask myself, what would become of you if your father were a poor man, and you had to earn your living?"

[25]

Anna had stooped yet more forward; she seemed to crouch as if she wanted to get out of sight. Christina suddenly stopped and looked at her for an answer. Anna fingered her splashed apron; she tried to speak, but a lump rose in her throat, and she could not see for the hot tears that would, against her will, rush to her eyes.

"I shall never do anything well," she said at last, and the misery in her voice touched her aunt. "I used not to believe you, aunt, but now I see that you are right. I can never be needful to any one." Then she went on bitterly: "It would have been better if father had taken me up to the lake on Scesaplana when I was a baby and drowned me there as he drowned the puppies in the wash-tub."

Christina looked shocked; there was a frown on her heavy face, which was usually as expressionless as if it had been carved in wood.

"Fie!" she said. "Think of Gretchen's mother, old Barbara; she does not complain of the goître; though she has to bear it under her chin, she tries to keep it out of sight. I wish you would do the same with your clumsiness. There, go and change your clothes, go, you unlucky child, go!"

"Go, you unlucky child!"

You are perhaps wondering how it comes to pass that an inn can exist placed alone in the midst of green pasture-land, and only approached by a simple foot track, which more than once leads the wayfarer across mere plank bridges, and which passes, only at long intervals, small groups of cottages that call themselves villages. You naturally wonder how the guests at this lonely inn fare with regard to provisions. It is true that milk is sent down every day from the cows on the green Alps higher up the mountain, and that the farm boasts of plenty of ducks and fowls, of eggs and honey. There are a few sheep and goats, too; we have seen that there are pigs. Fräulein Christina Fasch makes good bread, and she is famous for her delicate puddings and sauces; the puzzle is, whence come the groceries, and the extras, and the wines that are consumed in the inn? [26]

A mile or so beyond, on a lower spur of the mountain ridge that overlooks the Rhine, a gap comes in the hedge that screens an almost precipitous descent into the broad, flat valley. The descent looks more perilous than it is, for constant use has worn the slender track into a series of rough steps, which lead to the vine-clad knoll on which is situated Malans, and at Malans George Fasch, the landlord of our inn, can purchase all he needs, for it is near a station on the railway line between Zurich and Coire and close to the busy town of Mayenfeld in the valley below.

Just now there are no visitors at the inn, so the landlord only makes his toilsome journey once a fortnight; but when there is a family in the house he visits the valley more frequently, for he cannot bring very large stores with him, although he does not spare himself fatigue, and he mounts the natural ladder with surprising rapidity, considering the load he carries strapped to his shoulders.

The great joy of Anna was to meet her father at the top of the pass, and persuade him to lighten his burden by giving her some of it to carry; and to-day, when she had washed her face and hands, and had changed her clothes, she wished that he had gone to Malans; his coming back would have helped her to forget her disaster. Her aunt's words clung to the girl like burs; and now, as they rang in her ears again, she went into the wood to have her cry out, unobserved.

She stood leaning against a tree; and, as the tears rolled over her face, she turned and hid it against the rough red bark of the pine. She was crying for the loss of the dear, gentle mother who had always helped her. Her mother had so screened her awkwardness from public notice that Anna had scarcely been aware of it. Her Aunt Christina had said, when she was summoned four years ago to manage her brother's household, "Your wife has ruined Anna, brother. I shall have hard work to improve her." [27]

Anna was not crying now about her aunt's constant fault-finding; there was something in her grief more bitter even than the tears she shed for her mother; it seemed to the girl that day by day she was becoming more and more clumsy and stupid; she broke the crockery, and even the furniture; she spoiled her frocks; and, worst of all, she had more than once met her father's kind blue eyes fixed on her with a look of sadness that went to her heart. Did he, too, think that she would never be useful to herself or to any one?

At this thought her tears came more freely, and she pressed her hot face against the tree.

"I wonder why I was made!" she sobbed.

There came a sharp crackling sound, as the twigs and pine-needles snapped under a heavy tread.

Anna caught up her white apron and vigorously rubbed her eyes; then she hurried out to the path from her shelter among the trees.

In another minute her arms were round her father, and she was kissing him on both cheeks.

A Startling Face

George Fasch kissed her and patted her shoulder; then a suppressed sob caught his ear. He held Anna away from him, and looked at her face.

It was red and green in streaks, and her eyes were red and inflamed. The father was startled by her appearance.

"What is the matter, dear child?" he said. "You are ill."

Then his eyes fell on her apron. Its crumpled state, and the red and green smears on it, showed the use to which it had been put, and he began to guess what had happened.

Anna hung her head.

"I was crying and I leaned against a tree. Oh, dear, it was a clean apron! Aunt will be vexed."

Her father sighed, but he pitied her confusion. [28]

"Why did you cry, my child?" he said, half-tenderly, half in rebuke. "Aunt Christina means well, though she speaks abruptly."

He only provoked fresh tears, but Anna tried so hard to keep them back that she was soon calm again.

"I am not vexed with Aunt Christina for scolding me," she said; "I deserved it; I am sorry for

myself."

"Well, well," he said cheerfully, "we cannot expect old heads on young shoulders." His honest, sunburned face was slightly troubled as he looked at her. "You will have to brush up a bit, you know, when Christina goes to Zurich. You are going to be left in charge of the house for a week or so."

Anna pressed her hands nervously together. She felt that the house would suffer greatly under her guidance; but then, she should have her father all to herself in her aunt's absence, and she should be freed from those scathing rebukes which made her feel all the more clumsy and helpless when they were uttered in her father's presence.

George Fasch, however, had of late become very much aware of his daughter's awkwardness, and secretly he was troubled by the prospect of her aunt's absence. He was a kind man and an affectionate father, but he objected to Gretchen's unaided cookery, and he had therefore resolved to transact some long-deferred business in Zurich during his sister's stay there. This would lessen the number of his badly-cooked dinners at home.

"I shall start with Christina," he said—"some one must go with her to Pardisla; and next day I shall come home by Malans, so you will have to meet me on Wednesday evening at the old place, eh, Anna?"

She nodded and smiled, but she felt a little disappointed. She reflected, however, that she should have her father alone for some days after his return.

Christina was surprised to see how cheerful the girl looked when she came indoors.

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[29] Rain fell incessantly for several days, and even when it ceased masses of white vapour rose up from the neighbouring valleys and blotted out everything. The vapour had lifted, however, when Fasch and his sister started on their expedition, and Anna, tired of her week's seclusion, set out on a ramble. A strange new feeling came over the girl as soon as she lost sight of her aunt's straight figure. She was free, there would be no one to scold her or to make her feel awkward; she vaulted with delight, and with an ease that surprised her, over the fence that parted the two meadows; she looked down at her skirt, and she saw with relief that she had not much frayed it, yet she knew there were thorns, for there had been an abundance of wild roses in the hedge.

A lark was singing blithely overhead, and the grasshoppers filled the air with joyful chirpings. Anna's face beamed with content.

"If life could be always like to-day!" she thought, "oh, how nice it would be!"

In the Marsh

Presently she reached the meadow with the brook running across it, and she gave a cry of delight; down in the marsh into which the brook ran across the sloping field she saw a mass of bright dark-blue. These were gentian-flowers, opening blue and green blossoms to the sunshine, and in front of them the meadow itself was white with a sprinkling of grass of Parnassus.

Anna had a passionate love of flowers, and, utterly heedless of all but the joy of seeing them, she ran down the slope, and only stopped when she found herself ankle-deep in the marsh below, in which the gentian grew.

This sobered her excitement. She pulled out one foot, and was shocked to find that she had left her shoe behind in the black slime; she was conscious, too, that her other foot was sinking deeper and deeper in the treacherous marsh. There was nothing to hold by, there was not even an osier near at hand; behind the gentian rose a thicket of rosy-blossomed willow-herb, and here and there was a creamy tassel of meadowsweet, but even these were some feet beyond her grasp. [30]

Anna looked round her in despair. From the next field came a clicking sound, and as she listened she guessed that old Andreas was busy mowing.

He was old, but he was not deaf, and she could easily make him hear a cry for help; but she was afraid of Andreas. He kept the hotel garden in order, and if he found footmarks on the vegetable plots, or if anything went wrong with the plants, he always laid the blame on Anna; he was as neat as he was captious, and the girl shrank from letting him see the plight she was in.

She stooped down and felt for her shoe, and as she recovered it she nearly fell full length into the bog; the struggle to keep her balance was fatal; her other foot sank several inches; it seemed to her that she must soon be sucked down by the horrible black water that spurted up from the marsh with her struggles.

Without stopping to think, she cried out as loud as she could, "Help me, Andreas! Help! I am drowning!"

At the cry the top of a straw hat appeared in sight, and its owner came up-hill—a small man, with twisted legs, in pale clay-coloured trousers, a black waistcoat, and brown linen shirtsleeves. His wrinkled face looked hot, and his hat was pushed to the back of his head. He took it off and wiped his face with his handkerchief while he looked round him.

"Pouf!" He gave a grunt of displeasure. "So you are once more in mischief, are you? Ah, ah, ah! What, then, will the aunt, that ever to be respected Fräulein, say, when she hears of this?"

He called this out as he came leisurely across the strip of meadow that separated him from Anna.

She was in an agony of fear lest she should sink still farther in before he reached her; but she knew Andreas far too well to urge him even by a word to greater haste. So she stood shivering and pale with fear while she clasped her bog-stained shoe close to her. [31]

Andreas had brought a stake with him, and he held this out to Anna, but when she tried to draw out her sinking foot she shook her head, it seemed to be stuck too fast in the bog.

Andreas gave a growl of discontent, and then went slowly up to the plank bridge. With some effort he raised the smaller of the two planks and carried it to where Anna stood fixed like a statue among the flowering water-plants. Then he pushed the plank out till it rested on a hillock of rushes, while the other end remained on the meadow.

"Ah!"—he drew a long breath—"see the trouble you give by your carelessness."

He spoke vindictively, as if he would have liked to give her a good shaking; but Anna smiled at him, she was so thankful at the prospect of release.

Rescued

The mischievous little man kept her waiting some minutes. He pretended to test the safety of the plank by walking up and down it and trying it with his foot. At last, when the girl's heart had become sick with suspense, he suddenly stretched out both hands and pulled her on to the plank, then he pushed her along before him till she was on dry ground once more.

"Oh, thank you, Andreas," she began, but he cut her thanks very short.

"Go home at once and dry yourself," he said. "You are the plague of my life, and if I had been a wise man I should have left you in the marsh. Could not your senses tell you that all that rain meant danger in boggy places? There'll be mischief somewhere besides this; a landslip or two, more than likely. There, run home, child, or you'll get cold."

He turned angrily away and went back to his work.

Anna hurried to the narrowest part of the brook and jumped across it. She could not make herself in a worse plight than she was already; her skirts were dripping with the black and filthy water of the marsh. [32]

Heavy rain fell again during the night, and continued throughout the morning, but in the afternoon there was a glimpse of sunshine overhead. This soon drew the vapour up again from the valley, and white steam-clouds sailed slowly across the landscape.

Gretchen had been very kind and compassionate about Anna's disaster; she made the girl go to bed for an hour or two, and gave her some hot broth, and Anna would have forgotten her trouble but for the certainty she felt that old Andreas would make as bad a story of it as he could to her Aunt Christina. But this morning the girl was looking forward to her father's home-coming, and she was in good spirits; she had tried to make herself extra neat, and to imitate as closely as she could her Aunt Christina's way of tidying the rooms; but one improvement suggested itself to Anna which would certainly not have occurred to her tidy aunt; if she had thought of it, she would have scouted the idea as useless, and a frivolous waste of time.

Directly after the midday meal Anna went out to gather a wild-flower nosegay, to place in the sitting-room in honour of her father's return. It seemed to her the only means she had of showing him how glad she was to see him again.

While she was busy gathering Andreas crossed the meadow; he did not see Anna stooping over the flowers, and she kept herself hidden; but the sight of him brought back a haunting fear. What was it? What had Andreas said that she had forgotten? He had said something which had startled her at the time, and which now came pressing urgently on her for remembrance, although she could not distinctly recall it.

What was it? Anna stood asking herself; the flowers fell out of her hand on to the grass among their unplucked companions; she stood for some minutes absorbed in thought.

Andreas had passed out of sight, and she could not venture to follow him, for she did not know what she wanted him to tell her. [33]

A raindrop fell on her hand, and she looked up. Yes, the rain had begun again. Anna gave a sudden start; she left the flowers and set off running towards the point at which she was accustomed to meet her father.

With the raindrop the clue she had been seeking had come to her. Andreas had said there might very likely be landslips, and who could say that there might not have been one on the hillside above Malans? Anna had often heard her father say that, though he could climb the steep ascent with his burden, he should be sorry to have to go down with it. If the track had been partly carried away, he might begin to climb without any warning of the danger that lay before him. . . .

Anna trembled and shivered as she thought of the danger. It would be growing dusk before her

father began to climb, and who could say what might happen?

She hurried on to the place at which she always met her father. When she had crossed the brook that parted the field with the gap from the field preceding it, Anna stood still in dismay. The hedge was gone, and so was a good strip of the field it had bordered.

There had already been a landslip.

A Landslip

Anna had learned wisdom by her mischance yesterday, and she went on slowly and cautiously till she drew near the edge; then she knelt down on the grass, and, creeping along on her hands and knees, she peered over the broken, slippery edge. The landslip seemed to have reached midway down the cliff, but the rain had washed the earth and rubbish to one side.

So far as Anna could make out, the way up, half-way, was as firm as ever; then there came a heap of debris from the fall of earth, and then the bare rock rose to the top, upright and dreadful.

Anna's head turned dizzy as she looked down the precipice, and she forced herself to crawl backward from the crumbling edge only just in time, for it seemed to her that some mysterious power was beckoning her from below. [34]

When she got on her feet she stood and wondered what was to be done. How was she to warn her father of this danger?

She looked at the sun; it was still high up in the sky, so she had some hours before her. There was no other way to Malans but this one, unless by going back half-way to Seewis, to where a path led down to Pardisla, and thence into the Landquart valley, where the high-road went on to Malans, past the corner where the Landquart falls into the Rhine. Anna had learned all this as a child from the big map which hung in the dining-room at the inn. But on the map it looked a long, long way to the Rhine valley, and she had heard her father tell her Aunt Christina that she must take the diligence at Pardisla; it would be too far, he said, to walk to Landquart, and Anna knew that Malans was farther still. She stood wondering what could be done.

In these last four years she had become by degrees penetrated with a sense of her own utter uselessness, and she had gradually sunk into a melancholy condition. She did only what she was told to do, and she always expected to be told how to do it.

Her first thought now was, how could she get help or advice? she knew only two people who could help her—Gretchen and Andreas. The last, she reflected, must be already at some distance. When she saw him, he was carrying a basket, and he had, no doubt, gone to Seewis, for it was market-day in that busy village. As to Gretchen, Anna felt puzzled. Gretchen never went from home; what could she know about time and the distance from the Rhine valley?

Besides, while the girl stood thinking her sense of responsibility unfolded, the sense that comes to every rational creature in a moment that threatens danger to others; and she saw that by going back even to consult with Gretchen she must lose many precious minutes. There was no near road to the valley, but it would save a little to keep well behind the inn on her downward way to Pardisla. [35]

As Anna went along the day cleared again. The phantom-like mists drifted aside and showed on the opposite mountain's side brilliant green Alps in the fir-wood that reached almost to the top. The lark overhead sang louder, and the grasshopper's metallic chirp was incessant under foot.

Father must be Warned

Anna's heart became lighter as she hurried on; surely, she thought, she must reach Malans before her father had begun to climb the mountain. She knew that he would have left his knapsack at Mayenfeld, and that he must call there for it on his way home. Unless the landslip was quite recent it seemed to her possible that some one might be aware of what had happened, and might give her father warning; but Anna had seen that for a good way above Malans the upward path looked all right, and it was so perpendicular that she fancied the destruction of its upper portion might not have been at once discovered, especially if it had occurred at night. No, she was obliged to see that it was extremely doubtful whether her father would receive any warning unless she reached the foot of the descent before he did.

So she went at her utmost speed down the steep stony track to Pardisla. New powers seemed to have come to her with the intensity of her suspense.

George Fasch had every reason to be content with the way in which he had managed his business at Zurich; and yet, as he travelled back to Mayenfeld, he was in a desponding mood. All the way to Zurich his sister had talked about Anna. She said she had tried her utmost with the girl, and that she grew worse and worse.

"She is reckless and thoroughly unreliable," she said, "and she gets more stupid every day. If you were wise you would put her into a reformatory." [36]

George Fasch shrugged his shoulders.

"She is affectionate," he said bluntly, "and she is very unselfish. I should be sorry to send her

from home."

Christina held up her hands.

"I call a girl selfish who gives so much trouble. Gretchen has to wash out three skirts a week for Anna. She is always spoiling her clothes. I, on the contrary, call her very selfish, brother."

George Fasch shrugged his shoulders again; he remembered the red and green apron, and he supposed that Christina must be right; and now, as he travelled back alone, he asked himself what he must do. Certainly he saw no reason why he should place Anna in a reformatory—that would be, he thought, a sure way of making her unhappy, and perhaps even desperate; but Christina's words had shown him her unwillingness to be plagued with his daughter's ways, and he shrank from the idea of losing his useful housekeeper. He had been accustomed to depend on his sister for the management of the inn, and he felt that no paid housekeeper would be able to fill Christina's place. Besides, it would cost more money to pay a stranger.

Yes, he must send Anna away, but he shrank from the idea. There was a timid, pathetic look in the girl's dark eyes that warned him against parting her from those she loved. After all, was she not very like her mother? and his sweet lost wife had often told George Fasch how dreamy and heedless and stupid she had been in childhood. He was sure that Anna would mend in time, if only he could hit on some middle course at present.

The weather had been fine at Zurich; and he was surprised, when he quitted the train, to see the long wreaths of white vapour that floated along the valley and up the sides of the hill. It was clearer when he had crossed the river; but before he reached Malans evening was drawing in, and everything grew misty. [37]

He had made his purchases at Mayenfeld so as to avoid another stoppage; and, with his heavy load strapped on his back, he took a by-path that skirted Malans, and led him straight to the bottom of the descent without going through the village. There was a group of trees just at the foot of the path, which increased the gathering gloom.

"My poor child will be tired of waiting," he thought, and he began to climb the steep ascent more rapidly than usual.

All at once a faint cry reached him; he stopped and listened, but it did not come again.

The way was very slippery, he thought; his feet seemed to be clogged with soft earth, and he stopped at last to breathe. Then he heard another cry, and the sound of footsteps behind him.

Some one was following him up the dangerous ascent. And as his ears took in the sound he heard Anna's voice some way below.

"You cannot climb To-night!"

"Father! father! stop! stop!" she cried; "there is a landslip above; you cannot climb to-night."

George Fasch stopped. He shut his eyes and opened them again. It seemed to him that he was dreaming. How came Anna to be at the foot of the pass if it was not possible to climb to the top of it?

"What is it, Anna? Do you mean that I must come down again?" he said wonderingly.

"Yes, yes; the path above is destroyed."

And once more he wondered if all this could be real.

"Father, can you come down with the pack, or will you unfasten it and leave it behind?"

George Fasch thought a moment.

"You must go down first," he said, "and keep on one side; the distance is short, and I think I can do it; but I may slip by the way."

There were minutes of breathless suspense while Anna stood in the gathering darkness, and then the heavy footsteps ceased to descend, and she found herself suddenly hugged close in her father's arms. [38]

"My good girl," he said, "my good Anna, how did you come here?"

Anna could not speak. She trembled like a leaf, and then she began to sob. The poor girl was completely exhausted by the terrible anxiety she had gone through, and by fatigue.

"I thought I was too late," she sobbed; "it looked so dark. I feared you could not see; I cried out, but you did not answer. Oh, father!"—she caught at his arms—"if I had been really too late!"

Her head sank on his shoulder.

George Fasch patted her cheek. He was deeply moved, but he did not speak; he would hear by-and-by how it had all happened. Presently he said cheerfully:

"Well, my girl, we must let Gretchen wonder what has happened to us to-night. You and I will get beds at Malans. My clever Anna has done enough for one day."

Three years have passed since Anna's memorable journey. Her Aunt Christina has married, and she has gone to live in Zurich; Anna is now alone with her father and Gretchen. She has developed in all ways; that hurried journey to the foot of the mountain had been a mental tonic to the girl. She has learned to be self-reliant in a true way, and she has found out the truth of a very old proverb, which says, "No one knows what he can do till he tries."

[39]

To Girls of the Empire

The Call to Service

BY

Mrs. Creighton

Mrs. Creighton (the widow of one of the most brilliant men who ever adorned the English episcopate) has herself been an ardent worker in literary and social fields. Her appeal to the girls of the Empire lays stress on the joy as well as the privilege of service.

There are those who speak of patriotism as selfish, and bid us cultivate a wider spirit, and think and work for the good of the whole world rather than for the good of our own country. It is true that there is a narrow and a selfish patriotism which blinds us to the good in other nations, which limits our aspirations and breeds a spirit of jealousy and self-assertion. The true patriotism leads us to love our country, and to work for it because we believe that God has given it a special mission, a special part to play in the development of His great purpose in the world, and that ours is the high privilege of helping it to fulfil that mission.

At this moment there seems to come a special call to women to share in the work that we believe the British Empire is bidden to do for the good of the whole world. If we British people fail to rise to the great opportunity that lies before us, it will be because we love easy ways, and material comfort, and all the pleasant things that come to us so readily, because we have lost the spirit of enterprise, the capacity to do hard things, and are content with trying to get the best out of life for ourselves. [40]

We need to keep always a high ideal before us, and as civilisation increases and brings ever new possibilities of enjoyment, the maintenance of that high ideal becomes always more difficult. Nothing helps so much to keep us from low ideals as the conviction that life is a call from God to service, and that our truest happiness is to be found in using every gift, every capacity that we possess, for the good of others.

Girls naturally look forward into life and wonder what it will bring them. Those will probably be the happiest who early in life are obliged or encouraged to prepare themselves for some definite work. But however this may be, they should all from the first realise the bigness of their position, and see themselves as citizens of a great country, with a great work to do for God in the world.

It may be that they will be called to what seems the most natural work for women—to have homes of their own and to realise their citizenship as wives and mothers, doing surely the most important work that any citizen can fulfil. Or they may have either for a time or for life some definite work of their own to do. Everywhere the work of women is being increasingly called for in all departments of life, yet women do not always show the enterprise to embark on new lines or the energy to develop their capacities in such a way as to fit them to do the work that lies before them.

It is so easy after schooldays are ended to enjoy all the pleasant things that lie around, to slip into what comes easiest, to wait for something to turn up, and so really to lose the fruits of past education because it is not carried into practice or used as a means for further development.

This is the critical period of a girl's life. For a boy every one considers the choice of a definite profession imperative; for a girl, unless necessity compels it, the general idea is that it would be a pity for her to take to any work, let her at any rate wait a bit and enjoy herself, then probably something will turn up. This might be all very well if the waiting time were used for further education, for preparation for the work of life. But in too many cases studies begun at school are carried no further, habits of work are lost, and intellectual development comes to a standstill. [41]

We are seeing increasingly in every department of life how much depends upon the home and upon the training given by the mother, and yet it does not seem as if girls as a rule prepared themselves seriously for that high position. The mother should be the first, the chief religious teacher of her children, but most women are content to be vaguely religious themselves whilst hardly knowing what they themselves believe, and feeling perfectly incapable of teaching others.

How to Begin

Yet how are they to fulfil the call which will surely come to them to teach either their own children or those of others if they have not troubled to gain religious knowledge for themselves? The Bible, which becomes each day a more living book because of all the light thrown upon it by recent research, should be known and

studied as the great central source of teaching on all that concerns the relations between God and man. But sometimes we are told that it is less well known now than formerly, when real knowledge of it was much more difficult.

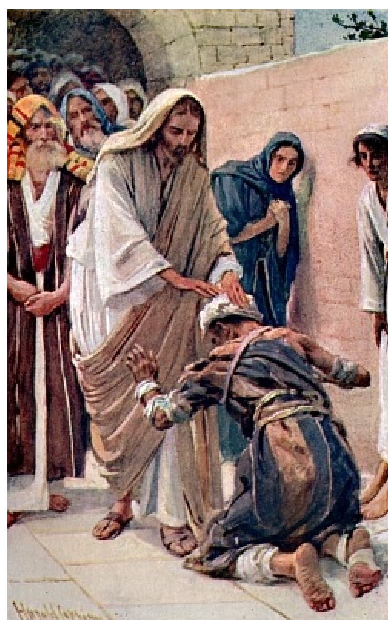
Women are said to be naturally more religious than men, but that natural religion will have all the stronger influence the more it is founded on knowledge, and so is able to stand alone, apart from the stimulus of beautiful services or inspiring preaching. Women who follow their husbands into the distant parts of the earth, and are called to be home-makers in new lands, may find themselves not only compelled to stand alone, but called upon to help to maintain the religious life in others. They will not be able to do this if, when they had the opportunity, they neglected to lay sure foundations for their own religious life. [42]

These thoughts may seem to lead us far away from the occupations and interests of girlhood; but they emphasise what is the important thing—the need to recognise the years of girlhood as years of preparation. This is not to take away from the joy of life. The more we learn to find joy in all the beauty of life, in books, in art, in nature, the more permanent sources of joy we are laying up for the future. We must not starve our natures; we should see that every part of ourselves is alive and vigorous.

It is because so many women really hardly live at all that their lives seem so dull and colourless. They have never taken the trouble to develop great parts of themselves, and in consequence they do not notice all the beautiful and interesting things in the world around them. They have not learnt to use all their faculties, so they are unfit to do the work which they might do for the good of others.

Many girls have dreams of the great things they would like to do. But they do not know how to begin, and so they are restless and discontented. The first thing to do is to train themselves, to do every little thing that comes along as well as they can, so as to fit themselves for the higher work that may come. It is worth while for them to go on with their studies, to train their minds to habits of accurate thought, to gain knowledge of all kinds, for all this may not only prove useful in the future, but will make them themselves better instruments for any work that may come to them to do. It is very worth while to learn to be punctual and orderly in little things, to gain business-like habits, even to keep accounts and to answer notes promptly—all these will be useful in the greater business of life. We must be tried in little things before we can be worthy to do big things.

Meanwhile doors are always opening to us whilst we are young, only very often we do not think it worth while to go in at the open door because it strikes us as dull or unimportant and not the great opportunity that we hoped for. But those who go in at the door that opens, that take up [43] the dull little job that offers, and do it as well as they can, will find, first that it is not so dull as they thought, and then that it leads on to something else, and new doors open, and interests grow wider, and more important work is offered. Those who will not go in, but choose to wait till some more interesting or inviting door opens, will find that opportunities grow fewer, that doors are closed instead of opened, and life grows narrower instead of wider.



"THE SON OF MAN CAME NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO, BUT TO MINISTER."

All the Difference

It is of course the motive that inspires us that makes all the difference. To have once realised life, not as an opportunity for self-pleasing, but as an opportunity for service, makes us willing to do the small tasks gladly, that they may fit us for the higher tasks. It would seem as if to us now came with ever-increasing clearness the call to realise more truly throughout the world the great message that Christ proclaimed of the brotherhood of men. It is this sense of brotherhood that stirs us to make the conditions of life sweet and wholesome for every child in our own land, that rouses us to think of the needs of those who have never heard the Christian message of love. As we feel what it means to know God as our Father, we learn to see all men as our brothers, and hence to hear the call to serve them.

It is not necessary to go far to answer this call; brothers and sisters who need our love and help are round our doors, even under our own roof at home; this sense of brotherhood must be felt with all those with whom we come in contact. To some may come the call to realise what it means to recognise our brotherhood with peoples of other race and other beliefs. Even within our own Empire there are, especially in India, countless multitudes waiting for the truth of the gospel to bring light and hope into their lives. Do we feel as we should the call that comes to us from our sisters the women of India? They are needing teachers, doctors, nurses, help that only other women can bring [44] them. Is it not worth while for those who are looking out into life, wondering what it will mean to them, to consider whether the call may not come to them to give themselves to the service of their sisters in the East?

But however this may be, make yourselves ready to hear whatever call may come. There is some service wanted from you; to give that service will be your greatest blessing, your deepest

joy. Whether you are able to give that service worthily will depend upon the use you make of the time of waiting and preparation. It must be done, not for your own gratification, but because you are the followers of One who came, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

My Dangerous Maniac

BY

Leslie M. Oyler

A very singular adventure befell two young people, who entertained a stranger unawares.

that makes you feel how good it is to be alive and young—and, incidently, to hope that the tennis-courts won't be too dry.

You see Gerald, my brother, and I were invited to an American tournament for that afternoon, which we were both awfully keen about; then mother and father were coming home in the evening, after having been away a fortnight, and, though on the whole I had got on quite nicely with the housekeeping, it *would* be a relief to be able to consult mother again. Things have a knack of not going so smoothly when mothers are away, as I daresay you've noticed.

I had been busy making strawberry jam, which had turned out very well, all except the last lot. Gerald called me to see his new ferret just after I had put the sugar in, and, by the time I got back, the jam had, most disagreeably, got burnt.

That's just the way with cooking. You stand and watch a thing for ages, waiting for it to boil; but immediately you go out of the room it becomes hysterical and boils all over the stove; so it is borne in on me that you must "keep your eye on the ball," otherwise the saucepan, when cooking.

However, when things are a success it feels quite worth the trouble. Gerald insisted on "helping" me once, rather against cook's wish, and made some really delicious meringues, only he *would* eat them before they were properly baked!

The gong rang, and I ran down to breakfast; Gerald was late, as usual, but he came at last.

"Here's a letter from Jack," I remarked, passing it across; "see what he says."

Jack was one of our oldest friends; he went to school with Gerald, and they were then both at Oxford together. He had always spent his holidays with us as he had no mother, and his father, who was a most brilliant scholar, lived in India, engaged in research work; but this vac. Mr. Marriott was in England, and Jack and he were coming to stay with us the following day.

Gerald read the letter through twice, and then looked puzzled.

GERALD LOOKED PUZZLED.

"Which day were they invited for, Margaret?" he asked.

"To-morrow, of course, the 13th."

"Well, they're coming this evening by the 7.2."

I looked over his shoulder; it *was* the 12th undoubtedly. "And mother and father aren't coming till the 9.30," I sighed; "I wish they were going to be here in time for dinner to entertain Mr. Marriott; he's sure to be eccentric—clever people always are."

"Yes," agreed Gerald, "he'll talk miles above our heads; but never mind, there'll be old Jack."

Cook and I next discussed the menu. I rather thought curry should figure in it, as Mr. Marriott came from India; but cook overruled me, saying it was "such nasty hot stuff for this weather, and English curry wouldn't be like Indian curry either."

When everything was in readiness for our guests Gerald and I went to the Prescotts', who were giving the tournament.

We had some splendid games, and Gerald was still playing in an exciting match when I found that the Marriotts' train was nearly due. Of course he couldn't leave off, so I said that I would meet them and take them home; we only lived about a quarter of a mile from the station, and generally walked.

I couldn't find my racquet for some time, and consequently had a race with the train, which luckily ended in a dead heat, for I reached the platform just as it steamed in.

The few passengers quickly dispersed, but there was no sign of Jack; a tall, elderly man, wrapped in a thick overcoat, in spite of the hot evening, stood forlornly alone. I was just wondering if he could be Jack's father when he came up to me and said, "Are you Margaret?"

"Yes," I answered.

"I have often heard my boy speak of you," he said, looking extremely miserable.

"But isn't he coming?" I cried.

Jack does not Come

He replied "No" in such a hopeless voice and sighed so heavily that I was beginning to feel positively depressed, when he changed the subject by informing me that his bag had been left behind but was coming on by a later train, so, giving instructions for it to be sent up directly it arrived, I piloted him out of the station.

I had expected him to be eccentric, but he certainly was the oddest man I had ever met; he seemed perfectly obsessed by the loss of his bag, and would talk of nothing else, though I was longing to know why Jack hadn't come. The absence of his dress clothes seemed to worry him intensely. In vain I told him that we need not change for dinner; he said he must, and wouldn't be comforted.

"How is Jack?" I asked at last; "why didn't he come with you?"

He looked at me for a moment with an expression of the deepest grief, and then said quietly, "Jack is dead."

"*Dead?*" I almost shouted. "Jack dead! You can't mean it!"

But he only repeated sadly, "Jack is dead," and walked on.

It seemed incredible; Jack, whom we had seen a few weeks before so full of life and vigour, Jack, who had ridden with us, played tennis, and been the leading spirit at our rat hunts, it was too horrible to think of!

I felt quite stunned, but the sight of the poor old man who had lost his only child roused me.

"I am more sorry than I can say," I ventured; "it must be a terrible blow to you."

"Thank you," he said; "you, who knew him well, can realise it more than any one; but it was all for the best—I felt that when I did it."

"Did what?" I inquired, thinking that he was straying from the point.

"When I shot him through the head," he replied laconically, as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

If he had suddenly pointed a pistol at *my* head I could not have been more astonished; I was absolutely petrified with horror, for the thought flashed into my brain that Jack's father must be mad!

His peculiar expression had aroused my curiosity at the station, and his next remark confirmed my suspicion.

"You see, he showed unmistakable symptoms of going mad——"

(I had heard that madmen invariably think every one around them is mad, and that they themselves are sane.)

"——so I felt it my duty to shoot him; it was all over in a moment."

"Poor Jack!" I cried involuntarily.

"Yes," he answered, "but I should do just the same again if the occasion arose."

And he looked at me fixedly.

I felt horribly frightened. Did he think I was mad? And I fell to wondering, when he put his hand in his pocket, whether he had the revolver there. We had reached our garden gate by this time, where, to my infinite relief, we were joined by Gerald, flushed and triumphant after winning his match.

After an agonised aside "Don't ask about Jack," I murmured an introduction, and we all walked up to the house together. In the hall I managed to tell Gerald of our dreadful position, and implored him to humour the madman as much as possible until we could form some plan for his capture.

"We'll give him dinner just as if nothing has happened, and after that I'll arrange something," said Gerald hopefully; "don't you worry."

A Knife Trick

Never shall I forget that dinner! We were on tenterhooks the whole time, and it made me shudder to see how Mr. Marriott caressed the knives. I could scarcely prevent myself screaming when he held one up, and, feeling the blade carefully with his finger, said:

"I rather thought of doing this little trick to-night, if you would like it; it is very convincing and doesn't take long."

I remembered his remark, "it was all over in a moment," and trembled; but Gerald tactfully drew his attention to something else, and dinner proceeded peaceably; but he had a horrible

fondness for that knife, and, when dessert was put on the table, kept it in his hand, "to show us the trick afterwards."

I stayed in the dining-room when we had finished; I couldn't bear to leave Gerald, and he and I exchanged apprehensive glances when Mr. Marriott refused to smoke, giving as his reason that he wanted a steady hand for his work later.

He worried ceaselessly about his bag (I began to think the revolver must be there), and when, at last, it came he almost ran into the hall to open it. [50]

Then Gerald had a brilliant inspiration. Seizing the bag, he carried it up to his room, which was at the top of the house. Mr. Marriott eagerly followed, and when he was safely in we shut the door and bolted it securely on the outside.

"That was a good move, Gerald," I cried, heaving a sigh of relief, "we can keep him there till mother and father come home; they can't be very long now; perhaps he won't notice he's locked in for some time."

But unfortunately he *did* notice, for very soon we heard him rattling the door handle, and when no one came (for we had had to explain matters to the maids, whereat they had all rushed, panic-stricken, to the servants' hall), he started banging and shouting louder than ever.

It was an awful time for us; every minute I expected him to burst the door open and come tearing downstairs. Gerald wanted to go up and try to pacify him, but I told him I was too frightened to be left, which, I knew, was the only way of preventing him.

We walked down the garden to see if mother and father were in sight, and then——

"Awfully sorry we missed the train," said a cheerful voice, and *Jack*, followed by another figure, came through the gate!

"You aren't dead then?" was all I could manage to gasp.

"No, rather not! Very much alive. Here's the pater; but first, tell me, why should I be dead?"

Gerald and I began to speak simultaneously, and in the midst of our explanations mother and father arrived, so we had to tell them all over again.

"The question is, who *is* your lunatic?" said father, "and——"

But just at that moment we heard frantic shouts from Gerald's bedroom window, and found the sham Mr. Marriott leaning out of it in a state of frenzy.

He was absolutely furious; but we gathered from his incoherent remarks that he was getting very late for a conjuring performance which he had promised to give at a friend's house. He [51] vowed that there was some conspiracy to prevent him going there at all; first his bag was lost, then some one pretended to be his friend's daughter, whom he had never seen, and finally he was locked in a room with no means of escape!

Our Little Mistake

Then, and only then, did we realise our mistake! The others seemed to find it very amusing and shrieked with laughter, but the humour of it didn't strike Gerald and me any more than it did the irate conjuror, who was promptly released with profuse apologies, and sent in our car to his destination. It transpired that his conversation which had so alarmed me referred only to a favourite dog of his, and I, of course, had unconsciously misled Gerald.

Mr. Marriott proved to be most interesting and amusing, anything but eccentric; but I shall *never* hear the last of my mistake, and to this day he and Jack tease me unmercifully about my "dangerous maniac!" [52]

Jim Rattray, Trooper

BY

Kelso B. Johnson

A story of the Canadian North-West Mounted Police, founded on fact.

"Our Lady of the Snows" resents the title. It is so liable, she complains, to give strangers an utterly wrong idea of her climate. And yet, at times, when the blizzard piles the swirling snow over fence and hollow, until boundaries are lost, and the bewildered wayfarer knows not which way to turn, he is apt to think, if he is in a condition to think at all, that there is some justice in the description.

But there was no sign of the stern side of nature as Jim Rattray made his way westward. The sun shone on the wide, rolling plains, the fresh green of the pasture lands, and the young wheat; the blue sky covered all with a dome of heaven's own blue, and Jim's heart rejoiced within him.

A strapping young fellow was Jim, not long out from the Old Country—the sort of young fellow whose bright eyes and fresh open face do one good to look at. North-country farming in England was the life to which he had looked forward; vigorous sports and hard work in the keen air of the Cumberland fells had knit his frame and hardened his muscles; and his parents, as they noticed with pride their boy's sturdy limbs, and listened in wonder to the bits of learning he brought home from school, had looked forward half-unconsciously to the days when he in his turn would be master of the farm which Rattrays had held for generations. [53]

Bad days, however, had come for English farmers; the Cumbrian farm had to be given up, and Jim's father never recovered from the shock of having to leave it. Within a few years Jim was an orphan, alone in the world.

The Great New World

There was nothing to keep him in England; why should he not try his fortune in the great new world beyond the seas, which was crying out for stout hearts and hands to develop its treasures? He was young and strong: Canada was a land of great possibilities. There was room and a chance for all there. His life was before him—what might he not achieve!

"What do you propose doing?" asked a fellow-voyager as they landed.

"I really don't quite know," replied Jim. "As soon as possible I must get employment on a farm, I suppose, but I hardly know how to set about it."

"There won't be much difficulty about that. All you have to do is to let it be known at the bureau that you want farm work, and you'll find plenty of farmers willing to take you—and glad to get you," he added, as his eyes roved over Jim's stalwart figure. "But have you thought of the police?"

"The police? No—what have I done?"

His friend laughed.

"I mean the North-West Mounted Police. Why don't you try to join it? If they'll take you, you'll take to the life like a duck to water. You could join, if you liked, for a short term of years; you would roam about over hundreds of miles of country, and get a general knowledge of it such as you could hardly get otherwise; then, if you'd like to settle down to farming or ranching, the information you had picked up would be useful." [54]

Jim pondered over the advice, and finally resolved to follow it. He hoped to make his way in the world, and the more knowledge he could gain the better.

A few days later saw him on his way westward, his heart bounding with the exhilarating beauty of the scene. Already the life at home seemed cramped; the wideness and freedom of this great new country intoxicated him.

"Do we want a recruit? No, we don't!" said the sergeant at Regina, to whom Jim applied. "Stay a bit, though; you needn't be in such a hurry. Just out from the Old Country, I suppose. Do you know anything about horses? Can you ride?"

"Yes," said Jim humbly.

"Let's try you," and the sergeant led the way into the riding-school. "We call this one 'Brown Billy,'" he remarked, indicating a quiet-looking horse. "Think you can sit on him?"

"I'll try," said Jim.

Riding Brown Billy seemed ridiculously easy at first. Suddenly, however, without the slightest warning, Jim found himself gripping with his knees the sides of an animal that was dancing wildly on its hind legs.

Jim caught a grin on the faces of the sergeant and some of the other bystanders, and setting his teeth he held on grimly. This was evidently a favourite trick of Brown Billy's, and the sergeant knew it. Well, they should see that British grit was not to be beaten.

Seemingly conquered, Brown Billy dropped again on all-fours. Scarcely had Jim begun to congratulate himself on his victory when Billy's head went down between his forelegs, his hind-quarters rose, and Jim was neatly deposited on hands and knees a few feet ahead.

The grins were noticeably broader as Jim rose, crimson with vexation.

"Thought you could sit him, eh?" laughed the sergeant. "Well, you kept on longer than some I've seen, and you didn't try to hug him around the neck, either. You're not the first old Billy has played that trick on, by a long way. You'll make a rider yet! Come along and let us see what else you can do." [55]

Enrolled

As a result of the searching examination Jim underwent he found himself enrolled as a recruit. He was glad to find that there were among his new companions others who had fallen victims to Brown Billy's wiles, and who in consequence thought none the worse of him for his adventure.

Into the work that followed Jim threw himself with all his might. Never had instructors a more willing pupil, and it was a proud day for Jim when he was passed out of the training-school as a

qualified trooper.

Jim found himself one of an exceedingly small party located apparently a hundred miles from anywhere. Their nearest neighbours were a tribe of Indians, whose mixture of childishness and cunning shrewdness made them an interesting study. These gave little trouble; they had more or less accepted the fact that the white man was now in possession of the domains of their forefathers, and that their best course was to behave themselves. When the presence of the police was required, Jim was almost amused at the docility with which his directions were generally obeyed.

He delighted in the life—the long rides, the occasional camping out on the plains far from any dwelling, the knowledge that he must rely upon himself. He felt more of a man; his powers of endurance increased until he took a positive pleasure in exercising them to their fullest possible extent. Meanwhile, nothing more exciting happened than the tracking and capture of an occasional horse-thief.

Winter set in early and hard. Snow fell until it lay feet deep, and still the stormy winds brought more. One day the sergeant came in with a troubled face.

"Wightman's horses have stampeded," he announced. "They'll be gone coons if they're not rounded up and brought in." [56]

"Let me go, sergeant!" said Jim.

The sergeant shook his head. "It's no work for a young hand. The oldest might lose his bearings in weather like this."

"Let me go, sergeant!" Jim repeated. "If those horses are to be brought in I can do it." There was a world of pleading in his tone, and the sergeant guessed the reason.

"I meant no reflection on you, my lad," said he. "It's no weather for anybody to be out in. All the same, if those horses aren't to be a dead loss, somebody's got to round them up."

Finally Jim got his way. In a temporary lull about midday he set out on his stout horse, well wrapped up in the thick woollen garments provided for such times as these, and determined to bring in those horses, or perish in the attempt.

"They went off sou'-west," shouted the sergeant. "I should——" A furious blast as the gale recommenced carried away whatever else he might have said, and Jim was alone with his good horse on the prairie.

There was no hesitancy in his mind. South-west he would push as hard as he could go. The animals had probably not gone far; he must soon come up with them, and the sooner the better.

Gallantly his steed stepped out through the deepening snowdrifts. Fain would the sensible animal have turned and made his way back to his stable, but Jim's credit was at stake, and no turning back was allowed. Mile after mile was covered; where could those animals be in this storm?

Ha! a sudden furious rush of wind brought Jim's horse nearly to its knees. How the gale roared, and how the snow drove in his face! Up and on again, south-west after those horses!

But which *was* the south-west? The daylight had completely faded; not a gleam showed where the sun had set. Jim felt for his pocket-compass; it was gone! The wind, blowing apparently from every quarter in succession, was no guide at all. Nothing was visible more than a yard away; [57] nothing within that distance but driving snowflakes. Any tracks of the runaways would be covered up in a few moments; in any case there was no light to discern them.

Lost!

However, it was of no use to stand still. By pressing on he might overtake his quarry, and after fright had driven them away, instinct might lead them home. That was now the only chance of safety. Would he ever find them?

Deeper and deeper sank his horse into the snow; harder and harder it became to raise its hoofs clear for the next step. Snorting with fear, and trembling in every limb, the gallant beast struggled on. He *must* go on! To stop would be fatal. Benumbed as he was by the intense cold, bewildered by the storm, with hand and voice Jim cheered on his steed, and nobly it responded.

Suddenly it sank under him. A hollow, treacherously concealed by the snow, had received them both into its chilly depths.

"Up again, old boy!" cried Jim, springing from the saddle, and tugging at the rein, sinking to the waist in the soft snow as he did so. "Now then, one more try!"

The faithful horse struggled desperately to respond to the words. But its strength was spent; its utmost exertions would not suffice to extricate it. The soft snow gave way under its hoofs; deeper and deeper it sank. With a despairing scream it made a last futile effort, then it stretched its neck along the snow, and with a sob lay down to die. Further efforts to move it would be thrown away, and Jim knew it. In a few minutes it would be wrapped in its winding-sheet.

With a lump in his throat Jim turned away—whither? His own powers had nearly ebbed out. Of what use was it to battle further against the gale, when he knew not in which direction to go?

[58]

With a sharp setting of the teeth he set himself to stimulate into activity his benumbed faculties. Where was he? What was he doing there? Ah, yes, he was after those stampeded horses. Well, he would never come up with them now. He had done his best, and he had failed.

Taking out his notebook, as well as his benumbed powers would let him, Jim scrawled a few words in the darkness. The powers of nature had been too strong for him. What was a man to set himself against that tempest?

But stay! there was One stronger than the gale. Man was beyond hearing, but was not God everywhere? Now, if ever, was the time to call upon Him.

No words would come but the familiar "Our Father," which Jim had said every night for longer than he could remember. He had no power to think out any other petition. "Our Father," he muttered drowsily, "which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done. . . ."

The murmur ceased; the speaker was asleep.

They found him a few days later, when the snow had ceased to fall, and the wind swept over the prairie, stripping off the deadly white covering, and leaving the khaki jacket a conspicuous object. The sergeant saw it, and pointed—he could not trust his voice to speak. Eagerly the little band bent over the body of their comrade.

"Why, he's smiling! And see here! he's been writing something in his notebook. What is it?"

Reverently they took the book from the brown hand, and the sergeant read the words aloud:

"Lost, horse dead. Am trying to push on. Have done my best."

"That he did. There was good stuff in him, lads, and perhaps he was wanted up aloft!"

A solemn hush held the party. "'I did my best,'" said a trooper softly at length. "Ah, well, it'll be a good job for all of us, if when our time comes we can say that with as much truth as he!" [59]

Mary's Stepping Aside

BY

Edith C. Kenyon

"How very foolish of you! So unbusinesslike!" cried Mrs. Croft angrily.

Mary sacrificed herself to help another. The renunciation in time brought reward.

"I could not do anything else, Hetty. Poor Ethel is worse off than we are. She has her widowed mother to help; they are all so poor, and it was such a struggle for Mrs. Forrest to pay that £160 for Ethel's two years' training in the Physical Culture College. You know, when Ethel and I entered for training, there was a good demand for teachers of physical culture, but now, alas! the supply exceeds the demand, and it has been such a great trouble to Ethel that she could not get a post, and begin to repay her mother for the outlay. She failed every time she tried to secure an appointment; the luck seemed always against her. And now she was next to me, and I had only to step aside to enable her to receive the appointment."

"And you did so! That is just like you, Mary. You will never get on in the world. What will people say? They are already wondering why my clever sister is not more successful."

"Does it really matter what people think?" questioned Mary, and there was a far-away look in her blue eyes, as she glanced through the window at the wide stretch of moorland to be seen from it. [60]

She had been to London to try to secure an appointment as teacher of physical culture at a large ladies' college. There were several applicants for the appointment, which was worth £100 a year and board and lodging, not bad for a commencement, and she was successful.

The lady principal came out to tell her so, and mentioned that Ethel Forrest, her college friend, was the next to her, adding that the latter appeared to be a remarkably nice girl and very capable. In a moment, as Mary realised how terrible poor Ethel's disappointment would be, she resolved to step aside in order that her friend might have the appointment.

The lady principal was surprised, and a little offended, but forthwith gave Ethel Forrest the post, and Mary was more than repaid by Ethel's unbounded gratitude.

"I can't tell you what it is to me to obtain this good appointment," she said, when they came away together. "Poor mother will now cease to deplore the money she could so ill afford to spend on my training. You see, it seemed as if she had robbed the younger children for me, and that it was money thrown away when she could so ill spare it, but now I shall repay her as soon as possible out of my salary, and the children will have a chance."

"Yes, I know. That is why I did it," Mary said. "And I am happy in your happiness, Ethel darling."

"But I am afraid it is rather irksome for you, living so long with your sister and brother-in-law, although they are so well off," Ethel remarked, after a while.

"That is a small matter in comparison," Mary said lightly. "And I am so happy about you, Ethel, your mother will be so pleased."

It seemed to Mary afterwards, when she left Ethel and went by express to York, where she took a slow train to the little station on the moors near her sister's home, that her heart was as light and happy as if she had received a great gift instead of surrendering an advantage. Truly it is more blessed to give than to receive, for there is no joy so pure as "the joy of doing kindnesse." [61]

But on her arrival at the house which had been her home since her parents died, she found herself being severely blamed for what she had done.

In vain Mary reminded her sister that she was not exactly poor, and certainly not dependent upon her. Their father had left a very moderate income to both his daughters, Hetty the elder, who had married Dr. Croft, a country practitioner, and Mary, who, as a sensible modern young woman, determined to have a vocation, and go in for the up-to-date work of teaching physical culture.

Finding she could make no impression upon her sister, Mrs. Croft privately exhorted her husband to speak to Mary about the disputed point.

That evening, therefore, after dinner, as they sat round the fire chatting, the doctor remarked: "But you know, Mary, it won't do to step aside for others to get before you in the battle of life. You owe a duty to yourself and—and your friends."

"I am quite aware of that," Mary replied, "but this was such an exceptional case. Ethel Forrest is so poor, and——"

"Yes, yes. But, my dear girl, it is each for himself in this world."

"Each for Himself!"

"Is it?" Mary asked, and again there was a wistful, far-away look in her blue eyes. With an effort, she pulled herself together, and went on softly: "Shall I tell you what I saw as I returned home across the moor from the station? The day was nearly over, and the clouds were gathering overhead. The wind was rising and falling as it swept across the moorland. The rich purple of the heather had gone, and was succeeded by dull brown—sometimes almost grey—each little floret of the ling, as Ruskin said, folding itself into a cross as it was dying. Poor little purply-pink petals! They had had their day, they had had their fill of sunshine, they had been breathed on by the soft breezes of a genial summer, and now all the brightness for them was over; they folded their petals, becoming just like a cross as they silently died away. You see," she looked up with a smile, "even the heather knows that the way of self-sacrifice is the only way that is worth while." [62]

There was silence for a few minutes. The crimson light from the shaded candles fell softly on Mary's face, beautiful in its sincerity and sweet wistfulness.

The doctor shook his head. "I should never have got on in life if I had acted in that way," he said.

"You are quite too sentimental, Mary," remarked her sister harshly. "Why, the world would not go on if we all did as you do. All the same," she added, almost grudgingly, "you are welcome to stay here till you get another appointment."

Mary rose and kissed her. "You shan't regret it, Hetty," she said. "I will try to help you all I can while I stay, but I may soon get another appointment."

Fifteen months afterwards there was great rejoicing in Mrs. Forrest's small and overcrowded house in Croydon, because her youngest brother had returned from New Zealand with quite a large fortune, which he declared gallantly that he was going to share with her.

"Half shall be settled on you and your children, Margaret," he said, "as soon as the lawyers can fix it up. You will be able to send your boys to Oxford, and give your girls dowries. By the by, how is my old favourite Ethel? And what is she doing?"

"She teaches physical culture in a large ladies' college in the West End. It is a good appointment. Her salary has been raised; it is now £130, with board and lodging."

That did not seem much to the wealthy colonial, but he smiled. "And how did she get the post?" he said. "I remember in one of your letters you complained that her education had cost a lot, and that she was very unlucky about getting anything to do." [63]

Uncle Max

"Yes, it was so, Max. But she owed her success at last to the kindness of a friend of hers, who won this appointment, and then stepped aside for her to have it."

"Grand!" cried Max Vernon heartily. "What a good friend that was! It is a real pleasure to hear of such self-sacrifice in this hard, work-a-day world. I should like to know that young woman," he continued. "What is she doing now?"

"I don't know," replied his sister. "But here comes Ethel. She will tell you."

Ethel had come over from the college on purpose to see her uncle, and was delighted to welcome him home. He was not more than ten years older than herself, there being more than that between him and her mother. His success in New Zealand was partly owing to his charming personality, which caused him to win the love of his first employer, who adopted him as his son and heir some six years before he died, leaving all his money to him. Ethel had pleasant memories of her uncle's kindness to her when a child.

When hearty greetings had been exchanged between the uncle and niece, Margaret Forrest said to her daughter: "I have been telling your uncle about your friend Mary Oliver's giving up that appointment for you, and he wants to know where she is now, and what she is doing."

"Ah, poor Mary!" said Ethel ruefully. "I am really very troubled about her. Her sister and brother-in-law lost all their money through that recent bank failure, and Dr. Croft took it badly. His losses seemed to harden him. Declaring that he could not carry on his practice in the country without capital, he sold it and arranged to go to New Zealand, though his wife had fallen into ill-health and could not possibly accompany him. He went abroad, leaving her in London in wretched lodgings. Then Mary gave up her good situation as teacher of physical culture in a private school, and took a less remunerative appointment so that she might live with her poor sister, and look after her, especially at nights. I believe there is a lot of night nursing. It's awfully hard and wearing for Mary, but she does it all so willingly, I believe she positively enjoys it, though I cannot help being anxious lest her health should break down."

"She must not be allowed to do double work like that," said the colonial. "No one can work by day and night as well without breaking down."

"But what is she to do?" queried Ethel. "She is obliged to earn money for their maintenance."

"We might put a little in her way," suggested Vernon.

Ethel shook her head. "She is very sweet," she said, "but I fancy she would not like to accept money as a gift."

Max Vernon assented. "Exactly," he said, "I know the sort. But she could not object to take it if it were her right."

IT WAS UNDER A NOBLE TREE THAT MAX ASKED MARY TO MARRY HIM.

Margaret Forrest smiled, scenting a romance. "I will have her here to tea on her next half-holiday," she said; "then you will see her."

But Vernon could not wait till then. He and Ethel made up a plan that they would go to Mrs. Croft's rooms that very evening, in order that he might personally thank Mary for her goodness to his niece.

Mary thought she had never seen such a kind, strong face as his, when he stood before her expressing his gratitude for what she had done for Ethel, and also his sympathy with her troubles, of which Ethel had told him.

That was the beginning, and afterwards he was often in her home, bringing gifts for the querulous invalid, and, better still, hope for the future of her husband, about whom he interested a friend of his, who was doing well out in New Zealand, and looking out for a partner with some knowledge of medicine.

It was at a picnic, under a noble tree, that Max asked Mary to marry him, and learned to his great joy how fully his love was returned.

Mary thought there was no one like him. So many had come to her for help, but only he came to give with both hands, esteeming all he gave as nothing if only he could win her smile and her approval.

So it happened that by the time Mrs. Croft had so far recovered as to be able to join her husband, her departure was delayed one week, in order that she might be present at her sister's wedding.

Not so Foolish after all!

"After all, Mary," she said, when at last she was saying goodbye, "your happiness has come to you as a direct result of your kindness to Ethel Forrest in stepping aside for her to have that appointment. You were therefore not so foolish after all."

Mary laughed joyously. "I never thought I was," she said. "There's an old-fashioned saying, you know, that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

A Race for Life

BY

Lucie E. Jackson

How a plucky girl averted a terrible danger from marauding Redskins.

The McArthurs were fortunate people. Everybody said that Mr. McArthur must have been born with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth, for though he had come to Tulaska with barely a red cent in his pocket, everything he attempted succeeded. His land increased, his cattle increased, his home grew in proportion to his land, his wife was a perfect manager, and his only child was noted for her beauty and daring.

A tall, graceful girl was Rosalind McArthur, with her mother's fine skin and Irish blue eyes, her father's strength of mind and fearless bearing. At nineteen years of age she could ride as straight as any man, could paddle her canoe as swiftly as any Indian, and could shoot as well as any settler in the land.

Added to all this, McArthur was a good neighbour, a kind friend, a genial companion, and a succourer of those in need of help. Thus when it became reported that the Indians had been making a raid upon a small settlement on the borders, and it was likely their next incursion would be directed against McArthur's clearing, the owners of small holdings declared their intention to stand shoulder to shoulder, and fight, if need be, for their more prosperous neighbour.

"I think it must have been a false report. Here have we been waiting, gun in hand, for the last two months, and not a sign of a Redskin's tomahawk have we seen," said Rosalind cheerfully, as she and her parents rose from their evening meal.

"Thank God if it be so," returned her mother.

"We'll not slacken our vigilance, however," was McArthur's answer.

At that instant a rapping at the house door was heard, and McArthur rose.

"It must be Frank Robertson. He'll probably want a shake-down, wife."

"He can have it if he wants it," was Mrs. McArthur's cordial answer.

"Many thanks, but he won't trespass on your hospitality," said the new-comer, a tall, handsome young settler, entering as he spoke. "No, McArthur, I cannot stay. I have come but for five minutes on my way back to the village."

"You can at least sit down," said McArthur, pulling forward a chair. "What is the latest news?"

"Nothing, beyond the report that the Indians appear to have shifted themselves elsewhere."

"Well, that is news," said Rosalind, looking up with a smile.

"You say, 'appear to have shifted themselves,'" said McArthur. "I shall still keep on the defensive. I wouldn't trust a Redskin for a good deal."

"True enough," was the answer. "McArthur, whom could you send to the village for need at a critical time?"

"I doubt if I could spare a man. Every hand would be wanted, every rifle needed, for I know not in what numbers the Redskins might come."

"I could ride to the village," announced Rosalind calmly. "Golightly and I would cover the ground in no time."

"I could go!"

"You, my darling!" Mrs. McArthur ejaculated in horror.

McArthur waved his daughter's words aside.

"You do not know, my child, what danger you would court."

"Of course, Miss McArthur is out of the question," said the young man, and smiled as Rosalind darted an indignant glance at him.

"At any rate, I am at your service if you need me," he continued. "I trust I may not be called out for such a purpose, but if I am, I and my rifle are at your disposal."

"Thanks, Robertson, you are a good fellow," returned McArthur heartily, grasping the young man's hand.

In a few minutes he rose to go. Rosalind accompanied him to the house door.

"Mr. Robertson," she said abruptly, as soon as they were out of hearing, "which would be the shortest cut to the village? By the woods or by the river?" He looked keenly at her.

"You meant what you said just now?"

"Of course I meant it. I—I would do anything to save my father's and mother's lives, and their property, which father has secured by dint of so much labour."

He took her hand in his.

"Rosalind," he said softly, "if anything happened to you, my life would be of no worth to me."

She flushed all over her fair skin.

"It is better to be prepared for an emergency," she answered gently, "and I do not think I would run such a great risk as you and my father think."

"You do not know the Redskin," was the grave answer.

"You heard my father say he couldn't spare a man. How much more use I would be if I brought help than stayed here and perhaps shot a couple of Indians, who might overpower us by their numbers. I was wondering if Golightly and the woods would be a shorter way than my canoe and the river?" [69]

He had both her hands in his, and was looking down into her eyes.

"The woods and Golightly would be the swiftest way to communicate with us in the village."

"Then if need be I shall do it."

"Take the right-hand track straight through the wood, and God protect you, Rosalind. My house will be the first one you will come to. Let me be the first to spring to your aid. No man will step into the stirrup with greater alacrity than I. But, please God, there may be no need for you to go."

He lifted her hands to his lips and was gone.

Two days passed and nothing of moment happened. But on the evening of the third, two men in McArthur's employ entered the house breathless with excitement. Feathertop—an Indian chief noted for the number of scalps which adorned his person—had been seen in the vicinity of the small settlement.

McArthur, with a grim fixedness of countenance, saw to the priming of his rifle for the fiftieth time; and Rosalind, with her father's courage, examined her own weapon, which she had resolved to take with her for safety if Golightly had to be requisitioned.

"Rosalind, those chaps will be on us to-night or to-morrow morning."

It was McArthur who spoke, and Rosalind knew that her own misgivings had taken root also within her father's mind.

"Because of Feathertop?" she asked bravely.

"Yes. He is never lurking about unless he means business."

"Could David and Jim have been misinformed?"

"I don't think so."

"Then, father, I shall ride to the village."

Rosalind's Resolve

McArthur looked at his daughter. He saw her face, he saw her figure. Both were alive with determination and courage.

"Rosalind, you will kill your mother if you attempt to do such a thing." [70]

"Don't tell her unless you are obliged. It is to save her that I do it. Give her a rifle—keep her employed—let her think I am with some of the neighbours. Father, we do not know if we shall be outnumbered. If we are, what will happen? All your cattle will go—your whole property will be ruined, and, worse than all put together, we shall probably lose our lives in a horrible manner."

"I acknowledge all that you say, but one of the men must go. You with your rifle can take his place, and do just as much execution as he can——"

David put his head in at the door.

"We've brought all the live-stock as close to the house as possible. Jim has been stealing round the plantation by the river, and says he has distinctly seen three Redskins on the other side of the river. We must be prepared for an attack this evening."

"David, can you get me Golightly without attracting attention? I am going to ride him at once to the village."

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed David. "Is there no one but you to do that?"

"No. You and all the rest must defend my father and mother. I shall keep on this side of the river, and will go through the wood. If I go at once I may prevent an attack. David, every minute is of value. Fetch me Golightly. Father, I am not of such importance as the men here, but I can ride, and I can defend myself with my rifle if need be."

"Then God go with you, my child."

Only McArthur, and David, and the moon saw Rosalind spring to her seat on Golightly's back. Only the moon saw her with flushed cheeks and beating heart riding for life through the trees of the forest. If only she could get clear of the first two or three miles, she was safe to reach her destination in time.

The track was clearly discernible except when the swiftly-flying clouds obscured the moon's light. The soughing of the wind in the tree-tops, together with the soft springy turf, helped to somewhat deaden the sound of Golightly's hoofs. The good horse scented danger in the air and in the tone of his mistress's voice, and with true instinct galloped through the wood, conscious of the caressing finger-tips which ever and anon silently encouraged him. [71]

"Bang!"

It was unexpected, and Golightly sprang into the air, only to gallop on again like lightning. Rosalind's heart was going pretty fast now. She could see two or three dark forms gliding serpent-like through the trees, but Golightly's rapid progress baulked their aim. Ah, there are some figures in advance of her! Courage, Rosalind, courage! Her rifle is ready.

"Golightly, dear Golightly, save us both," she whispers. And Golightly tosses up his head with a little whinny of comprehension, and, bracing up every nerve, prepares for a rush through that ominous path blocked as it is by two dark figures.

"Bang!"

Rosalind's Rifle speaks

It is Rosalind's rifle this time, and a scream, shrill and piercing, rends the air. One form drops like a stone right across the path. But there is another to dispose of. His rifle is raised. Either Golightly or his mistress will receive the contents of that barrel. But Rosalind's hand never wavers as she points at that upraised arm.

"Bang!"

"Bang!"

The two shots resound almost simultaneously, but Rosalind's is first by half a second. Again a scream rends the air, and yet another, coming this time from the rear. Rosalind's palpitating heart prevents her from glancing about to learn the cause. She knows she has shot the Indian in the right arm, but she does not know, and will never know, that her opportune shot has saved herself and her steed from being fired at from behind as well as in front. For when the Indian's arm was struck, it directed the contents of his rifle away from the point he aimed at. He shot half a second after Rosalind's fire, and killed his chief Feathertop, who was lurking in the background, grinning horribly at his good fortune in taking aim at the back of the paleface and her flying steed. [72]

Over the body of the dead Indian Golightly springs, paying no heed to the savage Redskin who stands aside from the trampling hoofs with his right arm hanging broken at his side. He is helpless, but he may yet do damage to Rosalind's cause. She lifts her rifle in passing him, and aims once more at his retreating form. He springs into the air, and, without a groan or cry, meets his death.

Rosalind has cleared her path from further danger. Ride swiftly though she does, no lurking forms are seen, no gliding figures block her way. But the danger she has gone through has taken all her strength from her. She leans her cheek on Golightly's sympathetic head and sobs out her gratitude to him.

When a foam-flecked steed dashed up to the first house in the village there was great commotion. Frank Robertson, with his mother and sisters, rushed out to find a white-faced Rosalind, spent and nearly fainting, sitting limply on Golightly's back. She had no words to explain her presence. She could only look at them with lack-lustre eyes. But Golightly turned his head as the young man lifted her gently off, and his eloquent eyes said as plainly as any words could say—

"Deal gently with her; she has gone through more than you will ever know, and has played her part bravely."

His comfort was looked after in as great degree as was Rosalind's. For while Rosalind lay on a couch, faint but smiling, and listening to the praises which the women-folk showered upon her, Golightly was stabled and rubbed down by two of Robertson's hired men, and caressed and given a good feed of corn with as many admiring words thrown in as ever his mistress had. [73]

No time was lost in collecting a good body of mounted men, and away they rode with Frank Robertson at their head, arriving in good time to save McArthur's home and family from savage destruction by the Redskins.

Their Last Visit

With the knowledge that their chief Feathertop was killed, the Indians' enthusiasm cooled, and those who could saved their lives by flying to their homes in the mountains. McArthur was never again troubled by a visit from them, and lived to rejoice in the marriage of his brave daughter to Frank Robertson.

The young couple settled within a couple of miles of McArthur's homestead, and as each anniversary of Rosalind's ride came round, it was a familiar sight to see old McArthur standing

up amongst the great gathering of friends to praise the brave girl who jeopardised her life that moonlight night to save the lives and property of those dearest to her. [74]

Which of the Two?

BY

Agnes Giberne

Mittie's love of self might have led on to a tragedy. Happily the issue was of quite another kind.

"It's going to be a glorious day—just glorious! Joan, we must do something—not sit moping indoors from morning till night!"

Mittie never did sit indoors from morning till night; but this was a figure of speech.

"I'm all alive to be off—I don't care where. Oh, do think of a plan! It's the sort of weather that makes one frantic to be away—to have something happen. Don't you feel so?"

She looked longingly through the bow-window, across the small, neat lawn, divided by low shrubs from a quiet road, not far beyond which lay the river. The sisters were at breakfast together in the morning-room, which was bathed in an early flood of sunshine.

Three years before this date they had been left orphaned and destitute, and had come to their grandmother's home—a comfortable and charming little country house, and, in their circumstances, a very haven of refuge, but, still, a trifle dull for two young girls. Mittie often complained of its monotony. Joan, eighteen months the elder, realised how different their condition would have been had they not been welcomed here. But she, too, was conscious of dulness, for she was only eighteen. [75]

"Think of Something!"

"Such sunshine! It's just *ordering* us to be out. Joan, be sensible, and think of something we can do—something jolly, something new! Just for one day can't we leave everything and have a bit of fun? I'm aching for a little fun! Oh, do get out of the jog-trot for once! Don't be humdrum!"

"Am I humdrum?" Joan asked. She was not usually counted so attractive as the fluffy-haired, lively Mittie, but she looked very pretty at this moment. The early post had come in; and as she read the one note which fell to her share a bright colour, not often seen there, flushed her cheeks, and a sweet half-glad half-anxious expression stole into her eyes.

"Awfully humdrum, you dear old thing! You always were, you know. How is Grannie to-day?" Mittie seldom troubled herself to see the old lady before breakfast, but left such attentions to Joan.

"She doesn't seem very well, and she is rather—depressed. I'm afraid we couldn't possibly both leave her for the whole day—could we?" There was a touch of troubled hesitation in the manner, and Joan sent a quick inquiring glance at the other's face.

"No chance of that. We never do leave her for a whole day; and if we did we should never hear the end of it. But we might surely be off after breakfast, and take our lunch, and come back in time for tea. She might put up with that, I do think. Oh dear me! Why can't old people remember that once upon a time they were young, and didn't like to be tied up tight? But, I suppose, in those days nobody minded. I know I mind now—awfully! I'm just crazy to be off on a spree. What shall we do, Joan? Think of something."

"Mittie, dear——"

"That's right. You've got a notion. Have it out!"

"It isn't—what you think. I have something else to say. A note has come from Mrs. Ferris." [76]

"Well—what then?"

"She wants me—us—to go to her for the day."

Mittie clapped her hands.

"Us! Both of us, do you mean? How lovely! I didn't know she was aware of my existence. Oh, yes, of course, I've seen her lots of times, but she always seems to think I'm a child still. She never asked me there before for a whole day. How are we to go? Will she send for us?"

"Yes, but—but, Mittie—we can't both leave Grannie all those hours. She would be so hurt."

"So cross, you mean. You don't expect *me* to stay behind, I hope! *Me*—to spend a long endless day here, poking in Grannie's bedroom, and picking up her stitches, and being scolded for every mortal thing I do and don't do, while you are off on a lovely jaunt! Not I! You're very much mistaken if that is what you expect. Will Mrs. Ferris send the carriage or the motor?"

"She is sending the boat. And her son——"

"What! is he going to row us? That nice fellow! He rows splendidly, I know. I shall get him to let me take an oar. It's as easy as anything, going down the stream. Oh, we must do it, Joan—we really, really *must!* Grannie will have to put up for once with being alone. Is he coming by himself?"

"Yes—no—I mean, he will drop his sister Mary at The Laurels and come on for us, and then take her up as we go back."

"The Laurels? Oh, just a few minutes off. Mary—she's the eldest. When does he come? Eleven o'clock! No time to waste. We must put on our new frocks. You had better tell Grannie at once that we are going. I shall keep out of her way. You'll manage her best."

"But if she doesn't like to be left?"

"Then she'll have to do without the liking! Yes, I know what you mean, Joan. You want me to stay here, and set you free. And I'm not going to do it. I simply won't—won't—won't! It's no earthly use your trying to make me. I'm asked too, and I mean to go."

[77]

"Mittie, you've not seen the note yet. I think you ought to read it. She asks me first—and then she just says, would I like to bring——?"

"It doesn't matter, and I don't want to see! It's enough that I'm invited." Mittie had a quick temper, apt to flare out suddenly. She jumped up, and flounced towards the door. "I shall get ready; and you'd better make haste, or you'll be late."

"And if I find that I can't be spared as well as you?"

Joan's eyes went to Mittie, with a look of grieved appeal. That look went home; and for a moment—only one moment—Mittie wavered. She knew how much more this meant to Joan than it could mean to herself. She knew that she had no right to put herself first, to snatch the joy from Joan. But the habit of self-indulgence was too strong.

"If you choose to stay at home, I shall go without you. It is all nonsense about 'can't'! You can go if you like."

"It is all Nonsense!"

Joan remained alone, thinking.

What could she say? Mittie, the spoilt younger sister, always had had her own way, and always insisted on having it. She would insist now, and would have it, as usual.

That Mittie would go was indeed a foregone conclusion, and Joan had known it from the first. The question was—could she go too? Would it be right to leave the old lady, depressed and suffering, all those hours—just for her own pleasure, even though it meant much more than mere pleasure?

The girls owed a great deal to Mrs. Wills. She was not rich, though she had a comfortable little home; and when she took in the two granddaughters, it meant a heavy pull on her purse. It meant, also, parting with a valued companion—a paid companion—whom she had had for years, and on whom she very much depended. This necessary step was taken, with the understanding that the two girls would do all in their power to supply her place. And Joan had done her best. Mittie seldom gave any thought to the matter.

[78]

In a general way, Joan would at once have agreed that Mittie should be the one to go, that she herself would be the one to stay behind.

But this was no ordinary case. In the summer before she had seen a good deal of Fred Ferris. He had been at home for three months after an accident, which, for the time, disabled him from work; and he had been unmistakably attracted by Joan. Not only had he made many an opportunity to see her, but his mother had taken pains to bring the two together. She liked Joan, and made no secret of the fact. Mittie had often been left out of these arrangements, and had resented it.

For a good while Fred Ferris had been away from home; but Joan knew that he was likely to come soon, and she built upon the hope. She had given her heart to Fred, and she indulged in many a secret dream for the future while pursuing her little round of daily duties, and bearing patiently with the spoilt and wayward Mittie.

And now—this had come!—this intimation of Fred's arrival, and the chance of a long delightful day with him—a day on which so much might hang!

And yet, if Mittie insisted on going, it would probably mean that she would have to give it up. That would be hard to bear—all the harder because Mittie knew at least something of the true state of affairs. She knew how persistently Fred Ferris had come after her sister, and she must at least conjecture a little of what her sister felt for Fred. Nobody knew all that Joan felt, except Joan herself; but Mittie had seen quite enough to have made her act kindly and unselfishly.

[79]

Joan's hopes had grown faint when she left the breakfast-table and went upstairs.

Mrs. Wills spent most of her time in her bedroom, sometimes hobbling across to a small sitting-room on the same floor. She was too infirm to come downstairs.

"Eh? What is it? I don't understand!"

The old lady was growing deaf, and when she objected to what was being said, she would become doubly deaf. Like her younger granddaughter, she had always been accustomed to getting her own way.

"Your Turn now!"

"You want to do—what?" as Joan tried to explain. "I wish you would speak more clearly, my dear, and not put your lips together when you talk. Mrs. Ferris! Yes, of course I know Mrs. Ferris. I knew her long before *you* came here. She wants you for the day? Well, one of you can go, and the other must stay with me. You've got to take turns. That is only reasonable. Mittie went last time, so it is your turn now."

But Mittie never cared about turns.

"I suppose you couldn't for once—just once, Grannie, dear—spare us both together?"

Joan said this with such a sinking of heart that, had the old lady known it, she would surely have yielded. A sick fear had come over the girl lest Fred might think that she was staying away on purpose—because she did not want to see him. But she only looked rather white, and smiled as usual.

"Spare you both! What!—leave me alone the whole day, both of you!" The old lady was scandalised. "I didn't think before that you were a selfish girl, Joan. Well, well, never mind!—you're not generally, I know. But of course it is out of the question, so lame as I am—not able to get anything that I want. That wasn't in the bargain at all, when we settled that you should live with me."

Joan knew that it was not. But it was very hard to bear!

She went to Mittie, and made one more attempt in that direction, ending, as she expected, unsuccessfully. [80]

"It really is my turn, you know, Mittie, dear."

"Your turn? What! because I went to that silly tea last week? As if the two things could be compared!"

Mittie ran to the glass to inspect herself.

"Why didn't you just tell Grannie that you meant to do it, instead of asking whether she could spare you? So absurd! She would have given in then."

Joan might have answered, "Because I have some sense of duty!" But she said nothing—it was so useless.

She debated whether to write a note for Mittie to take, and then decided that she would run down to the river-edge and would explain to Fred Ferris himself why she might not go, not implying any blame to her sister, but just saying that she could not leave her grandmother.

The thought of this cheered her up, for surely he would understand.

But a few minutes before the time fixed for his arrival a message summoned her to the old lady, and she found that for a good half-hour she would be unable to get away. All she could do was to rush to Mittie and to give a hurried message—which she felt far from certain would be correctly delivered.

Then for a moment she stood outside Mrs. Wills's room, choking back the sobs which swelled in her throat, and feeling very sad and hopeless at the thought of all she would miss, still more at the thought that her absence might be misunderstood.

From the window, as she attended to her grandmother's wants, she had a glimpse of Mittie, running gaily down the garden, in her pretty white frock, carrying an open Japanese parasol in one hand, while from the other dangled her hat and a small basket of flowers.

"Oh, Mittie, I wouldn't have done it to you—if you had cared as I do!" she breathed. [81]

When Mittie reached the stream, Ferris had that moment arrived.

He had made fast the painter, intending to run up to the house, and had stepped back into the boat to put the cushions right.

A straight well-built young fellow, he looked eagerly up at the sound of steps; and when Mittie appeared alone, a momentary look of surprise came. But, of course Joan would follow!

Mittie wore her prettiest expression. She dropped her hat into the boat, and he took her parasol, holding out a hand to help, as she evidently meant to occupy her seat without delay.

"Your sister is coming?" he said.

"She doesn't like to leave Grannie. So you'll

"YOUR SISTER IS COMING?" HE SAID.

"Your Sister is Coming?"

have to do with me alone," smiled Mittie. "Such a pity, this splendid day! I did my best to persuade her—but she wouldn't be persuaded."

There was an abrupt pause. Even Mittie's self-complacency could not veil from her his changed face, his blank disappointment.

In that moment she very fully realised the truth that Joan, and not herself, was the one really wanted. But she smiled on resolutely, careless of what Fred might think about Joan's motives, and bent on making a good impression.

"It's the first time I've been to your house—oh, for months and months! I'm *so* looking forward to a whole day there. And being rowed down the river is so awfully delightful. I did try my hardest to get Joan to come, too; but she simply wouldn't, and she asked me to explain."

This only made matters worse. Fred could hardly avoid believing that Joan's absence was due to a wish to avoid him. In Mittie's mind lay a scarcely acknowledged fear that, if she were more explicit, Fred might insist on seeing Joan; and, in that event, that she might herself be in the end the one left behind. She was determined to have her day of fun. [82]

Ferris had grown suddenly grave. He made Mittie comfortable in her seat, cast loose, and took the oars; but he seemed to have little to say.

Almost in complete silence they went to The Laurels. Mittie's repeated attempts at conversation died, each in succession, a natural death.

When Mary Ferris appeared, surprise was again shown at the sight of Mittie alone. Mary Ferris did not take it so quietly as her brother had done. She was naturally blunt, and she put one or two awkward questions which Mittie found it not easy to evade.

The hour on that lovely river, to which she had looked forward as delightful, proved dull.

Fred Ferris had nothing to say; he could not get over this seeming snub from Joan. He attended silently to his oars, and somehow Mittie had not courage to suggest that she would very much like to handle one of them. Mary was politely kind, and talked in an intermittent fashion; but the "fun" on which Mittie had counted was non-existent.

When they reached the landing-place and stepped out Mrs. Ferris stood on the bank, awaiting them. And Mrs. Ferris, though able, when she chose, to make herself extremely charming, was a very outspoken lady.

There was no mistake about her astonishment. Her eyebrows went up, and her eyes ran questioningly over the white-frocked figure.

"What, only Mittie! How is this? Where is Joan?"

Mittie felt rather small, but she was not going to admit that she had been in the wrong.

"Joan wouldn't come," she said, smiling.

"Is she not well?"

"Oh yes; quite well. I did try to persuade her—but she wouldn't."

The mother and daughter exchanged glances. Fred was already walking away, and Mary remarked:

"Joan always thinks first of other people. I dare say she felt that she could not leave Mrs. Wills." [83]

Mittie, conscious of implied blame, grew pink and eager to defend herself.

"She could have come—perfectly well! There wasn't the *least* reason why she shouldn't. Grannie was all right. Joan simply—simply wouldn't!" Mittie stopped, knowing that she had conveyed a false impression, but pride withheld her from modifying the words. "I told her she might—just as well."

Mrs. Ferris began to move towards the house. "It is a great pity," she said. "We all counted on having Joan. However, it cannot be helped now. I hope you will enjoy yourself, my dear. Mary will show you over the garden and the house."

To Mary she added: "The old castle must wait for another time, I think—when Joan is here."

Mittie cast a questioning look, and Mary said, in explanation: "Only an old ruin a few miles off. We meant to have an excursion there this afternoon."

Mittie loved excursions, and could not resist saying so. No notice was taken of this appeal; but

somewhat later she overheard a murmured remark from Mrs. Ferris to Mary.

"No, certainly not—now. Fred will not care to go. He is very much disappointed, poor boy! If only one could be sure that it means nothing!" But Mittie was not meant to hear this.

"Certainly not —now!"

They were very kind to her, and she really had nothing to complain of on the score of inattention. Mary, who happened to be the only daughter at home, took her in charge and put her through a steady course of gardens, glasshouses, family pets, and old furniture—for none of which Mittie cared a rap. What she had wanted was a gay young party, plenty of fun and merriment, and for herself abundance of admiration.

But Fred made himself scarce, only appearing at luncheon and vanishing afterwards; and Mrs. Ferris was occupied elsewhere most of the time; while between Mary and herself there was absolutely nothing in common. Mary, though only the senior by two or three years, was not only clever, but very intelligent and well read, and she had plenty of conversation. But the subjects for which she cared, though they would have delighted Joan, were utter tedium to Mittie's empty little head.

[84]

Before an hour had passed, Mary's boredom was only less pronounced than Mittie's own.

It was so tiresome, so stupid of Joan not to come! Mittie complained bitterly to herself of this. If Joan had come too, all would have gone well. She could not help seeing that she had not been meant to come without Joan, still less instead of Joan.

With all her assurance, this realisation that she was not wanted and that everybody was regretting Joan's absence made her horribly uncomfortable.

When left alone for a few minutes, early in the afternoon, she tugged angrily at her gloves, and muttered: "I wish I wasn't here. I wish I had left it to Joan. I think they are all most awfully frumpish and stupid, and I can't imagine what makes Joan so fond of them!"

But she did not yet blame herself.

Five o'clock was the time fixed for return. Had Joan come it would have been much later.

At tea-time Fred turned up, and it appeared that he meant to get off the return-row up the river. He had engaged a boatman to do it in his stead. Mary would still go, and though Mittie proudly said it did not matter, she wouldn't in the least mind being alone, Mary only smiled and held to her intention.

But long before this stage of proceedings everybody was tired—Mary and Mittie especially, the one of entertaining, the other of being entertained.

Mary had tried every imaginable thing she could think of to amuse the young guest, and every possible subject for talk. They seemed to have arrived at the end of everything, and it took all Mittie's energies to keep down, in a measure, her recurring yawns. Mary did her best, but she found Mittie far from interesting.

[85]

When at length they started for the riverside, Fred went with the two girls to see them off; and Mittie felt like a prisoner about to be released.

She was so eager to escape that she ran ahead of her companions towards the landing-place, and Mary dryly remarked in an undertone: "Mittie has had about enough of us, I think. How different she is from Joan! One would hardly take them for sisters."

Fred was too downhearted to answer. He had felt all day terribly hopeless.

Suddenly he started forward. "I say!—wait a moment!" he called.

A slight turn had brought them in full view of the small boat floating close under the bank, roped loosely to the shore, and of Mittie standing above, poised as for a spring. She was light and active, and fond of jumping. At the moment of Fred's shout she was in the very act. No boatman was within sight.

Perhaps the abrupt call startled her; perhaps in any case she would have miscalculated her distance. She was very self-confident, and had had little to do with boating.

One way or another, instead of alighting neatly in the boat, as she meant to do, she came with both feet upon the gunwale and capsized the craft.

An Upset

There was a loud terrified shriek, a great splash, and Mittie had disappeared.

"Fred! Fred!" screamed Mary.

Fred cleared the space in a few leaps, and was down the bank by the time that Mittie rose, some yards off, floating down the stream, with hands flung wildly out. Another leap carried him into the water.

He had thrown off his coat as he rushed to the rescue; and soon he had her in his grip, holding her off as she frantically clutched at him, and paddling back with one hand.

[86] He was obliged to land lower down, and Mary was there before him. Between them they pulled Mittie out, a wet, frightened, miserable object, her breath in helpless gasps and sobs, and one cheek bleeding freely from striking the rowlock.

"Oh, Mittie! why did you do it?" Mary asked in distress—a rather inopportune question in the circumstances. "We must get her home at once, Fred, and put her to bed."

They had almost to carry her up the bank, for all the starch and confidence were gone out of her; and she was supremely ashamed, besides being overwhelmed with the fright and the shock.

On reaching the house Fred went off to change his own soaking garments, and Mittie was promptly put to bed, with a hot bottle at her feet and a hot drink to counteract the effects of the chill.

She submitted with unwonted meekness; but her one cry was for her sister.

"I want Joan! Oh, do fetch Joan!" she entreated. "My face hurts so awfully; and I feel so bad all over. I know I'm going to die! Oh, please send for Joan!"

"I don't think there is the smallest probability of that, my dear," Mrs. Ferris said, with rather dry composure, as she sat by the bed. "If Fred had not been at hand you would have been in danger, certainly. But, as things are, it is simply a matter of keeping you warm for a few hours. Your face will be painful, I am afraid, for some days; but happily it is only a bad bruise."

"I thought I could manage the jump so nicely," sighed Mittie.

"It was a pity you tried. Now, Mittie, I am going to ask you a question, and I want a clear answer. Will you tell me frankly—did Joan *wish* to stay at home to-day, and to send you in her stead?"

Mittie was so subdued that she had no spirit for a fight. "No," came in a whisper. "I—she—she wanted awfully to come. And I—wouldn't stay at home. And Grannie didn't like to spare us both." [87]

"Ah, I see!" Mrs. Ferris laid a kind hand on Mittie. "I am glad you have told me; and you are sorry now, of course. That will make all the difference. Now I am going to send Fred to tell your sister what has happened, and to say that you will be here till to-morrow."

"Couldn't he bring Joan? I do want her so!"

"I'm not sure that that will be possible."

But to Fred, when retailing what had passed, she added: "You had better motor over. And if you can persuade Joan to come, so much the better—to sleep, if possible; if not, we can send her home later."

Fred was off like a shot. The motor run was a very short affair compared with going by boat. On arrival, he found the front door of Mrs. Wills's house open; and he caught a glimpse of a brown head within the bow-window of the breakfast-room.

If he could only find Joan alone! He ventured to walk in without ringing.

Alone, indeed, Joan was, trying to darn a pair of stockings, and finding the task difficult. It had been such a long, long day—longer even for her than for Mittie.

"Come in," she said, in answer to a light tap. And the last face that she expected to see appeared. "*Fred!*" broke from her. "Mr. Ferris!"

"Fred!"

"No, please—I like 'Fred' best!" He came close, noting with joy how her face had in an instant parted with its gravity. "Why did you not come to us to-day?" he asked earnestly.

"I couldn't."

"Not—because you wanted to stay away?"

"Oh no!"

"Could not your sister have been the one at home?"

Joan spoke gently. "You see, Mittie has never before spent a day at your house. She wanted it so much."

"And you—did you want it, too—ever so little? Would you have cared to come, Joan?" [88]

Joan only smiled. She felt happy beyond words.

"I've got to take you there now, if you'll come. For the night, perhaps—or at least for the evening. Mittie has had a wetting"—he called the younger girl by her name half-unconsciously—"and they have put her to bed for fear of a chill. And she wants you."

Naturally Joan was a good deal concerned, though Fred made little of the accident. He explained more fully, and an appeal to the old lady brought permission.

"Not for the night, child—I can't spare you for that, but for the evening. Silly little goose Mittie is!"

And Fred, with delight, carried Joan off.

"So Mrs. Wills can't do without you, even for one night," he said, when they were spinning along the high road, he and she behind and the chauffeur in front. He laughed, and bent to look into her eyes. "Joan, what is to happen when she *has* to do without you altogether?"

"Oh, I suppose—she might manage as she used to do before we came." Joan said this involuntarily; and then she understood. Her colour went up.

"I don't think *I* can manage very much longer without you—my Joan!" murmured Fred. "If you'll have me, darling."

And she only said, "Oh, Fred!"

But he understood. [89]

A Christmas with Australian Blacks

BY

J. S. Ponder

Here is a story of an out-of-the-way Christmas entertainment got up for a girl's pleasure.

"I say, Dora, can't we get up some special excitement for sister Maggie, seeing she is to be here for Christmas? I fancy she will, in her home inexperience, expect a rather jolly time spending Christmas in this forsaken spot. I am afraid that my letters home, in which I coloured things up a bit, are to blame for that," my husband added ruefully.

"What can we do, Jack?" I asked. "I can invite the Dunbars, the Connors and the Sutherlands over for a dance, and you can arrange for a kangaroo-hunt the following day. That is the usual thing when special visitors come, isn't it?"

"Yes," he moodily replied, "that about exhausts our programme. Nothing very exciting in that. I say, how would it do to take the fangs out of a couple of black snakes and put them in her bedroom, so as to give her the material of a thrilling adventure to narrate when she goes back to England?"

"That would never do," I protested, "you might frighten her out of her wits. Remember she is not strong, and spare her everything except very innocent adventures. Besides, snakes are such loathsome beasts." [90]

"How would it do, then, to give a big Christmas feast to the blacks?" he hazarded.

"Do you think she would like that?" I asked doubtfully. "Remember how awfully dirty and savage-looking they are."

"Oh, we would try and get them to clean up a bit, and come somewhat presentable," he cheerfully replied. "And, Dora," he continued, "I think the idea is a good one. Sister Maggie is the Hon. Secretary or something of the Missionary Society connected with her Church, and in the thick of all the 'soup and blanket clubs' of the district. She will just revel at the chance of administering to the needs of genuine savages."

"If you think so, you had better try and get the feast up," I resignedly replied; "but I do wish our savages were a little less filthy."

Such was the origin of our Christmas feast to the blacks last year, of which I am about to tell you.

My husband, John MacKenzie, was the manager and part proprietor of a large sheep-station in the Murchison district of Western Australia, and sister Maggie was his favourite sister. A severe attack of pneumonia had left her so weak that the doctors advised a sea voyage to Australia, to recuperate her strength—a proposition which she hailed with delight, as it would give her the opportunity of seeing her brother in his West Australian home. My husband, of course, was delighted at the prospect of seeing her again, while I too welcomed the idea of meeting my Scottish sister-in-law, with whom I had much charming correspondence, but had never met face to face.

As the above conversation shows, my husband's chief care was to make his sister's visit bright and enjoyable—no easy task in the lonely back-blocks where our station was, and where the dreary loneliness and deadly monotony of the West Australian bush reaches its climax. Miles upon miles of uninteresting plains, covered with the usual gums and undergrowth, surrounded us on all sides; beautiful, indeed, in early spring, when the wealth of West Australian wild flowers—unsurpassed for loveliness by those of any other country—enriched the land, but at other times painfully unattractive and monotonous. [91]

Except kangaroos, snakes, and lizards, animal life was a-wanting. Bird and insect life, too, was hardly to be seen, and owing to the absence of rivers and lakes, aquatic life was unknown.

The silent loneliness of the bush is so oppressive and depressing that men new to such conditions have gone mad under it when living alone, and others almost lose their power of intelligent speech.

Such were hardly the most cheerful surroundings for a young convalescent girl, and so I fully shared Jack's anxiety as to how to provide healthy excitement during his sister's stay.

Preparations for the blacks' Christmas feast were at once proceeded with. A camp of aboriginals living by a small lakelet eighteen miles off was visited, and the natives there were informed of a great feast that was to be given thirty days later, and were told to tell other blacks to come too, with their wives and piccaninnies.

A large order

Orders were sent to the nearest town, fifty-three miles off, for six cases of oranges, a gross of gingerbeer, and all the dolls, penknives and tin trumpets in stock; also (for Jack got wildly extravagant over his project) for fifty cotton shirts, and as many pink dresses of the readymade kind that are sold in Australian stores. These all came about a fortnight before Christmas, and at the same time our expected visitor arrived.

She at once got wildly enthusiastic when my husband told her of his plan, and threw herself into the preparations with refreshing energy.

She and I, and the native servants we had, toiled early and late, working like galley-slaves making bread-stuffs for the feast. Knowing whom I had to provide for, I confined myself to making that Australian standby—damper, and simple cakes, but Maggie produced a wonderfully elaborate and rich bun for their delectation, which she called a "Selkirk bannock," and which I privately thought far too good for them.

Well, the day came. Such a Christmas as you can only see and feel in Australia; the sky cloudless, the atmosphere breezeless, the temperature one hundred and seven degrees in the shade. With it came the aboriginals in great number, accompanied, as they always are, by crowds of repulsive-looking mongrel dogs.

Maggie was greatly excited, and not a little indignant, at seeing many of the gins carrying their dogs in their arms, and letting their infants toddle along on trembling legs hardly strong enough to support their little bodies, and much astonished when, on her proposing to send all their dogs away, I told her that this would result in the failure of the intended feast, as they would sooner forsake their children than their mongrels, and if the dogs were driven away, every native would indignantly accompany them.

Maggie, with a sigh and a curious look on her face that told of the disillusioning of sundry preconceived English ideas regarding the noble savages, turned to look at Jack, and her lips soon twitched with merriment as she listened to him masterfully arranging the day's campaign.

A Magnificent Bribe

Marshalling the blacks before him like a company of soldiers—the women, thanks to my prudent instructions, being more or less decently dressed, the men considerably less decently, and the younger children of both sexes being elegantly clad in Nature's undress uniform—Jack vigorously addressed his listeners thus: "Big feast made ready for plenty black-fellow to-day, but black-fellow must make clean himself before feast." (Grunts of disapprobation from the men, and a perfect babel of angry protestation from the women here interrupted the speaker, who proceeded, oblivious of the disapproval of his audience.) "Black-fellow all come with me for washee; lubras and piccaninnies (*i.e.*, women and children) all go with white women for washee." (Continued grumbles of discontent.) "Clean black-fellow," continued Jack, "get new shirtee, clean lubra new gowna." Then, seeing that even this magnificent bribe failed to reconcile the natives to the idea of soap and water, Jack, to the amusement of Maggie and myself, settled matters by shouting out the ultimatum: "No washee—no shirtee, no shirtee—no feastee," and stalked away, followed submissively by the aboriginal lords of creation.

The men, indeed, and, in a lesser degree, the children, showed themselves amenable to reason that day, and were not wanting in gratitude; but in spite of Maggie's care and mine, the gins (the gentler sex) worthily deserved the expressive description: "Manners none, customs beastly."

They were repulsive and dirty in the extreme. They gloried in their dirt, and clung to it with a closer affection than they did to womanly modesty—this last virtue was unknown.

We, on civilising thoughts intent, had provided a number of large tubs and soap, and brushes galore for the Augean task, but though we got the women to the water, we were helpless to make them clean.

Their declaration of independence was out at once—"Is thy servant a dog that I should do this thing?" Wash and be clean! Why, it was contrary to all the time-honoured filthy habits of the noble self-respecting race of Australian gins, and "they would have none of it." At last, in despair, and largely humiliated at the way in which savage womanhood had worsted civilised, Maggie and I betook ourselves to the long tables where the feast was being spread, and waited the arrival of the leader of the other sex, whose success, evidenced by sounds coming from afar, made me seriously doubt my right to be called his "better half."

After a final appeal to my hard-hearted lord and master to be spared the indignity of the wash-tub, the native men had bowed to the inevitable.

Each man heroically lent himself to the task, and diligently helped his neighbours to reach the required standard of excellence.

Finally all save one stubborn aboriginal protestant emerged from the tub, like the immortal Tom Sawyer, "a man and a brother."

Well, the feast was a great success. The corned and tinned meat, oranges, tomatoes, cakes and gingerbeer provided were largely consumed. The eatables, indeed, met the approval of the savages, for, like Oliver Twist, they asked for "more," until we who served them got rather leg-weary, and began to doubt whether, when night came, we would be able to say with any heartiness we had had "a merry Christmas."

Clad in their clean shirts, and with faces shining with soap-polish, the men looked rather well, despite their repulsive and generally villainous features. But the women, wrinkled, filthy, quarrelsome and disgusting, they might have stood for incarnations of the witch-hags in *Macbeth;* and as we watched them guzzling down the food, and then turning their upper garments into impromptu bags to carry off what remained, it is hard to say whether the feeling of pity or disgust they raised was the stronger.

After the feast, Jack, for Maggie's entertainment, tried to get up the blacks to engage in a corroboree, and give an exhibition of boomerang and spear-throwing; but the inner man had been too largely satisfied, and they declined violent exertion, so the toys were distributed and our guests dismissed.

When she and I were dressing that evening for our own Christmas dinner, Maggie kept talking all the time of the strange experience she had passed through that day.

A Striking Picture

"I'll never forget it," she said. "Savages are so different from our English ideas of them. Did you notice the dogs? I counted nineteen go off with the first native that left. And the women! Weren't they horrors? I don't think I'll ever feel pride in my sex again. But above all, I'll never forget the way in which Jack drove from the table that native who hadn't a clean shirt on. It was a picture of Christ's parable of the 'Marriage Feast,'" she added softly.

Before I could reply the gong, strengthened by Jack's imperative "Hurry up, I'm starving," summoned us to dinner.

My Mistress Elizabeth

BY

Annie Armitt

A story of Sedgemoor times and of a woman who was both a saint and a heroine.

I committed a great folly when I was young and ignorant; for I left my father's house and hid myself in London only that I might escape the match he desired to make for me. I knew nothing at that time of the dangers and sorrows of those who live in the world and are mixed in its affairs.

Yet it was a time of public peril, and not a few who dwelt in the quiet corners of the earth found themselves embroiled suddenly in great matters of state. For when the Duke of Monmouth landed in Dorsetshire it was not the dwellers in great cities or the intriguers of the Court that followed him chiefly to their undoing; it was the peasant who left his plough and the cloth-worker his loom. Men who could neither read nor write were caught up by the cry of a Protestant leader, and went after him to their ruin.

The prince to whose standard they flocked was, for all his sweet and taking manners, but a profligate at best; he had no true religion in his heart—nothing but a desire, indeed, for his own aggrandisement, whatever he might say to the unhappy maid that handed a Bible to him at Taunton. But of this the people were ignorant, and so it came to pass that they were led to destruction in a fruitless cause.

French Leave

But there were, besides the men that died nobly in a mistaken struggle for religious freedom, others that joined the army from mean and ignoble motives, and others again that had not the courage to go through with that which they had begun, but turned coward and traitor at the last.

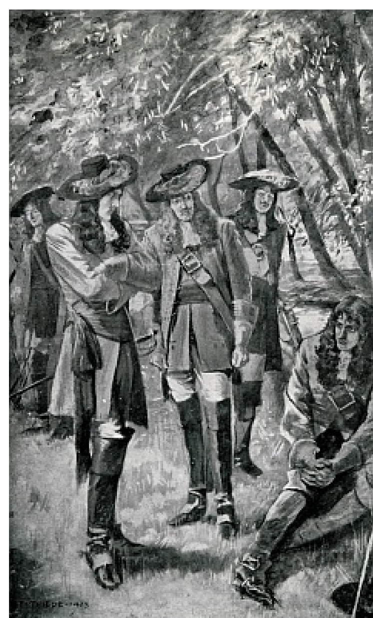
Of one of them I am now to write, and I will say of him no more evil than must be.

How I, that had fled away from the part of the country where this trouble was, before its beginning, became mixed in it was strange enough.

I had, as I said, run away to escape from the match that my father proposed for me; and yet it

was not from any dislike of Tom Windham, the neighbour's son with whom I was to have mated, that I did this; but chiefly from a dislike that I had to settle in the place where I had been bred; for I thought myself weary of a country life and the little town whither we went to market; and I desired to see somewhat of life in a great city and the gaiety stirring there.

There dwelt in London a cousin of my mother, whose husband was a mercer, and who had visited us a year before—when she was newly married—and pressed me to go back with her.



GALLANTS LOUNGING IN THE PARK.

"La!" she had said to me, "I know not how you endure this life, where there is nothing to do but to listen for the grass growing and the flowers opening. 'Twould drive me mad in a month."

Then she told me of the joyous racket of a great city, and the gay shows and merry sports to be had there. But my father would not permit me to go with her.

However, I resolved to ask no leave when the question of my marriage came on; and so, without more ado, I slipped away by the first occasion that came, when my friends were least suspecting it, and, leaving only a message writ on paper to bid them have no uneasiness, for I knew how to take care of myself, I contrived, after sundry adventures, to reach London.

I arrived at an ill time, for there was sickness in the house of my cousin Alstree. However, she made me welcome as well as might be, and wrote to my father suddenly of my whereabouts. My father being sore displeased at the step I had taken, sent me word by the next messenger that came that way that I might even stay where I had put myself.

So now I had all my desire, and should have been content; but matters did not turn out as I had expected. There might be much gaiety in the town; but I saw little of it. My cousin was occupied with her own concerns, having now a sickly baby to turn her mind from thoughts of her own diversion; her husband was a sour-tempered man; and the prentices that were in the house were ill-mannered and ill-bred.

There was in truth a Court no farther away than Whitehall. I saw gallants lounging and talking together in the Park, games on the Mall, and soldiers and horses in the streets and squares; but none of these had any concern with me.

The news of the Duke's landing was brought to London while I was still at my cousin's, but it made the less stir in her household because of the sickness there; and presently a new and grievous trouble fell upon us. My cousin Alstree was stricken with the small-pox, and in five days she and her baby were both dead. The house seemed no longer a fit place for me, and her husband was as one distracted; yet I had nowhere else to go to.

It was then that a woman whom I had seen before and liked little came to my assistance. Her name was Elizabeth Gaunt.

She was an Anabaptist and, as I thought, fanatical. She spent her life in good works, and cared nothing for dress, or food, or pleasure. Her manner to me had been stern, and I thought her poor and of no account; for what money she had was given mostly to others. But when she knew of my trouble she offered me a place in her house, bargaining only that I should help her in the work of it.

"My maid that I had has left me to be married," she said; "'twould be waste to hire another while you sit idle."

I was in too evil a plight to be particular, so that I went with her willingly. And this I must confess, that the tasks she set me were irksome enough, but yet I was happier with her than I had been with my cousin Alstree, for I had the less time for evil and regretful thoughts.

Now it befell that one night, when we were alone together, there came a knocking at the house door.

A Strange Visitor

I went to open it, and found a tall man standing on the threshold. I was used to those that came to seek charity, who were mostly women or children, the poor, the sick, or the old. But this man, as I saw by the light I carried with me, was sturdy and well built; moreover, the cloak that was wrapped about him was neither ragged or ill-made, only the hat that he had upon his head was crushed in the brim.

He stepped inside and shut the door behind him, and this frightened me somewhat, for we were two lone women, and the terror of my country breeding clung to me. There was, it is true, nothing in the house worth stealing, but yet a stranger might not know this.

"Doth Mrs. Gaunt still live in this house?" he asked. "Is she not a woman that is very, charitable and ready to help those that are in trouble?"

I looked at him, wondering what his trouble might be, for he seemed well-to-do and comfortable, except for the hat-brim. Yet he spoke with urgency, and it flashed upon me that his need might not be for himself, but another. [100]

I was about to answer him when he, whose eye had left me to wander round the narrow passage where we were, caught sight of a rim of light under a doorway.

"Is she in that chamber, and alone? What, then, are you afraid of?" he asked, with impatience. "Do you think I would hurt a good creature like that?"

"You would be a cruel wretch, indeed, to do it," I answered, plucking up a little spirit, "for she lives only to show kindness to others."

"So I have been told. 'Tis the same woman," and without more ado he stalked past me to the door of her room, where she sat reading a Bible as her custom was; so he opened it and went in.

I stood without in the passage, trembling still a little, and uncertain of his purpose, yet remembering his words and the horror he had shown at the thought of doing any hurt to my mistress. I said to myself that he could not be a wicked man, and that there was nothing to fear. But, well-a-day, well-a-day, we know not what is before us, nor the evil that we shall do before we die. Of a surety the man that I let in that night had no thought of what he should do; yet he came in the end to do it, and even to justify the doing of it.

I waited outside, as I have said, and the sound of voices came to me. I thought to myself once, "Shall I go nearer and listen?" though it was only for my mistress's sake that I considered it, being no eavesdropper. But I did not go, and in so abstaining I was kept safe in the greatest danger I have been in throughout my life. For if I had heard and known, my fate might have been like hers; and should I have had the strength to endure it?

In a little time the door opened and she came out alone. Her face was paler even than ordinary, and she gave a start on seeing me stand there.

"Child," she said, "have you heard what passed between us on the other side of that door?"

I answered that I had not heard a word; and then she beckoned me to follow her into the kitchen. [101]

When we were alone there I put down my candle on the deal table, and stood still while she looked at me searchingly. I could see that there was more in her manner than I understood.

"Child," she said, "I have had to trust you before when I have given help to those in trouble, and you have not been wanting in discretion; yet you are but a child to trust."

"If you tell me nothing I can repeat nothing," I answered proudly.

"Yet you know something already. Can you keep silent entirely and under all circumstances as to what has happened since you opened the street door?"

"It is not my custom to gabble about your affairs."

"Will you seek to learn no more and to understand no more?"

"I desire to know nothing of the affairs of others, if they do not choose to tell me of their own free will."

She looked at me and sighed a little, at the which I marvelled somewhat, for it was ever her custom to trust in God and so to go forward without question.

"You are young and ill prepared for trial, yet you have wandered alone—silly lassie that you are—into a wilderness of wolves."

"There is trouble everywhere," I answered.

"And danger too," she said; "but there is trouble that we seek for ourselves, and trouble that God sends to us. You will do well, when you are safe at home, to wander no more. Now go to bed and rest."

"Shall I not get a meal for your guest?" I asked; for I was well aware that the man had not yet left the house.

"Ask no Questions!"

"Do my bidding and ask no questions," she said, more sternly than was her custom. So I took my candle and went away silently, she following me to my chamber. When I was there she bid me pray to God for all who were in danger and distress, then I heard that she turned the key upon me on the outside and went away. [102]

I undressed with some sullenness, being ill-content at the mistrust she showed; but presently she came to the chamber herself, and prayed long before she lay down beside me.

And now a strange time followed. I saw no more of that visitor that had come to the house lately, nor knew at what time he went away, or if he had attained the end he sought. My mistress busied me mostly in the lower part of the house, and went out very little herself, keeping on me all the while a strict guard and surveillance beyond her wont.

But at last a charitable call came to her, which she never refused; and so she left me alone, with instructions to remain between the kitchen and the street-door, and by no means to leave the house or to hold discourse with any that came, more than need be.

I sat alone in the kitchen, fretting a little against her injunctions, and calling to mind the merry evenings in the parlour at home, where I had sported and gossiped with my comrades. I loved not solitude, and sighed to think that I had now nothing to listen to but the great clock against the wall, nothing to speak to but the cat that purred at my feet.

I was, however, presently to have company that I little expected. For, as I sat with my seam in my hand, I heard a step upon the stairs; and yet I had let none into the house, but esteemed myself alone there.

It came from above, where was an upper chamber, and a loft little used.

My heart beat quickly, so that I was afraid to go out into the passage, for there I must meet that which descended, man or spirit as it might be. I heard the foot on the lowest stair, and then it turned towards the little closet where my mistress often sat alone at her devotions.

While it lingered there I wondered whether I should rush out into the street, and seek the help and company of some neighbour. But I remembered Mrs. Gaunt's injunction; and, moreover, another thought restrained me. It was that of the man that I had let into the house and never seen again. It might well be that he had never left the place, and that I should be betraying a secret by calling in a stranger to look at him.

[103]

So I stood trembling by the deal table until the step sounded again and came on to the kitchen.

The Man Again

The door opened, and a man stood there. It was the same whom I had seen before.

He looked round quickly, and gave me a courteous greeting; his manner was, indeed, pleasant enough, and there was nothing in his look to set a maid trembling at the sight of him.

"I am in luck," he said, "for I heard Mrs. Gaunt go out some time since, and I am sick of that upper chamber where she keeps me shut up."

"If she keeps you shut up, sir," I said, his manner giving me back all my self-possession, "sure she has some very good reason."

"Do you know her reason?" he asked with abruptness.

"No, nor seek to know it, unless she chooses to tell me. I did not even guess that she had you in hiding."

"Mrs. Gaunt is careful, but I can trust the lips that now reprove me. They were made for better things than betraying a friend. I would willingly have some good advice from them, seeing that they speak wise words so readily." And so saying he sat down on the settle, and looked at me smiling.

I was offended, and with reason, at the freedom of his speech; yet, his manner, was so much beyond anything I had been accustomed to for ease and pleasantness, that I soon forgave him, and when he encouraged me, began to prattle about my affairs, being only, with all my conceit, the silly lassie my mistress had called me.

I talked of my home and my own kindred, and the friends I had had—which things had now all the charm of remoteness for me—and he listened with interest, catching up the names of places, and even of persons, as if they were not altogether strange to him, and asking me further of them.

[104]

"What could make you leave so happy a home for such a dungeon as this?" he asked, looking round.

Then I hung my head, and reddened foolishly, but he gave a loud laugh and said, "I can well understand. There was some country lout that your father would have wedded you to. That is the way with the prettiest maidens."

"Tom Windham was no country lout," I answered proudly; upon which he leaned forward and asked, "What name was that you said? Windham? and from Westover? Is he a tall fellow with straw-coloured hair and a cut over his left eye?"

"He got it in a good cause," I answered swiftly; "have you seen him?"

"Yes, lately. It is the same. Lucky fellow! I would I were in his place now." And he fell straightway into a moody taking, looking down as if he had forgotten me.

"Sir, do you say so?" I stammered foolishly, "when—when——"

"When you have run away from him? Not for that, little maid;" and he broke again into a laugh that had mischief in it. "But because when we last met he was in luck and I out of it, yet we guessed it not at the time."

"I am glad he is doing well," I said proudly.

"Then should you be sorry for me that am in trouble," he answered. "For I have no home now, nor am like to have, but must go beyond seas and begin a new life as best I may."

"I am indeed sorry, for it is sad to be alone. If Mrs. Gaunt had not been kind to me——"

Interrupted

"And to me," he interrupted, "we should never have met. She is a good woman, your mistress Gaunt."

"Yet, I have heard that beyond seas there are many diversions," I answered, to turn the talk from myself, seeing that he was minded to be too familiar. [105]

"For those that start with good company and pleasant companions. If I had a pleasant companion, one that would smile upon me with bright eyes when I was sad, and scold me with her pretty lips when I went astray—for there is nothing like a pretty Puritan for keeping a careless man straight."

"Oh, sir!" I cried, starting to my feet as he put his hand across the deal table to mine; and then the door opened and Elizabeth Gaunt came in.

"Sir," she said, "you have committed a breach of hospitality in entering a chamber to which I have never invited you. Will you go back to your own?"

He bowed with a courteous apology and muttered something about the temptation being too great. Then he left us alone.

"Child," she said to me, "has that man told you anything of his own affairs?"

"Only that he is in trouble, and must fly beyond seas."

"Pray God he may go quickly," she said devoutly. "I fear he is no man to be trusted."

"Yet you help him," I answered.

"I help many that I could not trust," she said with quietness; "they have the more need of help." And in truth I know that much of her good work was among those evil-doers that others shrank from.

"This man seems strong enough to help himself," I said.

"Would that he may go quickly," was all her answer. "If the means could but be found!"

Then she spoke to me with great urgency, commanding me to hold no discourse with him nor with any concerning him.

I did my best to fulfil her bidding, yet it was difficult; for he was a man who knew the world and how to take his own way in it. He contrived more than once to see me, and to pay a kind of court to me, half in jest and half in earnest; so that I was sometimes flattered and sometimes angered, and sometimes frighted. [106]

Then other circumstances happened unexpectedly, for I had a visitor that I had never looked to see there.

I kept indoors altogether, fearing to be questioned by the neighbours; but on a certain afternoon there came a knocking, and when I went to open Tom Windham walked in.

I gave a cry of joy, because the sight of an old friend was pleasant in that strange place, and it was not immediately that I could recover myself and ask what his business was.

"I came to seek you," he said, "for I had occasion to leave my own part of the country for the present."

Looking at him, I saw that he was haggard and strange, and had not the confidence that was his formerly.

"There has been a rising there," I answered him, "and trouble among many?"

"Much trouble," he said with gloom. Then he fell to telling me how such of the neighbours were dead, and others were in hiding, while there were still more that went about their work in fear for their lives, lest any should inform against them.

"Your father's brother was taken on Sedgemoor with a pike in his hand," he added, "and your father has been busy ever since, raising money to buy his pardon—for they say that money can do much."

"That is ill news, indeed," I said.

"I have come to London on my own affairs, and been to seek you at your cousin Alstree's. When I learnt of the trouble that had befallen I followed you to this house, and right glad I am that you are safe with so good a woman as Mrs. Gaunt."

"But why should you be in London when the whole countryside at home is in gaol or in mourning? Have you no friend to help? Did you sneak away to be out of it all?" I asked with the silly petulance of a maid that knows nothing and will say anything.

"Yes," he said, hanging his head like one ashamed, "I sneaked

away to be out of it all."

"LOOKING AT HIM, I SAW THAT HE WAS HAGGARD AND STRANGE."

It vexed me to see him so, and I went on in a manner that it pleased me little afterwards to remember. "You, that talked so of the Protestant cause! you, that were ready to fight against Popery! you were not one of those that marched for Bristol or fought at Sedgemoor?"

"No," he said, "I did neither of these things."

"Yet you have run away from the sight of your neighbours' trouble—lest, I suppose, you should anyways be involved in it. Well, 'twas a man's part!"

He was about to answer me when we both started to hear a sound in the house. There was a foot on the stairs that I knew well. Tom turned aside and listened, for we had now withdrawn to the kitchen.

"That is a man's tread," he said; "I thought you lived alone with Mrs. Elizabeth Gaunt."

"Mrs. Gaunt spends her life in good works," I answered, "and shows kindness to others beside me."

I raised my voice in hopes that the man might hear me and come no nearer, but the stupid fellow had waxed so confident that he came right in and stood amazed.

"You!" he said; and Tom answered, "You!"

"You!"

So they stood and glared at one another.

"I thought you were in a safe place," said Tom, swinging round to me.

"She is in no danger from me," said the man.

"Are you so foolish as to think so?" asked Tom.

"If you keep your mouth shut she is in no danger," was the answer.

"That may be," said Tom. Yet he turned to me and said, "You must come away from here."

"I have nowhere to go to—and I will not leave Mrs. Gaunt."

"I am myself going away," the man said.

"How soon?"

"To-night maybe; to-morrow night at farthest."

"'Tis a great danger," said Tom, "and I thought you so safe." Again he spoke to me.

"Is there danger from *you?*" the man asked.

"Do you take me for a scoundrel?" was the wrathful reply.

"A man will do much to keep his skin whole."

"There are some things no man will do that is a man and no worse."

"Truly you might have easily been in my place; and you would not inform against a comrade?"

"I should be a black traitor to do it."

Yet there was a blacker treachery possible, such as we none of us conceived the very nature of, not even the man that had the heart to harbour it afterwards.

Tom would not leave me until Mrs. Gaunt came in, and then they had a private talk together. She begged him to come to the house no more at present, because of the suspicions that even so innocent a visitor might bring upon it at that time of public disquiet.

"I shall contrive to get word to her father that he would do well to come and fetch her," he said, in my hearing, and she answered that he could not contrive a better thing.

The man that, as I now understood, we had in hiding went out that night after it was dark, but he came back again; and he did so on the night that followed. Mrs. Gaunt, perceiving that she could not altogether keep him from my company, and that the hope of his safe departure grew less, began to show great uneasiness.

"I see not how I am to get away," the man said gloomily when he found occasion for a word with me; "and the danger increases each day. Yet there is one way—one way."

"Why not take it and go?" I asked lightly.

"I may take it yet. A man has but one life." He spoke savagely and morosely; for his manner

was now altered, and he paid me no more compliments.

There came a night on which he went out and came back no more.

"I trust in God," said Mrs. Gaunt, who used this word always in reverence and not lightly, "that he has made his escape and not fallen into the hands of his enemies." [109]

The house seemed lighter because he was gone, and we went about our work cheerfully. Later, when some strange men came to the door—as I, looking through an upper window, could see—Mrs. Gaunt opened to them smiling, for the place was now ready to be searched, and there was none to give any evidence who the man was that had lately hidden there.

Arrested

But there was no search. The men had come for Elizabeth Gaunt herself, and they told her, in my hearing, that she was accused of having given shelter to one of Monmouth's men, and the punishment of this crime was death.

It did not seem to me at first possible that such a woman as Elizabeth Gaunt, that had never concerned herself with plots or politics, but spent her life wholly in good works, should be taken up as a public enemy and so treated only because she had given shelter to a man that had fled for his life. Yet this was, as I now learnt, the law. But there still seemed no possibility of any conviction, for who was there to give witness against her of the chief fact, namely, that she had known the man she sheltered to be one that had fought against the King? Her house was open always to those that were in trouble or danger, and no question asked. There were none of her neighbours that would have spied upon her, seeing that she had the reputation of a saint among them; and none to whom she had given her confidence. She had withheld it even from me, nor could I certainly say that she had the knowledge that was charged against her. For Windham was out of the way now—on my business, as I afterwards discovered; and if he had been nigh at hand he would have had more wisdom than to show himself at this juncture.

When I was taken before the judge, and, terrified as I was, questioned with so much roughness that I suspected a desire to fright me further, so that I might say whatever they that questioned me desired, even then they could, happily, discover nothing that told against my mistress, because I knew nothing. [110]

In spite of all my confusion and distress, I uttered no word that could be used against Elizabeth Gaunt.

I saw now her wise and kind care of me, in that she had not put me into the danger she was in herself. It seemed too that she must escape, seeing that there was none to give witness against her.

And then the truth came out, that the villain himself, tempted by the offer of the King to pardon those rebels that should betray their entertainers, had gone of his own accord and bought his safety at the cost of her life that had sheltered and fed him.

When the time came that he must give his evidence, the villain stepped forward with a swaggering impudence that ill-concealed his secret shame, and swore not only that Elizabeth Gaunt had given him shelter, but moreover that she had done it knowing who he was and where he came from. And so she was condemned to death, and, in the strange cruelty of the law, because she was a woman and adjudged guilty of treason, she must be burnt alive.

She had no great friends to help her, no money with which to bribe the wicked court; yet I could not believe that a King who called himself a Christian—though of that cruel religion that has since hunted so many thousands of the best men out of France, or tortured them in their homes there—could abide to let a woman die, only because she had been merciful to a man that was his enemy. I went about like one distracted, seeking help where there was no help, and it was only when I went to the gaol and saw Elizabeth herself—which I was permitted to do for a farewell—that I found any comfort.

"We must all die one day," she said, "and why not now, in a good cause?"

"Is it a good cause," I cried, "to die for one that is a coward, a villain, a traitor?" [111]

"Nay," she answered, "you mistake. I die for the cause of charity. I die to fulfil my Master's command of kindness and mercy."

"But the man was unworthy," I repeated.

"What of that? The love is worthy that would have helped him; the charity is worthy that would have served him. Gladly do I die for having lived in love and charity. They are the courts of God's holy house. They are filled full of peace and joy. In their peace and joy may I abide until God receives me, unworthy, into His inner temple."

"But the horror of the death! Oh, how can you bear it?"

"God will show me how when the time comes," she said, with the simplicity of a perfect faith.

Death by Fire

And of a truth He did show her; for they that stood by her at the last testified how her high courage did not fail; no, nor her joy either; for she laid the straw about her cheerfully for her burning, and thanked God that she was permitted to die in this cruel manner for a religion that was all love.

I could not endure to watch that which she could suffer joyfully, but at first I remained in the outskirts of the crowd. When I pressed forward after and saw her bound there—she that had sat at meals with me and lain in my bed at night—and that they were about to put a torch to the faggots and kindle them, I fell back in a swoon. Some that were merciful pulled me out of the throng, and cast water upon me; and William Penn the Quaker, that stood by (whom I knew by sight—and a strange show this was that he had come with the rest to look upon), spoke to me kindly, and bid me away to my home, seeing that I had no courage for such dreadful sights.

So I hurried away, ashamed of my own cowardice, and weeping sorely, leaving behind me the tumult of the crowd, and smelling in the air the smoke of the kindled faggots. I put my fingers in my ears and ran back to the empty house: there to fall on my knees, to pray to God for mercy for myself, and to cry aloud against the cruelty of men. [112]

Then there happened a thing which I remember even now with shame.

The man who had betrayed my mistress came disguised (for he was now at liberty to fly from the anger of the populace and the horror of his friends) and he begged me to go with him and to share his fortunes, telling me that he feared solitude above everything, and crying to me to help him against his own dreadful thoughts.

I answered him with horror and indignation; but he said I should rather pity him, seeing that many another man would have acted so in his place; and others might have been in his place easily enough.

"For," said he, "your friend Windham was among those that came to take service under the Duke and had to be sent away because there were no more arms. He was sorely disappointed that he could not join us."

"Then," said I suddenly, "this was doubtless the reason why he fled the country—lest any should inform against him."

"That is so," he answered; "and a narrow escape he has had; for if he had fought as he desired he might well have been in my place this day."

"In Elizabeth Gaunt's rather!" I answered. "He would himself have died at the stake before he could have been brought to betray the woman that had helped him."

"You had a poorer opinion of him a short while ago."

"I knew not the world. I knew not men. I knew not *you*. Go! Go! Take away your miserable life —for which two good and useful lives have been given—and make what you can of it. I would—coward as I am—go back to my mistress and die with her rather than have any share in it!"

He tarried no more, and I was left alone. Not a creature came near me. It may be that my neighbours had seen him enter, and thought of me with horror as a condoner of his crime; it may be that they were afraid to meddle with a house that had fallen into so terrible a trouble; or that the frightful hurricane that burst forth and raged that day (as if to show that God's anger was aroused and His justice, though delayed, not forgotten) kept them trembling in their houses. [113]

A Knocking at Nightfall

What would have befallen me if I had been left long alone in that great and evil city I know not, for I had no wits left to make any plans for myself. At nightfall, however, there came once more a knocking, and when I opened the door my father stood on the threshold. There seemed no strangeness in his presence, and I fell into his arms weeping, so that he, seeing how grievous had been my punishment, forbore to make any reproach.

The next day began our journey home, and I have never since returned to London; but when I got back to the place I had so foolishly left I found it sadder than before. Many friends were gone away or dead. Some honest lads, with whom I had jested at fair-times, hung withering on the ghastly gallows by the wayside; others lay in unknown graves; others languished in gaol or on board ship. My father's own brother, though his life was spared, had been sent away to the plantations to be sold, and to work as a slave.

It was some time before Tom Windham—that had, at considerable risk to himself, sent my father to fetch me—ventured to settle again in his old place; and for a long time after that he was shy of addressing me.

But I was changed now as much as he was. I had seen what the world was, and knew the value of an honest love in it. So that, in the end, we came to an understanding, and have been married these many years. [114]

Girl Life in Canada

BY

What is girl life like in newer Canada—in lands to which so many of our brothers are going just now? This article—written in the Far North-West—supplies the answer.

If you leave out France, Canada is as large as all Europe; which means that the girls of our Dominion live under climatic, domestic, and social conditions that are many and varied. It is of the girls in the newer provinces I shall write—those provinces known as "North-West Canada"—who reside in the country adjacent to some town or village.

It is true that many girls who come here with their fathers and mothers often live a long distance from a town or even a railroad.

Where I live at Edmonton, the capital of the Province of Alberta, almost every day in the late winter we see girls starting off to the Peach River district, which lies to the north several hundred miles from a railroad.

A Travelling House

How do they travel? You could never guess, so I may as well tell you. They travel in a house—a one-roomed house. It is built on a sled and furnished with a stove, a table that folds against the wall, a cupboard for food and dishes, nails for clothing, and a box for toilet accessories. Every available inch is stored with supplies, so that every one must perforce sleep on the floor. This family bed is, however, by no means uncomfortable, for the "soft side of the board" is piled high with fur rugs and four-point blankets. (Yes, if you remind me I'll tell you by and by what a "four-point" blanket is.)

The entrance to the house is from the back, and the window is in front, through a slide in which the lines extend to the heads of the horses or the awkward, stumbling oxen.

You must not despise the oxen, or say, "A pretty, team for a Canadian girl!" for, indeed, they are most reliable animals, and not nearly so delicate as horses, nor so hard to feed—and they never, never run away. Besides—and here's the rub—you can always eat the oxen should you ever want to, and popular prejudice does not run in favour of horseflesh.

Oh, yes! I said I would tell you about "four-point" blankets. They are the blankets that have been manufactured for nearly three hundred years by "the Honourable Company of Gentlemen Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay," known for the sake of conciseness as the "H.B. Company." These blankets are claimed to be the best in the world, and weigh from eight to ten pounds. The Indians, traders, trappers, boatmen, and pioneers in the North use no others. They are called "four-point" because of four black stripes at one corner. There are lighter blankets of three and a half points, which points are indicated in the same way. By these marks an Indian knows exactly what value he is getting in exchange for his precious peltry.

After travelling for three or four weeks in this gipsy fashion, mayhap getting a peep at a moose, a wolf, or even a bear (to say nothing of such inconsequential fry as ermine, mink, beaver, and otter), the family arrive at their holding of 160 acres.

It does not look very pleasant, this holding. The snow is just melting, and the landscape is dreary enough on every side, for as yet Spring has not even suggested that green is the colour you may expect to see in Nature's fashion-plate. Not she!

But here's the point. Look you here! the house is already built for occupancy, and has only to be moved from the sled to the ground. There is no occasion for a plumber or gasfitter either, and as for water and fuel, they are everywhere to be had for the taking.

Presently other rooms will be added of lumber or logs, and a cellar excavated. But who worries about these things when they have just become possessors of 160 statute acres of land that have to be prepared for grain and garden stuff? Who, indeed?

Here is where the girl comes in. She must learn to bake bread and cakes, how to dress game and fish, and how to make bacon appetising twice a day. She must "set" the hens so that there may be "broilers" against Thanksgiving Day, and eggs all the year round. She has to sow the lettuces, radishes, and onions for succulent salads; and always she must supply sunshine and music, indoors and out, for dad and mother and the boys.

Perhaps you think she is not happy, but you are sadly mistaken. She is busy all day and sleepy all night. She knows that after a while a railroad is coming in here, and there will be work and money for men and teams, which means the establishment of a town near by, where you may purchase all kinds of household comforts and conveniences, to say nothing of pretty blouses, hats, and other "fixings." Oh, she knows it, the minx! She is the kind of a girl Charles Wagner describes as putting "witchery into a ribbon and genius into a stew."

But let us take a look at the girl who lives in the more settled parts of the country, near a town.

If she be ambitious, or anxious to help the home-folk, she will want to become a teacher, a bookkeeper, Civil Service employee, or a stenographer. To accomplish this end, she drives to town every day to attend the High School or Business College. Or perhaps she may move into town for the school terms.

Of all these occupations, that of the teacher is most popular. Teachers, in these new provinces, are in great demand, for the supply is entirely inadequate. As a result, they are especially well

paid.

If the teacher is hard to get, she is also hard to hold; for the bachelor population being largely in the majority, there are many flattering inducements of a matrimonial character held out to the girl teacher to settle down permanently with a young farmer, doctor, real estate agent, lawyer, or merchant. You could never believe what inducements these sly fellows hold out. Never!

In town our girls find many diversions. She may skate, ride, play golf, basket-ball, or tennis, according as her purse or preference may dictate.

If there be no municipal public library, or reading-room in connection with the Young Women's Christian Association, she may borrow books from a stationer's lending-library for a nominal sum, so that none of her hours need be unoccupied or unprofitable.

Young Men and Maidens

In Canadian towns and villages the Church-life is of such a nature that every opportunity is given young girls to become acquainted with others of their own age. There are literary, temperance, missionary, and social clubs in connection with them, some one of which meets almost every night. In the winter the clubs have sleigh-rides and suppers, and in the summer lawn-socials and picnics much as they do in England, or in any part of the British Isles.

Compared with girls in the older countries, it is my opinion that the Canadian lassie of the North-West Provinces has a keener eye to the material side of life. This is only a natural outcome of the commercial atmosphere in which she lives.

She sees her father, or her friends, buying lots in some new town site, or in a new subdivision of some city, and, with an eye to the main chance, she desires to follow their example. These lots can be purchased at from £10 to £100, and by holding them for from one to five years they double or treble in value as the places become populated. [118]

As a result, nearly all the girls employed in Government offices, or as secretaries, teachers, or other positions where the salaries are fairly generous, manage to save enough money to purchase some lots to hold against a rise. After investing and reinvesting several times, our girl soon has a financial status of her own and secures a competency. She has no time for nervous prostration or moods, but is alert and wideawake all the time.

Does she marry? Oh, yes! But owing to her financial independence, marriage is in no sense of the word a "Hobson's choice," but is generally guided entirely by heart and conscience, as, indeed, it always should be.

Some of the girls who come from Europe or the British Isles save their dollars to enable the rest of the family to come out to Canada.

"Wee Maggie," a waitress in a Winnipeg restaurant, told me the other day that in three years she had saved enough to bring her aged father and mother over from Scotland and to furnish a home for them.

Still other girls engage in fruit-farming in British Columbia, or in poultry-raising; but these are undertakings that require some capital to start with.

An increasingly large number of Canadian girls are taking University courses, or courses in technical colleges and musical conservatoires, with the idea of fitting themselves as High School teachers or for the medical profession.

In speaking of the girls of Western Canada, one must not overlook the Swedish, Russian, Italian, Galician, and other Europeans who have made their home in the Dominion.

The Handicrafts Guild is helping these girls to support themselves by basketry, weaving, lace and bead making, pottery, and needlework generally. Prizes are offered annually in the different centres for the best work, and all articles submitted are afterwards placed on sale in one of their work depositories. This association is doing a splendid work, in that they are making the arts both honourable and profitable. [119]

While this article has chiefly concerned itself with the domestic and peaceful pursuits of our Canadian girls, it must not be forgotten that in times of stress they have shown themselves to be heroines who have always been equal to their occasions.

Our favourite heroine is, perhaps, Madeleine de Verchères, who, in the early days when the Indians were an ever-present menace to the settlers on the St. Lawrence River, successfully defended her father's seignory against a band of savage Iroquois.

Her father had left an old man of eighty, two soldiers, and Madeleine and her two little brothers to guard the fort during his absence in Quebec.

A Girl Captain

One day a host of Indians attacked them so suddenly they had hardly time to barricade the windows and doors. The fight was so fierce the soldiers considered it useless to continue it, but Madeleine ordered them to their posts, and for a week, night and day, kept them there. She taught her little brothers how to load and fire the guns so rapidly that the Indians were deceived and thought the fort well garrisoned.

When a reinforcement came to her relief, it was a terribly exhausted little girl that stepped out to welcome them at the head of the defenders—Captain Madeleine Verchères, aged fourteen!

Yes, we like to tell this story of Madeleine over and over.

We like to paint pictures of her, too, and to mould her figure in bronze; for we know right well that she is a type of the strong, brave, resourceful lassies who in all ranks of our national life, may ever be counted upon to stand to their posts, be the end what it may.

Gentlemen, hats off! The Canadian girl! [120]

"Such a Treasure!"

BY

Eileen O'Connell

Evelyne resented the summons to rejoin her father in New Zealand. Yet she came to see that the call to service was a call to true happiness.

"Evelyne, come to my room before you go to your singing lesson. I have had a most important letter from your father; the New Zealand mail came in this morning."

"Can I come now, Aunt Mary?" replied a clear voice, its owner appearing suddenly at the head of the stairs pinning on to a mass of sunny hair a very large hat. "I want to go early, for if I arrive first, I often get more than my regular time, and you know how greedy I am for new songs."

Mrs. Trevor did not reply; she walked slowly into her morning-room and stood at the window looking perplexed and serious, thinking nothing about her niece's lessons, and looking at, without seeing, the midsummer beauty of her garden. A few minutes later the door opened, and she turned to the young girl, who with a song on her lips danced merrily into the room.

At the sight of Mrs. Trevor's face she stopped suddenly, exclaiming, "Something is wrong! What has happened?"

"You are right, Eva, something has happened—something, my child, that will affect your whole life." With a falter in her voice the woman continued, "You are to leave me, Evelyne, and go out to New Zealand. You are needed in your father's house." [121]

"To New Zealand?—I refuse to go."

"I Refuse to Go!"

"You have no choice in the matter, dearest. Your mother has become a confirmed invalid, and is incapable of looking after the children and the house. Your father has naturally thought of you."

"As a kind of servant to a heap of noisy boys, half of whom I never have seen even. I daresay it would be very convenient and very cheap to have me. However, I shall not go to that outlandish place they live at in New Zealand, and you must tell father so."

"But I cannot, Evie. There is no choice about it. Your parents have the first claim on you, remember."

"I deny that," said the girl passionately; "they cared so little about me that they were ready to give me to you and go to New Zealand without me; that fact, I think, ends their claims. And Auntie, having lived here for eight years, and being in every way happy, and with so much before me to make life worth living, how can they be so selfish as to wish to ruin my prospects and make me miserable?"

"Eva, Eva, don't jump to conclusions! Instead of believing that the worst motives compelled your father's decision, think it just possible that they were the highest. Put yourself out of the question for the moment and face facts. Your parents were *not* willing to part with you; believe me, it was a bitter wrench to both to leave you behind. But settling up country in the colony was not an easy matter for my brother with his delicate wife and four children. Marjory was older than you, so of course more able to help with the boys, and knowing that his expenses would be very heavy and his means small, I offered to adopt you; for your sake, more than other considerations, I think, my offer was accepted. Since Marjory's death your mother has practically been alone, for servants are scarce and very expensive. Now, poor soul, her strength is at an end; [122] she has developed an illness that involves the greatest care and rest. You see, darling, that this is no case for hesitation. The call comes to you, and you must answer and do your duty faithfully."

The girl buried her face in the sofa cushions, her hat lay on the floor.

"I hate children—especially boys," she said sullenly when she spoke. "Surely in eight years a doctor ought to be able to make enough to pay a housekeeper, if his wife can't look after his house."

"You don't understand how hard life is sometimes, or I think you would be readier to take up part of a burden that is dragging down a good and brave man."

"To live in an uncivilised country, where probably the people won't speak my own language

——"

"Don't betray such absurd ignorance, Eva," replied Mrs. Trevor; "you must know that New Zealand is a British colony, inhabited mainly by our own people, who are as well educated and as well mannered as ourselves."

"And just when I was getting on so well with my singing! Mr. James said my voice would soon fill a concert hall, and all my hopes of writing and becoming a known author—everything dashed to the ground—every longing nipped in the bud! Oh! it is cruel, cruel!"

"I knew, dear child, that the blow would be severe; don't imagine that it will be easy for me to give you up. But knowing what lies before us, the thing to do is to prize every hour we are together, and then with courage go forward to meet the unknown future. The boys are growing up——"

"Hobbledehoys, you may be sure."

Mrs. Trevor smiled, but said nothing. "And in addition to them, there is the baby sister you have never seen."

"And never wish to," added Eva ungraciously. [123]

"We shall have much to think of, and when once you have become used to the idea, I should strongly advise you to settle to some practical work that will help when you are forced to depend on yourself."

Eva did not reply. Mentally she was protesting or blankly refusing to give up her life of ease, of pleasures, and congenial study in exchange for the one offered her in the colony.

"Friends of your father are now home and expect to return in September; so, having arranged for you to accompany them, we must regard their arrangements as time limit. It is always best to know the worst, though, believe me, anticipation is often worse than realisation."

The sword had fallen, cutting off, as Evelyne Riley was fully convinced, every possibility of happiness on earth so far as she was concerned. Time seemed to fly on fairy wings; Mrs. Trevor made all necessary preparations, and before Evelyne realised that her farewell to England must be made, she stood on the deck of the outgoing steamer "Waimato" at the side of a stranger, waving her hand forlornly to the woman whose heart was sore at parting with one she had learned to look upon as her own child.

In New Zealand

Six weeks later, Eva landed at Wellington. The voyage had not interested her much, and she was glad to end it. She had read somewhere that it was usual to wear old clothes on board, but for landing to choose smart and becoming ones, and Eva had bestowed quite some thought on the subject. Her dark serge lay at the bottom of her trunk, and for the important occasion she decided on her most cherished frock and the new hat, which in Richmond she had worn on high-days and holidays. Certainly she looked very attractive. Almost sixteen, tall and very fair, Eva was a beautiful girl, and as the eyes of Dr. Riley fell on her, he wondered in amazement at the change that had taken place in the pale, slight child he had left with his sister. Could this really be Evelyne? If so, how was she going to suit in the simple surroundings to which she was going? He [124] gazed in dismay at the expensive clothes and fashionable style of one who soon would need to patch and darn, to bake and cook, run the house on practical lines, and care for children.

Somewhat nervous and much excited, Eva allowed herself to be kissed and caressed, asking after her mother in a constrained fashion, for, try as she would, she bore a grudge against one who was the cause of her changed life.

A shadow overcast the doctor's face as he replied, "Your dear mother will not welcome you at our home as we had hoped. She lies very ill in a hospital at present, awaiting a severe operation, the success of which may save her life—God grant it may—but the boys and Babs are wild with excitement and longing to see you. We ought to reach 'Aroha' before they are in bed. It is only nine o'clock, and we can go part of the way by train; then we shall have a long buggy drive through the bush."

That day Eva never forgot. Travelling with one who was practically a stranger to her and yet her nearest relative, the girl felt embarrassed. She wanted to hear about her future surroundings and ask questions about the children, but she found it hard to disguise her disappointment in having to leave her old home and to pretend enthusiasm about her brothers and sister; she feared that her father would read her thoughts and be hurt and offended, so relapsed into silence. Once they left the railway they said goodbye to civilisation, Eva felt positive.

The country was at its loveliest; the early summer brought a beauty of its own. Rains had washed every leaf and refreshed each growing thing. Great trees, veritable giants, reared their heads proudly towards the sky, bushes were in full leaf, the ground on either side of the road was carpeted with thick moss that had grown for long years without being disturbed. From out of a cloudless sky the sun shone brilliantly, and the travellers gladly exchanged the high-road for the [125] shelter of the bush. The day was undoubtedly hot, and Eva in her holiday raiment felt oppressed and weary before the carriage came in sight of the first houses that comprised the growing little township in which her father held an important position as medical man.

The style of house brought a curve of contempt to the girl's lips, but she offered no opinions. Suddenly, without a remark, her father checked the horses, as a small group came to a halt in the middle of the road and began waving their hats and shouting wildly.

"There's a welcome for you, Eva!"

"Who are they? I mean—how did those boys know I was coming?"

"They are your brothers, dear; jolly little chaps every one of them, even though they are a bunch of rough robins."

Eva shivered; her brothers—those raggety tags!

They presented a picturesque though unkempt appearance. Jack was eating a slice of bread and jam; Dick had Babs—somewhat in a soiled condition from watering the garden—on his back; Charlie, the incorrigible, with a tear in his knickers and a brimless hat on the back of his curly head, was leaping about like an excited kangaroo.

"An Impossible Crowd!"

The doctor held out his arms to the three-year-old little girl, who looked shyly at the pretty lady and then promptly hid her face. Eva's heart sank; she knew she ought to say or do something, but no words of tenderness came to her lips. The child might be attractive if clean, but it looked neglected, while the boys were what she described as "hobbledehoys." "An impossible crowd," she decided with a shudder, and yet her life was to be spent in their midst.

"Leave your sister in peace, you young rascals!" said the doctor; "she is tired. Dick, put on the kettle; Eva will be glad of some tea, I know. Welcome home, dear daughter. Mother and I have longed for you so often, and my hopes run high now that you have come. I trust you will be a second mother to the boys and Babs."

"I will try," Eva replied in a low voice.

Her father noticed her depression, so wisely said little more, but going out to see a patient, left her to settle into her new surroundings in her own fashion.

Next morning Eva wakened early and looked out of her window, which was shaded by a climbing rose that trailed right across it. The house was boarded and shingled, one little piece of wood neatly overlapping the other; it was only two stories high, with deep eaves and a wide verandah all around it.

Breakfast once over, Eva made a tour of the rooms, ending up in the kitchen, accompanied, of course, by all the boys and Babs at her heels. Uncertain what to do first, she was much astonished at a voice proceeding from the washhouse saying in familiar fashion, "Where on earth are you all?" There had been no knock at the door, no bell rung—what could it mean?

Standing unconcernedly in the middle of the room unrolling an apron stood a little woman of about forty years.

"Good day to you, Eva; hope you slept well after your journey. Come out of the pantry, Jack, or I'll be after you."

"May I ask whom I am talking to?" asked Eva icily, much resenting being addressed as "Eva."

"I am Mrs. Meadows, and thought I'd just run in and show you where things are. You'll feel kind of strange."

"Of course it will take some time to get used to things, but I think I should prefer doing it in my own way, thank you."

"Perhaps that would be best," replied Mrs. Meadows. "To-day is baking day; can you manage, do you think?"

"I suppose I can order from the baker?"

 The woman smiled. "'Help yourself' is the motto of a young country, my dear; every one is her own cook and baker, too. Let me help you to-day, and by next week things will seem easier, and you will be settled and rested. Your mother is my friend; for her sake I'd like to stand by you. Will you tidy the rooms while I see to the kitchen?"

Fairly beaten, Eva walked upstairs, hating the work, the house, and everything in general, and Mrs. Meadows, whom she considered forward, in particular.

The next three days were trials in many ways to the doctor's household, himself included. The meals were irregular, the food badly cooked, but the man patiently made allowances, and was silent. It was a break in the monotony of "sweep and cook and wash up" when Sunday arrived and the family went to church. The tiny building was nearly filled, and many eyes were turned on the newcomer. But she noticed no one. The old familiar hymns brought tears to her eyes, and her thoughts stole away from her keeping to the dear land beyond the seas. However, she rallied and joined heartily in the last hymn, her voice ringing out above all others.

When next she saw Mrs. Meadows the conversation turned to church and congregation. After telling her details she thought were interesting, Mrs. Meadows said, "You have a nice voice, Eva, but you mustn't strain it."

"Do you think I do?" she replied. "I was trained at the Guildhall School, and I suppose my master knew the limits of my voice. *He* approved of my top notes. Perhaps you don't know what the Guildhall School is, though," she added insolently.

Eva's Top Notes

"On the contrary, my father was one of the professors until he died. Don't think that in New Zealand we are quite ignorant of the world, Eva."

The conversation upset the girl sadly. She was vain of her voice and anxious to make the most of it. She went into the kitchen to make a pie, heedless that Jack had found a jar of raisins and was doing his best to empty it as fast as he could, and that Charlie was too quiet to be out of mischief. The paste was made according to her ability, certainly neither light nor digestible, and was ready for the oven, when suddenly a giggle behind her made her turn to behold that wretched boy Charlie dressed in her blue velvet dress, best hat, and parasol. [128]

"You wicked boy, how dare you?" she cried, stamping her foot, but the boy fled, leaving the skirt on the floor. Picking it up, she gave chase to recover the hat, and when at last she returned to her pie, she found that Jack had forestalled her and made cakes for himself out of it and a marble tart for her.

Eva did not trust herself with the boys that morning; she literally hated them. Still, she must master herself before she could master them, and show once and for all that she was able to deal with the situation. Shutting herself into the parlour, she sat quiet, trying to think and plan, but in vain—she could not calm herself.

She took up a book and attempted to read and forget her annoyances in losing herself in the story, but that, too, failed. Her trials were countless. Not sufficient were to be found in the house, but that interfering Mrs. Meadows must criticise her singing.

She opened the piano, determined to listen to herself and judge what truth there was in the remark. She ran over a few scales, but was interrupted by a rough-looking man shouting, "Stop that noise, and come here! It'd be better if you looked after the bits of bairns than sit squealing there like a pig getting killed. Don't stare so daft; where's yer father?"

Eva rose in anger, but going up to the man, words died on her lips—her heart seemed to stand still, for in his arms he held Babs, white and limp.

"What has happened—is she dead?"

"Don't know; get her to bed." But Eva's hands trembled too much to move them, so the old Scotch shepherd pushed her aside, muttering, "Yer feckless as yer bonny; get out of the way." Tenderly his rough hands cared for the little one, undressing and laying her in her bed. [129]

"She's always after the chickens and things on our place, and I think she's had a kick or a fall, for I found her lying in a paddock."

"Where were you, Eva? Hadn't you missed Babs? I thought at any rate she would be safe with you," said her father.

Eva's remorse was real. Her mother dying, perhaps, the children entrusted to her, and she—wrapped up in herself and her own grievances—what use was she in the world? But oh! if Babs were only spared how different she would be! If she died, Eva told herself, she would never be happy again.

She went downstairs wretched and helpless, and once more found Jessie Meadows in possession of the kitchen. "How is Babs?"

"Conscious, I think—but I don't know," and the girl buried her face and wept passionately.

"There, there, Eva, we've all got to learn lessons, and some are mighty hard. Take life as you find it, and don't make trouble. The change was a big one, I know, but you'll find warm hearts and willing hands wherever men and women are. I just brought over a pie and a few cakes I found in my pantry——"

"I can't accept them after being so rude."

"Were you rude, dear? A short memory is an advantage sometimes. But we'll kiss and be friends, as the children say, and I will take turns with you in nursing Babs."

A Short Memory

What Eva would have done without the capable woman would be hard to say, for the child lay on the borders of the spirit land for weeks. When the crisis was past her first words were, "Evie, Evie!" and never before had Eva listened with such joy and thankfulness to her name. The child could not bear her out of sight; "pretty sister" was doctor, nurse, and mother in one. Unwearied in care, and patient with the whims of the little one, she was a treasure to her father, whose harassed face began to wear a happier expression. [130]

"I have great news to tell," he began one evening when, with Babs in his arms and the boys hanging around in their usual fashion, they were sitting together after tea.

"Tell, tell!" shouted the audience; but the doctor shook his head, while his eyes rested on Eva.

MRS. MEADOWS' BROTHER ARRIVED.

"Is it about mother?" she whispered, and he nodded.

"Mother is well, and coming home."

"Mother's coming back!" was echoed throughout the house to the accompaniment of a war dance of three excited kangaroos until sleep closed all eyes.

The day of the arrival was memorable in many ways to the young girl. In the morning came an invitation to sing at a concert, an hour later Mrs. Meadows' brother arrived, laden with good things for the returning invalid, and with a letter from an editor in Wellington, which brought a flush of delighted surprise to Eva's face.

Mrs. Meadows herself came over later.

"The editor is a friend of mine, Eva," she said; "and in rescuing a story of yours from Jack, I found him a contributor. Not for what you have done, but for what I'm certain you can do if you will write of life and not sentimental rubbish. You are not offended, are you?"

Eva's eyes glistened. "Offended with *you—you* who have laden me with kindness, and helped me to find all that is worth having in life! I have learned now to see myself with other eyes than my own."

Eva's doubts were set to rest once and for ever when she saw the frail mother she had really forgotten, and felt her arms around her as she said, "My daughter—thank Heaven for such a treasure!"

Rosette in Peril

A Story of the War of La Vendée

BY

M. Lefuse

A loud knocking sounded at the door.

Rosette was a girl of singular resolution. Through what perils she passed unscathed this story will tell.

"Jean Paulet," cried a voice, "how much longer am I to stand and knock? Unbar the door!"

"Why, it is Monsieur de Marigny!" exclaimed the farmer, and hurried to let his visitor in.

"Ah, Jean Paulet! You are no braver than when I saw you last!" laughed the tall man who entered, wrapped in a great cloak that fell in many folds. "I see you have not joined those who fight for freedom, but have kept peacefully to your farm. 'Tis a comfortable thing to play the coward in these days! And I would that you would give a little of the comfort to this small comrade of mine." From beneath the shelter of his cloak a childish face peered out at the farmer and his wife.

"Ah, Monsieur! that is certainly your little Rosette!" exclaimed Madame Paulet. "Yes, yes, I have heard of her—how you adopted the poor little one when her father was dead of a bullet and her mother of grief and exposure; and how, since, you have loved and cared for her and kept her ever at your side!"

"Well, that is finished. We are on the eve of a great battle—God grant us victory!" he said reverently—"and I have brought the little one to you to pray you guard and shelter her till I return again. What, Jean Paulet! You hesitate? Before this war I was a good landlord to you. Will you refuse this favour to me now?" asked de Marigny, looking sternly down on the farmer from his great height.

"I—I do not say that I refuse—but I am a poor defenceless man; 'tis a dangerous business to shelter rebels—ah, pardon! loyalists—in these times!" stammered Jean Paulet.

"No more dangerous than serving both sides! Some among this republic's officers would give much to know who betrayed them, once, not long ago. You remember, farmer? What if *I* told tales?" asked de Marigny grimly.

"Eh! but you will not!" exclaimed the terrified man. "No, no! I am safe in your hands; you are a man of honour, Monsieur—and the child shall stay! Yes, yes; for your sake!"

De Marigny caught up Rosette and kissed her. "Sweetheart, you must stay here in safety.

What? You are 'not afraid to go'? No, but I am afraid to take you, little one. Ah, vex me not by crying; I will soon come to you again!" He took a step towards the farmer. "Jean Paulet, I leave my treasure in your hands. If aught evil happen to her, I think I should go mad with grief," he said slowly. "And a madman is dangerous, my friend; he is apt to be unreasonable, to disbelieve excuses, and to shoot those whom he fancies have betrayed him! So pray you that I find Rosette in safety when I come again. Farewell!"

But before he disappeared into the night, he turned smiling to the child. "Farewell, little one. In the brighter days I will come for thee again. Forget me not!"

Round Jean Paulet's door one bright afternoon clustered a troop of the republican soldiers, eyeing indolently the perspiring farmer as he ran to and fro with water for their horses, and sweetening his labours with scraps of the latest news. [133]

"Hé, Paulet," suddenly asked the corporal, "hast heard anything of the rebel General Marigny?"

"No!" replied the farmer hurriedly. "What should I hear? Is he still alive?"

"Yes, curse him! So, too, is that wretched girl, daughter of a vile aristocrat, that he saved from starvation. Bah! as if starving was not too good a death for her! But there is a price set on Marigny, and a reward would be given for the child too. So some one will soon betray them, and then—why, we will see if they had not rather have starved!" he said ferociously.

"I—I have heard this Marigny is a brave man," observed the farmer timidly.

"That is why we want the child! There is nothing would humble him save perchance to find he could not save the child he loves from torture. Ha! ha! we shall have a merry time then!"

"Doubtless this Marigny is no friend to the republic," said the farmer hesitatingly.

The corporal laughed noisily as he gathered up his horse's reins. "Head and front of this insurrection—an accursed rebel! But he shall pay for it, he shall pay; and so will all those fools who have helped him!"

And the little band of soldiers rode away, shouting and jesting, leaving Jean Paulet with a heart full of fear.

With trembling fingers he pushed open the house door, and, stepping into the kitchen, found Rosette crouched beneath the open window. "Heard you what they said—that they are seeking for you?" he gasped.

Rosette nodded. "They have done that this long time," she observed coolly.

"But—but—some time they must find you!" he stammered.

"They must find You!"

Rosette laughed. "Perhaps—if I become as stupid a coward as Jean Paulet." [134]

The farmer frowned. "I am no coward—I am an experienced man. And I tell you—I, with the weight of forty years behind me—that they will find you some time."

"And I tell you—I," mimicked Rosette saucily, "with the weight of my twelve years behind me—that I have lived through so many perils, I should be able to live through another!"

"'Tis just that!" said the farmer angrily. "You have no prudence; you take too many risks; you expose yourself to fearful dangers." He shuddered.

"What you fear is that I shall expose you," returned Rosette cheerfully. "Hé, well! a man can but die once, Farmer Paulet."

"That is just it!" exclaimed the farmer vivaciously. "If I had six lives I should not mind dying five times; but having only the one, I cannot afford to lose it! And, besides, I have my wife to think of."

Rosette meditated a moment. "Better late than never, Farmer Paulet. I have heard tell you never thought of that before." The sharp little face softened. "She is a good woman, your wife!"

"True, true! She is a good woman, and you would not care for her to be widowed. Consider if it would not be better if I placed you in safety elsewhere."

"Jean Paulet! Jean Paulet!" mocked Rosette; "I doubt if I should do your wife a kindness if I saved your skin."

Jean Paulet wagged a forefinger at her angrily. "You will come to a bad end with a tongue like that! If it were not for the respect I owe to Monsieur de Marigny——"

"Marigny's pistol!" interrupted Rosette.

"Ah, bah! What is to prevent my abandoning you?" asked the farmer furiously.

Rosette swung her bare legs thoughtfully. "Papa Marigny is a man of his word—and you lack

five of your half-dozen lives, Jean Paulet."

[135] "See you it is dangerous!" returned her protector desperately. "My wife she is not here to advise me; she is in the fields——"

"I have noticed she works hard," murmured Rosette.

To the Uplands!

"And I will not keep you here. But for the respect I owe Monsieur de Marigny, I am willing to sacrifice something. I have a dozen of sheep in the field down there—ah! la, la! they represent a lifetime's savings, but I will sacrifice them for my safety—no, no; for Monsieur de Marigny, I mean!" he wailed. "You shall drive them to the uplands and stay there out of danger. I do not think you will meet with soldiers; but if you do, at the worst they will only take a sheep—ah! my sheep!" he broke off distressfully. "Now do not argue. Get you gone before my wife returns. See, I will put a little food in this handkerchief. There, you may tell Monsieur de Marigny I have been loyal to him. Go, go! and, above all, remember never to come near me again, or say those sheep are mine. You will be safe, quite safe."

Rosette laughed. "You have a kind heart, Jean Paulet," she mocked. "But I think perhaps you are right. You are too much of a poltroon to be a safe comrade in adversity."

She sprang from her chair and ran to the doorway. Then she looked back. "Hark you, Jean Paulet! This price upon my head—it is a fine price, hé? Well, I am little, but I have a tongue, and *I know what my papa de Marigny knows*. Ah! the fine tale to tell, if they catch us! Eh? Farewell."

She ran lightly across the yard, pausing a moment when a yellow mongrel dog leaped up and licked her chin. "Hé, Gegi, you love me better than your master does!" she said, stooping to pat his rough coat. "And you do not love your master any better than I do, eh? Why, then you had better keep sheep too! There is a brave idea. Come, Gegi, come!" And together they ran off through the sunshine.

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[136] It was very cold that autumn up on the higher lands, very cold and very lonely.

Also several days had passed since Rosette had ventured down to the nearest friendly farm to seek for food, and her little store of provisions was nearly finished.

"You and I must eat, Gegi. Stay with the sheep, little one, while I go and see if I can reach some house in safety." And, the yellow mongrel offering no objection, Rosette started.

She was not the only person in La Vendée who lacked food. Thousands of loyal peasants starved, and the republican soldiers themselves were not too plentifully supplied. Certainly they grumbled bitterly sometimes, as did that detachment of them who sheltered themselves from the keen wind under the thick hedge that divided the rough road leading to La Plastière from the fields.

"Bah! we live like pigs in these days!" growled one of the men.

"It is nothing," said another. "Think what we shall get at La Plastière! The village has a few fat farmers, who have escaped pillaging so far by the love they bore, as they said, to the good republic. But that is ended: once we have caught this rascal Marigny in their midst, we can swear they are not good republicans."

"But," objected the first speaker, "they may say they knew nothing of this Marigny hiding in the château!"

"They may say so—but we need not believe them!" returned his companion.

"Ah, bah! I would believe or not believe anything, so long as it brought us a good meal! How long before we reach this village, comrade?"

"Till nightfall. We would not have Marigny watch our coming. This time we will make sure of the scoundrel."

Rosette, standing hidden behind the hedge, clenched her hands tightly at the word. She would have given much to have flung it back at the man, but prudence suggested it would be better to [137] be discreet and help Marigny. She turned and ran along under the hedge, and away back to where she had left her little flock, her bare feet falling noiselessly on the damp ground.

"Ah, Gegi!" she panted, flinging herself beside the yellow mongrel, "the soldiers are very near, and they are going to surprise my beloved papa de Marigny. What must we do, Gegi, you and I, to save him?"

Gegi rolled sharply on to his back and lay staring up at the skies as if he was considering the question. Rosette rested her chin on her drawn-up knees and thought fiercely. She knew in what direction lay the château of La Plastière, and she knew that to reach it she must cross the countryside, and cross, too, in full view of the soldiers below; or else—and that was the shorter way—go along the road by which they encamped.

Rosette frowned. If they spied her skulking in the distance, they would probably conclude she

carried a message that might be valuable to them and pursue her. If she walked right through them? Bah! Would they know it was Rosette—Rosette, for whose capture a fine reward would be given?

She did not look much like an aristocrat's child, she thought, glancing at her bare brown legs and feet, and her stained, torn blue frock. Her dark, matted curls were covered with a crimson woollen cap—her every garment would have been suitable for a peasant child's wear; and Rosette was conscious that her size was more like that of a child of seven than that of one of twelve. She had passed unknown through many soldiers—would these have a more certain knowledge of her?

"Oh, Gegi!" she sighed; "how am I to settle it?"

"How am I to Settle it?"

Gegi wagged his tail rapidly and encouragingly, but offered no further help.

If she went across country the way was longer far, and there was a big risk. If she went near those soldiers and was known, why, risk would become a certainty. That Death would stare into her face then, none knew better than Rosette; but Death was also very near Rosette's beloved de Marigny, the man who had cared for her and loved her with all the warmth of his big, generous heart. [138]

"Ah! if my papa de Marigny dies, I may as well die too, Gegi," she whispered wearily. The yellow mongrel cocked one ear with a rather doubtful expression. "Well, we must take the risk. If papa de Marigny is to live, you and I, Gegi, must take him warning!" Rosette cried, springing to her feet; and Gegi signified his entire approval in a couple of short barks. "I will take the sheep," his little mistress murmured; "'tis slower, but they will be so pleased to see them. Poor Jean Paulet!" she thought, with a faint smile.

Gegi bounded lightly through a gap in the hedge, and dashed up to the soldiers inquisitively. With an oath, one of the men hurled a stone at him, which Gegi easily dodged, and another man stretched out his hand for his musket.

"There are worse flavours than dog's meat," he observed coolly. "Come, little beast, you shall finish your life gloriously, nourishing soldiers of the republic!" He placed his gun in position.

"Hé! you leave my dog alone!" called Rosette sharply, as she stepped into the roadway. "He has the right to live," she added, as she moved jauntily up to them. Her pert little face showed nothing of the anguish in her heart.

"Not if I want him for my supper," observed the soldier, grinning at his comrades, who changed their position to obtain a better view of the coming sport.

"But you do not," corrected Rosette. "If you need to eat dog, search for the dog of an accursed fugitive!"

The men laughed. "How do we know this is not one?" they asked.

"I will show you. Hé, Gegi!" she called, and the dog came and sat in front of her. "Listen, Gegi. Would you bark for a monarchy?" The yellow mongrel glanced round him indifferently. "Gegi!" his mistress called imperiously, "do you cheer for the glorious republic?" And for answer, Gegi flung up his head and barked. [139]

"You see?" asked Rosette, turning to the grinning man. "He is your brother, that little dog. And you may not eat your brother, you know," she added gravely.

"Hé, by the Mass! whose sheep are those?" cried a soldier suddenly.

"Whose Sheep are those?"

"They are mine, or rather they are my master's; I am taking them back to the farm."

"Why, then, we will spare you the trouble. I hope they, too, are not good republicans," he jested.

"I have called them after your great leaders—but they do not always answer to their names," Rosette assured him seriously.

"Then they are only worthy to be executed. Your knife, comrade," cried one of the men, jumping to his feet. "What, more of them! Six, seven, eight," he counted, as the sheep came through the gap. "Why, 'twill be quite a massacre of traitors."

"Oh, please! you cannot eat them all! Leave me some, that I may drive back with me, else my master will beat me!" implored Rosette, beginning to fear that her chances of passing towards the far distant village were lessening.

"Your master! Who is your master?"

"He is a farmer down there," nodding vaguely as she spoke.

"Hark you! Have you by any chance seen a man bigger than the average skulking thereabouts?"

She shook her head. "There are few big men round here—none so fine as you!" she said prettily.

The man gave a proud laugh. "Ah! we of Paris are a fine race."

Rosette nodded. "My Master is a good republican. You will let me take him back the sheep," she coaxed.

"Why, those that remain," the soldier replied, with a grin. "Sho! sho! Those that run you can follow. Ah, behold!" Rosette needed no second bidding, but started after the remnant of her little troop. [140]

"Hé!" called one of the soldiers to his comrades—and the wind bore the words to Rosette—"you are fools to let that child pass! For aught we know, she may be spying for the rebels."

As the men stared after her irresolute, Rosette slackened her pace, flung up her head, and in her clear childish treble began to sing that ferocious chant, then at the height of its popularity, which is now the national hymn of France. So singing, she walked steadily down the long road, hopeful that she might yet save the man who was a father to her.

It was almost dusk outside the desolate, half-ruined château of La Plastière. Within its walls the shadows of night were already thickly gathered—shadows so dark that a man might have lurked unseen in them. Some such thought came to Rosette as she stood hesitating in the great hall. How silent the place was! The only noises came from without—the wind sobbing strangely in the garden, the ghostly rustling of the leaves, the moan of the dark, swift river. Ah! there was something moving in the great hall! What was it? A rat dashed by, close to Rosette's feet; then the hall settled again into unbroken silence.

The child's heart beat quickly. She hated, feared, the shadows and the quiet.

Yet she must go forward; she dare not call aloud, and she must find de Marigny, if, indeed, he was still there.

She groped her way to the broad stone stairs. How dark it was! She glanced up fearfully. Surely something up above her in the shadow on the stairway moved. She shrank back.

"Coward! little coward!" she muttered. And to scare away her fear she began to sing softly, very softly, a tender little song de Marigny himself had taught to her. [141]

"Stay thy hand, man! It is Rosette!" cried a voice from above her, shattering the silence. And the shadow that had moved before moved again, and a man from crouching on the step rose suddenly in front of her.

"Why did you not speak? I thought we were like to be discovered, and I had nearly killed you. Curse this dark!"

"Hush!" whispered Rosette. "Hush! you are betrayed! The soldiers are coming. Oh, Papa de Marigny," she murmured, as he came down the stairway, "they are to be here at dusk. Is it too late? I tried to get here sooner, but—it was such a long road!" she ended, with a sob.

De Marigny gathered her in his arms. "And such a little traveller! Never mind, sweetheart, we will cheat them yet," he said tenderly. "Warn the others, Lacroix!"

Flight

But Lacroix had done that already. The house was full now of stealthy sounds and moving shadows descending the great staircase. De Marigny, carrying Rosette, led the way across the garden behind the house, towards the river that cut the countryside in half. The stillness of the night was broken suddenly by the neighing of a not far distant horse.

"The soldiers! the rebels, papa!" cried Rosette.

De Marigny whispered softly to one of his companions, who ran swiftly away from him, and busied himself drawing from its hiding-place a small boat. They could hear the tramp of horses now, near, very near, and yet the men seated silent in the boat held tightly to the bank.

Hark! The thud, thud of running footsteps came to Rosette, nearer, nearer, and the man for whom they waited sprang from the bank into their midst.

A moment later they were caught by the swift current and carried out into the centre of the broad river.

"Now, if my plan does not miscarry, we are safe!" cried de Marigny exultantly.

"But, papa, dear one, they will follow us across the river and stop our landing!" cried Rosette anxiously. [142]

De Marigny chuckled. "Providentially the river flows too fast, little one, for man or horse to ford it. The bridge yonder in the field is the only way to cross the river for many miles. And I do not think they will try the bridge, for I was not so foolish as not to prepare for a surprise visit many days ago. Look, little one!" he added suddenly.

Rosette held her breath as away up the river a great flame streamed up through the darkness, followed by a loud explosion, and she saw fragments of wood hurled like playthings high into the

air. Some, as they fell again to earth, turned into blazing torches. For far around trees and hedges showed distinctly; the gleaming river, the garden, and the château stood out clear in the flaming light.

Round the château tore two or three frightened, plunging horses, and the desperate gestures of their riders could easily be seen by Rosette for a moment before their craft was hidden by a turn in the river bank.

Monsieur de Marigny rejoined the loyalists across the river, and, animated by his presence, the struggle against the republic was resumed with great firmness.

Whenever de Marigny rode among his peasant soldiers, he, their idol, was greeted with many a lively cheer, which yet grew louder and more joyful when he carried before him on his horse Rosette, the brave child who had saved their leader's life at the risk of her own. [143]

Golf for Girls

BY

An Old Stager

A few plain hints to the teachable.

I veil my identity because I am not a girl—old or young. Being, indeed, a mere man, it becomes me to offer advice with modesty.

And, of course, in the matter of golf, women—many of them no more than girls—play so well that men cannot affect any assurance of superiority. On my own course I sometimes come upon a middle-aged married couple playing with great contentment a friendly game. The wife always drives the longer ball, and upon most occasions manages to give her husband a few strokes and a beating.

However, I did not start out to write a disquisition on women as golfers, but only to offer some hints on golf for girls.

And first, as to making a start.

The best way is the way that is not possible to everybody. No girl plays golf so naturally or so well as the girl who learned it young; who, armed with a light cleek or an iron, wandered around the links in company with her small brothers almost as soon as she was big enough to swing a club. Such a girl probably had the advantage of seeing the game played well by her elders, and [144] she would readily learn to imitate their methods. Of course, very young learners may and do pick up bad habits; but a little good advice will soon correct these if the learner is at all keen on the game.

A girl who grows up under these conditions—and many do in Scotland—does not need any hints from me. She starts under ideal conditions, and ought to make the most of them. Others begin at a later age, with fewer advantages, and perhaps without much help to be got at home.

How, then, to begin. Be sure of one thing: you cannot learn to play golf out of your own head, or even by an intelligent study of books on the subject. For, if you try, you will do wrong and yet be unable to say *what* you are doing wrong. In that you will not be peculiar. Many an experienced golfer will suddenly pick up a fault. After a few bad strokes he knows he is wrong somewhere, but may not be able to spot the particular defect. Perhaps a kindly disposed opponent—who knows his disposition, for not everybody will welcome or take advice—tells him; and then in a stroke or two he puts the thing right. So you need a teacher.

Generally speaking, a professional is the best teacher, because he has had the most experience in instruction. But professionals vary greatly in teaching capacity, and cannot be expected in every case to take the same interest in a pupil's progress that a friend may. If you are to have the help of a relative or friend, try to get competent help. There *are* well-meaning persons whose instruction had better be shunned as the plague.

Let your teacher choose your clubs for you, and, in any case, do not make the mistake of fitting yourself up at first either with too many clubs or with clubs too heavy for you.

As to first steps in learning, I am disposed to think that an old-time method, by which young people learned first to use *one* club with some skill and confidence before going on to another, [145] was a good one. In that case they would begin with a cleek or an iron before using the driver.

The learner should give great attention to some first principles. Let her note the *grip* she is told to use. Very likely it will seem to her uncomfortable, and not at all the most convenient way of holding a club in order to hit a ball; but it is the result of much experience, and has not been arbitrarily chosen for her especial discomfort.

In like manner the stance, or way of standing when making a

stroke, must be noted carefully and copied exactly. In private practice defy the inward tempter which suggests that you can do much better in some other way. Don't, above all, allow yourself to think that you will hit the ball more surely if you stand farther behind it—not even if you have seen your brother tee a ball away to the left of his left foot and still get a long shot.

A BREEZY MORNING

Don't think that the perpetual injunction, "Keep your eye on the ball," is an irritating formula with little reason behind it. It is, as a matter of fact, a law quite as much for your teacher as for yourself. And don't suppose that you *have* kept your eye on the ball because you think you have. It is wonderful how easy it is to keep your eye glued—so to speak—to the ball until the very half-second when that duty is most important and then to lift the head, spoiling the shot. If you can persuade yourself to look at the ball all through the stroke, and to look at the spot where the ball was even after the ball is away, you will find that you not only hit the ball satisfactorily but that it flies straighter than you had hitherto found it willing to do. When you are getting on, and begin to have some satisfaction with yourself, then remember that this maxim still requires as close observance as ever. If you find yourself off your game—such as it is—ask yourself at once, "Am I keeping my eye on the ball?" And don't be in a hurry to assume that you were. [146]

"Keep your Eye on the Ball"

Always bear in mind, too, that you want to hit the ball with a kind of combined motion, which is to include the swing of your body. You are not there to use your arms only. If you begin young, you will, I expect, find little difficulty in this. It is, to older players, quite amazing how readily a youngster will fall into a swing that is the embodiment of grace and ease.

Putting is said by some to be not an art but an inspiration. Perhaps that is why ladies take so readily to it. On the green a girl is at no disadvantage with a boy. But remember that there is no ordinary stroke over which care pays so well as the putt; and that there is no stroke in which carelessness can be followed by such humiliating disaster. Don't think it superfluous to examine the line of a putt; and don't, on any account, suppose that, because the ball is near the hole, you are bound to run it down.

Forgive me for offering a piece of advice which ought to be superfluous and is not. I have sometimes found ladies most culpably careless in the matter of divots. It is a fundamental rule that, if in playing you cut out a piece of turf, you or your caddy should replace it. Never, under any circumstances, neglect this rule or allow your caddy to neglect it. Nobody who consistently neglects this rule ought to be allowed on any course.

A word as to clothing. I *have* seen ladies playing in hats that rather suggested the comparative repose of a croquet lawn on a hot summer's day. But of course you only want good sense as your guide in this matter. Ease without eccentricity should be your aim. Remember, too, that whilst men like to play golf in old clothes, and often have a kind of superstitious regard for some disgracefully old and dirty jacket, a girl must not follow their example. Be sure, in any case, that your boots or shoes are strong and water-tight. [147]

Keep your Heart up!

Finally, keep your heart up! Golf is a game of moods and vagaries. It is hard to say why one plays well one day and badly another; well, perhaps, when in bad health, and badly when as fit as possible; well, perhaps, when you have started expecting nothing, and badly when you have felt that you could hit the ball over the moon. Why one may play well for three weeks and then go to pieces; why one will go off a particular club and suddenly do wonders with a club neglected; why on certain days everything goes well—any likely putt running down, every ball kicking the right way, every weak shot near a hazard scrambling out of danger, every difficult shot coming off; and why on other days every shot that can go astray will go astray—these are mysteries which no man can fathom. But they add to the infinite variety of the game; only requiring that you should have inexhaustible patience and hope as part of your equipment. And patience is a womanly virtue. [148]

Sunny Miss Martyn

A Christmas Story

BY

Somerville Gibney

A mere oversight

"Goodbye, Miss Martyn, and a merry Christmas to you!"

"Goodbye, Miss Martyn; how glad you must be to get rid of us all! But I shall remember you on Christmas Day."

"Goodbye, dear Miss Martyn; I hope you won't feel dull. We shall all think of you and wish you were with us, I know. A very happy Christmas to you."

nearly wrecked two lives. Happily the mistake was discovered before remedy had become impossible.

"The same to you, my dears, and many of them. Goodbye, goodbye; and, mind, no nonsense at the station. I look to you, Lesbia, to keep the others in order."

"Trust me, Miss Martyn; we'll be very careful."

"I really think I ought to have gone with you and seen you safely off, and ——"

"No, no, no—you may really trust us. We've all of us travelled before, and we will behave, honour bright!"

[149]

Off for the Holidays

And with a further chorus of farewells and Christmas wishes, the six or seven girls, varying in age from twelve to seventeen, who had been taking their places in the station 'bus, waved their hands and blew kisses through the windows as the door slammed, and it rolled down the drive of Seaton Lodge over the crisp, hard-frozen snow. And more and more indistinct grew the merry farewells, till the gate was reached, and the conveyance turning into the lane, the noisy occupants were hidden from sight and hearing to the kindly-faced, smiling lady, who, with a thick shawl wrapped about her shoulders, stood watching its departure on the hall steps.

For some moments longer she remained silent, immovable, her eyes directed towards the distant gate. But her glance went far beyond. It had crossed the gulf of many years, and was searching the land of "Never More."

At length the look on her face changed, and with a sigh she turned on her heel and re-entered the house.

And how strangely silent it had suddenly become! It no longer rang with the joyous young voices that had echoed through it that morning, revelling in the freedom of the commencement of the Christmas holidays.

Selina Martyn heaved another sigh; she missed her young charges; her resident French governess had left the previous day for her home at Neuilly; and now, with the exception of the servants, she had the house to herself, and she hated it.

A feeling of depression was on her, but she fought against it; there was much to be done. Christmas would be on her in a couple of days, and no sooner would that be passed than the bills would pour in; and in order to satisfy them her own accounts must go out. Then there were all the rooms to be put straight, for schoolgirls are by no means the most tidy of beings. She had plenty of work before her, and she faced it.

[150]

But evening came at last, and found her somewhat weary after her late dinner, and disinclined to do anything more, except sit in front of the blazing fire in her own little room and dream. Outside, the frost continued sharper than ever, and faintly there came to her ear the sounds of the distant bells practising for the coming festival, and once more for the second time that day her thoughts flew backwards over the mist of years.

She was a lonely old woman, she told herself; and so she was, as far as relatives went, but miserable she was not. She was as bright and sunny as many of us, and a great deal more so than some. Her life had had its ups and downs, its bright and dark hours; but she had learnt to dwell on the former and put the latter in the background, hiding them under the mercies she had received; and so she became to be known in Stourton as "sunny Miss Martyn," and no name could have been more applicable.

And as the flames roared up the chimney this winter night, she thought of the young hearts that had left her that morning and of their happiness that first night at home. She had known what that was herself. She had been a schoolgirl once—a schoolgirl in this very house, and had left it as they had left it that morning to return to a loving home. Her father had been well off in those days; she was his only child, and all he had to care for, her mother dying at her birth. They had been all in all to each other, and the days of her girlhood were the brightest of her life.

He missed his "little sunbeam," as he called her, when she was away at Seaton Lodge—for it was called Seaton Lodge even then; but they made up for the separation when the holidays came and they were together once more, and more especially at Christmas-time, that season of parties and festivities. Mr. Martyn was a hospitable man, and his entertainments were many, and his neighbours and friends were not slow in returning his kindnesses; so that Christmas-time was a dream of excitement and delight as far as Selina was concerned.

[151]

A Bank Failure

But a break came to those happy times: a joint stock bank, in which Mr. Martyn had invested, failed, and he was ruined. The shock was more than his somewhat weak heart could stand, and it killed him.

His daughter was just sixteen at the time, and the head pupil at Seaton Lodge. She was going to leave at the end of the half-year; but now all was changed. Instead of returning home to be mistress of her father's house, she would have to work for her living, and the opportunity for doing so came more quickly than she had dared to hope.

With Miss Clayton, the mistress, she had been a favourite from the first day she had entered the school, and the former now made her the offer of remaining on as a pupil teacher. Without hesitation the girl accepted. She had no relatives; Seaton Lodge was her second home; she was loved there, and she would not be dependent; and from that hour never had she to regret her decision.

When her father's affairs were settled up there remained but a few pounds a year for her, but these she was able to put by, for Miss Clayton was no niggard towards those that served her, and Selina received sufficient salary for clothes and pocket-money.

After the first agony of the shock had passed away, her life was a happy if a quiet one. Her companions all loved her; she was to them a friend rather than a governess, and few were the holidays when she did not receive more than one invitation to spend part of them at the homes of some of her pupil friends.

She had been a permanent resident at Seaton Lodge some three years when the romance of her life took place.

Among the elder pupils at that time was Maude Elliott, whose father's house was not many miles distant from her friend's former home. She had taken a great fancy to Selina, and on several occasions had carried her off to spend a portion of the holidays with her, and it was at her home that she had made the acquaintance of Edgar Freeman, Maude's cousin. A young mining engineer, he had spent some years in Newfoundland, and had returned to complete his studies for his full diploma at the School of Mines, spending such time as he could spare at his uncle's house. [152]

Almost before she was aware of it, he had made a prisoner of the lonely little pupil-teacher's heart, and when she was convinced of the fact she fought against it, deeming herself a traitor to her friend, to whom she imagined he was attached, mistaking cousinly affection for something warmer.

Then came that breaking-up for the Christmas holidays which she remembered so well, when she was to have followed Maude in a few days to her home, where she and Edgar would once more be together; and then the great disappointment when, two days before she was to have started, Miss Clayton was taken ill with pneumonia, and she had to stay and nurse her.

How well she remembered that terrible time! It was the most dreary Christmas she had ever experienced—mild, dull, and sloppy, the rain falling by the hour, and fog blurring everything outside the house, while added to this was the anxiety she felt for the invalid.

Christmas Day was the worst of the whole time; outside everything was wet and dripping, and even indoors the air felt raw and chilly, penetrating to the bones, and resulting in a continual state of shivers. There was no bright Christmas service for Selina that morning: she must remain at home and look after her charge, for, save the invalid, the servants and herself, the house was empty.

But there was one glad moment for her—the arrival of the postman. He was late, of course, but when he did come he brought her a budget of letters and parcels that convinced her she was not forgotten by her absent schoolgirl friends. With a hasty glance over them, she put them on one side until after dinner, when, her patient having been seen to, she would have a certain amount of time to herself. [153]

But that one glance had been sufficient to bring a flush of pleasure to her cheeks, and to invest the gloomy day with a happiness that before was absent. She had recognised on one envelope an address in a bold, firm writing, very different from the neat, schoolgirl caligraphy of the rest; and when her hour of leisure arrived, and over a roaring fire she was able to examine her presents and letters, this one big envelope was reserved to the last.

Romance

Her fingers trembled as she opened the still damp covering, and saw a large card with a raised satin medallion in the centre, on which were printed two verses, the words of which caused the hot colour to remount to her cheeks, and her heart to redouble its beats.

There was no mistaking the meaning of those lines; love breathed from every letter, and, with a hasty look round to make sure she was alone, the happy girl pressed the inanimate paper, satin, printer's ink, and colours to her lips as though in answer to the message it contained.

The feeling of loneliness had vanished; there was some one who loved her, to whom she was dearer than all others, and the world looked different in consequence. It was a happy Christmas Day to her after all, in spite of her depressing surroundings; and Miss Clayton noticed the change in her young nurse, and in the evening, when thanking her for all she had done for her, hoped she had not found it "so very dull."

That night Selina Martyn, foolish in her new-found happiness, placed the envelope, around which the damp still hung, beneath her pillow, and dreamed of the bright future she deemed in store for her. [154]

He would write to her, or perhaps come and see her; yes, he would come and see her, and let her hear from his own lips what his missive had so plainly hinted at. And in her happiness she waited. She waited, and waited till her heart grew sick with disappointed longing.

The days passed, but never a word came from the one who had grown so dear to her, and as they passed the gladness faded from her face, and the light went out from her eyes.

At last she could but feel that she had been mistaken. It was only a foolish joke that had meant nothing, and her heart grew hot within her. How could she have been so weak and silly as to have imagined such a thing? She put the envelope and its contents away, and, saddened and subdued, fought bravely to return to her former self.

Miss Clayton made a slow recovery, and when convalescent went for a change to the sea, carrying off Selina with her, for she had noticed the change in the girl, and put it down to her labours in the sick-room.

School-time commenced again, but without Maude Elliott as a pupil; she had gone to be "finished" to a school in Lausanne, and it was months before Selina received a letter from her, and then she only casually mentioned that her cousin Edgar had left them directly after Christmas for a good appointment in Brazil, where he expected to remain for some years.

With that letter the last traces of Selina Martyn's romance ended. It had crossed her life like a shooting star, and had only left a remembrance behind.

But that remembrance never entirely died; its sharp edge was dulled, and as the years went on —and in time she took Miss Clayton's place as the head of Seaton Lodge—she came to regard the unrequited bestowal of her young affections as an incident to be smiled over, without any vindictive feelings.

And now, when the silver hairs were beginning to make their appearance among the ruddy gold, she would each Christmas take out from its hiding-place in the old-fashioned, brass-bound writing-desk the time-stained envelope, and compare the old-world design within with the modern and more florid cards, and in her heart of hearts she found more beauty in the simple wreath of holly with the couple of robins perched above and the bunch of mistletoe hanging below than in its more ornate followers of the present time. [155]

Christmas Morning

It was Christmas morning—an ideal Christmas morning. The frost had been keen the previous night, and the branches of the trees had donned a sparkling white livery. The sun shone brightly, but there was little warmth in its rays, and the snow had crunched and chittered as "sunny Miss Martyn" had made her way over it to the church, smiling and sending bright glances to right and left of her, for there were few in Stourton with whom she was not acquainted. And now, her lunch over—she was going out to dinner that evening—she sat by the fire with a big pile of envelopes and parcels beside her. Her pupils never forgot her, and the day would have seemed incomplete to each one of them without a card despatched to Miss Martyn.

Her bundle was a large one, and took some time to get through; and then the cards had all to be arranged on the mantelpiece. But at length her task was done, and as her custom was, she went to the brass-bound desk standing on a table in the corner, and, taking out the now worn envelope, resumed her seat by the fire.

She had gazed on its contents on many a Christmas day before, but on this particular day—she never knew why—the memory of the sorrow it had caused her seemed keener, and she found the tears were gathering in her eyes, and that one of them had fallen on the edge of the satin medallion bearing the verses.

With her handkerchief she wiped it away, but in doing so a fold of the cambric caught the filagree, and she learnt what she had never known before—that the medallion opened like a little door, and that below it a folded scrap of paper lay concealed. [156]

What could it mean?

With fingers that trembled so much that they almost refused their task she took it out, unfolded it, and, spreading it flat, read the words that long years ago would have meant all the world to her.

How cruel had Fate been to her to have hidden them for so long! But the thought only remained in her mind a moment, being blotted out by the remembrance that he was not heartless, as she had grown to believe.

The faded lines before her laid a strong man's heart at her feet, and begged for her love in return, stating that he had been suddenly called to a distant post, and asking for an answer before he sailed. The writer felt he was presumptuous, but the exigencies of the case must be his excuse. If he had no reply he should know his pleading was in vain, and would trouble her no more; but if, on the other hand, she was not entirely indifferent to him, a line from her would bring him to her side to plead his cause in person. There was more in the letter, but this was its main purpose.

And this was the end of if: two loving hearts divided and kept apart by a damp day and an accidental drop of gum.

No wonder the tears flowed afresh, and "sunny Miss Martyn" belied her character.

She was still bending over the sheet of paper spread out on her knee when, with a knock at the door, the servant entered, saying:

"A gentleman to see you, Miss."

Hastily brushing away the traces from her cheeks, Miss Martyn rose, to see a tall, grey-haired man standing in the doorway, regarding her with a bright smile on his face.

She did not recognise him; he was a stranger to her, and yet——

The next moment he strode forward with outstretched hand. [157]

"Selina Martyn, don't you know me? And you have altered so little!"

A moment longer she stood in doubt, and then with a little gasp exclaimed:

"Edgar! Mr. Freeman—I—I didn't know you. You—you see, it is so long since—since I had that pleasure."

"Edgar!"

And while she was speaking she was endeavouring with her foot to draw out of sight the paper that had fallen from her lap when she had risen.

He noticed her apron, and with an "Excuse me" bent down, and, picking it up, laid it on the table. As he did so his eyes fell for a moment on the writing, and he started slightly, but did not refer to it.

"Thank you," she said, and her cheeks had suddenly lost their colour, and her hand trembled as she indicated an armchair on the other side of the fireplace, saying, "Won't you sit down?"

He did so, easily and naturally, as though paying an ordinary afternoon call.

"Selina Martyn, you're looking remarkably well, and nearly as young as ever," he continued.

She raised her eyes shyly, and smiled as she replied, "Do you really think so, Mr. Freeman?"

"Call me Edgar, I like it better; and we've known each other long enough to account for your doing so." He did not give her a chance of objecting, but continued, "I only landed in England yesterday, and you are the first person I've called on. I got your address from my cousin, Mrs. Perry—Maud Elliott that was; she's living in Monte Video, you know; I saw her for a few hours as I passed through. Really, Selina, you're looking prettier than ever, I declare!"

"You mustn't flatter an old woman, Mr. Freeman—well—Edgar, if you wish it. I don't think perhaps there is anything unmaidenly in my using your Christian name. We've known each other a great many years now, as you say."

"We have indeed, my dear lady. And we might have known each other a great deal better if—if—well, if you had only seen your way to it. But there—that's all passed now. And yet——" [158]

"Yes, that's all passed now." And Selina gave a little sigh, yet loud enough for her visitor to hear it, and he moved his chair from the side to the front of the fire as she continued, "Do you know—Edgar—just before you came in I made a discovery—I found something that reached me a day or two before you sailed, and that I had never seen till half an hour ago," and she looked down at her fingers that were playing with the end of the delicate lace fichu she was wearing.

A smile came over her visitor's face, but he only said:

"'Pon my word, Selina, you're a very beautiful woman! I've carried your face in my memory all these years, but I see now how half-blind I must have been."

"You mustn't talk nonsense to an old woman like me. I want to tell you something, and I don't know how to do it."

"Don't try. Let me guess, and you tell me if I'm right."

Miss Martyn did not answer in words, only bowed her head, and he continued, with a glance at the paper lying on the table:

"You once received what you considered a very impertinent letter from me?"

"I don't think impertinent is the right term," replied Selina, not raising her eyes.

"Then, my dear lady, why did you not let me have an answer?"

"Oh, Edgar, I only discovered it a few minutes before you came," and casting aside all reserve, she told him of the unfortunate combination of the damp Christmas morning and the drop of gum that had so disastrously separated them.

Long before the recital was complete her visitor had shifted his chair again and again until it was close beside her own. [159]

"You poor, dear woman!" he exclaimed, as his arm stole quietly round her waist, and Miss Martyn suffered it to remain there.

"I'm Waiting!"

"Why did you hide your letter inside, Edgar?" she asked quietly.

"I suppose because I didn't want to startle you, and thought you should see the verses first. May I see it now?" he continued. "It's so long since I wrote it, you see."

"Yes, you may see it," replied Selina, without raising her eyes;

SELINA MARTYN GAVE HER ANSWER.

"but it's all passed now," with another little sigh.

His disengaged hand had secured the letter, and hastily glancing over the writing, he exclaimed with sudden fervour:

"No, Selina! Every word I wrote then I mean to-day. When I left England years ago it was with your image in my heart, and with the determination that when I was rich I would come back and try my luck again. And in my heart you, and you alone, have reigned ever since. And when after long years I heard from my cousin that you might still be found at Seaton Lodge, you don't know what that meant to me. It made a boy of me again. It blotted out all the years that have divided us, and here I am waiting for my answer."

"Oh, Edgar, we mustn't be silly. Remember, we're no longer boy and girl."

"I remember nothing of the kind. All I remember is that it's Christmas Day, that I've asked you a question, and that I am waiting for the answer you would have given me years ago but for the damp and a drop of gum. You know what it would have been then; give me it now. Dearest, I'm waiting."

And Selina Martyn gave her answer, an all-sufficient one to both.

Whilst Waiting for the Motor

BY

Madeline Oyler

Young people, read and take warning by this awful example.

Her name was Isabel, and she really was a very nice, good little girl—when she remembered. But you can't always remember, you know; you wouldn't be a little girl if you could, and this happened on one of those days when she didn't remember.

Of course Peter forgot too; but then you would expect him to, for he was only a boy, and boys, as I suppose you know, cannot use their brains in the way that girls can.

The two had spent their morning in the usual way, had breakfast, fed the rabbits, said "Good-morning" to the horses, got mother a bunch of flowers from their own gardens (Isabel's turn this morning), seen daddy off, and then had lessons.

You wouldn't have guessed for a moment that it was going to be a bad day; everything had gone well. Peter had actually remembered that Madrid was the capital of Spain, always a rather doubtful question with him; and Isabel had said her eight times with only two mistakes, and they were slight ones.

So you may imagine they were feeling very happy and good, because it was a half-holiday, and, best of all, because Auntie May was coming over with her big motor at three o'clock, to take them back to tea with grandpapa.

I should like you to understand that it was not just an ordinary tea, but a special one; for it was grandpapa's birthday, and, as perhaps you know, grandpapas don't often have birthday parties, so it was a great occasion.

It had taken a long time to choose his presents, but at last they were decided.

Presents

Isabel had made him a blue silk shaving tidy, with "Shaving" worked in pink across it. The "h-a-v" of "Shaving" were rather smaller than the other letters, because, after she had drawn a large "S," she was afraid there would not be room for such big letters. Afterwards she found there was plenty of room, so she did "i-n-g" bigger to make up for it.

After all, it really didn't matter unless you were *very* particular; and of course you wouldn't see that the stitches showed rather badly on the inside unless you opened it. Besides, as grandpapa grew a beard, and didn't shave at all, he wouldn't want to look inside.

Peter had bought a knife for him; being a boy, and therefore rather helpless, he was not able to make him anything. He did begin to carve grandpapa a wooden ship, although Isabel pointed out to him that grandpapa would never sail it; but Peter thought he might like to have it just to look at.

However, just at an important part the wood split; so after all it had to be a knife, which of course is always useful.

These presents were kept very secret; not even mother was allowed to know what they were.

Three o'clock seemed such a long time coming—you know how slow it *can* be. But at half-past two nurse took them up to dress. Peter had a nice white serge suit, and nurse had put out a clean starched muslin for Isabel, but she (being rather a vain little girl) begged for her white silk. [162]

I ought to explain about this frock. One of her aunties sent it to her on her last birthday. It was quite the most beautiful little dress you ever saw—thick white silk embroidered with daisies. Isabel loved it dearly, but was only allowed to wear it on very great occasions.

Well, when she asked if she might put it on, nurse said she thought it would be wiser not to. "You won't be able to run about and climb trees at your grandpapa's if you do, Miss Isabel."

"But I shan't want to," replied Isabel, "for it is a grown-up party, and we shall only sit and talk."

So after all she was allowed to wear it, and with that on and a beautiful new sash her Uncle Dick had just sent her from India, she felt a very smart little girl indeed.

The shaving tidy she had done up in a parcel, and Peter had the knife in his pocket, so they were quite ready, and as they went down to the hall the clock struck three.

Alas! there was no motor waiting; instead there was mother with a telegram in her hand saying that Auntie May couldn't come for them till four o'clock.

What a disappointment! A whole hour longer to wait! What were they to do with themselves?

Mother suggested that they should sit down quietly and read, but who can possibly sit and read when a big motor is coming soon to fetch them?

So mother very kindly said they might go out in the garden.

"Only remember," she said, "you are not to run about and get hot and untidy; and keep on the paths, don't go on the grass."

So out they went, Isabel hugging her precious parcel. She was afraid to leave it in the hall lest mother should see it and guess by the shape what it was, which of course would spoil it all.

They strolled round the garden, peeped at the rabbits and a brood of baby chickens just hatched, then wandered on down the drive. [163]

"Can't we play something?" suggested Isabel—"something quite clean and quiet with no running in it."

Peter thought for some time, then he said: "I don't believe there are any games like that." Being a boy, you see, he couldn't think of one, so he said he didn't think there were any.

"Yes, there are," said Isabel, "heaps of them, only I can't think of one. Oh, I know, follow my leader, walking, not running, and of course not on the grass. I'll be leader."

Follow-my-leader

So off they started, and great fun it was. Isabel led into such queer places—the potting-house, tool-shed, laundry, and even into the dairy once. Then it was Peter's turn, and he went through the chicken-run, stable-yard, and kitchen-garden, and then down the drive.

When he got to the gate he hesitated, then started off down the road.

"Ought we to go down here, do you think?" asked Isabel, plodding along behind him.

"Oh, yes, it's all right," Peter said; "we're keeping off the grass and not running, and that's all mother told us," and on they went.

After walking for a little way, Peter turned off down a side lane, a favourite walk of theirs in summer, and Isabel followed obediently.

Unfortunately, for the last three days it had rained heavily, and the deep cart-ruts on both sides of the road were full of thick, muddy water.

In trying to walk along the top of one of them, Peter's foot slipped, and, before he could prevent it, in it went, right over the top of his nice patent-leather shoe.

Isabel, who was following close behind, intently copying her leader in all his movements, plopped hers in too.

"Goodness, what a mess!" said Peter, surveying his muddy foot. "How awful it looks! I think I shall make the other one dirty too, then it won't look so bad." [164]

So in went each clean foot.

And then it was, I am sorry to say, that Isabel forgot to be good. You remember I told you that she did sometimes?

She said: "Now that our feet are dirty, let's paddle, they can't look worse, and it's such fun!" And as Peter thought so too, paddle they did, up and down the dirty, muddy cart-ruts.

Presently Peter's white suit and even his clean tie were spotted with mud, and Isabel's

beautiful little dress was soaked with muddy water all round the bottom, and, saddest of all, her new sash was dragging behind her in the water, quite spoilt; but they were so excited that they neither of them noticed how they were spoiling their clothes, or that the parcel with the shaving-tidy in it had been dropped and stamped down into the mud.

They were in the middle of the fun when suddenly they heard in the distance the "toot-toot" of a motor-horn, and, looking at each other in dismay, they realised it must be Auntie May come to fetch them.

"We shall have to change first," gasped Isabel, as they hurried along the road. "I'm afraid we look rather messy!"

Peter said nothing; he was feeling too miserable.

It was a sad sight that met nurse's horrified eyes as she hurried anxiously out through the gates in search of them, having hunted the garden in vain; and it was a very shamefaced little pair that hastened by the big motor at the front door and into the hall, where they found mother and Auntie May waiting.

Isabel and Peter really did feel more sorry and ashamed than I can tell you, and, grievous though it be, mother and Auntie May went to tea with grandpapa, but Peter and Isabel went to bed!

The Grumpy Man

BY

Mrs. Hartley Perks

The story of a hard heart, a little child, and a kind friend.

It was past nine on a winter's evening. Through the misty gloom a tenor voice rang clear and resonant. The singer stood on the edge of the pavement, guitar in hand, with upturned coat-collar, a wide-brimmed soft hat sheltering his face.

"I'll not leave thee, thou lone one,
To pine on the stem:
Since the lovely are sleeping,
Go sleep thou with them.
Thus kindly I scatter
Thy leaves o'er the bed,
Where thy mates of the garden
Lie scentless and dead.

So soon may I follow
When friendships decay,
And from love's shining circle
The gems drop away.
When true hearts lie withered,
And fond ones are flown,
Oh! who would inhabit
This bleak world alone?"

The well-placed voice and accent were those of an educated man. The words of the old song, delivered clearly with true musical feeling, were touched with a thrill of passion.

The thread of the melody was abruptly cut off by a sudden mad clatter of hoofs. A carriage dashed wildly along and swerved round the corner. The singer dropped his instrument and sprang at the horse's bridle. A moment's struggle, and he fell by the curb-stone dazed and shaken, but the runaway was checked and the footman was down at his head, while the coachman tightened his rein.

The singer struggled to his feet. The brougham window was lowered, and a clear-cut feminine face leaned forward.

"Thank you very much," said a cool, level voice, in a tone suitable to the recovery of some fallen trifle.

"Williamson"—to the coachman—"give this man half a crown, and drive on."

While Williamson fumbled in his pocket for the money, the singer gave one glance at the proud, cold face framed by the carriage window, then turned hurriedly away.

"Hey, David!" called the coachman to the groom. "Give her her head and jump up. She'll be all right now. Whoa—whoa, old girl. That chap's gone—half-crowns ain't seemingly in his line.

Steady, old girl!" And the carriage disappeared into the night.

The singer picked up his guitar and leant on the railings. He was shaken and faint. Something seemed amiss with his left hand. He laid his forehead against the cool iron and drew a deep breath, muttering—

"It was she! When I heard her cold, cruel voice I thanked God I am as I am. Thank God for my child and a sacred memory——"

"Are you hurt?" asked a friendly voice.

The singer looked up to see a man standing hatless above him on the steps of the house. He strove to reply, but his tongue refused to act; he swayed while rolling waves of blackness encompassed him. He staggered blindly forward, then sank into darkness—and for him time was not. [167]

When consciousness returned his eyes opened upon a glint of firelight, a shaded lamp on a table by which sat a man with bent head writing. It was a fine head, large and massive, the hair full and crisp. A rugged hand grasped the pen with decision, and there was no hesitation in its rapid movement.

The singer lay for a moment watching the bent head, when it suddenly turned, and a pair of remarkably keen grey eyes met his own.

"Ah, you are better! That's right!" Rising, the writer went to a cupboard against the wall, whence he brought a decanter and glass.

"I am a doctor," he said kindly. "Luckily I was handy, or you might have had a bad fall."

The singer tried to rise.

"Don't move for a few moments," continued the doctor, holding a glass to his lips. "Drink this, and you will soon be all right again."

The singer drank, and after a pause glanced inquiringly at his left hand, which lay bound up at his side.

"Only a sprain," said the doctor, answering his glance. "I saw how it happened. Scant thanks, eh?"

The singer sat up and his eyes flashed.

"I wanted no thanks from her," he muttered bitterly.

"I want no Thanks!"

"How is that?" questioned the doctor. "You knew the lady?"

"Yes, I knew her. The evil she has brought me can never be blotted out by rivers of thanks!"

The doctor's look questioned his sanity.

"I fail to understand," he remarked simply.

"My name is Waldron, Philip Waldron," went on the singer. "You have a right to my name."

"Not connected with Waldron the great financier?" again questioned the doctor.

"His son. There is no reason to hide the truth from you. You have been very kind—more than kind. I thank you." [168]

"But I understood Waldron had only one son, and he died some years ago—I attended him."

"Waldron had two sons, Lucien and Philip. I am Philip."

"But——"

"I can well understand your surprise. My father gave me scant thought—his soul was bound up in my elder brother."

"But why this masquerade?"

"It is no masquerade," returned the singer sadly. "I sing to eke out my small salary as clerk in a city firm. My abilities in that way do not command a high figure," he added, with a bitter laugh.

"Then your father——?"

"Sent me adrift because I refused to marry that woman whose carriage I stopped to-night."

The doctor made an expression of surprise.

"Yes, it seems strange I should come across her in that fashion, doesn't it? The sight of her has touched old sores."

Philip Waldron's eyes gleamed as he fixed them on the doctor's face.

"I will tell you something of my story—if you wish it."

"Say on."

"As a young man at home I was greatly under my father's influence. Perhaps because of his indifference I was the more anxious to please him. At all events, urged by him, but with secret reluctance, I proposed and was accepted by that lady whose carriage I stopped to-night. She was rich, beautiful, but I did not love her. I know my conduct was weak, it was ignoble—but I did her no wrong. For me she had not one spark of affection. My prospective wealth was the bait."

Waldron paused, and drew his hand across his eyes. "Then—then I met the girl who in the end became my wife. That she was poor was an insurmountable barrier in my father's eyes. I sought freedom from my hateful engagement in vain. I need not trouble you with all the story. Suffice it that I left home and married the woman I loved. My father's anger was overwhelming. We were never forgiven. When my brother died I hoped for some sign from my father, but he made none. And now my wife also is dead." [169]

"And you are alone in the world?" asked the doctor, who had followed his story with interest.

Philip Waldron's face lit up with a rarely winning smile.

"No," he said, "I have a little girl." Then the smile faded, as he added, "She is a cripple."

"And have you never appealed to your father?"

Unopened Letters

"While my wife lived—many times. For her sake I threw pride aside, but my letters were always returned unopened."

The doctor sat silent for some time. Then steadfastly regarding the young man, he said—

"My name is Norman. I have known and attended your father now for a good many years. I was at your brother's death-bed. I never heard him mention a second son."

Philip sighed. "No, I suppose not. I am as dead to him now."

"You are indifferent?"

"Pardon me; not indifferent, only hopeless. Had there been any chance for me, it came when my brother died."

"For the sake of your child will you not appeal once more?"

Philip's face softened. "For my child I would do much. Thank God," glancing at his left hand, "my right is uninjured. My city work is safe. Singing is not my profession, you know," he added, with a dreary smile. "I only sing to buy luxuries for my lame little one."

Rising, he held out his hand. [170]

"You have been a true Samaritan, Dr. Norman. I sincerely thank you."

The doctor took the outstretched hand.

"May I help you further?" he asked.

"I don't see well how you can, but I will take the will for the deed."

"But you do not forbid me to try?"

Philip shook his head despondingly. "You may try, certainly. Matters cannot be worse than they are; only you will waste valuable time."

"Let me be judge of that. May I come to see you?"

Philip hesitated; then, when urged, gave his address, but in a manner indicating that he never expected it to be used.

Dr. Norman, however, was a man of his word. A few days after that chance meeting found him toiling up the steep stairs of block C in Dalmatian Buildings, Marylebone, having ascertained below that the Waldrons' rooms were on the top floor.

"There had need be good air when one gets to the surface here," groaned the doctor, when he reached the top, and paused to recover breath before knocking.

Sounds came from within—a light, childish laugh, a patter of talk. In response to his knock, a step accompanied by the tap-tap of a crutch came across the wooden floor. After some hesitation the door was opened by a pale, brown-eyed child of about seven. A holland pinafore reached to her feet, the right side hitched up by the crutch under that arm, on which she leant heavily. Dark, wavy hair fell over her shoulders, framing a pale, oval face, out of which shone a pair of bright, wide-open eyes.

She remained in the doorway looking up at the doctor.

"I suppose you've come about the gas bill," she said at length, with an old-womanish air, "but it's no use. Father is out, and I have only sixpence. It's my own, but you can have it if you promise to take care of it." [171]

"I SUPPOSE YOU'VE COME ABOUT THE GAS BILL."

"I'm a doctor, and a friend of your father's," replied Norman, with a reassuring smile.

The child at once moved aside.

A Real Live Visitor

"Please come in. I've just been playing with my dolls for visitors, but it will be much nicer to have a real live one."

The room the doctor entered was small, but cheerful; the floor uncarpeted, but clean, and the window framed a patch of sky over the chimney-pots below. A table stood near the window, by it two chairs on which lay two dolls.

"Come to the window," requested the child, tap-tapping over the floor. "Lucretia and Flora, rise at once to greet a stranger," she cried reproachfully to the dolls, lifting them as she spoke.

She stood waiting until Dr. Norman was seated, then drew a chair facing him and sat down. Her keen, intelligent glance searched him over, then dwelt upon his face.

"Are you a good doctor?" she asked.

"Why do you want to know?"

"Because father says doctors are good, and I wondered if you were. You must not mind my dollies being rather rude. It is difficult to teach them manners so high up."

"How so?"

"Well, you see, they have no society but my own, because they have to be in bed before father comes home."

"And do you never go out?"

"Sometimes on Sundays father carries me downstairs, and when we can afford it he hires a cab to take me to the Park. But, you see, we can't always afford it," with a wise shake of the head.

"Poor child!"

"Why do you say 'poor child' in that voice? I'm not a poor child. I got broken—yes—and was badly mended, dad says, but I'm not a 'poor child.' Poor childs have no dolls, and no funny insides like me."

[172]

The doctor smiled. "What sort of inside is that?"

"Well, you see, I have no outside little friends, and so my friends live inside me. I make new ones now and then, when the old ones get dull, but I like the old ones best myself."

At that moment a step sounded on the stairs; the child's face lit up with a look which made her beautiful.

"That's father!" she exclaimed, and starting up, hastened as fast as her crutch would permit to the door.

Waldron stooped to kiss tenderly the sweet, welcoming face held up to his, then he grasped Dr. Norman's hand.

"So, doctor, you are true," he said with feeling. "You do not promise and forget."

"I am the slower to promise," returned Dr. Norman. "I have just been making acquaintance with your little maid."

"My little Sophy!"

"Yes, father?"

Waldron passed a caressing hand over the child's head.

"We two want to talk, dear, so you must go into your own little room."

"Yes, father; but I will bid goodbye to this doctor first," she said, with a quaint air, offering Dr. Norman a thin little hand.

As the door closed upon her Waldron remarked rather bitterly, "You see I told the truth."

"My dear fellow," cried the doctor, "I did not doubt you for a moment! I came this afternoon to tell you I have seen your father—he sent for me. He is not well. He seems troubled more than his illness warrants. Can it be that under that callous manner he hides regret for the past?"

Philip sighed.

"You must be ever present to his memory," went on the doctor. "It might be possible to touch his feelings."

[173]

"How?"

"Through your child—nay, hear me out. No harm shall come to her; I would not propose it did I believe such a thing possible."

"But it might mean separation. No, doctor, let us struggle along—she at least is happy."

"For the present, yes, but for how long? She will not always remain a child. Have you had a good medical opinion in regard to her lameness?"

"The best I could afford at the time."

"And——?"

"It was unfavourable to trying any remedy; but that was not long after her mother's death."

"May I examine her?"

Waldron's glad eagerness was eloquent of thanks.

When Dr. Norman left those upper rooms there was a light long absent on Philip's face as he drew his lame child within his arms.

Sophy takes a Drive

In a few days the doctor called again at Dalmatian Buildings, and carried Sophy off in his carriage, the child all excitement at the change and novelty.

After a short drive Dr. Norman said, "Now, Sophy, I have a rather serious case on hand, and I am going to leave you for a little at a friend's, and call for you again later. You won't mind?"

"I think not. I shall be better able to tell you after I have been."

The doctor laughed.

"You see," went on Sophy, with a wise nod of her little head, "you can't tell how you will like things until you try them—now, can you?"

"No, certainly not. So you can tell me how you get on as I drive you home."

"Is this your serious case or mine?" asked Sophy anxiously, as the carriage drew up at a large house in a West-End square.

"This is where I hope to leave you," returned the doctor, smiling. "But you must wait until I find if it be convenient for me to do so."

Dr. Norman was shown into the library, where by the fire in an arm-chair sat an old man, one foot supported on a stool before him. His face was drawn and pinched, and his temper none of the sweetest, to judge by the curt response he made to the doctor's greeting.

"You are late this morning," was his sole remark.

"I may be slightly—but you are fast becoming independent of my care."

An unamiable grunt was the old man's reply.

When a few medical questions had been put and answered, Dr. Norman placed himself on the hearthrug, looking down at his patient as he drew on his gloves.

"You are much better," he said cheerfully.

"Oh, you think so, do you? Well, I don't."

"Yes, I think so. I should like to prescribe you change of scene, Mr. Waldron."

"Want to be rid of me, I suppose. Well, I'm not going!"

"Change of thought might do equally well."

"I'm likely to get it, chained here by the leg, ain't I?"

"Well, change of thought comes by association, and is quite available; in fact, at the present moment I have in my carriage a small person who has given me much change of thought this morning."

"I can't see what good your change of thought will do me!" growled Mr. Waldron.

Dr. Norman regarded him speculatively.

"I wonder if you would do me a favour. I have rather a serious case on the other side of the square, will take me about half an hour; might I leave my small friend here for that time?"

"What! in this room?"

"Why not?"

"Nonsense! You don't mean to bring a child in here!"

"Again I say, why not? She will amuse and interest you."

"Well, of all the——"

"Don't excite yourself, Mr. Waldron. You know how bad that is for you."

"You are giving me some change of thought with a vengeance, doctor! Why should you bring a nasty brat to disturb me?"

"I only offered you some amusement——"

Some Amusement

"Amusement be hanged! You know I hate children."

"I know you say so."

Mr. Waldron growled.

"She is not so very small," went on the doctor—"about seven or eight, I think."

"Humph! Young enough to be a nuisance! A girl, eh?"

"Yes."

"Girls are not so bad as boys," he admitted.

"No, so some people think—good-morning." Dr. Norman went towards the door.

"A girl, you say?" growled old Mr. Waldron again.

"Yes; good-morning."

"I say, don't be in such a hurry!"

"I really cannot stay longer at present; goodbye."

Dr. Norman opened the door and stood within it. Old Mr. Waldron fidgeted in his chair, muttering—

"Horrid child! Hate children! Perfect nuisance!"

The doctor partly closed the door.

"I say, have you gone?" cried the old man, glancing round. "Dr. Norman," he called suddenly, "you can bring that brat in if it will be any pleasure to you, and if you find me dead in half an hour my death will lie at your door!"

The doctor at once accepted this grudging concession, and hastening to the carriage, brought Sophy back in his arms.

"What the——" called out old Mr. Waldron when he saw the child. "Is she ill?"

"Oh, no, only lame," replied the doctor, as he placed his burden in a chair opposite to the old man.

"Now, Sophy," he admonished, "you will be a pleasant companion to this gentleman until my return."

Sophy eyed her neighbour doubtfully.

"I'll try to," she replied, and so the doctor left them.

For some time this strangely assorted pair eyed each other in silence. At length Sophy's gaze rested on the old man's foot where it lay in its large slipper on the stool before him.

"I see you are broken too," she said in a sympathetic voice. "It isn't really pleasant to be broken, is it, although we try to pretend we don't care, don't we?"

"No, it isn't exactly pleasant," replied Mr. Waldron, and a half-smile flickered over his face. "How did you get broken?"

"Somebody let me fall, father says, and afterwards I was only half-mended. It is horrid to be only a half-mended thing—but some people are so stupid, you know."

Mr. Waldron grunted.

"Does it hurt you to speak that you make that funny noise?" asked Sophy curiously.

"I'm an old man, and I do as I like."

"Oh! When I'm an old woman may I do as I like?"

"I suppose so," grudgingly.

"Then I shall be an awfully nice old woman; I shouldn't like to be cross and ugly. I don't like ugly people, and there are so many going about loose. I am always so glad I like my father's face."

"Why?"

"Because I have to see it every, every day. Have you anybody whose face you like?"

"No; I haven't."

"What a pity! I wonder if you like mine—or perhaps you would like father's. It does seem a shame you shouldn't have somebody." [177]

"I do very well without."

"Oh no, I'm sure you don't," replied Sophy with deep concern. "You may do somehow, but you can't do well."

"What's your father like?" asked Mr. Waldron, amused in spite of himself.

"My father's like a song," returned Sophy, as though she had given the subject much reflection.

"A song! How's that?"

"Sometimes he is gay—full of jokes and laughter, sometimes he is sad, and I cry softly to myself in bed; but he is always beautiful, you know—like a song."

"And your mother?"

"It is Lonely Sometimes"

"I haven't got a mother," replied Sophy sadly. "That's where I'm only half like other little girls. My mother was frightened, and so was the little brother who was coming to play with me. They were both frightened, and so they ran away back again to God. I wish they had stayed—it is lonely sometimes."

"But you have your father."

"Yes, only father is away all day, and I sit such a lot at our window."

"But you have no pain, have you?" Mr. Waldron questioned with interest.

"No," answered Sophy, sighing faintly. "Only a pain in my little mind."

"Ah! my pain is in my toe, and I expect hurts a deal more than yours. What's your father about that he leaves you alone and doesn't have you seen to, eh?"

Sophy's face blazed. "How dare you speak in that voice of my father!" she cried. "He is the kindest and best, and works for me until he is quite thin and pale. Do you work for anybody? I don't think you do," she added scornfully, "you look too fat!"

"You haven't much respect for grey hairs, young lady."

"Grey hairs, why?" asked Sophy, still ruffled.

Mr. Waldron took refuge in platitudes. [178]

"I have always been taught that the young should respect age, of which grey hair is an emblem."

"How funny!" said Sophy, leaning forward to look more closely at her companion. "To think of so much meaning in those tufts behind your ears! I always thought what was inside mattered—not the outside. How much silly people must long to have grey hairs, that they may be respected. I must ask father if that is true."

"I suppose you respect your father?" said Mr. Waldron severely.

"Oh, no," replied Sophy. "I only *love* him. I think the feeling I have for the gas man must be respect. Yes, I think it must be, there is something so disagreeable about it."

"Why?"

"Well, you see, he so often comes when father is out and asks for money, just as if money grew on our floor, then he looks at me and goes away grumbling. I think it must be respect I feel when I see his back going downstairs."

Mr. Waldron laughed. "You are a queer little girl!" he said.

"Yes, I suppose I am," answered Sophy resignedly. "Only I hope I'm not unpleasant."

When Dr. Norman returned he found the child and his patient on the best of terms. After placing Sophy in the carriage, he came back at Mr. Waldron's request for a few words.

"That's a funny child," began the old man, glancing up at the doctor. "She actually made me laugh! What are you going to do with her?"

"Take her home."

"Humph! I suppose I couldn't—couldn't——?"

"What?"

"Buy her?"

"Good gracious, Mr. Waldron! We are in the twentieth century!"

"Pity, isn't it! But there are many ways of buying without paying cash. See what you can do. [179]

She amuses me. I'll come down handsomely for her."

"Well, you must let me think it over," replied the doctor in his most serious manner, but he smiled as he shut the library door.

An evening shortly afterwards Dr. Norman again called on old Mr. Waldron. He found his patient much better, and seated at his writing-table, from which he glanced up quite briskly to inquire—

"Well, have you brought our queer little friend again?"

"Not this time, but I have come to know if you will help me."

"Got some interesting boy up your sleeve this time, have you?"

"No, only the same girl. I want to cure her lameness."

"Is that possible?"

"I believe quite possible, but it will mean an operation and probably a slow recovery."

"You don't want me to operate, I suppose?"

The doctor smiled. "Only as friend and helper. I will do the deed myself."

Old Mr. Waldron growled. "Flaunting your good deeds to draw this badger, eh? Well, where do I come in?"

Dr. Norman's Proposal

"Let me bring the child here. Let her be cared for under your roof. Her father is poor—he cannot afford nurses and the paraphernalia of a sick-room."

"So I am to turn my house into a hospital for the sick brat of nobody knows who—a likely tale! Why, I haven't even heard the father's name!"

"He is my friend, let that suffice."

"It doesn't suffice!" roared the old man, working himself into a rage. "I call it pretty cool that you should come here and foist your charity brats on me!"

Dr. Norman took up his hat.

"You requested me to see if the father would allow you to adopt the child——"

"Adopt; did I say adopt?"

"No; you used a stronger term—'buy,' I think it was."

Old Mr. Waldron grunted. "I said nothing about nurses and carving up legs."

"No, these are only incidents by the way. Well, good-evening." Dr. Norman opened the door.

"Why are you in such haste?" demanded Mr. Waldron.

"I have people waiting for me," returned the doctor curtly. "I am only wasting time here. Good-night."

He went outside, but ere his hand left the door a call from within reached him.

"Come back, you old touch-flint!" cried Mr. Waldron. "You are trying to force my hand—I know you! Well, I'll yield. Let that uncommonly queer child come here; only remember I am to have no trouble, no annoyance. Make your own arrangements—but don't bother me!"

So it came to pass that little Sophy Waldron was received into her grandfather's house all unknowing that it was her grandfather's.

He saw her for a few moments on the day of her arrival.

"I hear you are going to be made strong and well," was the old man's greeting.

"Yes," returned Sophy, with a wise look. "They are going to try and mend me straight. I hope they won't make a mistake this time. Mistakes are so vexatious."

"When you are well would you like to live with me? I want a little girl about the house."

"What for? You have lots and lots of people to do things for you."

Mr. Waldron sighed. "I would like somebody to do things without being paid for their work."

"Oh, I understand," replied Sophy. "Well, I'll see how my leg turns out, and if father thinks you a nice old man—of course it will all depend on father."

"Confound it! I forgot the father!"

"You mustn't say naughty words, Mr. Sir," remonstrated Sophy, shaking a forefinger at him. "And you mustn't speak horrid of my father; I love him."

Old Mr. Waldron regarded her wistfully. "Do you think you could love me, Sophy?"

"Could you

The child eyed him critically.

Love me?"

"I like you in bits," she replied. "But perhaps the good bits may spread, then I should like you very much."

Just then the doctor came to take her to the room prepared, where a pleasant-faced nurse was in waiting.

Some hours afterwards, when Dr. Norman's task was done, and poor little Sophy lay white but peaceful on her bed, she looked up at the nurse, saying with a whimsical smile—

"I should like to see the grumpy man."

"And so you shall, my dear," was the nurse's hasty assurance. "Whoever can that be?" she muttered under her breath.

"Why, the grumpy man downstairs," reiterated Sophy.

"Would it be right?" questioned her father, who knelt by the bed, holding a small hand clasped firmly in his own.

"I'll see what the doctor says," replied the nurse, retiring into the adjoining room.

She speedily returned to say that Dr. Norman would go down himself to bring up old Mr. Waldron.

Sophy turned a pale face contentedly to her father.

"Dear dadums," she whispered, "now you will see my friend. He is not such a bad old man, though he does grunt sometimes."

For answer Philip Waldron bowed his head upon the hand he held, and waited.

Soon steps and voices were heard outside.

"Is this the room? A terrible way up! Why didn't you put her a floor lower? Quieter?—oh, well, have your own way!" [182]

The doctor and Mr. Waldron entered. In the half-light of the room the little figure on the bed was dimly visible. Both men paused while the doctor laid a professional hand on the child's pulse.

"She is all right," he remarked reassuringly.

"So you wanted to see me," began Mr. Waldron, looking down at the small head where it lay on the pillow. "How pale she is!" he ejaculated to himself. "I hope they have treated her properly!"

"Quite properly, thank you," replied Sophy, answering his half-whisper. "I wanted you to see my daddy."

Mr. Waldron noticed for the first time the bowed head on the other side of the bed.

"Yes," continued Sophy, following his glance. "This is my daddy, and he wants to help me say 'Thank you.' For Dr. Norman has told me how kind you are, if you are sometimes grumpy."

Philip Waldron slowly raised his head and stood up, facing his father across the bed.

"Philip!"

"Yes, sir."

"Is it possible?"

"I did not intend you should find me here," said Philip, his voice hoarse with emotion, "but it was her wish to see you; and I—I can go away."

He moved as if to leave the room.

"Stay!" came a peremptory command. "I—I have forgiven you long ago, my son; only pride and self-will stood in the way. For her sake, Philip!"

And the old man stretched a trembling hand across the child. [183]

Dogs We Have Known

BY

Lady Catherine Milnes-Gaskell

Some years ago I was the guest of my friends Colonel and Mrs. Hamilton. Besides myself, there was a large Christmas party of friends and children staying in the house. One evening in the drawing-room we all joined in the children's play.

Some true dog-stories for

"What would you say," interposed Mr. Hillary, one of the guests, and he addressed the children, "if we were all in turn to tell you stories of all the dogs we have known?"

all who love dogs.

A little buzz of applause met this proposal, and our hostess, being pressed to tell the first tale, began by saying, "Well, then, I will tell you how I found my little terrier 'Snap.'"

"One day, about two years ago, I was driving into Charleston, which, as you know, is about two miles off. A little distance from the park gates I noticed that my pony carriage was followed by a little white dog—or at least by a little dog that had once been white. It ran along through the black mud of the roads, but nothing seemed to discourage it. On it came, keeping up some ten yards behind my carriage.

"At first I thought we only happened both of us to be going in the same direction, and that it was merely hurrying home; but I was soon undeceived, for to my surprise the little dog followed me first into one shop and then into another.

"Finally I got out again and went into the last. On returning to the ponies I was astonished to find that the poor little wanderer had jumped into the carriage, and ensconced herself comfortably amongst the cushions."

AT THE SHOW.

"'The brute won't let me take it out,' said Dick, my diminutive groom; 'it growls if I only touch it, something terrible.'

"'Oh, leave it, then,' I replied, and Snap, as I afterwards christened her, drove back with me, sitting up proudly by my side.

"The next day I went out for a long ride. Without any encouragement on my part, the little terrier insisted upon following my horse. I think we must have gone over a distance of some twenty-four miles, through woods, over fields, and along the high-roads, but never once had I to call or whistle to bring her to my side. My little friend was always just behind me.

"'She be determined to earn herself a good home,' said our old coachman, when I returned in the afternoon and he saw the little dog still following faithfully behind me. I asked him to catch and feed her, but Snap would not trust herself to his care. She showed her teeth and growled furiously when he approached her.

"'More temper than dawg,' murmured our old retainer as he relinquished his pursuit of her. 'Cum, lassie, I'll do thee no harm;' but the terrier was not to be caught by his blandishments, and I had to catch her myself and feed her. To me she came at once, looking at me with her earnest, wistful eyes, and placing complete trust in me immediately.

"One of my friends says, 'Snap is redeemed by her many vices.' What made her confidence in me from the very first most remarkable was her general dislike to all strangers. She hates nearly every one. 'Snap spakes to us all about place,' is said of her by our old gardener.

"Obviously, I am sorry to say, her former master must have been opposed to law and order, for of all human beings she most hates policemen!

"She also entertains a strong dislike to ministers of all denominations. Last year when a high dignitary of the Church came to call upon me, imagine my dismay when I saw during our interview Snap, with evil designs, crawling under the furniture to nip his lordship's legs. I was only just in time to prevent the catastrophe!

Only Just in Time!

"The 'nasty sneak,' as my nephew Harry called her when he heard the story, was almost able before I could stop her to fulfil her wicked intentions. Happily, his lordship was unconscious of her inhospitable purpose, and when I caught her up only said: 'Poor little dog! don't trouble, Mrs. Hamilton, I am not at all nervous about dogs.'

"Another time I remember taking Snap to a meeting got up to further the interests of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

"All went well till a clergyman rose and addressed the meeting, when Snap jumped up also, barking ferociously, and tried to bite him. She was carried out struggling and yelping with rage.

"'Yon tyke can't do with a parson,' is the dictum of the villagers when they see her go by with me. Snap is very faithful, very crotchety, distrusting nearly everybody, greeting every fresh acquaintance with marked suspicion, and going through life with a most exalted and ridiculous notion of her own importance, and also of that of her master and mistress."

"Snap's dislike to the clergy reminds me," said Colonel Hamilton, "of a story I heard the other day from my friend Gordon, the artist: You must know that last year the county gave old Vaughan

of Marshford Grange, for his services as M.F.H., a testimonial. 'Old V.,' as he is known, has the hereditary temper of all the Vaughans—in fact, might vie with 'Our Davey' of Indian fame. Gordon, as you know, was selected by the Hunt Committee to paint the picture, and he went to stay at the Grange. [186]

"The day after his arrival he went down to breakfast, but found nobody there but the old squire seated at his table, and by him a favourite large lean white bull terrier.

"'Bob,' he declared, looked at him out of the corner of his evil eye, and therefore it was with some trepidation that he approached the table.

"'Swear, man, swear, or say something that he'll take for swearing,' exclaimed his host. 'If Bob takes you for a parson he'll bite you.' The explanation of this supposed hostility on Bob's part to the clergy consisted in the known and open warfare that existed between Vaughan and his parson.

"Some forty years before, the Squire had given his best living to his best college friend, and ever since there had been internecine war as a consequence.

"Poor Gordon was that curious anomaly, an artist combined with the pink of spinsterly propriety; and he could see no humour in the incident, but always declared that he felt nervous during his visit at the Grange lest Bob's punishing jaws should mistake his antecedents and profession.

"But now, Lady Constance, it is your turn, as the children say."

"I have a very clever old dog at home," said Lady Constance, turning to the children, "called 'Sloe.' She was, in her youth and prime, a most valuable retriever, but now is grown too old to do much but sleep in the sunshine. Eddie and Molly were given some time ago two pretty young white rabbits. They looked like balls of white fluff, and were the prettiest toy-like pets you can imagine. One night, unfortunately, they escaped from their protecting hutch. [187]

"Sloe is one of those dogs that cannot resist temptation, and although she has often been whipped and scolded for massacring rabbits, never listens to the voice of conscience. In fact, she hardly seems as if she could help doing so, and appears to think, like the naughty boy of the story, that, in spite of the beating, the fun was too great to forgo.

Sloe and Duchess

"Sloe is always loose, but has a kennel to sleep in at nights in the stable-yard. Opposite to her kennel is chained another dog—a retriever—'Duchess' by name, a lovely dog of a soft flaxen colour. This dog on this occasion, it so happened, had not yet been unchained.

"Sloe disappeared amongst the shrubberies, and found there her innocent victims. The poor little things were soon caught, and breathed their last in her ferocious jaws. When Sloe had killed them she did not care to eat them, and, strange to say, she determined not to bury them, but resolved that it should appear that the murder had been committed by her companion, and that Duchess should bear the blame.

"It is said that she is jealous of her companion sharing the favour of her master, and so decided upon doing her a bad turn.

"Prompted probably by this evil thought, she carried her victims one after the other into Duchess's kennel and left them there. The coachman, who was up betimes cleaning his harness, saw her do this. After which the old sly-boots retired to her own lair and went to sleep as if nothing had happened."

"Did you ever owe your life to a dog?" inquired Colonel Hamilton, turning to Lady Constance.

"Oh, yes, I did once," was her reply.

"Some years ago I was given a large dog—half bloodhound and half mastiff. To women and children he was very gentle, but he had an inveterate dislike to all men. There was nothing he would not allow a baby to do to him. It might claw his eyes, sit on his back, tap his nose, scream in his ears, and pull his hair; and 'George,' for such was his name, would sit and look at me with a sort of broad good-natured smile. [188]

"One year we all went up to a shooting-lodge in Perthshire. In the paddock before the house there was a bull. I complained of our neighbour, for I thought he had an evil eye, and might some day do the children some mischief.

"Our landlord, however, would not listen to my complaints.

"'Dinna ye fash yersel,' Geordie,' he said to his herdsman, 'or take notice of what the women-folk say. It is a douce baistie, and he'll nae harm bairns nor doggies.'

"In spite of this, one afternoon I had occasion to cross the meadow, when suddenly I turned

round and saw the bull running behind me. He bellowed fiercely as he advanced.

"Happily, when he charged I was able to spring aside, and so he passed me. But I saw that the wall at the end of the field was several hundreds yards off, and I felt, if the bull turned again to pursue me, my life would not be worth much.

"Then I saw my faithful George standing sullenly beside me, all his 'hackles' up, and waiting for the enemy with an ominous growl.

"The bull again turned, but my dog met him, and something of the inherited mastiff love of feats in the bull-ring must have awoke within him, for when the bull came after me the old dog flew at his nose, courageously worried him, and fairly ended by routing him. In the meantime I slipped over the loose stone wall, and ran and opened the gate at the bottom of the field, through which trotted a few minutes later my protector.

"I told my story when I returned to the house, and the keeper promised me that he would speak to the bailiff at our landlord's farm and have the bull taken away on the following day.

[189] "Now, the grass of the paddock being particularly tender and sweet, it was the custom for the 'hill ponies' to graze at night in company with the cows and the bull. The horses and cattle had hitherto done so, without causing any damage to each other; but the morning after my adventure one of the ponies was found gored to death, and an old cart-mare who had been running there with a foal was discovered to be so terribly injured that she had to be shot. It was noticed that the bull's horns were crimson with blood, so there could be no doubt who was the delinquent.

"'The more you know of a bull, the less faith you can put in one,' said our old cowherd to me one day when I recounted to him in Yorkshire my escape; 'and, saving your ladyship's presence,' he added, 'bulls are as given to tantrums as young females.'

George's Tricks

"When George was young we tried to teach him some tricks," continued Lady Constance, "but, like a village boy, he 'was hard to learn;' and the only accomplishment he ever acquired was, during meals, to stand up and plant his front paws upon our shoulders, look over into our plates, and receive as a reward some tit-bit. Sometimes he would do this without any warning, and he seemed to derive a malicious pleasure in performing these antics upon the shoulders of some nervous lady, or upon some guest who did not share with us our canine love."

It had now come to my turn to contribute a story, and in answer to the children's appeal I told them that I would tell them all that I could remember of my old favourite mastiff, "Rory Bean," so-called after the Laird of Dumbiedike's pony in the "Heart of Midlothian."

"Rory was a very large fawn mastiff, with the orthodox black mask. I remember my little girl, when she was younger, having once been told that she must not go downstairs to her godmamma with a dirty face, resolved that if this was the case Rory must have a clean face too. [190]

"So the next day, on entering the nursery, I found she had got some soap and water in a basin, and beside her I saw the great kindly beast, sitting up on her haunches, patiently waiting whilst her face was being washed; but in spite of all the child's efforts the nose remained as black as ever. My little girl's verdict, 'that mastiffs is the best nursery dogs,' was for a long time a joke amongst our friends.

"For several years we took Rory up to London, but her stay there was always rather a sad one, for when out walking the crossings in the streets were a great source of terror to her. No maiden-aunt could have been more timid. She would never go over by herself, but would either bound forward violently or else hang back, and nearly pull over her guide. She had also a spinsterly objection to hansoms, and never would consent to be driven in one. On the other hand, she delighted in a drive in a 'growler,' and, if the driver were cleaning out his carriage, would often jump in and refuse to be taken out.

"When Rory followed us in London she had a foolish habit of wishing to seem independent of all restraint, and of desiring to appear 'a gentleman at large.'

"On one unfortunate occasion, whilst indulging in this propensity, she was knocked over by a hansom—not badly hurt, but terribly overcome by a sense of the wickedness of the world, where such things could be possible.

"The accident happened in Dover Street. Rory had strayed into the gutter after some tempting morsel she had espied there, and a dashing hansom had bowled her over. She lay yelping and howling and pitying herself intensely. My companion and I succeeded in dragging her into a baker's shop, where she was shown every kindness and consideration, and then we drove home in a four-wheeler. Rory was not much hurt, but for many days could hardly be induced to walk in the streets again. She seemed to be permeated with a sense of the instability and uncertainty of all things, and never appeared able to recover from her surprise that she, 'Rory Bean,' a mastiff [191] of most ancient lineage and of the bluest blood, should not be able to walk about in safety wherever she pleased—even in the streets of the metropolis.

"I recollect we once lost her in London. She made her escape out of the

house whilst we had gone for a ride in the park. When we returned from our ride, instead of hearing her joyous bark of welcome, and seeing her flop down in her excitement the last four steps of the staircase, as was her wont, we were met instead by the anxious face of the butler, who told us Rory had run out and could not be found.

Lost in London

"Fortunately, we were not dining out that night, and so, as quickly as possible, we sallied forth in different directions to find her. The police were communicated with, and a letter duly written to the manager of the Dogs' Home at Battersea, whilst my husband and I spent the evening in wandering from police-station to police-station, giving descriptions of the missing favourite.

"Large fawn mastiff, answers to the name of 'Rory Bean,' black face and perfectly gentle. I got quite wearied out in giving over and over again the same account. However, to cut a long story short, she was at last discovered by the butler, who heard her frantic baying a mile off in the centre of Hyde Park, and brought her back, and so ended Rory Bean's last season in London.

"A few days before this escapade I took out Rory in one of the few squares where dogs are still allowed to accompany their masters. Bean had a naïve way, when bored, of inviting you or any casual passer-by that she might chance to see, to a good game of romps with her. Her method was very simple. She would run round barking, but her voice was very deep, as of a voice in some subterranean cavern; and with strangers this did not invariably awaken on their side a joyous reciprocity. Somehow, big dogs always ignore their size. [192]

"They have a confirmed habit of creeping under tiny tables, and hanker after squeezing themselves through impossible gaps. Being, as a rule, quite innocent of all desire to injure any member of the human race, they cannot realise that it is possible that they in their turn can frighten anybody.

"I remember on this particular occasion that I was interested in my book, and that when Rory had barked round me I had refused to play with her. For some time she had lain down quietly beside me, when suddenly an old gentleman came into view. He held in his hand a stick, with which he meditatively struck the pebbles of the pathway as he walked along.

"At the sight of him Rory jumped up. She could not resist this particular action on his part, which she considered a special invitation to come and join in a good romp. To my consternation, before I could prevent her, I saw her barking and jumping round the poor frightened old gentleman, in good-natured but ominous-looking play.

"Seeing that he was really alarmed, I rushed off to his rescue, seized my dog and apologised. Wishing at the same time to say something that might somewhat condone her conduct, I said: 'I am very sorry, sir, but you see she is only a puppy,' and pointed to Rory.

"This was not quite a correct statement, as my four-footed friend was at that time about two years old, and measured nearly thirty inches from the shoulder, but, as the old man seemed really frightened and muttered two ugly words in connection with each other, 'Hydrophobia' and 'Police,' I was determined to do all I could to reassure him and smooth down his ruffled plumes.

"However, my elderly acquaintance would not be comforted, and I heard him muttering to himself as he retired from the square, 'Puppy indeed! Puppy indeed!'

"Bean's death was very sad. Two years ago we left her in Yorkshire whilst we went to London. [193] We heard of her continually whilst we were away, and she seemed very flourishing although growing old, till one day I got a letter to say that the old dog was suddenly taken very ill and could hardly move. The servants had taken her to a loose box, given her a good clean bed of straw, and were feeding her with such delicacies as she could be prevailed upon to take.

Rory's Last Welcome

"I had a sad journey home, thinking of the sufferings of my trusty old friend. I shall never forget her joy at seeing me once more. The poor faithful creature could not walk, but crawled along upon her stomach to meet me when I entered the loose box, filling the place with her cries of joy. She covered my hands with kisses, and then laid her head upon my knees whilst I sat down beside her. She whined with a sort of half-sorrow, half-pleasure—the first that she could not get up and show me round the gardens as was her wont, the second that she was happy to be thus resting in the presence of her beloved mistress. Around her lay a variety of choice foods and tit-bits, but she was in too great pain to feed except from my hands.

"Poor dear Bean! she looked at me out of her great solemn eyes. Those dear loving eyes; with only one expression shining in them—a daily, hourly love—a love in spite of all things—a love invincible.

"During those last few days of her life Rory could not bear to be left alone. Her eyes followed me tenderly round and round the stables wherever I went. Although constantly in great pain, I shall never forget her patience and her pathetic conviction that I could always do her some good, and she believed in the miracle which I, alas! had no power to perform. The veterinary surgeon who attended her said she was suffering from sudden paralysis of the spine, and that she was incurable. This disease, it appears, is not very rare amongst old dogs who have lived, not always wisely, but too well." [194]

"Do tell us about some other dogs," cry the children as I cease speaking. I search my memory, and then turn to the group of little faces that are waiting expectantly for me to begin, and

continue:

"Amongst the various breeds of dogs that I have come across personally, I know of none more faithful than the little fox-terrier is to his first devotion. He is a perfect little bantam-cock to fight, and never so happy as when he is in a row. 'The most unredeemed thing in nature,' was a true remark I once heard made of one; and yet there is no dog more devoted to his master, or more gentle to the children of his own household.

"I remember a little white terrier of my mother's, a celebrated prize-winner, and of the old Eggesford breed, called 'Spite.' Before I married she was my special dog, and used to sleep in my room. For years afterwards, although a general pet, whenever I returned to my old home she would prefer me to every one else, and, when old and blind, would toddle up the polished oak staircase to my room, in spite of being terribly afraid of slipping through the carved bannisters. She never forgot me or wavered when I was with her in giving me the first place in her affections.

"I have heard that the first of this noted strain was given many years ago to my father as a boy by 'Parson Jack.' It seems that the terriers of Parson Russell were noted in the days when the manners and customs of the parsons of the West were 'wild and furious.'

"A parson of the 'Parson Froude' type called upon him one evening in the dusk, to say that he had brought his terrier to fight 'Parson Jack's' in a match.

"My father's old friend, as I have often heard him tell the story to my mother, sent down word that he would not fight his dog because he 'looked upon dog-fights as beastly sights,' but if his brother clergyman would come upstairs, they would clear the tables, and he would take his jacket off, and they would have some rounds, and see which was the best man, and he who won should keep the other's dog. [195]

"Parson Jack"

"When the fight was fought and won, and when 'Parson Jack' came off victorious, he claimed the other terrier.

"'And don't yu goe for to think, my dear,' he would add, turning to one of us children, as he ended the story, and speaking in broad Devonshire, as he often did when his heart kindled at the memory of the county in the old days—'don't yu goe for tu think as my having a set-tu zhocked the people in my parish. My vulk were only plazed to think as parsan was the best man of the tu, and if a parsan could stand up like a man in a round in they days, er was all the more likely to zuit 'em in the pulpit on Zundays.'

"Once every year 'Parson Jack' used to come and dine and sleep at my old home to keep his birthday, in company with my father and mother. At such times we as children used to come down to dessert to hear him tell stories in his racy way of Katerfelto, of long gallops over Exmoor after the stag, or of hard runs after the little 'red rover' with Mr. Fellowes' hounds."

"What dogs have you now?" inquired Mrs. Hamilton.

"Amongst others, a large St. Bernard," is my reply—"Bathsheba, so called after Mr. Hardy's heroine. Not that she has any of that young lady's delicate changes and complications of character, nor is she even 'almighty womanish.'

"Our Bathsheba is of an inexhaustible good temper, stupid, and wonderfully stolid and gentle. She is never crusty, and is the untiring playmate of any child. The 'Lubber fiend' we call her sometimes in fun, for she seems to extend over acres of carpet when she takes a siesta in the drawing-room.

'Has she a soul?' inquired a friend who admired the great gentle creature. 'I fear not,' was my reply; 'only a stomach.'

"Besides Bathsheba, we have a large retriever called 'Frolic.' He and Bath are given sometimes to running after people who go to the back door; they never bite, but growl, and bark if it is a complete stranger. [196]

"On one occasion, an Irishman who had been employed to do some draining met with this hostile reception. ''Tis gude house-dogs,' said my guardian of the poultry grimly.

"On hearing that the Irishman had been frightened, I sought him, expressed to him my regrets, and said that, though big, the dogs were quite harmless. With ready wit he retorted: 'Begorra, it isn't dogs that I am afraid of, but your ladyship keeps lions.'"

"Just one more story," cry the children as I cease speaking, and Mrs. Hamilton points to the clock, as their bedtime is long past. After a few minutes' pause, I continue:

"The other day I was told of a little girl who attended a distribution of prizes given by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

"She had won, you must know, a book as a reward for writing the best essay on the subject given, and, with the other successful children, was undergoing a *vivâ voce* examination.

"'Well, my dear,' said the gentleman who had given away the prizes, 'can you tell me why it is

cruel to dock horses' tails and trim dogs' ears?' 'Because,' answered the little girl, 'what God has joined together let no man put asunder.'"

An explosion of childish laughter follows my story, and then the little ones troop up in silence to bed. I sit on, quietly looking into the fire, and as I sit so the voices of my friends seem to grow distant, and I fall into a reverie. [197]

Daft Bess

BY

Kate Burnley Belt

A Cornish story of a girl's sorrow.

Up and down the little pier they paced in quarter-deck fashion, each with his hands tucked deep down in the pockets of his sea-blanket coat, and his oilskin cap pulled well over his ears.

They were very silent in their walk, these three old men, who had watched the breakers come and go at Trewithen for over sixty years, and handled the ropes when danger threatened. Trewithen Cove had sheltered many a storm-driven ship within their memories, and there were grave-mounds in the churchyard on the cliff still unclaimed and unknown that had been built up by their hands.

Up and down, to and fro they went in the face of the flying spray, in spite of the deepening mist that was creeping up over the darkening sea.

Benjamin Blake—once the handiest craftsman in the cove—was the first to break the silence.

"'Tis a sa-ad night at sea, mates!" he shouted, and the roar of the waves nearly drowned the sound of his voice.

"Iss, tu be zure, Benjamin Blake!" shouted Tom Pemberthy in answer, "an' 'twill be a ba-ad job fer more'n wan boat, I reckin, 'gainst marnin'!" [198]

Then Joe Clatworthy, whose opinions were valued highly in the settlement of all village disputes, so that he had earned for himself the nickname of "Clacking Joe," stood still as they once more turned their backs on the threatening sea, and said his say.

"A tell ee wot 'twill be, mates," he said solemnly and slowly. "You mark my wurrds ef it dawn't cum truthy too,—there'll be terble loss uv li-ife out there tu-night," and he waved his hand towards the blackening sea, "an' us'll hev tu dig a fuu more graves, I reckin', cum marnin'!"

"The Lard hev murcy!" said Benjamin Blake, and the three resumed their walk again.

Half an hour afterwards they were making their way along the one little street of which Trewithen boasted to their homes; for a storm—the roughest they had known for years—had burst overhead, and a man's life is a frail thing in the teeth of a gale.

At the top of the cliff and beyond Trewithen churchyard by the length of a field there stood a tiny cottage, in which lived Jacob Tresidder, fisherman, and his daughter Bess.

"Daft Bess" the children called her as they played with her on the sands, though she was a woman grown, and had hair that was streaked with white.

She was sitting now by the dying fire in the little kitchen listening to the storm without; the hands of the grandfather clock were nearing the midnight hour, and Jacob Tresidder lay in a sound sleep upstairs hearing nought. She was of the type of fisher-maid common to the depths of Cornwall. The soft rich colouring of her skin reminded one more of the sunny south, and her big brown eyes had always a glow in them.

To-night they were more luminous than ever as she sat by the fire watching the sparks flicker and die, as if the dawn of some hidden knowledge were being borne to them on the breath of the storm. The roar of the sea as it dashed up the face of the cliff seemed to soothe her, and she would smile and turn her ear to catch the sound of its breaking on the beach below. [199]

And yet, seven years before, "Daft Bess" had been the brightest and prettiest girl in Trewithen, and the admiration of every lad in the country round! And Big Ben Martyn, who had a boat of his own, had been the pride of every girl! But he only cared for Bess and she for him. All their lives they had been together and loved,—and a simple, truthful love can only produce its own affinity, though in its travail it pass through pain and suffering, and, maybe, the laying down of life!

Ben Martyn was twenty-five, and his own master, when he asked Bess, who had just turned twenty, to be his wife.

"The cottage be waitin', Bess, my gurrl!" he whispered as they sat on the cliff in the summer

night; she knitting as usual, and he watching the needles dart in and out. They were very silent in their love, these two, who had been lovers ever since they could paddle.

"'Tis so lawnly betimes!" he pleaded.

And Bess set his longing heart at rest.

"So soon as vather can spare I, Ben," she said; and she laid her knitting on the rock beside them, and drew his sea-tanned face close down beside her own. "Ee dawn't seek fer I more'n I seek fer ee, deary!" and kissed him.

Thus they plighted their troth.

One Dark Night

Then came the winter and the hard work. And one dark stormy night, when the waves rose and fought till they nearly swept Trewithen out of sight, Ben Martyn was drowned.

He had been trying to run his boat into the shelter of the cove and failed, and in the morning his battered body lay high and dry on the quiet beach among the wreckage.

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For weeks Bess lay in a high fever; and then, when the strain was greater than her tortured mind could bear, and she had screamed loud and long, something snapped in her brain and gave relief. But it left her without a memory, and with the ways and speech of a little child.

Her mind was a blank! She played with the seaweed and smiled, till the women's hearts were like to break for her, and the words stuck in the men's throats as they looked at her and talked.

"She be mazed, poor maid!" they said gently lest she should hear them. "'Twould break Ben's heart ef ee knawed 'ur was so!"

THE ROCK SHE CLUNG TO GAVE WAY.

That was seven long years ago. And to-night Bess seemed loth to leave the fire, but sat hugging her knees in a restless fashion, and staring at the blackening embers in a puzzled way. A tremendous blast struck the cottage, and nearly shook the kitchen window out of its fastenings. The wind came shrieking through the holes in the shutter like a revengeful demon, and retreated again with a melancholy groan.

It pleased Bess, and she hugged her knees the tighter, and turned her head and waited for the next loud roar. It came, and then another, and another, till it seemed almost impossible for the little cottage to hold out against its fury!

Then "Daft Bess" sprang from her seat with a cry of gladness, and ran out into the night!

Along the path of the cliff she ran as fast as her bare feet would carry her, struggling and buffeting with the wind and spray till she reached the "cutting" down to the beach.

It was only a broken track where the rocks sloped and jagged a little, and not too safe at the best of times. She tried to get a foothold, but the wind was too strong, and she was driven back again and again. Then it lulled a little, and she began to descend.

Half-way down there was an ugly turn in the path, and she waited for a gust to pass before taking it. The wind was stronger than ever out here on the front of the cliff, but she held tight to the jagged rock above.

[201]

Round it swept, tearing loose bits of rock and soil from every corner, till her face was cut by the sharpness of the flints!

Close against the cliff it blew until she was almost breathless, when the rock she clung to gave way, and she fell down and down!

Jacob Tressider was awake. He had heard a noise like the breaking of delf in the kitchen below, and he wondered if Bess had heard it too. He got out of bed and dressed himself, and then came down the ladder which did service for a staircase to see what was amiss. The flags in the kitchen were strewn with broken plates, and the front kitchen door swung loosely on its hinges.

No Answer!

He called Bess, but there was no answer! He went into her room, the bed was untouched since day! Then he pulled on his great sea-boots and cap and went out to look for her.

The day was dawning when they brought her in and laid her on the bed of her little room more dead than alive. She was soaked through and through, and the seaweed still clung about her hair. Jacob Tresidder stood watching her like a man in a dream as she lay there white and silent.

"Us be mighty sore fer ee, so us be!" said old Benjamin Blake, who had helped to bring her

home. "But teddin fer yew nor I, Jacob, tu go fornenst His will." And he went out crying like a child.

There was a slight movement of the quiet figure on the coverlid, and Jacob Tresidder's heart stopped beating for a moment as he watched his daughter's brown eyes open once more! They wandered wonderingly to where he was, and rested there, and a faint smile crossed the dying lips.

Then he bowed his head between his hands as he knelt beside her, for he knew that God had given her back her memory again; and his sobs were the sobs of a thankful heart. [202]

"Vather!" she whispered, and with an effort she stretched the hand nearest to him and touched his sleeve. "'Tis—all right—now—I be gwine—tu—Ben."

The dying eyes glowed with love; then with a restful sigh the life passed out.

They had battened down the last spadeful of new-dug earth, and once again there was a storm-bred mound in Trewithen churchyard.

The three old comrades stood together in silence looking down on it, making little or no attempt to hide the sorrow that was theirs.

Then Tom Pemberthy said, drawing his hand across his tear-dimmed eyes: "Us'll miss ur simple wa-ays, sure 'nuff!"

But it was given to "Clacking Joe" to speak the final words ere they turned their faces homewards.

"'Twas awnly right that we laid ur 'longside o' Ben! When ur was a little chile ur shrimped with 'n! an' when ur was a gert maiden ur walked out with 'n! Please God, ur'll be the furrst tu spake tu 'n—cum the aftermath!" [203]

A seasonable chant, possibly useful for recitation purposes.

A Spring-time Duet

BY

Mary Leslie

1st Maiden. "Oh, Spring is here, the golden sun
Has routed Winter's gloom!"

2nd Maiden. "Good gracious! Jane has not *begun*
To scrub the dining-room!"

SPRING CLEANING.

1st Maiden. "And now the first sweet buds appear,
Symbolic of new hope."

2nd Maiden. "I didn't say 'carbolic,' dear,
I want the *yellow* soap."

1st Maiden. "Like nectar is the morning dew,
Its purity divine
Refreshes all the earth anew."

2nd Maiden. "Ah! here's the turpentine."

1st Maiden. "And crystal webs shine bright, as though
Spun on some fairy loom."

2nd Maiden. "A spider's web? I didn't know;
I'll run and fetch the broom!"

1st Maiden. "Blooms Nature scatters, fresh and free,
From out her treasure-house."

2nd Maiden. "I'll dust this cupboard thoroughly."

Both together. "Oh, horrors! There's a *mouse!*"

Out of Deadly Peril

BY

K. Balfour Murphy

What on earth had happened to Gladys Merritt?

A Canadian boy and girl together were at one moment as happy as youth and health could make them, and at the next in imminent danger of their lives.

In the course of a few short weeks the girl was transformed from the merriest, most light-hearted creature into one often thoughtful, silent, and serious. The question then was, Why had she suddenly changed completely? Many guessed, but only two knew the real reason.

Barrie, where Judge Merritt lived, lies at the head of lovely little Lake Simcoe, in Western Ontario, Canada. In summer the lake is blue as the heavens above, the borders of it are fringed with larch and maple that grow right down to the rippling edge and bow to their own reflections in the clear waters beneath, while on its glassy surface can be seen daily numbers of boats and launches, the whole scene animated by merry voices of happy folks, with picnic baskets, bound for the woods, or others merely seeking relief from the intense heat on shore. Work is finished early in the day in the Colonies, and when school is over and the scorching sun begins slowly to sink to rest, social life begins.

But in Canada winter is long and extremely cold. With the fall of the beautiful tinted leaves that have changed from green to wonderful shades of red, purple, and yellow, Canadians know that summer is gone and that frost and snow may come any day, and once come will stay, though an unwelcome guest, for at least seven or eight months.

Now the young folks in Barrie relished this long spell of cold—to them no part of the year was quite so delightful as winter. What could compare with a long sleigh drive over firm thick snow, tucked in with soft warm furs and muffled up to the eyes—or tobogganing in the moonlight down a long hill—or skimming over clear, smooth ice—or candy-making parties—or dances, or a dozen other delights? What indeed? On every occasion Gladys seemed to be the centre figure; she was the life and soul of every party.

The "Bunch"

She was an only child of wealthy parents. Her home was beautiful, her father indulgent, her mother like a sister to her; she was a favourite everywhere, loved alike by rich and poor. Together with two intimate friends and schoolfellows, the girls were commonly known as the "Buds," and they, with half a dozen boys, were called the "Bunch" throughout the town. They admitted no outsider to their circle. They danced together at parties, boated, picniced, skated, sometimes worked together. There was an invisible bond that drew the group near each other, a feeling of sympathy and good fellowship, for the "Bunch" was simply a whole-hearted, happy crowd of boys and girls about sixteen to nineteen years of age.

Winter was at its height. Christmas with all its joys was past, church decorations had surpassed the usual standard of beauty, holidays were in full swing, and the "Buds" were in great demand. The cold had for five weeks been intense, and the barometer on the last day of January sank to fifteen below zero. Snow had fallen but little, and the ring of merry, tinkling sleigh bells was almost an unknown sound. Tobogganing of course was impossible. But as Gladys philosophically remarked one day, "Where could you find such skating as in Barrie?"

Great excitement prevailed when the moon was full, for the lake, some nine miles in length, was frozen from end to end, with an average thickness of three feet, and to the delight of skaters, was entirely snow free. Of course parties were the order of the day. Such a chance to command a magnificent icefield might not occur again for a long, long time.

The "Bunch" instantly decided on a party of their own, and chose a glorious night for the expedition. It consisted of the "Buds" and three boys. For some time all went well, but Gladys's skate needed tightening, and before it was satisfactorily done, the other four were far away, and Harry Elliott was left as sole protector to the girl.

Their conversation was mainly about school concerns. The boy was in a bank, the girl in her last term at the High School.

"If only I could work at something after I'm finished! What shall I do with my life when I have no more lessons? I think everybody should do something; I shall soon be tired of lazing through the days."

"Your pater would never let you do anything for money, he is so rich."

"But simply to have a lot of money won't satisfy me, although I'd like to earn some. To be a teacher would suit me best, and keep my mind from rusting."

"You are awfully clever, you know. I never cared for books and never worked till one day—a day I shall never forget."

"What was it about, Harry? Tell me."

The two had chattered about their own concerns without noticing that the rest of the "Bunch" had kept to the left side of the lake while they had skated straight forward ignoring the deep bay, and were now nearing the right shore. The ice was smooth as glass, each was an accomplished skater, and together they had made a brilliant run without a pause after the tightening of the screw. Now, hot and breathless, they paused for a few moments, and only then realised that they were about three miles distant from the rest of the party. Harry drew off his thick woollen mittens and unloosened his muffler, as together they stood looking at the glistening landscape around them. [207]

"I think we ought to turn; we are a long way from home."

"Just let us touch shore first and get to the 'Black Stone'; that would be a record spin."

"All right, then, come along, and tell me what happened that day. You know."

Hand-in-hand the two started off once more in the direction of the "Black Stone." Far and wide there was not a human being visible. Not a sound except the swish, swish of their skates and their own voices fell on the clear, still air of the glorious night.

Harry's Story

"I never was clever," began Harry, "and am not now. I used to be quite satisfied that kings and other celebrated people really had lived and died without learning a whole rigmarole about their lives. Really it did not interest me a bit. Geography was the same, composition was worse, mathematics was worst. I seemed always to be in hot water at school. Then one day the old man (we always called Jackson Spencer that) said after class was over—and of course I hadn't answered once—'Elliott, go to my room and wait for me.' I tell you, Gladys, I shivered; I didn't know what I was in for. Old man walked right in and shut the door, after having left me alone about ten minutes, and just said, 'Come and sit down, boy, I want to say something to you.' You could have knocked me over I was so surprised. He then said: 'Look here, Elliott, you are not a bad chap, but do you know that you are as blind as an owl?' I rubbed my eyes and said, 'No, sir, I can see all right.'

"'You must be very short-sighted, then.' [208]

"Of course I said nothing.

"'Did you ever think why your father sent you to school?'

"'No-o, sir.'

"'I thought so, but I'm going to tell you. He is not a rich man, Harry, but he pays me to teach you all that will help you to rise above the level of an ignorant labourer. Culture and education are as necessary to a gentleman as bread is for food. I am doing my utmost, but I cannot pour instruction down your throat any more than you can make a horse drink by leading him to the trough. Now look here, boy, with all your faults you are no coward; haven't you the pluck to get to know yourself and stop being a shirker? Think what that means! A fellow never to be trusted, a lazy, good-for-nothing, cowardly loafer. Remember, if you don't work, you are taking your father's money under false pretences, which is only another word for dishonesty. Think about what I've said; turn over a page and start a new chapter. You can go, and mind—I trust you.'"

"What a splendid old boy!" exclaimed Gladys. "What did you do?"

"Do! I worked like a beaver for the balance of school life, I'd so much to make good. We shall touch the 'Stone' in a couple of——"

The sentence was never finished, for without warning, out of sight of a helping hand, Gladys and Harry skated right through a large hole, left by an ice-cutter without being marked by boughs, into ten feet of freezing water.

The shock was tremendous, but being fine swimmers they naturally struck out, trying to grasp the slippery ice.

To his horror Harry knew that his gloves were in his pocket, and now, try as he would, his hands would not grip the ice. Gladys had been entrusted to his care: not only would his life be the price of having separated from the "Bunch," but infinitely worse, she must share the same fate. [209]

Despair lent him strength to support the girl with his left arm while he tried to swing his right leg over and dig the heel of his skate into the ice.

But all in vain, he tried and tried again. Numbed with cold, he felt himself growing weaker and he knew that the end could not be far off should the next attempt fail.

One more struggle—one last effort—and the skate, thank Heaven, had caught! Then came the last act. Clenching his teeth and wildly imploring help from on high, Harry gathered together his

last remnant of strength, and swung the girl on to the ice—Gladys was saved!

The boy's heart beat, his panting breath seemed to suffocate him, the strain had been so fearful; now he could do no more, he seemed to make no effort to save himself.

"Harry! Harry!" cried Gladys; "you must try more! I'm all right and can help you—see, I am here close by!" she cried, frantic with terror. "It will be all right directly," she added bravely as she lay flat down and crept up to the edge of the ice.

The boy heard her encouraging words, but still made no progress.

"You are not doing your best, Harry! Think of me, if not of yourself. Remember, I am alone and so frightened. Oh! do be quick. Here, take hold of my hands."

This time her words went home, and the boy, half-paralysed with cold and completely worn out, remembered his responsibility.

"Come along, Harry—hold hard! Yes, I can bear the weight!" called out the courageous girl as she lay in her freezing garments on the ice, the strain of the lad's weight dragging her arms almost from their sockets.

Pluck Rewarded

[210] At last their pluck was rewarded. Heaven was good to them, and Harry Elliott, trembling in every limb, his teeth chattering, his face pale as the moon, stood by Gladys on solid ice. There was no time to waste in words, the boy merely stretched out his hand to the exhausted girl and started across the lake to the nearest house.

Not a word was spoken; they just sped onward, at first slowly and laboriously, until the blood began to circulate and progress became easier. When they reached the shore, they stood encased in solid ice, their wet clothes frozen stiff by the keen frost of the glorious night.

Not for some days did Gladys betray any signs of the mental shock she had received. Anxious parents and a careful doctor kept her in bed for a week, while Harry occupied his usual place at the bank.

It was during that week that the change in Gladys took place. She had plenty of time for thought. Recollections of her nearness to death, of her horror while under the ice, of her terror when saved, of seeing her brave rescuer sink, all these scenes made a deep and lasting impression on her, and she realised that life can never be made up of pleasures only.

When she met the rest of the "Bunch," her quietness puzzled them, her determination to go no more on the ice distressed them. But in her own heart Gladys felt that she had gained by her approach to death, for in the deadly struggle she had been brought near to God. As for Harry Elliott, need I forecast the trend of the two lives that were so nearly taken away together? [211]

The Pearl-rimmed Locket

BY

M. B. Manwell

Mike, the old Raven, is the central figure of this story for younger girls.

March came in with a roar that year. The elms of Old Studley creaked and groaned loudly as the wild wind tossed them about like toys.

"I'm frighted to go to bed," wailed little Jinty Ransom, burying her face in Mrs. Barbara's lap, when she had finished saying her prayers.

"Ah, dear, 'taint for we to be frightened at anything God sends! Do'ent He hold the storms in the hollow of His hand? And thou, dear maid, what's wind and tempest that's only 'fulfilling His word' compared wi' life's storms that will gather over thy sunny head one day, sure as sure?" Mrs. Barbara, the professor's ancient housekeeper, laid her knotted hand on the golden curls on her lap.

But "thou, dear maid" could not look ahead so far. It was more than enough for Jinty that Nature's waves and storms were passing over her at the moment.

"Sit beside my bed, and talk me to sleep, please, Mrs. Barbara, dear!" entreated the little girl, clutching tightly at the old lady's skirts.

So Mrs. Barbara seated herself, knitting in hand, by the little white bed, and Jinty listened to [212] the stories she loved best of all, those of the days when her father was a little boy and played under the great elms of Old Studley with Mike, the ancient raven, that some people declared was a hundred years old at least. He was little more than a dream-father, for he had been for most of Jinty's little life away in far-off China in the diplomatic service. Her sweet, young, gentle mother Jinty did not remember at all, for she dwelt in a land that is far-and-away farther off than China, a land:

"Where loyal hearts and true

Stand ever in the light,
All rapture through and through
In God's most holy sight."

"And, really and truly, Mrs. Barbara, was it the very same Mike and not another raven that pecked at father's little legs same's he pecks at mine?" Jinty inquired sleepily.

"The very self-same. Thief that he is and was!" wrathfully said Mrs. Barbara, who detested the venerable raven, a bird that gave himself the airs of being one of the family of Old Studley, and stirred up more mischief than a dozen human boys even.

"Why," grumbled on the old lady, "there's poor Sally Bent, the henwife, she's driven distracted with Mike's thievish tricks. This week only he stole seven eggs, three on 'em turkey's eggs no less. He set himself on the watch, he did, and as soon as an egg was laid he nipped it up warm, and away with it! If 'twasn't for master's anger I'd strangle that evil bird, I should. Why, bless her! The little maid's asleep, she is!"

And Mrs. Barbara crept away to see after her other helpless charge, the good old professor who lived so far back in the musty-fusty past that he would never remember to feed his body, so busy was he in feasting his mind on the dead languages.

Next morning the tearing winds had departed, the stately elms were motionless at rest, and the sun beat down with a fierce radiance, upon the red brick walls of Old Studley. [213]

Jinty Ransom leaned out of her latticed window and smiled contentedly back at the genial sun.

"Ah, thou maid, come down and count over the crocus flowers!" called up Mrs. Barbara from the green lawn below. "I fear me that thief Mike has nipped off the heads of a few dozens, out o' pure wicked mischief."

Presently Jinty was flashing like a sunbeam in and out of the old house.

"I must go round and scold Mike, then I'll come, back for breakfast, Mrs. Barbara. Grandpapa's not down yet."

Mike on the War-path

But scolding's a game two can play at. Mike charged at Jinty with a volley of angry chatter and fierce flappings of his heavy black wings. It was no good trying to get in a word about the headless crocus plants or the seven stolen eggs.

"Anybody would think that I was the thief who stole them, not you!" indignantly said Jinty. Then Mike craned suddenly forward to give the straight little legs a wicked nip, and Jinty fled with shrieks, to the proud ecstasy of the raven, who "hirpled" at her heels into the dining-room, into the learned presence of the old professor, by whom the mischievous Mike was welcomed as if he were a prince of the blood.

The raven knew, none better, that he had the freedom of the city, and at once set to work to abuse it. A sorry breakfast-table it was in less than five minutes. Here and there over the white tablecloth Mike scuttled and scrambled. His beak plunged into the cream-jug, then deep into the butter, next aimed a dab at the marmalade, and then he uttered a wrathful shriek became the bacon was too hot for his taste.

"My patience! Flesh and blood couldn't stand this!" Mrs. Barbara came in, her hands in the air.

But the professor neither saw nor heard the old housekeeper's anger. [214]

"Wonderful, wonderful!" he was admiringly ejaculating. "Behold the amazing instinct implanted by nature. See how the feathered epicure picks and chooses his morning meal!"

"If a 'feathered pickyer' means a black thief as ever was, sir, that bird's well named!" said the housekeeper wrathfully.

At last Mike made his final choice, and, out of pure contrariness, it was the bowl of hot bread and milk prepared for Jinty's breakfast from which he flatly refused to be elbowed away.

"My pretty! Has it snatched the very cup from thy lip!" Mrs. Barbara's indignation boiled over against the bold audacious tyrant so abetted by its master—and hers. "If I'd but my will o' thee, thou thief, I'd flog thee sore!" she added.

"Quoth the raven: never more!"

solemnly edged in the professor, with a ponderous chuckle over his own aptitude which went unapplauded save by himself.

"I want my breakfast, grandpapa," whimpered Jinty.

It was all very funny indeed to witness Mike's reckless charge of destruction over the snowy tablecloth, but, when it came to his calm appropriation of her own breakfast, why, as Mrs. Barbara said, "Flesh and blood couldn't stand it."

"Have a cup of black coffee and some omelette, dearling!" said the professor, who would not have called anybody "darling" for the world. Then the reckless old gentleman proceeded to placidly sort the letters lying on the breakfast-table, comfortably unconscious that little maids

"cometh up" on different fare from that of tough old veterans.

"Why, why! Here's a surprise for us all!" Pushing back his spectacles into the very roots of his white hair, the professor stared feebly round on the company, and twiddled in his fingers a sheet of thin foreign paper. [215]

"Yes, sir?" Mrs. Barbara turned to her master eagerly alert for the news, and Jinty wondered if it were to say the dream-father was coming home at last.

But Mike, though some folk believe that ravens understand every word you say, continued to dip again and again into his stolen bread and milk with a lofty indifference. It might be an earthquake that had come to Old Studley for all he knew. What if it were? There would always be a ledge of rock somewhere about where he, Mike, could hold on in safety if the earth were topsy-turvy. Besides, he had now scooped up the last scrap of Jinty's breakfast, and it behoved him to be up and doing some mischief.

His bold black eye caught a gleam of silver, an opportunity ready to his beak. It was a quaint little Norwegian silver salt-cellar in the form of a swan. Mike, with his head on one side, considered the feasibility of removing that ancient Norse relic quietly. Then, afraid perhaps of bringing about bad luck by spilling the salt, he gave up the idea and stole softly away, unnoticed by his betters, who seemed ridiculously occupied with a thin, rustling sheet of paper.

But to this day Mrs. Barbara has never found the salt-spoon, a little silver oar, belonging to that Norse salt-cellar, and she never will, that's certain.

"Extraordinary, most extraordinary!" the professor was repeating. Then, when Mrs. Barbara felt she could bear it no longer, he went on to read out the foreign letter.

It was from his son, Jinty's father, and told how his life had been recently in grave peril. His house had been attacked by native rioters, and he would certainly have been murdered had it not been for the warning of a friendly Chinaman. Mr. Ransom escaped in the darkness, but the loyal native who had saved him, paid the cost with his own life. He was cruelly hacked to pieces for his so-called treachery. When the rioters were quelled by a British detachment, Mr. Ransom's first thought was for the family of his faithful friend. But it was too late. With the exception of one tiny girl all had been killed by the rioters. This forlorn little orphan was already on her way crossing the Pacific, for she was to be housed and educated at Old Studley with Mr. Ransom's own little daughter, and at his expense. Common gratitude could do no less. [216]

Ah Lon

The letter went on to say that Ah Lon, the little Chinese maiden, was a well-brought-up child, her father belonging to the anti-foot-binding community which is fast making its way throughout China. She would therefore be no more trouble in the old home than a little English girl, than father's own Jinty, in fact.

"Well, of course," said the Professor meditatively, "the heavy end of the beam will come upon you, my good Barbara. There's plenty of room in the old house for this young stranger, but she will be a great charge for you."

"'Deed, sir, and it's a charge I never looked to have put upon me!" quavered the scandalised Mrs. Barbara, twisting the corner of her apron agitatedly. "A haythen Chinee under this respected roof where there's been none but Christian Ransoms for generations back!"

"There, there!" said her master soothingly. "Your motherly heart would never turn away a poor orphan from our door!"

But Mrs. Barbara sniffed herself out of the room, and it was weeks before she reconciled herself to the new and disagreeable prospect.

Indeed, when poor, shivering Ah Lon arrived at Old Studley, the good woman nearly swooned at the spectacle of a little visitor arrayed in dark blue raiment consisting of a long, square-shaped jacket and full trousers, and a bare head stuck over with well-oiled queues of black hair.

"I thought as Mr. William wrote it was a girl, sir!" she gasped faintly, with a shocked face. [217]

But the old professor was in ecstasies. All he could think of was the fact that under his roof was a being who could converse in pure Chinese; in truth, poor bewildered Ah Lon could not speak in anything else but her native tongue. He would have carried her off to his study and monopolised her, but Mrs. Barbara's sense of propriety was fired.

"No, sir," she interposed firmly. "If that being's the girl Mr. William sent she's got to look as such in some of Miss Jinty's garments and immediately."

So Ah Lon, trembling like a leaf, was carried off to be attired like a little English child.

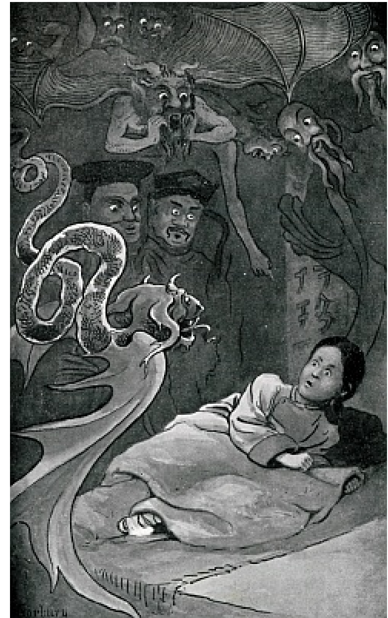
"But as for looking like one, that she never will!" Mrs. Barbara hopelessly regarded the strangely-wide little yellow face, the singular eyes narrow as slits, and the still more singular eyebrows.

"Oh, never mind how she looks!" Jinty put her arms round the little yellow neck and lovingly kissed the stranger, who summarily shook her off. Perhaps Ah Lon was not accustomed to kisses at home.

It was a rebuff, and Jinty got many another as the days went on. Do what she could to please

and amuse the little foreigner, Ah Lon shrank from her persistently.

All Jinty's treasures, dolls and toys and keepsakes were exhibited, but Ah Lon turned away indifferently. The Chinese girl, in truth, was deadly home-sick, but she would have died rather than confess it, even to the professor, the only person who understood her speech. She detested the new, strange country, the queer, unknown food, the outlandish ways. Yet she was in many respects happier. Some of the old hardships of girl life in China were gone. Some old fears began to vanish, and her nights were no longer disturbed with horrible dreams of monsters and demons.



HORRIBLE DREAMS OF MONSTERS AND DEMONS.

But of all things in and about Old Studley Ah Lon most detested Mike the raven, and Mike seemed fully to return her dislike. He pecked viciously at the spindly Chinese legs and sent Ah Lon into convulsions of terror.

"Ah well, bad as he is, Mike's British same's I am, and he do hate a foreigner!" said Mrs. Barbara appreciatively.

Time went on and Jinty began to shoot up; she was growing quite tall, and Ah Lon also grew apace. But, still, though the little foreigner could now find her way about in the language of her new country, she shut her heart against kind little Jinty's advances.

"She won't have anything to say to me!" complained Jinty, "she won't make friends, Mrs. Barbara! The only thing she will look at is my pearl locket, she likes that!"

Indeed Ah Lon seemed never tired of gazing at the pearl-rimmed locket which hung by a slender little chain round Jinty's neck, and contained the miniature of her pretty young mother so long dead. The little Chinese never tired of stroking the sweet face looking out from the rim of pearls.

"Do you say prayers to it?" she asked, in her stammering English.

"Prayers, no!" Jinty was shocked. "I only pray to our Father and to the good Jesus. Why, you wouldn't pray to a picture?"

Ah Lon was silent. So perhaps she had been praying to the sweet painted face already, who could say?

It was soon after this talk that the two little girls sat in the study one morning. Ah Lon was at the table by the side of the professor, an open atlas between them and the old gentleman in his element.

But Jinty sat apart, strangely quiet.

Ah Lon, watching out of her slits of eyes, had never seen Jinty so dull and silent. And all that summer day it was the same.

"What's amiss with my dear maid?" anxiously asked Mrs. Barbara, when bed-time came.

Then it all came out.

"I've lost my pearl-rimmed locket!" sobbed Jinty. "Ah Lon asked to look at it this morning the first thing; she always does, you know. And I took it off, and then Mike pecked my legs and Ah Lon's so hard that we both ran away screaming, and I must have dropped the locket—and it's gone!"

"Gone! That can't be! Unless—unless——" Mrs. Barbara hesitated, and Jinty knew they were thinking the same thing. "Have you told Ah Lon, deary?"

"I did this afternoon, and she cried. I never saw her cry before!"

"Ah, jes' so! You can't trust they foreigners. But I'll sift this business, I shall!" vigorously said Mrs. Barbara.

But for days the disappearance of the locket was a mystery. In Mrs. Barbara's mind there was no doubt that Ah Lon had taken the coveted picture and concealed it in safe hiding. Jinty almost thought so too, and a gloom crept over Old Studley. "I dursn't tell the master, he's that wrapped up in the wicked little yellow-faced creature. I'll step over to the parson and tell he," Mrs. Barbara decided, and arraying herself in her Sunday best, she sallied forth to the vicarage.

As she crossed the little common shouts and laughter and angry chatter fell on her ear.

A group of schoolboys, the parson's four little sons, were closing in round a dark object.

"Why, if that isn't our Mike! I never knew the bird to go outside of Old Studley before. What ——"

"Oh, Mrs. Barbara, do come along here!" Reggie, the eldest of the four, turned his head and beckoned her.

Mike's Mishap

"Here's a nice go! We've run your Mike in, and see his fury, do! Our Tommy was looking for birds' eggs in the Old Studley hedge, and he saw a shine of gold and pulled out this! And Mike chased him, madly pecking his legs, out here to the common. And now he's fit to fly at me because I've got his stolen goods. Look, do!"

Reggie doubled up with yells of laughter, and Mike, in a storm of fury, shrieked himself hoarse. [220]

But Mrs. Barbara stood dumb.

In a flash the truth had come to her.

Mike, not poor Ah Lon, was the thief. She tingled all over with remorseful shame as she crept home with the locket in her hand.

"Oh, and we thought you had stolen it, Ah Lon dear!" Jinty confessed, with wild weeping; but Ah Lon was placidly smoothing the precious little picture. It was enough for her that it had come back. "Grandpapa must know; he must be told!" went on Jinty, determined not to spare herself.

When the professor heard the whole story he was very quiet indeed. But a few days after he went up to London on a little visit, and when he returned he called Jinty into the study.

"This," he said, opening a case, "will perhaps make up to the friendless little stranger for your unjust suspicions!" He handed Jinty a pearl-edged locket with a painting of a Chinese lady's head. "Chinese faces are so similar that it may serve as a remembrance of her own mother. And this, Jinty dearling, will keep alive in your memory one of our Lord's behests!" From another case came a dainty silver bangle inside of which Jinty read, with misty eyes, the engraved words: *Judge not!*

But already their meaning was engraved on her heart; and—as time won Ah Lon's shy affections—she and the little Chinese stranger grew to be as true sisters under the roof of Old Studley. [221]

Rembrandt's Sister

A Noble Life Recalled

BY

Henry Williams

The artistic life sometimes leaves those who follow it largely dependent upon the stimulus and the aid which the devotion of others may supply. Rembrandt was a case in point, and the story of his sister's life is worth recalling.

The first glimpse we get of the noble woman who is the subject of this sketch gives us the key to her whole character. Her brother, the famous Paul Rembrandt, had come home from school in disgrace, and it is as his defender that Louise Gerretz first shows herself to the world. Her tender, sympathetic heart could find excuse for a brother who would not learn Latin because even as a child his heart was set upon becoming a painter. We know how he succeeded, but it is not always one's early desires are fulfilled so completely as they were in Paul's case.

It was in the evening of the very same day on which Louise championed her brother's cause that we find her almost heart-broken, yet bravely hiding her own grief and comforting her younger sisters and brothers in a terrible affliction, the most terrible that can overtake a family of young children. This was the sudden death of the beloved mother, who had been an invalid for some time. The father was a drunken sot, who had fallen into heavy slumber even while his dying wife was uttering her last request to him on earth; this was that he would make an artist of the young Paul, instead of a lawyer, as was his intention. [222]

The next day, while preparations were going on for the funeral, the brutal husband sought refuge from remorse in the bottle, so that for the most part of the day he was hopelessly drunk. In this emergency Louise (who was only fifteen) took the direction of affairs into her own hands. The little ones had been crying all day for their mother, and would not be even separated from the corpse. They were inconsolable, and at last the youngest sobbed out, "Who will be our mother now?"

At this question Louise arose, and said, with deep and solemn earnestness, "I will!"

There was something in her manner which struck the children with wonder. Their tears ceased immediately. It seemed as if an angel stood beside Louise, and said, "Behold your mother!"

"Do you not wish me for your mother?" she repeated.

The little ones ran into her embrace. She folded her arms around them, and all wept together.

She had conquered the children with love, and they were no more trouble to her. They all gladly gave the promise to look up to and obey her in everything.

But a harder task was before her. Strangers were present who must soon find out that her father was intoxicated, on this day of all others, if she did not get him out of the way. She succeeded at last, after infinite pains, and that so well that no one knew the state he was in, and thus he was saved from the open disgrace that would surely have followed him had it got about.

The sad duties of the funeral over, Louise Gerretz braced herself to the task of looking after the numerous household affairs. Nor was this all she had to do, for her father carried on the business of a miller, and because of his drunken habits his daughter had the workpeople to look after, and also the shop to attend to. But she was sustained by the thought that her sainted mother was looking on her from heaven, and this helped her to bear up during the trying times that followed. [223]

She now determined that, if it were possible, her brother Paul—who, afterwards following the usual custom amongst painters of the time, changed his name to Rembrandt—should have every opportunity afforded him of following his natural bent.

"I will be a Painter!"

But no sooner was the subject broached to M. Gerretz than his anger blazed forth, and though Louise withstood him for some time, she felt her cherished plans would receive no consideration whatever from a father who was three-parts of his time crazed with drink. Little Paul, who was present, seeing that the appeal would probably end in failure, exclaimed, with determined voice, "I will be a painter!"

A blow aimed at him was his father's reply. The blow missed its mark, but struck the sister-mother to the earth. Heedless of his own danger, Paul raised his sister's head, and bathed it tenderly until she came to herself again. Even the brutish Gerretz was somewhat shocked by what he had done, yet seizing what he thought an advantage, he cried, "Hark ye, young rascal! You mind not blows any more than my plain orders; but your sister helps you out in all your disobedience, and if you offend me I will punish her."

The brutal threat had its desired effect, and young Paul returned to those studies which were intended to make a lawyer of him.

Every spare moment, however, he spent in his favourite pursuit. His materials were of the roughest: a charred stick, a lump of chalk, and a flour sack. Not very encouraging tools, one would think, and yet the genius that was within would not be hid. He produced from memory a portrait of his mother, that had such an effect upon the father that the latter, affected to tears by the sight of his dead wife's face, dismissed the boy with his blessing, and promised him he should be a painter after all. [224]

Great was Louise's joy; and then, like the loving, practical sister she was, she immediately set about the young artist's outfit. Nor did she pause until everything was in apple-pie order.

Surely God was strengthening and comforting His own. Just consider; here was a young girl, now only sixteen years of age, who had the management of a miller's business, was a mother and sister in one to three young children, and, one is almost tempted to say, was also a tender, loving wife to a drunken, incapable father.

The journey to Leyden, whither Paul was bound, was not without incident of a somewhat romantic kind. As the vehicle in which Louise and the future great painter sat neared Leyden, they came upon a man who lay insensible upon the road. The tender heart of the girl was touched, and she stopped and restored the man to consciousness, and then pressed further assistance upon him. The grateful recipient of her kindness, however, soon feeling strong enough, proceeded on his way alone.

The scene had not passed without a witness, though, who proved to be none other than the eminent master-painter Van Zwanenburg, who joined himself to the little party. But his brow darkened when he learned the purport of the young traveller's journey, and he spoke no more for some time, for he was a misanthrope, and, consequently, took small share in the hopes and pleasures of others. Soon after, however, as they were passing a forge, young Paul stopped and clapped his hands with delight at the sight of the ruddy light cast on the faces of the workmen.

"Canst thou sketch this scene?" asked Van Zwanenburg. Paul took a pencil, and in a few moments traced a sketch, imperfect, no doubt, but one in which the principal effects of light and shade especially were accurately produced. [225]

"Young girl," said the painter, "you need go no further. I am Van Zwanenburg, and I admit your brother from this minute to my studio."

Further conversation ensued, and Van Zwanenburg soon learned the whole sorrowful tale, and also the courage and devotedness of this young foster-mother. He dismissed her with a blessing, misanthrope even as he was, and then carried Paul to his studio, lighter at heart for having done a kind action.

Sorrowful, and yet with a glad heart, did Louise part from little Paul, and then turn homewards. Little did she dream of the great sorrow that was there awaiting her.

Arriving at home in the dark, she was startled to find that no one answered her repeated

knocking. Accompanied by an old servant, who had been with her in the journey, she was about to seek assistance from the neighbours, when lights were seen in the adjoining forest. She hastened towards these, and was dismayed to learn that the two children left at home had strayed away and got lost in the forest. M. Gerretz was amongst the searchers, nearly frantic. The men were about to give up the search when Louise, with a prayer for strength on her lips, appealed to them to try once more. She managed to regulate the search this time, sending the men off singly in different directions, so as to cover as much ground as possible. Then with her father she set out herself.

Lost in the Forest

It was morning when they returned. Gerretz, sober enough now, was bearing the insensible form of the brave girl in his arms. She recovered, but only to learn that one of the children had been brought in dead, while the other was nearly so. This sister thus brought so near to death's door was to prove a sore trial in the future to poor Louise.

A hard life lay before Louise, and it was only by God's mercy that she was enabled to keep up under the manifold trials that all too thickly strewed her path. Her father, sobered for a time by the dreadful death of his child, through his own negligence, soon fell back into his evil ways, and became more incapable than ever. The business would have gone to the dogs had it not been for his heroic daughter, who not only looked after the household, but managed the mill and shop as well. All this was done in such a quiet, unostentatious manner that no one of their friends or customers but thought that the father was the chief manager. [226]

But Louise had other trials in store. Her sister Thérèse was growing up into young womanhood, and rebelled against her gentle, loving authority. The father aided Thérèse in the rebellion, as he thought Louise kept too tight a hold of the purse-strings. Between father and sister, poor Louise had a hard time of it; she even, at one time, was compelled to sell some valued trinkets to pay a bill that was due, because money she had put by for the purpose was squandered in drink and finery.

The father died, and then after many years we see Louise Gerretz established in the house of Van Zwanenburg the artist, the same who had taken young Paul as a pupil. Both Louise and Paul were now his adopted children; nor was he without his reward. Under the beneficent rule of the gentle Louise things went so smoothly that the artist and his pupils blessed the day when she came amongst them.

But before the advent of Louise, her brother Paul had imbibed a great share of his master's dark and gloomy nature, and, what was perhaps even worse, had already, young as he was, acquired the habit of looking at everything from a money-making standpoint.

Another great sorrow was in store for Louise, though she came from the ordeal with flying colours, and once more the grand self-sacrificing nature of the young woman shone out conspicuous amidst its surroundings of sordid self-interest. It was in this way. The nephew of Van Zwanenburg, with the approval of his uncle, wooed and eventually obtained her consent to their marriage. [227]

On the death of the father, Thérèse had been taken home by an aunt, who possessed considerable means, to Brussels. The aunt was now dead, and Thérèse, who inherited some of her wealth, came to reside near her sister and brother. She was prepossessing and attractive, and very soon it became evident that the lover of Louise, whose name was Saturnin, had transferred his affection to the younger sister. Saturnin, to his credit, did try to overcome his passion for Thérèse, but only found himself becoming more hopelessly in love with her handsome face and engaging ways. Van Zwanenburg stormed, and even forbade the young man his house.

Louise herself seemed to be the only one who did not see how things were going. She was happy in her love, which, indeed, was only increased by the thought that her promised husband and her sister seemed to be on the best of terms.

But one day she received a terrible awakening from her happy dreams. She heard two voices whispering, and, almost mechanically, stopped to listen. It was Saturnin and Thérèse. "I will do my duty," Saturnin was saying; "I will wed Louise. I will try to hide from her that I have loved another, even though I die through it."

Great was the grief of poor Louise, though, brave girl as she was, she strove to stifle her feelings, lest she should give pain to those she loved. A little later she sought Van Zwanenburg, and begged that he would restore Saturnin to favour, and consent to his marriage with Thérèse. She was successful in her mission of love, though not at first.

Hiding her almost broken heart, Louise now strove to find comfort in the thought that she had made others happy, though she had to admit it was at a terrible cost to herself.

A Terrible Blow

Her unselfishness had a great effect upon the old artist, whose admiration for his adopted daughter now knew no bounds. Through her he was restored to his faith in human nature, and he asked God to forgive him for ever doubting the existence of virtue. [228]

We cannot follow Louise Gerretz through the next twenty years. Suffice it to say that during that time Van Zwanenburg passed peacefully away, and that Paul Rembrandt, whose reputation was now well established, had married. The lonely sister tried to get on with Paul's wife, but after a few years she had sadly to seek a home of her own.

At the end of the twenty years Louise one day received the following curt letter from her miserly brother:

"Sister,—My wife is dead, my son is travelling, I am alone.

"Paul Rembrandt."

The devoted sister, still intent on making others happy, started at once to her brother, and until the day of his death she never left him. A great change had come over Rembrandt. He had become more morose and bitter than ever. Success had only seemed to harden his heart, until nothing but the chinking of gold had any effect upon it. He was immensely wealthy, but a miser. As the years passed the gloom settled deeper upon his soul, until finally he shut himself up in his dark studio, and would see no one but Jews and money-brokers. At times he would not let a picture go unless it had been covered with gold, as the price of it. With all this wealth, the house of the famous painter bore a poverty-stricken look, which was copied in the person of Rembrandt himself.

Just before the end, when he felt himself seized by his death-sickness, Paul one day called his sister to his bedside, and, commanding her to raise a trapdoor in the floor of his bedroom, showed her his hoard of gold. He then begged, as his last request, that he should be buried privately, and that neither his son, nor indeed any one, should know that he died rich. Louise was to have everything, and the graceless son nothing. [229]

Louise's Refusal

Great was his anger when his sister declared she should not keep the gold, but would take care that it passed into the hands of those who would know how to use it properly. Louise was firm, and Rembrandt was powerless to do more than toss about in his distress. But gradually, under the gentle admonitions of his sister, the artist's vision seemed to expand, and before his death he was enabled to see where and how he had made shipwreck of his happiness. Thanks to the ministrations of his sister, his end was a peaceful one, and he died blessing her for all her devotion to him.

Louise's own useful and devoted life was now near its close.

After winding up the affairs of her brother, she undertook to pay a visit to her sister, who had fallen ill. It was too much for the good old soul; she died on the journey. [230]

Hepsie's Christmas Visit

BY

Maud Maddick

Hepsie's misdeed led, when she understood it, to a bold act which had very gratifying results.

"I say, little mother," said Hepsie, as she tucked her hand under Mrs. Erldon's arm, and hurried her along the snowy path from the old church door, "I say—I've been thinking what a jolly and dear old world this is, and if only the people in it were a little bit nicer, why, there wouldn't be a thing to grumble at, would there?"

Mrs. Erldon turned her rather sad, but sweet face towards her little daughter, and smiled at her.

Somehow folks often *did* smile at Hepsie. She was such a breezy brisk sort of child, and had a way of looking at life in general that was distinctly interesting.

"Of course, dearie," she went on, in that protecting little manner Hepsie loved to adopt when talking to her beloved mother, "you can't imagine I am thinking of people like you. If every one were half—no—a quarter as delightful as *you*, the world would be charming. Oh dear no, I am not flattering at all, I am just speaking the truth; but there aren't many of your kind about, as I find out more and more every day." [231]

"My dearest of little girls," interrupted her mother, as they turned into Sunnycoombe Lane, where the snow lay crisply shining, and the trees were flecked with that dainty tracing of frozen white, "you look at me through glasses of love, and *they* have a knack of painting a person as fair as you wish that one to be. Supposing you give the rest of the world a little of their benefit, Hepsie mine!"

An Unruly Member

Hepsie flung back her head, and laughed lightly. "Oh, you artful little mother! That's your gentle way of telling me, what, of course, I know—that I am a horrid girl for impatience and temper, when I get vexed; but you know, mother darling, I shall never be able to manage my tongue. It was born too long, and though on this very Christmas morning I have been making ever so many good resolutions to keep the tiresome thing in order—you mark my words, little mother, if it doesn't run off in some dreadful way directly it gets the chance—and then you'll be grieved—and I shall be sorry—and some one or other will be *in a rage!*"

Mrs. Erldon drew in her lips. It was hard to keep from laughing at the comical look on the little girl's face, and certainly what she said was true. Some one was very often in a rage with Hepsie's tongue. It was a most outspoken and unruly member, and yet belonged to the best-hearted child in the whole of Sunnycoombe, and the favourite, too, in spite of her temper, which was so quickly over, and her repentance always so sincere and sweet.

She was looking up into Mrs. Erldon's face now with great honest blue eyes in which a faint shadow could be seen.

"I met my grandfather this morning," she said in a quick, rather nervous voice, "and I told him he was a wicked old man!"

Her mother turned so white that Hepsie thought she was going to faint, and hung on to her arm in terror and remorse. [232]

"Don't look like that!" she burst forth desperately. "I know I ought to be shaken, and ought to be ashamed of myself—but it's no use—I'm not either one or the other, only I wish I hadn't done it now, because I've vexed you on Christmas morning!"

Mrs. Erldon walked along, looking straight ahead.

"DO FORGIVE ME, MOTHER DARLING!"

"I'd rather you did shake me," said Hepsie, in a quivering tone, "only you couldn't do such a thing, I know. You're too kind—and I'm always saying something I shouldn't. Do forgive me, mother darling! You can't think what a relief it was to me to speak like that to my grandfather, who thinks he's all the world, and something more, just because he's the Lord of the Manor and got a hateful heap of money, and it'll do him good (when he's got over his rage) to feel that there's his own little granddaughter who isn't afraid of him and tells him the truth——"

"Hepsie!"

Hepsie paused, and stared. Her gentle mother was gazing so strangely and sternly at her.

"You are speaking of my father, Hepsie," she said quietly, but in a voice new to her child, though it was still gentle and low, "and in treating him with disrespect you have hurt me deeply."

"Oh, but mother—darling, darling mother," cried the child, with tears springing to her beautiful eyes, "I wouldn't hurt you for a million wicked old grandfathers! I'd rather let him do anything he liked that was bad to me, but what I can't stand is his making you sad and unhappy, and making poor daddy go right away again to that far-away place in South Africa, which he never need have done if it hadn't been for being poor, though he must be finding money now, or he couldn't send you those lovely furs, and——"

"Oh, Hepsie, Hepsie, that little tongue, how it gallops along! Be quiet at once, and listen to me! There, dear, I can't bear to see tears in your eyes on Christmas Day, and when you and I are just the two together on this day—your father so many, many miles distant from us, and poor grandfather nursing his anger all alone in the big old house." [233]

Her tone was full of a deep sorrow, and for once, young as she was, Hepsie understood that here was an emotion upon which she must not remark, though she muttered in her own heart:

"All through his own wicked old temper."

Mrs. Erldon took Hepsie's hand in her own as they walked towards the little home at the end of the long country lane.

Mrs. Erldon Explains

"I will not scold you, my darling," she said; "but in future never forget that God Himself commands that we shall honour our parents, and even if they grieve their children, Hepsie, that does not do away with children's duty, and a parent is a parent as long as life lasts—to be honoured and—loved! You are twelve years old, dear, and big enough now to understand how sad I am that my dear old father will not forgive me for marrying your father, and I think I had better explain things a little to you, Hepsie. There was some one—a rich cousin—whom my father had always hoped and wished that I should marry as soon as I was old enough; but when I was twenty-one, and was travelling with grandfather, you know, that is my own father—we made the acquaintance of a gentleman in South Africa—Alfred Erldon—who was of English parentage, but had lived out there all his life. Well, Hepsie, I need only say that this gentleman and I decided to marry against grandfather's desire. We were married in Johannesburg, to his great displeasure, so he refused to have anything to do with us, and returned to England, declaring he would never speak to me again.

"I never thought that he really meant such a thing, he had always loved me so dearly, and I loved him so much. I wrote again and again, but there was no answer to any of my letters. Then, my darling, you were born, and soon after, the great South African War broke out, and your dear father made me leave Johannesburg and bring you to England. Of course, I came to the old home [234]

—Sunnycoombe—but only to find I was still unforgiven, for the letter I sent to say I was in the village was not answered either, humbly as I begged my father to see me. All the same, Hepsie, I have remained here at your father's wish, for he lost money, and had to 'trek north,' as they say, to a wild part of Rhodesia, where white women could not go."

Mrs. Erldon's tears were nearly falling as she added: "Things have gone badly with him, and only once has he been able to come to England to spend a few months with us, as you remember, five years ago, but soon, now you are older, I shall go and face the life, however rough it may be. Now, no more talk, for here we are, darling, and, please God, this may be the last Christmas that we spend without daddy, in England or Africa, as it may be."

"And I won't grieve you again to-day, darling little mother," whispered Hepsie, quite sobered at the thought of mother without either her daddy or Hepsie's on Christmas Day again, and no letter from Africa by the usual mail.

An Afternoon Call

It was a glorious afternoon, and when Mrs. Erldon settled down for a rest, Hepsie asked if she might go out for a run, to which her mother at once agreed. In this quiet little peaceful spot in Somersetshire there was no reason why a girl of Hepsie's age should not run about freely, and so, warmly wrapped up, the child trotted off—but any one watching her small determined face would have seen that this was not an ordinary walk upon her part.

She left the old lane and turned towards a different part of Sunnycoombe. She approached the big Manor House through its wide gates, and along broad paths of well-trimmed trees. As she did so Hepsie breathed a little more quickly than usual, while a brilliant colour stole into her fair young cheeks.

"When one does wrong," she murmured determinedly, "there is only one thing to follow—and that is to put the wrong right, if one can. I spoke rudely to my darling little mother's own father, and though he's a terrible old man, he's got to have an apology, which is a wretched thing to have to give; and he's got to hear that his daughter never would and never did teach her little girl to be rude, no, not even to a cantankerous old grandfather, who won't speak to a lovely sweet woman like my mother."

She reached the porch, and pulled fiercely at the old-fashioned bell, then fairly jumped at the loud clanging noise that woke the silence of the quiet afternoon.

The door opened so suddenly that Hepsie was quite confused, and for the moment took the stately old butler for her grandfather himself, offered her hand, and then turned crimson.

"Good gracious me!" she said in her brisk voice. "Do you stand behind the door all day? You made me jump so that I don't know what I am saying, but—well—I must see my grandfather at once, please."

Every one in the village knew all about the child and who she was, and the man was more than surprised at seeing her dare to come there, and he also felt very nervous.

"You run away, miss," he said in a confidential whisper, "an' more's the shame I should have to say so, but, bless your heart, the master wouldn't see you, and it's more than I dare to tell him you're wanting."

"You need not trouble," Hepsie said; "if I had not made a big resolution to look after my tongue, I should say more than you would enjoy hearing—talking to a lady (who comes to visit your master on Christmas Day) like you are doing to me; not that you may not mean kindly, now I come to think of it, but meaning goes for nothing, my good man, if you do a wrong thing, and you can't tell me that you are the one to decide whom your master will see or not." She waited to take a breath, while the man rubbed his white hair in great perplexity, and feeling rather breathless himself; but Hepsie calmly walked by him, and before he could recover from the shock, he saw her disappear into the dining-room!

Hepsie never forgot that moment.

Seated at a long table was a solitary and lonely-looking figure, supporting one thin old cheek on his hand as he rested his elbow on the table and seemed to be gazing far away into space. She did not know that he was rather deaf, and had not heard her enter, and she stood and looked at him, with her heart aching in a funny sort of way, she thought, for the sake of a wicked old man.

She stared and stared, and the more she stared, the bigger a lump in her throat seemed to become. The room was so quiet and he sat so still, and something in his face brought that of her mother to her mind.

At last she walked right up to him, and, feeling if she did not get out the words quickly she never would, Hepsie stretched out her hand and said: "When I stopped you in the lane to-day, I didn't know how much mother still loved you, and I forgot all about honouring parents, however unkind they seem, or I shouldn't have told you what I did, however true it was, for I hurt mother shockingly, as any one could see, and I've promised to look after my tongue much better, and so I just rushed up here to say—what I have said—and—and—please that's all, except——"

She gulped and choked, her small quivering and scarlet face with the pitiful eyes gazing down into his—and the years rolled away in the old man's sight, and his daughter was back at his side

again. What was she saying in that pleading voice, as she knelt and clasped his shaking hand?

"Except—except—I'm sorry, I am! Oh—I didn't think how sad you were, and can't you love me just a bit?"

And what were Hepsie's feelings then when the old man rose, and seizing her in his arms, cried brokenly:

"Oh, child, if only your mother had said the same—only just once in the midst of my anger—but she passed her father by, she passed him by! And never a word in all these years of my loneliness and pain! My heart is breaking, for all its pride!" [237]

"She wrote again and again," declared Hepsie, and he started, and such a frown came then, that she was quite frightened, though she repeated, "Indeed she did, and she loves you still."

"Then," said he, "they never reached me! Some one has come between us. But never mind that now. I must go to your mother. Come," he added, "I must fetch my girl back to her home again, until her husband claims her from me."

A Surprise

But when the two reached the little house in the lane a surprise awaited them. They found Mrs. Erldon in her husband's arms. He had returned unexpectedly, having, as a successful prospector for gold, done well enough to return home at once to fetch his wife and child.

No words could describe the joy in his wife's heart when her father took their hands and asked their forgiveness for years of estrangement, and told the tale of the intercepted letters, which he might never have discovered had it not been for little Hepsie's Christmas visit of peace and goodwill.

Hepsie is learning to control that little tongue of hers now, and she has, framed in her room, a verse that mother wrote for Hepsie especially:

Take heed of the words that hastily fly,
Lest sorrow should weep for them by and by,
And the lips that have spoken vainly yearn,
Sighing for words that can never return!

[238]

Our African Driver

BY

J. H. Spettigue

A glimpse of South African travel, with some of the humours of the road.

"Here comes the wagon to be packed!" called the children, as with a creak and groan of wheels, and shouts from the Kafirs, it was brought lumbering to the door.

"The vor-chiest is ready, Lang-Jan," said Mrs. Gilbert, coming to the door. "Everything that can, had better be put in place to-night."

"Ja, Meeses," agreed Jan. "It's a long trek from this here place to the town in one day, and I will start early, while the stars are still out." Lang-Jan was our driver, so called to distinguish him from the numerous other Jans about the place.

The distinction was appropriate, for he looked very tall and slim, though it might be the contrast with his wife's massive build that gave him a false presentment. He was more proud of her bulk than of his own height, and used to jeer at his Hottentot leader for the scraggy appearance of *his* weaker half, possibly with the kindly intention of reducing the number, or severity, of the poor creature's beatings.

I do not believe Jan ever beat his wife, though I think she was as lazy a woman as could be found. Perhaps he got most of his rations provided from the house, and was not dependent on her for his comfort. [239]

However, he seemed to me to have a Mark Tapley temper; the more unendurable the weather got, the cheerier he grew with his guttural and yet limpid cries to the oxen, and his brisk steps by their side.

There was one thing, however, he could not see in patience—an amateur who had borrowed his whip with the proud intention of "helping to drive" letting the end of four yards of lash draggle over the dewy karoo, thereby making it limp and reducing its power to clack in the approved fashion.

"We had better sleep in the wagon, then we shall not be disturbed so early,"

cried one of the children; but we older people preferred the idea of half a night's rest indoors to lying awake on the cartels in the wagon listening to the tossings and complaints of others.

An Early Start

We had been staying by the sea, and were now to journey homewards. Long before daylight, the noise of the oxen and clank of trek-chain told that inspanning was begun, and those of us who were to form the wagon party sprang out of bed and made a hurried toilet, while the Kafir women carried off the feather-beds and blankets, to stow in their allotted places in the wagon.

Mr. Gilbert and his wife, with the younger children, were to follow in a four-horse Cape-cart.

"Isn't it too dark to be trekking?" he called from his window.

"The roads is good down here," said Jan. "I can see enough"; and he hurried his leader, and got us under way without more ado.

We had the front curtain of the tent rolled up, and sat about on the boxes in silence for some time, listening to the plash of the sea upon the beach, every minute somebody giving a yawn.

"I cannot think why Lang-Jan is hurrying on so," said Constance at last, "unless he thinks it will be a very hot day again. The oxen gave out as we were coming down, and we had to outspan about five miles off." [240]

"I *was* cross," said a younger sister.

"You need not tell us that. We have not forgotten," laughed another.

"Well, I thought I could hear the sea, and I had been meaning to run down and have a bathe directly we stopped. It was enough to make one cross. And then that stupid old Kafir and Jan over the outspan money, and our none of us being able to find any change. I believe Jan was glad we couldn't pay."

"Jan resents having to pay outspan money: he will wriggle out of it if he can," said Constance.

We had gone the first three or four miles with plenty of noise, clack of whip and shout at team, but this gradually subsided, and with a warning to April, the leader, to have the oxen well in the middle of the road and to keep right on, Jan sank into such silence as was possible.

Constance rose, and began to fumble for her purse.

We heard a stealthy order to April to run, and the whip sounded again about one ox and another, while we were tipped about in all directions as the team suddenly put on a tremendous spurt.

In the dim light we could see the outlines of a hut close by the road, and a Kafir sprang out of the doorway towards us shouting for his money. Jan took no notice, but whipped and shouted and trotted along as if his were the only voice upraised.

"Stop, Jan, stop!" called Constance.

But Jan was suddenly deaf. The other man was not, however, and he ran along after us, followed by a string of undressed children, shouting and gesticulating wildly.

"Jan, I insist upon stopping," called Constance. "April, stop the oxen."

In spite of all the noise Jan was making, April could not fail to hear the indignant cry of his young mistress, and presently the wagon was halted. Jan hastily popped the whip into the wagon and turned back to confront his enemy. [241]

"What do you mean by stopping a wagon in the road like this? Outspan money? We have not outspanned and are not going to on your starved old veldt."

"Jan, Jan, you know very well we are owing him two shillings from the last time we passed," said Constance.

The stranger Kafir tried to get to the wagon, but Jan barred the passage. He changed his tactics. "Come, let's fight for it," he cried, casting his hat and scarlet head-handkerchief into the karoo out of the way.

This offer was declined without thanks. "I shan't fight. The money is mine," protested the other, encouraged by finding his demand was allowed by the ladies.

"April, leave the oxen and come here," called Constance. "Give this money to him."

This was done at last, to Jan's grief. "Ah, Mees Constance! Why didn't you let me fight him? he was only a little thieving Fingo dog! I didn't outspan in sight of his old hut, and he must have come sneaking around and seen us, and never said he would have money till it was too late."

Jan's Principles

"Well, Jan, and why should our oxen eat up the grass and drink out of the dam without our paying?" asked Constance; but Jan only muttered, "Thief! Dog!" and got away from the scene of

his defeat with speed.

"That was why we were obliged to start in the middle of the night: Jan wanted to slip by here before the wagon could be recognised," said Constance. Jan had made a stand for his principles, though his mistress's perverted sense of justice had prevented his being able to carry them out. By the time we stopped for breakfast he had quite recovered his spirits; and when he found he had got his party well away from the place without another hateful demand, he seemed to have forgotten his hard fate in the early morning. When we reached the town we lost sight of Jan and his wagon for a couple of days, and took up our abode at an hotel. [242]

A change had taken place in our party when we collected for the second and longer part of our journey. Mr. Gilbert had gone home with some of the younger ones the day before, while his wife had stayed in town to take the rest of us to a ball.

We were all tired as we reached the wagon, with our minds running on the purchases we had made, and lingering regretfully on some we had not.

Lang-Jan and April hurried off to fetch the oxen as soon as we appeared; and Mrs. Gilbert began to go through the stores.

"Those two Kafirs have eaten up our butter!" she exclaimed indignantly. "I saw what was left when you came, and thought it might not be quite enough. It is lucky I did, and have bought some more, or we should have had none at all. I cannot let such a thing as their taking our provisions pass without notice.—Jan," she said, when he returned, "you have taken my butter."

"Oh, Meeses!" exclaimed Jan, as if such a thing was quite out of the question, "not me. It must ha' bin April."

"No, Meeses—not me, Jan," said April.

"It was both of you, I have no doubt," said Mrs. Gilbert severely.

"Oh, Meeses, April, April!" cried Jan, shaking his head.

"No, it was Jan," protested the leader, again.

Jan burst into a roar of laughter, like a naughty child owning up. "Oh! ja, Meeses! It was me. I looked at that tin of butter and then I said to April, 'I must have some of that lovely butter, whatever comes of it,' and then between us, it's all gone." [243]

It seemed impossible to deal with the offence gravely after that. "I shall know I must not leave any in the wagon another time," said the mistress; and we scrambled into our places to be out of the way while the work of inspanning went on.

A Fiery Day

The morning turned into a fiery day. The air shimmered blindingly above the veldt, and the white road, inches deep in dust, trailed ahead like an endless serpent. We panted and gasped under the shelter of the tent; April abandoned his post and climbed up in the back compartment of the wagon, but Jan grew more and more lively.

He tightened his waist-belt and ran by the side of his team, encouraging them by voice and example.

He wore an old soft felt hat, with a perfectly abject brim, above his scarlet handkerchief, and every quarter of a mile he would take it off and put the ostrich feather that adorned one side straight up, and attempt to pinch the limp brim into shape.

In spite of his cheerful snatches of song, and his encouraging cries, the poor beasts showed more and more signs of distress, till at last Jan turned to Mrs. Gilbert and said, "The poor oxen is just done up. We must outspan till it gets cooler."

"What, outspan in this pitiless place, with not a house, or a tree, or water to be got at!" cried one of the girls.

"There is a water-hole down there," said Jan, pointing to a dip in the ground not far off.

"Yes," said Mrs. Gilbert, "I have been down there on horseback."

The wagon was drawn off the road, and the weary oxen let loose, while we stretched ourselves on the cartels, but found the heat too great to let us recover any of our lost sleep.

After a time some of us, thinking any change must be for the better, dragged ourselves out into the glare, and went to look at the pool of water. But though a few prickly pears and mimosa bushes grew around, it was not an inviting spot to rest in, and we laboured back across the scorching ground to the wagon, our only benefit being more thankfulness for its shelter. [244]

April had gone off to see that the oxen did not wander too far. Jan lighted a fire, made coffee for us, and broiled some meat and green mealie cobs.

We felt better after our meal, though we had not been hungry for it. Then, to my surprise, Jan

settled down to enjoy his share, as close to the fire as he could. I do not know if the burning scrub made a little motion in the air, or if Jan, by roasting one half of his body, felt the other cooler by contrast.

Presently I saw, coming slowly across the veldt, a white-haired Kafir, carrying a weakly lamb in his arms. He made straight for Jan and sat down beside him.

Constance, who was looking out too, roused herself and gave a little laugh. "Caught," she said, and I knew what she meant.

At first the palaver seemed amiable enough, and we saw Jan even go the length of making a present of grilled mutton—chiefly bone, but not all.

"An attempt at bribery," murmured Constance.

In about half an hour we heard the inevitable demand. One might have thought Jan had never heard of outspan money, instead of its being a familiar and heating subject with him. When at last the claim was made clear to him, he asked the name of the Baas, and expressed the greatest surprise that any man could be so mean as to ask for money, just because poor souls had to wait by the road till it got cool, when it was too hot even for the oxen to eat anything.

The explanation that the place was such a convenient distance from town, that if nothing was charged the Baas would have nothing left for his own flocks and herds, was badly received, as was also the reminder that if it was too hot for the oxen to eat much, they would drink all the same. The two argued for an hour, Jan emphatic and expostulating, the old Kafir calm, feeling both right and law were on his side. [245]

"We shan't Pay"

At length, Jan surprised us by announcing, "We shan't pay. Your Baas won't expect money from me anyhow, if he does from other people."

"Why not?" exclaimed the other in surprise, for Jan spoke with conviction.

"My Baas' wife is cousin to your Baas' wife, so of course we're free on his veldt."

We laughed, but the collector remarked that he would go and inquire. So he marched up to the wagon, followed closely by Lang-Jan, in fear of treachery, and asked Mrs. Gilbert if it was true, and being informed that the ladies were related, he retired at once, and Jan triumphantly accompanied him back to the fire.

I thought Jan would be happy now the wicked had ceased from troubling, but the storm had its after-roll. He now expressed indignation that two shillings had been demanded. If such an iniquitous claim was made at all, one shilling was all that should be asked for.

They harried this point till the stranger asked Jan what odds it was to him—he did not pay the money.

"Don't I pay the money?" cried Jan. "Isn't it taken out of my very hand?"

"Oh, ja! But it comes out of the Baas' pocket."

"It comes out of my very hand," reiterated Jan, springing up; and fetching his whip, he gave three tremendous clacks with it, the signal to April, that could be heard a mile away in the still air, to bring back the oxen; and the baffled enemy picked up his lamb and retired from action.

Jan was jubilant, and cheerfully agreed to Mrs. Gilbert's suggestions as to the best camping-place for the night.

But I think his triumph was demoralising for him. As evening settled down and we were getting towards our resting-place, we passed by a rare thing—a long wooden fence; and we soon saw that Jan and April were freely helping themselves to the dry wood, and stowing it at the sides of the wagon to save themselves the trouble of collecting any later. [246]

"Jan," called his mistress, "you must not steal that wood. The man it belongs to told the Baas he lost so much that he should put somebody to watch, and have any one who was caught taken before Mr. Huntly."

"April," shouted Jan, laughing, "look out for old Huntly. The Meeses says we must stop it."

Later, when we had outspanned for the night, and they had broiled our sausages, and made the coffee with chuckling anticipation of remainders, they made such a fire as scared Mrs. Gilbert, lest they should set the dry karoo around alight.

"Here, April, we must beat it down a bit. The Meeses is feared we shall set the moon afire," laughed Jan, laying about him with a will, as the flames leaped heavenward.

The next morning he had to cross a river, and pay toll at the bridge. Why Lang-Jan never objected to that, I do not know, but he came quite meekly for the money. His mistress had not the exact sum, and Jan was some time inside the toll-house, which was also a store.

On emerging, he shouted and whipped up his oxen, and off we lumbered.

When we came to a hill, and our pace was sufficiently slackened for speech, Mrs. Gilbert called to him, "Jan, where is my change?"

"Oh, Meeses!" exclaimed Jan, quite unabashed; "I took the change in tobacco!" [247]

Claudia's Place

BY

A. R. Buckland

Many girls long for an opportunity to "do something." That was Claudia's way. And, after all, there *was* an opportunity. Where?

"What I feel," said Claudia Haberton, sitting up with a movement of indignation, "is the miserable lack of purpose in one's life."

"Nothing to do?" said Mary Windsor.

"To do! Yes, of a kind; common, insignificant work about which it is impossible to feel any enthusiasm."

"'The trivial round'?"

"Trivial enough. A thousand could do it as well or better than I can. I want more—to feel that I am in my place, and doing the very thing for which I am fitted."

"Sure your liver is all right?"

"There you go; just like the others. One can't express a wish to be of more use in the world without people muttering about discontent, and telling you you are out of sorts."

"Well, I had better go before I say worse." And Mary went.

Perhaps it was as well; for Claudia's aspirations were so often expressed in terms like these that she began to bore her friends. One, in a moment of exasperation, had advised her to go out [248] as a nursery governess. "You would," she said, "have a wonderful opportunity of showing what is in you, and if you really succeed, you might make at least one mother happy." But Claudia put the idea aside with scorn.

Another said it all came of being surrounded with comfort, and that if Claudia had been poorer, she would have been troubled with no such yearnings; the actual anxieties of life would have filled the vacuum. That, too, brought a cloud over their friendship. And the problem remained unsolved.

Mr. Haberton, immersed in affairs, had little time to consider his daughter's whims. Mrs. Haberton, long an invalid, was too much occupied in battling with her own ailments, and bearing the pain which was her daily lot, to feel acute sympathy with Claudia's woes.

"My dear," she said one day, when her daughter had been more than commonly eloquent upon the want of purpose in her life, "why don't you think of some occupation?"

"But what occupation?" said Claudia. "Here I am at home, with everything around me, and no wants to supply——"

"That is something," put in Mrs. Haberton.

"Oh, yes, people always tell you that; but after all, wouldn't it be better to have life to face, and to——"

"Poor dear!" said Mrs. Haberton, stroking her daughter's cheek with a thin hand.

"Please don't, mamma," said Claudia; "you know how I dislike being petted like a child."

"My dear," said Mrs. Haberton, "I feel my pain again; do give me my medicine."

She had asked for it a quarter of an hour before, but Claudia had forgotten so trivial a matter in the statement of her own woes. Now she looked keenly at her mother to see if this request was but an attempt to create a diversion. But the drawn look was sufficient. She hastily measured out the medicine, and as hastily left the room saying, "I will send Pinsett to you at once." [249]

Pinsett was Mrs. Haberton's maid, who was speedily upon the spot to deal with the invalid.

But Claudia had withdrawn to her own room, where she was soon deep in a pamphlet upon the social position of Woman, her true Rights in the World, and the noble opportunities for Serving Mankind outside the home.

Wanted—a Career

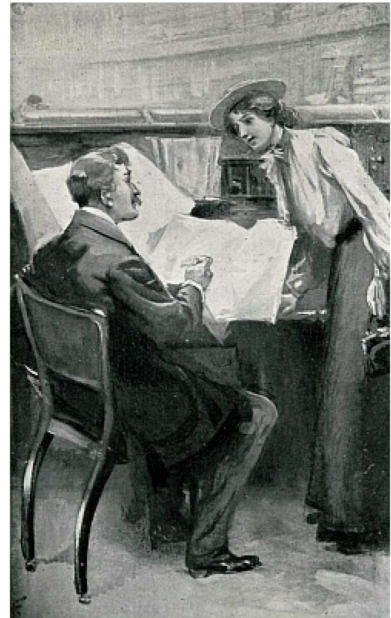
"Ah," said Claudia to herself, "if I could only find some occupation which would give a purpose to existence—something which would make me really useful!"

After all, was there any reason why she should not? There was Eroica Baldwin, who had become a hospital nurse, and wore the neatest possible costume with quite inimitable grace. It might be worth while asking her a few questions. It was true she had never

much cared for Eroica; she was so tall and strong, so absurdly healthy, and so intolerant of one's aspirations. Still, her experience might be of use.

There was Babette Irving—a foolish name, but it was her parents' fault; they had apparently thought she would always remain an infant in arms. Her father had married again, and Babette was keeping house with another woman of talent.

Babette had taken to the pen. Her very youth at first pleaded for her with editors, and she got some work. Then more came; but never quite enough. Now she wrote stories for children and for the "young person," conducted a "Children's Column" in a weekly paper, supplied "Answers to Correspondents" upon a startling variety of absurd questions, and just contrived to live thereby.



HER VERY YOUTH PLEADED FOR HER.

Babette's friend had been reared in the lap of luxury until a woeful year in the City made her father a bankrupt, and sent her to earn her living as a teacher of singing. They ought to have some advice to give.

Then there was Sarah Griffin—"plain Sarah," as some of the unkind had chosen to call her at school. She was one of nine girls, and when her father died suddenly, and was found to have made but poor provision for his family, she had been thankful to find a place in a shop where an association of ladies endeavoured to get a sale for the work of "distressed gentlewomen."

She also ought to know something of the world. Perhaps, she, too, could offer some suggestion as to how the life of a poor aimless thing like Claudia Haberton might be animated by a purpose.

But they all lived in London, the very place, as Claudia felt, where women of spirit and of "views" should be. If she could but have a few hours of chat with each! And, after all, no doubt, this could be arranged. It was but a little time since Aunt Jane and Aunt Ruth had asked when she was going to cheer them with another visit. Might not their invitation give her just the opportunity she sought?

Claudia reflected. She had not in the past cared much for her aunts' household. The elderly maiden ladies were "the dearest creatures," she told herself; but they were not interesting. Aunt Jane was always engaged in knitting with red wool, any fragments of attention which could be given from that task being devoted to Molossus, the toy terrier, who almost dwelt in her lap. Aunt Ruth was equally devoted in the matter of embroidery, and in the watchful eye she kept upon the movements of Scipio, a Persian cat of lofty lineage and austere mien.

Their other interests were few, and were mainly centred upon their pensioners amongst the poor. Their friends were of their own generation. Thus in the past Claudia had not felt any eager yearning for the house in St. John's Wood, where the sisters dwelt at peace. But it was otherwise now, because Claudia had new designs upon London.

She confided to her mother her readiness to accept the recent invitation.

"Go, my dear, by all means," said the invalid; "I am sure you must want a change, especially after so many weeks of looking after me."

"Pinsett," said Claudia, salving her own conscience, "is so very careful and efficient."

"And so good," added Mrs. Haberton; "you may be sure I shall be safe in her hands."

For the moment Claudia was sensible of a little pang. Ought she to be so readily dispensed with? Were her services a quantity which could be neglected?

But, after all, this was nothing. She did not neglect her mother; that was out of the question.

Up to Town

So it was agreed that Claudia should go. Aunt Jane wrote a letter expressing her joy at the prospect, and Aunt Ruth added a postscript which was as long as the letter, confirming all that her sister had said.

So Claudia went up to town, and was received with open arms by her aunts.

The placid household at St. John's Wood was all the brighter for Claudia's presence; but she could not suffer herself to remain for more than a day or two in the light of an ordinary visitor.

"I came this time, you know," she early explained to Aunt Jane, "on a voyage of exploration."

"Of what, my dear?" said Aunt Jane, to whom great London was still a fearsome place, full of grievous peril.

"Of exploration, you know. I am going to look up a few old friends, and see how they live. They

are working women, who——"

"But," said Aunt Jane, "do you think you ought to go amongst the poor alone?"

"Oh, they aren't poor in that sense, auntie; they are just single women, old acquaintances of mine—schoolfellows indeed—who have to work for their living. I want to see them again, and find out how they get on, whether they have found their place in life, and are happy."

Aunt Jane was not wholly satisfied; but Claudia was not in her teens, nor was she a stranger to London. So the scheme was passed, and all the more readily because Claudia explained that she did not mean to make her calls at random. [252]

Her first voyage was to the flat in which Babette Irving and her friend lived. It was in Bloomsbury, and not in a pile of new buildings. In old-fashioned phraseology, Miss Irving and her friend would have been said to have taken "unfurnished apartments," into which they had moved their own possessions. It was a dull house in a dull side street.

Babette said that Lord Macaulay in his younger days was a familiar figure in their region, since Zachary Macaulay had lived in a house hard by. That was interesting, but did not compensate for the dinginess of the surroundings.

Babette herself looked older.

"Worry, my dear, worry," was the only explanation she offered of the fact. It seemed ample.

Her room was not decked out with all the prettiness Claudia, with a remembrance of other days, had looked for. Babette seemed to make the floor her waste-paper basket; and there was a shocking contempt for appearance in the way books and papers littered chairs and tables. Nor did Babette talk with enthusiasm of her work.

"Enjoy it?" she said, in answer to a question. "I sometimes wish I might never see pen, ink, and paper again. That is why I am overdone. But I am ashamed to say it; for I magnify my office as a working woman, and am thankful to be independent."

"But I thought literary people had such a pleasure in their gift," said Claudia.

"Very likely—those eminent persons who tell the interviewers they never write more than five hundred words a day. But I am only a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, so to speak."

"But the thought of being useful!"

"Yes, and the thought——but here is Susie."

Susie was the friend who taught singing. Claudia thought she had never seen a woman look more exhausted; but Claudia knew so little of life. [253]

"You have had a long day, my dear," said Babette, as Susie threw herself into a chair; "it is your journey to the poles, isn't it?"

"To the poles?" said Claudia.

"Yes; this is the day she has to be at a Hampstead school from 9.30 till 12.30, and at a Balham school from 2.30 till 4. It's rather a drive to do it, since they are as far as the poles asunder."

"Still," said Claudia, "railway travelling must rest you."

"Not very much," said Susie, "when you travel third class and the trains are crowded."

"But it must be so nice to feel that you are really filling a useful position in the world."

"I don't know that I am," said Susie, rather wearily. "A good many of my pupils have no ear, and had far better be employed at something else."

"But your art!"

"I am afraid few of them think much about that, and what I have to do is to see that the parents are well enough pleased to keep their girls on at singing. I do my best for them; but one gets tired."

Claudia did not reply. This seemed a sadly mercenary view of work, and a little shocked her. But then Claudia had not to earn her own living.

Another Surprise

Claudia's inquiries of Sarah Griffin were scarcely more cheerful. Sarah was at the shop from 8.30 until 7, and was unable, therefore, to see her friend during the day. Aunt Jane and Aunt Ruth insisted that Sarah should spend the evening at St. John's Wood, and promised that she should leave early in the morning.

She came. Again Claudia marvelled at the change in her friend. Already she seemed ten years older than her age; her clothes, if neat, cried aloud of a narrow purse. She had lost a good deal of the brightness which once marked her, and had gathered instead a patient, worn look which had a pathos of its own. [254]

Sarah did not announce her poverty, but under the sympathetic hands of Aunt Ruth and Aunt Jane she in time poured out the history of her daily life.

She was thankful to be in work, even though it was poorly paid. When first in search of occupation, she had spent three weary weeks in going from one house of business to another. In some she was treated courteously, in a few kindly, in many coarsely, in some insultingly. But that was nothing; Sarah knew of girls, far more tenderly reared than she had been, whose experiences had been even sadder.

But Claudia hoped that now Sarah really was at work she was comfortable.

Sarah smiled a little wintry smile. Yes, she was comfortable, and very thankful to be at work.

Aunt Jane with many apologies wanted more detail.

Then it appeared that Sarah was living on 15s. a week. She lived at a home for young women in business; she fed chiefly on bread and butter. Her clothes depended upon occasional gifts from friends.

Claudia began to condemn the world for its hardness.

"But I am not clever," said Sarah; "I can do nothing in particular, and there are so many of us wanting work."

"And do all these people really need it?"

"Yes; and we all think it hard when girls come and, for the mere pleasure of doing something, take such work at a lower wage than those can take who must live."

"But look at me," said Claudia; "I don't want the money, but I want the occupation; I want to feel I have some definite duties, and some place of my own in the world."

Sarah looked a little puzzled. Then she said, "Perhaps Mrs. Warwick could help you."

"Who is Mrs. Warwick?"

"Mrs. Warwick is the presiding genius of a ladies' club to which some of my friends go. I daresay one of them will be very glad to take us there." [255]

So they agreed to go. Claudia felt, it must be owned, a little disappointed at what she had heard from her friends, but was inclined to believe that between the old life at home and the drudgery for the bare means of existence there still lay many things which she could do. She revolved the subject in the course of a morning walk on the day they were to visit the club, and returned to the shelter of her aunts' home with something of her old confidence restored.

Despite their goodness—Claudia could not question that—how poor, she thought, looked their simple ways! Aunt Jane sat, as aforetime, at one side of the fireplace, Aunt Ruth at the other. Aunt Jane was knitting with red wool, as she had always knitted since Claudia had known her. Aunt Ruth, with an equal devotion to habit, was working her way through a piece of embroidery. Molossus, the toy terrier, was asleep in Aunt Jane's lap; Scipio reposed luxuriously at Aunt Ruth's feet.

Mild Excitement

It was a peaceful scene; yet it had its mild excitements. The two aunts began at once to explain.

"We are so glad you are come in," said Aunt Jane.

"Because old Rooker has been," said Aunt Ruth.

"And with such good news! He has heard from his boy——"

"His boy, you know, who ran away," continued Aunt Ruth.

"He is coming home in a month or two, just to see his father, and is then going back again——"

"Back again to America, you know——"

"Where he is doing well——"

"And he sends his father five pounds——"

"And now the old man says he will not need our half-a-crown a week any longer——"

"So we can give it to old Mrs. Wimple, his neighbour——"

"A great sufferer, you know, and oh, so patient."

"Really!" said Claudia, a little confused by this antiphonal kind of narrative. [256]

"Yes," continued Aunt Jane, "and I see a letter has come in for you—from home, I think. So this has been quite an eventful morning."

Claudia took the letter and went up to her own room, reflecting a little ungratefully upon the contentment which reigned below.

She opened her letter. It was, she saw, from her mother, written, apparently, at two or three sittings, for the last sheet contained a most voluminous postscript. She read the opening page of salutation, and then laid it down to prepare for luncheon. Musing as she went about her room, time slipped away, and the gong was rumbling out its call before she was quite ready to go down.

She hurried away, and the letter was left unfinished. It caught her eye in the afternoon; but again Claudia was hurried, and resolved that it could very well wait until she returned at night.

The club was amusing. Mrs. Warwick, its leading spirit, pleasantly mingled a certain motherly sympathy with an unconventional habit of manner and speech. There was an address or lecture during the evening by a middle-aged woman of great fluency, who rather astounded Claudia by the freest possible assumption, and by the most sweeping criticism of the established order of things as it affected women. The general conversation of the members seemed, however, no less frivolous, though much less restrained, than she had heard in drawing-rooms at home.

She parted from Sarah Griffin at the door of the club, and drove to St. John's Wood in a hansom. The repose of the house had not been stirred in her absence. Aunt Jane, Aunt Ruth, Molossus, and Scipio, all were in their accustomed places.

"And here is another letter for you, my dear," said Aunt Jane. "I hope the other brought good news?"

Claudia blushed a healthy, honest, old-fashioned blush. She had forgotten that letter. Its opening page or so had alone been glanced at. [257]

Aunt Jane looked astonished at the confession, but with her placid good-nature added: "Of course, my dear, it was the little excitement of this evening."

"So natural to young heads," said Aunt Ruth, with a shake of her curls.

But Claudia was ashamed of herself, and ran upstairs for the first letter.

Startling News

A hasty glance showed her that, whilst it began in ordinary gossip, the long postscript dealt with a more serious subject. Mr. Haberton was ill; he had driven home late at night from a distance, and had taken a chill. Mrs. Haberton hoped it would pass off; Claudia was not to feel alarmed; Pinsett had again proved herself invaluable, and between them they could nurse the patient comfortably.

Claudia hastened to the second letter. Her fears were justified. Her father was worse; pneumonia had set in; the doctor was anxious; they were trying to secure a trained nurse; perhaps Claudia would like to return as soon as she got the letter.

"When did this come?" asked Claudia eagerly.

"A very few moments after you left," said Aunt Jane. "Of course, if you had been here, you might just have caught the eight o'clock train—very late, my dear, for you to go by, but with your father so ill——" And Aunt Jane wiped a tear away.

Claudia also wept.

"Can nothing be done to-night?" she presently cried. "*Must* I wait till to-morrow? He may be ——" But she did not like to finish the sentence.

Aunt Ruth had risen to the occasion; she was already adjusting her spectacles with trembling hands in order to explore the *A B C Timetable*. A very brief examination of the book showed that Claudia could not get home that night. They could only wait until morning.

Claudia spent a sleepless night. She had come up to London to find a mission in life. The first great sorrow had fallen upon her home in her absence, and by an inexcusable preoccupation she had perhaps made it impossible to reach home before her father's death. [258]

She knew that pneumonia often claimed its victims swiftly; she might reach home too late.

Her father had been good to her in his own rather stern way. He was not a small, weak, or peevish character. To have helped him in sickness would have seemed a pleasant duty even to Claudia, who had contrived to overlook her mother's frail health. And others were serving him—that weak mother; Pinsett, too; and perhaps a hired nurse. It was unbearable.

"My dear," said Aunt Jane, as Claudia wept aloud, "we are in our heavenly Father's hands; let us ask Him to keep your dear father at least until you see him."

So those two old maids with difficulty adjusted their stiff knees to kneeling, and, as Aunt Jane lifted her quavering voice in a few sentences of simple prayer, she laid a trembling hand protectingly on Claudia.

Would that night never go? Its hours to Claudia seemed weeks. The shock of an impending loss would of itself have been hard enough to bear; but to remember that by her own indifference to home she had perhaps missed seeing her father again alive—that was worse than all.

And then, as she thought of the sick-room, she remembered her mother. How had she contrived for years not to see that in the daily care of that patient woman there lay the first call for a dutiful daughter?

It was noble to work; and there *was* a work for every one to do.

But why had she foolishly gone afield to look for occupation and a place in life, when an obvious duty and a post she alone could best fill lay at home? If God would only give her time to amend!

It was a limp, tear-stained, and humbled Claudia who reached home by the first train the next morning.

Her father was alive—that was granted to her. Her mother had borne up bravely, but the struggle was obvious. [259]

A nurse was in possession of the sick-chamber, and Claudia could only look on where often she fain would have been the chief worker.

But the room for amendment was provided. Mr. Haberton recovered very slowly, and was warned always to use the utmost care. Mrs. Haberton, when the worst of her husband's illness was over, showed signs of collapse herself.

A New Ministry

Claudia gave herself up to a new ministry. Her mother no longer called for Pinsett; Mr. Haberton found an admirable successor to his trained nurse.

Claudia had found her place, and in gratitude to God resolved to give the fullest obedience to the ancient precept: "If any have children . . . let them learn first to show piety at home, and to requite their parents." [260]

Famous Women Pioneers

BY

Frank Elias

Women explorers have been the helpers of men, and spurred them on towards their goals. Some such workers are here recalled.

A great deal has been said and written about the men who, in times past, opened up vast tracts of the unknown, and, by so doing, prepared new homes for their countrymen from England. Park and Livingstone, Raleigh and Flinders—the names of these and many more are remembered with gratitude wherever the English tongue is spoken.

Less often perhaps do we remember that there have been not only strong-willed and adventurous men but brave and enduring women who have gone where scarcely any white folks went before them, and who, while doing so, bore without complaint hardships no less severe than those endured by male pioneers.

To the shores of Cape Cod there came, on November 11, 1620, a little leaky ship, torn by North Atlantic gales and with sides shattered by North Atlantic rollers. Standing shivering upon her decks stood groups of men and women, plainly not sailor-folk, worn by a long voyage, and waiting to step upon a shore of which they knew no more than that it was inhabited by unmerciful savages and overlaid by dense forests. The first must be conciliated, and the second, to some extent at least, cleared away before there could be any hope of settlement. [261]

What pictures of happy homes in the Old Country, with their green little gardens and honeysuckle creepers, rose up in the memory of those delicate women as they eyed the bleak, unfriendly shore! Yet, though the cold bit them and the unknown yawned before, they did not flinch, but waited for the solemn moment of landing.

The "Mayflower"

Perhaps a little of what they did that day they knew. Yet could they, we wonder, have realised that in quitting England with their husbands and fathers in order, with them, to worship God according to the manner bidden by their conscience, they were giving themselves a name glorious among women? Or that, because of them and theirs, the name of the little tattered, battered ship they were soon to leave, after weary months of danger from winds and seas, was to live as long as history. Thousands of great ships have gone out from England since the day on which the "Mayflower" sailed from Plymouth, yet which of them had a name like hers?

Tried as the "Mayflower" women were, their trials were only beginning. Even while they waited for their husbands to find a place of settlement, one of their number, wife of William Bradford—a man later to be their governor—fell overboard and was drowned. When they did at last land they had to face, not only the terrors of a North American winter, but sickness brought on by the hard work and poor food following the effects of overcrowding on the voyage.

Soon the death-rate in this small village amounted to as much as two to three persons a day. Wolves howled at night, Indians crept out to spy from behind trees, cruel winds shook their frail wooden houses and froze the dwellers in them, but the courage of the women pioneers of New England never faltered, and when, one by one, they died, worn out by hardship, they had done their noble part in building an altar to Him whom, in their own land, they had not been permitted to serve as they would. [262]

For many years the task of helping to found settlements was the only work done by women in the way of opening up new territory. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries most of our discoveries were still those of the mariner, who could scarcely take his wife to sea. But in the

nineteenth came the rise of foreign missions, as well as the acknowledgment of the need of inland exploration, and in this work the explorer's wife often shared in the risks and adventures of her husband.

When Robert Moffat began his missionary labours in South Africa in 1816, he had not only to preach the gospel to what were often bloodthirsty savages, but he had to plunge into the unknown. Three years later he married Mary Smith, who was henceforth to be his companion in all his journeys, and to face, with a courage not less than his own, the tropical heat, the poisonous insects, the savage beasts, the fierce natives of a territory untrod by the white man, and who had to do all this in a day before medicine had discovered cures for jungle-sickness and poisons, before invention had improved methods of travel, and before knowledge had been able to prepare maps or to write guides.

It was the daughter of Mary Moffat who became the wife of the greatest of all explorers, David Livingstone, and who like her mother, was to set her foot where no white men or women had stood before.

Their first home was at Mabotsa, about two hundred miles from what is now the city of Pretoria. But soon Livingstone began the series of journeys which was to make his name famous. With his wife he travelled in a roomy wagon, drawn by bullocks at a rate of about two miles an hour. But they often suffered intensely from the heat and the scarcity of water. Then the mosquitoes were always troublesome, and frequently even the slow progress they were making would be interrupted by the death of one of the bullocks, killed by the deadly tsetse. At other times they would halt before a dense bunch of trees, and would have to stop until a clearing had been cut through. [263]

Such was the life of Mrs. Livingstone during her first years in Africa. For a time, following this, she lived in England with her children, and had there to endure sufferings greater than any she had shared with her husband, for during most of her time at home Livingstone was cut off from the world in the middle of Africa. When he reached the coast once more she went back to him, unable to endure the separation longer.

But, soon after landing, her health gave way. At the end of April her condition was hopeless; she lay upon "a rude bed formed of boxes, but covered with a soft mattress," and thus, her husband beside her, she died in the heart of the great continent for which she and those most dear to her had spent themselves.

Lady Baker

An even greater African explorer than Mrs. Livingstone was Lady Baker, wife of Sir Samuel Baker. She was a Hungarian, and married Baker in 1860, when he had already done some colonisation work by settling a number of Englishmen in Ceylon. In the year following their marriage, the Bakers went to Egypt, determined to clear up that greatest of all mysteries to African explorers—the secret of the Nile sources. Arrived at Khartoum, they fitted out an expedition and set off up the river with twenty-nine camels.

One day, as they pushed on slowly in that silent, burning land, they heard that white men were approaching; and sure enough, there soon appeared before them the figures of Speke and Grant, two well-known explorers who had gone out a year before and whom many feared to have been lost. These men had found the source of the Nile in the Victoria Nyanza. But they told the Bakers a wonderful story of how they had heard rumours from time to time of the existence of another lake into which the Nile was said to flow. [264]

The minds of Baker and his wife were fired to emulation. Parting from their newly-met countrymen, they pressed onwards and southwards. They had to go a long distance out of their way to avoid the slave-traders who were determined to wreck their plans if they could.

"We have heard a good deal recently of lady travellers in Africa," said the *Times* a long time afterwards, "but their work has been mere child's play compared with the trials which Lady Baker had to undergo in forcing her way into a region absolutely unknown and bristling with dangers of every kind."

But after encountering many adventures, the determined traveller and his brave wife at last reached the top of a slope from which, on looking down, they saw a vast inland ocean. No eye of white man had ever beheld this lake before, and to Lady Baker, not less than to her husband, belongs the glory of the discovery of the lake which all the world knows to-day as the Albert Nyanza.

"Thus," to quote an earlier passage in the same *Times* article, "amid many hardships and at the frequent risk of death at the hands of Arab slavers and hostile chiefs, Baker and his wife forged one of the most important links in the course of one of the world's most famous rivers."

After many further difficulties, the explorers found their way back to the coast, and thence to England. But their fame had gone before them, and everywhere they were welcomed. And though it was Baker who was awarded a gold medal by the Royal Geographical Society, all must have felt that the honour belonged, not less, to his courageous wife.

Mary Kingsley

It may be said that Lady Baker was not alone in her journeys. On the other hand, Mary Kingsley, another woman African traveller, led her own expeditions. Moreover, her travelling was often done through territory reeking

with disease. At the age of twenty-nine she explored the Congo River, and visited Old Calabar, and in 1894 ascended the mountain of Mungo Mah Lobeh. After her return to England she lectured upon her adventures. One more journey, this time not of exploration, was she to make to the great African continent. In 1900 she volunteered as a nurse during the war, and went out to the Cape. Here she was employed to nurse sick Boer prisoners. But her work was done. Enteric fever struck her down and, before long, the traveller had set out upon her last journey. [265]

The names we have mentioned have been those of famous travellers—women whose work is part of the history of discovery. But there are hundreds of courageous women to-day, not perhaps engaged in exploration, but who, nevertheless, are living in remote stations in the heart of Africa, in the midst of the Australian "never-never," in the lonely islands of the Pacific—women whose husbands, whose fathers, whose brothers are carrying on the work of Empire, or the greater work of the gospel.

Often one of these women is the only white person of her sex for hundreds of miles. Perhaps she is the first who has ever set foot in the region wherein she lives. Yet her courage does not fail. When, as sometimes she does, she writes a book describing her adventures, it is sure to be full of high spirits and amusing descriptions of the primitive methods of cooking and housekeeping to which she must submit. The other side of the picture, the loneliness, the intense heat or cold, the mosquitoes or other pests, the compulsion, through absence of assistance, to do what at home could be done by a servant—all this is absent.

Women may have changed, but certainly woman in the difficult places of the Empire, whether she be missionary, squatter, or consul's wife, has lost nothing in courage, in perseverance, in cheerful or even smiling submission to hard conditions. [266]

Poor Jane's Brother

BY

Marie F. Salton

A rural story this—of adventurous youngsters and a pathetic figure that won their sympathy.

Ever since the twins could remember Poor Jane had lived in the village. In fact, she had lived there all her life, though one could not expect the twins to remember that, for they were very young indeed, and Poor Jane was quite old.

Poor Jane did not dress like other folks. Her boots were so large and sloppy that her feet seemed to shake about in them, and she shuffled along the ground when she walked. These boots could never have been cleaned since Jane had had them, and the twins firmly believed that they always had been that queer dust-colour, until one day Nan told them that when they were quite new they were black and shiny like ordinary boots.

Poor Jane always wore a brown, muddy, gingham skirt, frayed and tattered, and the torn pieces hung like a frill from her knees to the tops of her dust-coloured boots. Over her chest she wore a dark-grey woollen cross-over, and on her head was a dirty shawl, which hung down her back, and was pinned across her breast. Little straw-like wisps of straight brown hair stuck out from under the shawl over her forehead and ears. Her face was dried up and shrivelled, and her cheek-bones were so sharp that they tried to prick through the skin. [267]

Poor Jane did not often wash, so her wrinkles, and what Dumpty called her "laughing lines," were marked quite black with dirt. Her lips were not rosy and fresh like mummie's or Dumpty's, but they were of a purple-grey colour, and when she opened her mouth, instead of a row of pearly white teeth showing, there was only one very large yellow tooth, which looked as if it could not stay much longer in the gum.

The twins always thought that she must live on milk, as babies do before they have any teeth, but to their amazement they heard that last Christmas, at the Old People's Tea, Poor Jane had eaten two plates of salt beef.

"Do you think she sucked it?" Dumpty asked her brother that evening when nurse was safely out of the way. Humpty asked daddy the next day at lunch how old people managed to eat when they had only one tooth.

Humpty's Experiment

Daddy said they "chewed," and showed Humpty how it was done, and there was a scene that afternoon in the nursery at tea, when Humpty practised "chewing" his bread and honey. And in the end Dumpty went down alone to the drawing-room for games that evening, with this message from Nan: "Master Humphrey has behaved badly at the tea-table, and been sent to bed."

But although the children met Poor Jane every time that they went into the village they had never once spoken to her. That was because she was not one of nurse's friends, like old Mrs. Jenks, whom Barbara, the twins' elder sister, visited every week with flowers or fruit or other good things. Nan considered that Poor Jane was too dirty for one of her friends.

BARBARA'S VISIT.

Poor Jane was so interesting because she had so much to say to herself, and, as daddy said, "gibbered like a monkey" when she walked alone. [268]

All day long she would wander up and down the village street, and when the children came out of school and the boys began to tease, she would curl her long black-nailed fingers—which were so like birds' claws—at her persecutors, and would run towards them as if she meant to scratch out their eyes.

Early last spring the twins met with their first real adventure. They had had lots of little adventures before, such as the time when Humpty fell into the pond at his cousins' and was nearly drowned, and when Dumpty had a tooth drawn, and because she was brave and did not make a fuss, daddy and mummie each presented her with a shilling, and even the dentist gave her a penny and a ride in his chair.

But this time it was a real adventure because every one—twins included—was frightened.

The twins had just recovered from bad colds in their heads, which they had passed on to all the grown-ups in the house, and a cold in the head makes grown-ups particularly cross, so the twins found.

Mum came up to the nursery with a very hoarse voice and streaming eyes, but when she saw Nan she forgot about her own cold, and said that Nan must go to bed at once, and have something warm to drink, and put a nice hot-water bottle between the sheets. For a long time Nan said that nothing would make her go to bed, but at last mum, who is very sweet, and of whom Nan is really quite afraid, persuaded her to lie down, and herself brought up a dose of quinine.

It had rained all the morning, but the sun was shining so brightly now that the twins stood looking longingly out of the nursery window, while mummie helped Nan into bed.

"Can we go out, mum?" asked Humpty.

"There is no one to take you out, darling," said mummie thoughtfully; "but it is so nice and sunny now that I think you ought to go. It is too wet to play in the garden, and if you go alone you must promise to walk along the road to the end of the village, and straight back again. Now, [269] remember to walk where it is clean and dry, and keep moving, and do not stop to play with the puddles, and when you come in you shall have tea with me."

"Hooray!" shouted the children; "two treats in one afternoon!"

It did not take the twins long to get ready for their walk that afternoon. They were so excited, for they had never been out alone for a walk before, though, of course, they used to play by themselves in the garden.

Each was inwardly hoping that they might meet Poor Jane, and so they did. As they came out of the drive gate they saw Poor Jane shuffling quickly up the road.

"Let's walk slowly," whispered Dumpty, quivering with excitement, "and perhaps she will catch us up."

In a few minutes the old woman had overtaken them.

Jane's New Gloves

All Nurse's injunctions were forgotten. The children stood still and stared, for Poor Jane was wearing a pair of brand new, red woollen gloves! Poor Jane saw them looking, and she crossed from the other side of the road and came near the children. Dumpty gave a little scream of terror, but Humpty caught her by the hand, so that she could not run away.

"Good afternoon," he said; "what nice red gloves you have!"

The old woman looked at her hands with great pride. "Beautiful red gloves," she said, spreading out her fingers. "I had the chilblains bad, so Mrs. Duke gave 'em to me. Beautiful red gloves!" She began cackling to herself, staring hard at the children as she did so. She had brown, staring eyes that looked very large and fierce in her thin face.

"Where's your nuss?" she asked, beginning to walk along by the side of the children.

"Our what?" asked Dumpty, puzzled.

"She means nurse," said Humpty, with great emphasis. "Nan is ill with a cold in her head," he [270] explained, "and mum has just made her go to bed and drink hot milk."

"I often see ye passin'," said Poor Jane conversationally.

"Yes," said Humpty, who was still holding his sister's hand tight, "we often come this way for a walk, and we always see you."

"You always walk this way, don't you?" said Dumpty bravely, though she still trembled with fright.

"Yes, I allus come along 'ere, every day, wet or fine."

"Why?" asked Humpty, who had an inquiring mind.

Then the old woman seized him by the arm. Humpty turned white with terror, but his courage did not forsake him.

"Why?" he repeated boldly.

The old woman pinched his arm.

"Don't you know why I come here?" she asked, her voice getting shriller and shriller; "don't you know why I walk up and down this road every day, fine or wet, through snow and hail?" She lowered her voice mysteriously, and clutched hold of Dumpty, who could not help shrieking. "You're a lucky little miss; you keep your brother as long as you can. Ah! my poor brother, my poor brother!"

"Is your brother dead?" asked Dumpty sympathetically. She was not so frightened now, for although the old woman still held her pretty tight she did not look as if she meant to hurt them.

"No, he is alive! He is alive! They tell me he is dead, but I know better. A circus came to Woodstead" (the little shopping-town two miles from the village), "and he joined that—he had to go; the circus people—they was gipsies most of 'em—forced him—and he 'ad to go; 'e is a clown now."

"A clown!" cried the twins.

"Yus, and they won't let 'im come back to his poor old Jane. They're a keepin' us apart, they're a keepin' us apart!" And her voice died away in a wail. She stopped in the middle of the road. [271]

"Poor Jane!" whispered Dumpty; "poor Jane! I am so sorry"; but Jane took no more notice of them, but went on murmuring to herself, "Keepin' us apart—keepin' us apart."

"Come on, Dump," said Humpty at last; "it's no good staying, she doesn't seem to want us." Dumpty joined him, and there were tears in her eyes. What Poor Jane had said was so very, very sad. The twins had so much to think about now that they talked very little during their walk, but when they did, it was all about Poor Jane and her brother, who was the clown in a circus.

When they got home the children had tea and games downstairs, and altogether it was great fun, but they did not mention their meeting with Poor Jane. That was their secret.

For days afterwards they talked it over and wondered whether Jane would speak to them the next time they met on the road, but when they went down the village again with nurse the old woman passed them by without a sign of recognition.

Three months passed and June had come, and one day Nan and the children went down to the village shop to buy slate-pencils.

Mrs. Moses' Question

"Are you taking the children to the circus?" asked Mrs. Moses, the shopwoman.

The twins pricked up their ears.

"When is it?" asked Nan.

"To-morrow, at Woodstead," answered Mrs. Moses; and she showed the children two large bills with pictures on them, of a beautiful young lady with yellow hair, who was walking on a tight-rope, a dark lady balancing herself on a golden globe, a young man riding, bare-back, on a fierce white horse, and a lion jumping through flames of fire, while in the corner was the picture of a clown grinning through a hoop. [272]

"Oh, Nan!" said Humpty, when they were outside, "can we go?"

"I shall ask mummie when we get home what she thinks about it," said nurse, "but you are not to be disappointed or cross if she won't let you."

That evening when mummie came up to bid good-night to the twins in bed they were told that they might go. Nurse had been promised to-morrow off, so that she might have tea with her sister, who lived at Woodstead, but she had very kindly said that she would be quite willing to take the twins with her, and put them into seats in the circus, and then she would come for them at the end of the performance.

The twins were delighted, and almost too excited to speak. After mummie had gone they lay awake thinking.

"Humpty," said Dumpty presently, "what are you thinking about?"

"The circus," answered Humpty promptly.

"And I," said Dumpty pensively—"I have been thinking about Poor Jane."

"I have been thinking about her lots too," said Humpty.

"And oh, Humpty! supposing the clown should be her brother, what should we do?"

"We should bring him back to Poor Jane of course," said Humpty.

"But how shall we know whether he is her brother?"

"He will look like her, of course, stupid," replied Humpty, a little crossly, for he was beginning to feel sleepy.

At the Circus

They had an early dinner next day, and then Edward brought the pony round to the door, and they set off for Woodstead. Nurse was looking very smart in a black bonnet and silk mantle, and the children felt almost as if she were a stranger. Soon they came to a large meadow, where stood a great tent with steps leading up to it, and a man stood on the top of the steps beating a drum and crying, "Children half-price! Walk up! Walk up!" [273]

There was a nice man inside, who led the children past rows of bare seats, raised one above the other, till he came to a part which was curtained off from the rest. He drew the curtain to one side to let the children pass in, and they saw four rows of comfortable seats with backs, covered with scarlet cloth.

"Yes, these will do nicely," said Nan; "and now, children, you must sit here quietly till the circus is over, and I shall come and fetch you at half-past four."

The children now had time to look about. A large plot of grass had been encircled with a low wooden fence, hung with more red cloth. Inside this ring some of the grass had been taken up, so that there was a narrow path where the horses would canter right round the ring. Quite close to the children was an elegant carriage—wagon-shaped—where the musicians sat, and made a great noise with their instruments. One of the men played the drum and cymbals at the same time. On their right the tent was open and led out on to the meadow, and this was the entrance for the horses and performers.

After playing the same tune through seven times, the band changed its music and began a quick, lively air, and in came trotting, mounted on a black horse with a white nose, a rather elderly lady with golden hair. She did not sit on an ordinary saddle, but on what appeared to be an oval tea-tray covered with blue satin. Behind her followed a serious, dignified gentleman, who was busily cracking a long whip. His name, the twins soon learned, was Mr. Brooks, for so all the performers addressed him.

The lady rode twice round the ring, and on dismounting kissed her hands to the audience in a friendly manner.

"I want to introduce to you, ladies and gentlemen, my wonderful performing horse Diamond. Diamond, make your bow." [274]

Whereupon Diamond—with some difficulty—bent his knees, and thrust his head down to the ground.

The twins were enchanted.

But this was by no means the best of Diamond's accomplishments. By looking at a watch he could tell the time, and explained to the audience that it was now seventeen minutes past three, by pawing on a plank of wood with his hoof three times, and then, after a moment's pause, seventeen times. He could shake his head wisely to mean "yes" or "no"; he could find the lady's pocket-handkerchief amongst the audience, and, finally, he refused to leave the ring without his mistress, and when she showed no sign of accompanying him, he trotted behind her, and pushed her out with his soft white nose.

Next an acrobat came somersaulting in. He did all sorts of strange things, such as balancing himself upside down on the broad shoulders of Mr. Brooks, and tying himself into a kind of knot and so entangling his limbs that it became impossible to tell the legs from the arms.

After he had gone there was a long pause, and then came tottering in, with slow and painful footsteps, an old, old man. He was dressed in a dirty black suit, and wore an old battered bowler. His clothes were almost in rags, and he had muffled up his face with a long black comforter.

A strange hush came over the audience as he sat down in the ring to rest, only Humpty and Dumpty leaned forward eagerly to watch. "It is Poor Jane's brother," said Humpty very loudly.

Mr. Brooks went up to the tired old man. "I am afraid you are very tired, my good man," he said kindly.

"Very tired, very tired indeed, Mr. Brooks," sighed Poor Jane's brother.

"Mr. Brooks!" cried the owner of that name, "how, sir, do you know that my name is Brooks?" And then a wonderful thing happened. The old man sprang to his feet, his rags dropped from him, he tore off the black comforter, and behold! he was a clown with a large red nose, who cried, "Here we are again!" [275]

How the children laughed and clapped, and how pleased the twins were to have discovered Poor Jane's brother!

Oh, the things that clown did! The familiar way in which he spoke to Mr. Brooks! The practical jokes that he played on him! Then in trotted old Diamond to join in the fun, and here was a chance for the clown to take a lesson in riding. He mounted by climbing up the tail, and then he rode sitting with his back to the horse's head. He tried standing upright whilst Diamond was galloping, but could not keep his balance, and fell forward with his arms clasped tightly round the animal's neck. In the end Diamond, growing tired of his antics, pitched him over his head, but the clown did not seem to mind, for before he had reached the ground he turned an immense somersault—then another—and the third carried him right through the entrance back into the meadow where the caravans were standing.

"Humpty," asked Dumpty, "what are we to do?"

"We must go at once and rescue him," answered the boy.

To the Rescue!

The twins slipped from their seats, and crept to the back of the tent.

"I think we can squeeze under this," said Humpty, as he began wriggling under the awning. He then helped Dumpty, who was rather fat, and showed signs of getting stuck.

"How cool it is outside!" remarked Dumpty, who had found it hot and stifling under the tent. "I would like to know what is going on, wouldn't you?" she added, as a peal of merry laughter came from the tent.

"We will go back presently," said Humpty; "but we must first find Poor Jane's brother."

There were two or three small tents, and one large one, in which the horses were stabled. Dumpty longed to stop and talk to a dear little piebald pony, but Humpty carried her on till they came to the caravans.

Four or five men were lying face downwards on the grass—worn out and tired. Before the steps of one caravan a group of children were playing, whilst one woman in a red shawl sat on the steps smoking a clay pipe, and holding a dirty-looking baby in her arms.

The twins stole round the caravan, taking good care not to be seen. There was as yet no sign of the clown.

At last they found a smaller caravan which stood apart from the others, and the door was ajar. "Perhaps he is in there," suggested Humpty. "I am going to see." And he ran up the steps and peeped inside.

"Oh, do come, Dumpty!" he cried; "it is awfully interesting."

Dumpty tumbled up the steps.

"Oh, Humpty!" she said, "how lovely!"

It really was a very nice caravan, and spotlessly clean. There were dear little red curtains in front of the window and a red mat on the floor. All over the wall hung baskets made in pretty green and blue straw of all shapes and sizes. On the chair lay a bundle of peacock's feathers.

"These are like what the gipsies sell," remarked Dumpty. A gipsy's basket was lying on the floor, in which were tin utensils for cooking, and two or three saucepans. Bootlaces had been wound round the handle.

The twins were fascinated, and turned everything over with great interest. They found a large cupboard, too, containing all sorts of beautiful clothes—lovely velvet dresses, and robes of gold and silver.

"How dark it is getting!" said Humpty presently; "why did you shut the door?"

"I didn't shut the door," answered Dumpty; "I spect the wind did."

They took a long time in exploring the cupboard. Suddenly Humpty cried, "We have forgotten Poor Jane's brother!"

They made a rush for the door.

"Here, Humpty, will you open it? This handle is stiff."

Humpty pulled and struggled with the handle until he was red in the face.

"I can't get it open," he said at last.

"Let me try again," said Dumpty, and she pushed and struggled, but to no purpose.

For a long time she and Humpty tried alternately to open the door, but nothing that they could do was of any avail.

Locked in

"I think it is locked," said Humpty at last, sitting down despondently. He was panting breathlessly, and began to swing his legs.

Dumpty's eyes grew wide with terror, her lips trembled.

"Have they locked us in on purpose?" she asked.

"Yes," said Humpty, "the circus people have locked us in, and they won't unlock the door until they have left Woodstead."

"And then?" asked Dumpty.

"Then they will keep us, and never let us come home again—like they did to Poor Jane's brother, and I shall be a bare-back rider, and you will wear the blue velvet gown, and ride in the processions on the piebald pony."

"And we shall never see mummie or daddy again—or Nan—or Poor Jane," said Dumpty, beginning to cry.

"No, we shall never see them again," answered Humpty, swallowing hard to keep himself from crying.

Dumpty was crying bitterly now, and the loud sobs shook her small body. Humpty looked dismally at his surroundings, and continued to swing his legs.

"Give over!" he said to Dumpty, after one of her loudest sobs; "it will never do for them to see that you've been crying, or they will be just furious." [278]

After a time Dumpty dried her eyes, and went to the window, and drew back the curtains.

"It's getting dark," she said.

Humpty began to whistle. Suddenly he stopped.

"I am getting awful hungry," he remarked.

"We shan't have nuffin' to eat until the morning," said Dumpty.

"Humpty," she continued, "would it be any good if we screamed and banged the door?"

"No," said the boy; "if they heard us trying to give the alarm, they would be very angry, and perhaps they wouldn't give us anything to eat for days—not until we were nearly dead."

"I think we had better go to sleep," said Dumpty, yawning, and began saying her prayers.

In a few minutes both children were lying fast asleep on the floor of the caravan.

"My eye! jest look 'ere, Bill!"

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Bill, gaping open-mouthed at the sight of the two children asleep in the caravan.

"'Ow in the world did they get 'ere?" continued the woman who had first found them. "Wike up! wike hup!" she cried, giving them each a violent shaking.

Humpty began to open his eyes. He stared in astonishment at the people round him.

"Are you the circus people?" he asked.

"Yes, and who are you, we're wanting to know, and 'ow did you come 'ere?"

By this time Dumpty was awake. On seeing the strange faces, she immediately began to cry.

"Don't 'e cry, dear," said the woman; "there's no call to be afraid."

But Dumpty still cried.

"Why did you lock us in?" asked Humpty defiantly.

"I believe they think as 'ow we locked 'em in for the purpose," laughed the woman, and then she explained to them what had happened, how they always kept this caravan locked, for they did not use it for sleeping or living in, but filled it with baskets and tins, which they sold as they travelled through the villages. She told the twins, too, that three policemen were out searching for them everywhere, and had come to make inquiries of her husband, and of the man who sold the tickets, but they could tell them nothing. And in their turn the twins had to explain how it was that they had found their way into the caravan. [279]

An Early Breakfast

It was just three o'clock now, and the men were all at work, for by four o'clock they must be on the way to the next town, where they were "billed" to give a performance that very afternoon.

"And now," said the woman, "you must 'ave a bite of breakfast, and then Bill shall tike you 'ome. What'll your ma and pa say when they see you? they'll be mighty pleased, I guess."

The twins had never been up so early in the morning before. They felt ill and stiff all over from sleeping on the hard floor, and they were very hungry, and cold too, for the morning air seemed chill and biting.

The women had made a fire of sticks, and a great black kettle was hanging over it. The water

was boiling and bubbling.

Soon the men left their work and came to join in the meal. They all sat round the fire on the wet grass, and shared the large, thick mugs of tea and sugar, and stared at the little strangers.

All the children were up, too, and rubbed their eyes and tried hard not to look sleepy, but the little ones were cross and peevish. Each child had a large slice of bread, and a piece of cold pork, and even the little, sore-eyed baby held a crust of bread and a piece of pork in his hand, which he tried to stuff into his mouth.

[280] The twins, because they were the guests, were given each a hard-boiled egg. Dumpty was getting over her shyness now, and tried to behave as mummie does when she is out to tea. "Eggs are very dear now," she announced gravely, during a lull in the conversation; "how much do you pay for yours?" How the men and women laughed! It seemed as if Bill would never stop chuckling, and repeating to himself, "Pay for our eggs! That's a good un"; and every time that he said "Pay for our eggs!" he gave his leg a loud slap with his hand. When breakfast was over—and you may be sure that the twins ate a good one, although they did not much like the strong tea, without any milk—the woman said it was time for them to be starting home.

"Please," begged Dumpty, summoning all her courage—"please, may the piebald pony take us?" and in a few minutes Bill drove it up, harnessed to an old rickety cart, and the two children were packed in.

Just as they were starting Dumpty said, with a sigh, to the kind gipsy woman, "Thank you very, very much, and will you, please, tell the clown how sorry I am that I have not seen him to speak to?"

"'Ere I am, young mon—'ere I am!"

It was Bill who spoke. The twins could not believe their ears.

"Are you the clown?" said Dumpty in an awestruck voice; "are you really and truly the clown?"

Bill jerked the reins, and the piebald pony set off at a weary trot. "Yes, missie, I am the clown," he said.

"Where's your nose?" asked Humpty suspiciously.

"One's on my face—t'other's in the dressing-up box," answered the man, with a shout of laughter.

"Then you're not Poor Jane's brother?" said Dumpty.

"Don't know nuffun about Poor Jine—we've got only one Jine here, and that's the monkey, and she ain't my sister, leastways it's to be hoped as she in't." [281]

But although it was disappointing to find that the clever clown was only Bill all the time, the twins enjoyed their drive home, for Bill told them many wonderful tales of his life in the ring, and of the animals which he had trained.

Soon they came to the village, which looked so strange and quiet by the early morning light, with the cottage-doors all shut, and the windows closed and the blinds drawn. Humpty jumped down to open the gate leading up the drive, and there on the doorstep were mummie and daddy, looking so white and ill, who had come out of the house at the sound of the wheels on the gravel to greet them.

Home Again

The twins were hurried indoors and taken up to the nursery, and Nan cried when she saw them and forgot to scold. From the window they watched mum and daddy thanking Bill, and giving him some money, and they waved "goodbye" to him, and he flourished his whip in return, gave another tug at the reins, and the old piebald pony cantered bravely down the drive, and they saw them no more.

The twins were not allowed to see their mother, for Nan said that she was feeling ill with a dreadful headache, and it was all on account of their "goings-on"; and after Nan had stopped crying, she began to scold, and was very cross all day.

That evening when the twins were in bed mummie came to tuck them up. But instead of saying "Good-night," and then going out as she generally did, she stayed for a long, long time and talked.

She told them that it was very wrong to have disobeyed nurse, who had told them to stay in the seats and not to go away.

"But," cried Humpty, "we had to try to rescue Poor Jane's brother!"

"Poor Jane's brother!" repeated mummie, looking puzzled. And then the twins explained.

Mummie sat silent for a long time.

[282] "Remember, children," she said at last, "never do evil that good may come—I can't expect you to understand that—but I can tell you a little story."

"A story!" cried the twins. "Hooray!"

"Once upon a time a town was besieged. It was night, and only the sentinels on the walls were left on guard, and told to give the alarm by clanging a large bell, should the enemy force an attack. There was one sentinel who had never done this work before, and he was given the least important tower to guard. During the night a loud bell clanged out, and a soldier came running along the wall to speak to the new sentinel. 'Do come,' he said, 'we want as many helpers as we can get at once, and there will be plenty of fighting.' The young sentinel longed to go with him, and join the fight, but he remembered his duty in time.

"'I cannot leave this tower,' he said; 'I have had orders to stay and give the alarm should the enemy appear, and the town trusts me to do so.'

"'I believe that you are afraid,' said the soldier as he hurried away.

"And this was the hardest of all, and the sentinel longed to join in the fighting to show that he, too, was no coward, but could fight like a man.

"He stood there, listening to the noise in the distance, to the shouts of the enemy, and the screams of those who were struck down. And as he looked below the walls into the valley beyond he thought that he could distinguish men moving, and while he watched he saw a number of soldiers creeping up to the walls, and one man had even placed his foot on the steps that led up to his tower. Quick as thought, the sentinel seized the rope of the large bell that hung over his head and clanged it again and again.

"In a few minutes the troops were assembled, and, making their way down the steep steps, they charged at the enemy, and followed them into the valley.

[283] "Late on the following evening the soldiers returned, but not all, for many were killed—and they brought back news of a great victory. The enemy was routed and the town saved. So you see, children," said mother gravely, "how much better it is to do what is right. If that young sentinel had left his post, even though it were to help the men in the other tower, the enemy would have climbed up those steps and got into the town. You must try to remember this always. You should have obeyed nurse, and remembered that she was trusting you to do what she had said. It was a kind thought of yours to try to rescue Poor Jane's brother, but obedience to nurse should have come first."

"But we forgot, mummie," said Humpty.

Jane's Delusion

"What would have happened if the sentinel had forgotten that he was trusted to do his duty, and stay in the tower?"

Humpty was silent.

"And now," said mummie cheerfully, "we will forget all about the terrible fright you have given us, and you must try to remember what I have said. I want to know all about Poor Jane's brother," she continued, smiling; "is it some one you have been imagining about?"

"Oh, no!" cried the twins at once. And then they told her of the conversation which they had had with Poor Jane, and of what she had said about her brother.

"But Poor Jane has no brother," said mummie; "he died long ago. Jane's mind has never grown up. One day, when she was a girl, her mother took her to a circus at Woodstead, and when they came home, after it was over, they were told the sad news that Jane's brother had fallen from the top of a wagon of hay on to his head. He died a few hours later. But Jane could not understand death—she only knew that Harry had gone away from them, and she believed that the circus [284] people had stolen him from the village and made him a clown. Ever since that sad day Jane has gone up and down the village to look for him, hoping that he will come back."

"And will Poor Jane never see him again?" asked Dumpty.

[285] "Yes," answered mummie, with her sweetest smile—"yes, darlings, one day she may!"

The Sugar Creek Highwayman

BY

Adela E. Orpen

An Englishwoman's adventure in Arkansas, issuing in a great surprise to all concerned.

When Mrs. Boyd returned from Arkansas, I, having myself spent a very uneventful summer at home, with only the slight excitement of a month at Margate, was most anxious to hear an account of her adventures. That she had had adventures out there on those wild plains of course I felt certain. It would be manifestly preposterous to go to Arkansas for three months, and come back without an adventure.

So, on the first day when Mrs. Boyd was to be "at home" after her return, I went to see her; and I found, already assembled in her cosy drawing-room, several other friends, impelled there, like myself, by curiosity to hear what she

had to say, as well as by a desire to welcome her back.

"I was just asking Mrs. Boyd what she thought the most singular thing in America," said Miss Bascombe, by way of putting me *au courant* with the conversation after my greeting was over with our hostess.

"And I," replied Mrs. Boyd, "was just going to say I really did not know what was the one most curious thing in America, where most things seem curious, being different from here, you know. I suppose it is their strange whining speech which most strikes one at the outset. It is strong in New York, certainly, but when you get out West it is simply amazing. But then they thought my speech as curious as I did theirs. A good woman in Arkansas said I talked 'mighty crabbed like.' But a man who travelled in the next seat to me, across Southern Illinois, after talking with me for a long time, said, 'Wal, now, you dew talk purty tol'eble square for an Englishwoman. You h'aint said 'Hingland' nor 'Hameriky' onst since you sot there as I knows on!'" [286]

Mrs. Boyd put on so droll a twang, and gave her words such a curious, downward jerk in speaking, that we all laughed, and felt we had a pretty fair idea of how the Illinois people talk at all events.

"Everybody is very friendly," continued Mrs. Boyd, "no matter what may be their station in life, nor what you may suppose to be yours. I remember in Cincinnati, where I stopped for a couple of days, the porter who got out my box for me saw it had some London and Liverpool labels on it, whereupon he said, with a pleasant smile, 'Wal, how's Eurôpe gettin' on, anyhow?' Fancy a Cannon Street porter making such a remark to a passenger! But it was quite simply said, without the faintest idea of impertinence. In fact, it is almost impossible to say that anybody is impertinent where you are all so absolutely on an equality."

Now all this was interesting enough, no doubt, but what I wanted to hear about was something more startling. I could not really give up all at once the idea of an adventure in the West, so I said, "But didn't anything wonderful happen to you, Mrs. Boyd?"

"No, I can't say there did," replied the lady, slightly surprised, I could see, by my question.

Then, rallying my geography with an effort, I asked, "Weren't you carried off by the Indians, or swept away by a flood?"

"No, I was many hundred miles away from the Indian Reservation, and did not see a single Red man," replied Mrs. Boyd; "and as for floods—well, my dear, I could tell you the ridiculous straits we were put to for want of water, but I can't even imagine a flood on those parched and dried-up plains." [287]

An Adventure

"Well," said I, in an aggrieved voice, "I think you might have come back with at least one adventure after being away for three months."

"An adventure!" exclaimed Mrs. Boyd, in astonishment, and then a flash of recollection passed over her countenance, and she continued, "Oh, yes, I did have one; I had an adventure with an highwayman."

"Oh!" cried all the ladies, in a delighted chorus.

"See there, now!" said Miss Bascombe, as if appropriating to herself the credit of the impending narrative.

"I knew it!" said I, with triumph, conscious that to me was due the glory of unearthing the tale.

"I'll tell it to you, if you like," said Mrs. Boyd.

"Oh, pray do; we are dying to hear about it!" said Miss Bascombe. "A highwayman above all! How delicious!"

"Was he handsome?" asked one of the ladies, foolishly, as if that had anything to say to it.

"Wait," said Mrs. Boyd, who assumed a grave expression of countenance, which we felt to be due to the recollection of the danger she had run. We also looked serious, as in politeness bound, and sat in eager expectation of her story.

"One day we were all invited to spend the whole afternoon at a neighbour's house. We were to go early for dinner at half-past twelve, stay until tea at five, and then drive home in the evening. The neighbour lived twelve miles away, but as there was to be a moon we anticipated no difficulty in driving home over the prairie. You see, as a rule, people are not out after dark in those wild regions; they get up very early, work hard all day, and are quite ready to go to bed soon after sunset. Anyway, there is no twilight; the sun sets, and it is dark almost immediately. When the day came, Emily (my sister, you know, with whom I was staying) wasn't able to go because the baby was not at all well, and she could not leave him for so long a time. So my brother-in-law and I set off alone, promising to come home early. I enjoyed the drive over the prairie very much, and we got to our destination about midday. Then we had dinner, a regular out-West dinner, all on the table together, everything very good and very plentiful. We dined in the kitchen, of course, and after dinner I helped Mrs. Hewstead to wash up the dishes, and then we went out and sat on the north side of the house in the shade and gossiped, while the men went and inspected some steam-ploughs and corn-planters, and what not. Then at five o'clock we had supper. Dear me! when I think of that square meal, and then look at this table, I certainly [288]

realise there is a world of difference between England and Arkansas."

"Why," said Miss Bascombe, "don't they have tea in America?"

"Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Boyd, "we had tea and coffee, any number of cakes and pies, and the coloured man brought up a wheelbarrowful of water-melons and piled them on the floor, and we ate them all!"

"Dear me," I remarked, "what a very extraordinary repast! I think you must have felt rather uncomfortable after such a gorge."

"Oh dear, no," returned Mrs. Boyd, smiling; "one can eat simply an unlimited quantity of water-melons on those thirsty plains. The water is always sickeningly warm in the summer-time, so that any substitute for it is eagerly welcomed."

Mrs. Boyd, lost in the recollections of the appetising water-melons, was clearly forgetting the great point of her story, so I ventured to suggest it by remarking: "And the highwayman?"

"I am coming to that directly," said Mrs. Boyd.

"Well, we started home just before sundown; and as it was very hot, we could not drive fast. Indeed, the horses were in a sheet of lather almost immediately, and the air seemed fairly thick with the heat-rays, and absolutely breathless. Just as we got to the bluff overlooking the Big Sugar Creek, the sun set. [289]

A Dangerous District

"'I wish we were on the other side of the creek, I know,' said my brother-in-law.

"'Why so?' said I; 'this part of the country is perfectly safe, is it not?'

"'Yes,' he replied, 'it is pretty safe now, but there are always some rough customers about the bush, and there have been one or two shootings on the Big Sugar. Orlando Morse saw a man on horseback one night just after he had crossed the ford, waiting for him by the side of the road under the trees. But Orlando is an old frontier-man, so he is pretty quick with his trigger. He fired twice at the man, after challenging; whereupon the scoundrel vanished rapidly, and Orlando got safe home.'

"I felt very uncomfortable at this, as you may imagine; still, as I knew my brother-in-law had a very poor opinion of the nerves of Englishwomen, I made an effort to say, as lightly as I could: 'What a very extraordinary country, to be sure! And do you always shoot anybody you may happen to see standing by the roadside of a summer's evening?'

"'Oh no,' laughed Louis; 'we're not quite so savage as that. But you may fire at any suspicious body or thing, after due challenge, if the answer is not satisfactory. That's the rule of the road.'

"After that I began to peer about in the gloom, rather anxiously trying to see if I could discover any suspicious body or thing, but I could make out nothing on account of the gloom, made more complete by the surrounding trees. Besides, we were going down hill very fast; we were, in fact, descending the steep bank of the first creek; then there was a bit of level in the wooded valley, then another stream, the South Fork it was called, then another steep climb, and we would once more be on the high and open prairie. [290]

"'Now, then, hold on tight!' said my brother-in-law, as he clutched the reins in both hands, braced his feet against the dashboard, and leaned far back in his seat. The horses seemed literally to disappear beneath our feet; the wagon went down head foremost with a lunge, there was a sudden jerk and great splashing and snorting, followed by a complete cessation of noise from the wheels, and a gentle swaying to and fro of the wagon. We were crossing the ford with the water breast high on the horses.

"'I'm always glad when that ford is behind me,' said Louis to me, when we were again driving on quietly through the valley.

"'Why?' said I; 'for there's another ford in front of us still.'

"'Oh, the South Fork is nothing, but the Big Sugar is treacherous. I've known it rise twenty feet in two hours, and once I was water-bound on the other side for eleven days, unable to ford it. Emily would have gone out of her mind with anxiety, for the country was very disturbed at the time, only one of our neighbours, who saw me camping there, rode down to the house, and told her where I was, but, all the same——Hold! what's that?'

"I didn't scream; I couldn't, for my heart almost stopped beating with terror.

"'Take the reins,' said Louis, in a quick whisper.

"I took hold of them as firmly as I could, but a pair of kittens could have run away with us, my hands trembled so. Louis got out his revolver; I heard click, click, click, in his hand, and then in the faint light I saw the gleam of steel.

"'Halt! Who goes there?' called Louis, in a voice of thunder. I never heard his soldier-voice before, for ordinarily he speaks in a melodious baritone; and I then quite understood what Emily meant when she told me how his voice was heard above the din of battle, cheering his men on for the last charge at Gettysburg. I strained my eyes to see what it was, and there in front of us, not [291]

fifteen yards away, on the side of the road, I saw a man seated on horseback standing motionless, his right arm stretching forward, aiming straight towards us.

Two Pistol-shots

"Two livid tongues of flame darted from beside me—two quick reports of pistol-shots rang on the night air, then all was still. I felt the horses quiver, for the motion was communicated to me by the reins I held in my hands, but they were admirably trained animals, and did not move to the right or the left, only the younger one, a bay filly, snorted loudly. Louis sat silent and motionless, his revolver still pointing at the highwayman.

"I scarcely breathed, but in all my life I never thought with such lightning rapidity. My whole household over here was distinct before me, with my husband and the children, and what they would do on getting the cablegram saying 'waylaid and murdered.'

"I thought of a myriad things. I remember, amongst others, that it worried me to think that an over-charge of five shillings from Perkins for fowl, which my husband had just written to ask about, would now be paid because I could never explain that the pair of chickens had been returned. All this time—only a moment or two, you know—I was expecting instant death, while Louis and the horses remained motionless.

"The smoke from the revolver slowly cleared away; a bat, startled by the noise, flapped against my face, and we saw the highwayman seated on his horse, standing immovable where he was, his right arm stretching out towards us with the same deadly aim.

"'If that man is mortal, he should have dropped,' said Louis softly. 'Both bullets struck him.'

"We waited a moment longer. The figure remained as before.

"'I must reconnoitre,' said Louis; 'I don't understand his tactics.' And, to my dismay, he prepared to get out of the wagon. [292]

"'Are you going away?' I asked breathlessly.

"'Yes; sit still—the horses won't stir. I'm going to open fire at close quarters.'

"I thought Louis's attempt at jocularity most ill-timed, but I said nothing. It seemed to me an immense time that he was gone, but he declares that it was not more than a minute and a quarter. Then I heard him laugh quietly to himself.

"'All right, come on,' he said to me. 'Gee, whoa, haw, get up, girlies,' he said to the horses, and those sagacious beasts immediately walked straight towards the spot whence his voice came, without paying the least attention to me, who was holding the reins so tight, as I thought.

"'Well, Milly, I suppose you'll never stop laughing,' was the first thing he said to me when the horses came to a standstill, with their noses almost in his beard.

"'I never felt less like laughing,' I replied, hardly daring to believe that the peril was past and that I was still alive.

"'Our highwayman is an old stump, don't you see?' exclaimed Louis. I looked again and saw that what he said was true; a gnarled tree stump, some twisted branches, a deceiving white vapour, and perhaps, too, our own vivid imaginations, these were the elements which had given birth to our highwayman.

"'I never was more taken in,' said Louis, as he resumed his seat beside me. 'It was the dead image of a man on horseback holding out a pistol. I'll come down here to-morrow and examine the place, to find out how I could have been so silly, but in the daylight, of course, it will look quite different. I shan't ever dare to tell the story, however, for they'll laugh at me from the Red River to the Mississippi, and say I'm getting to be an old fool, and ought to have somebody to look after me!'

"I saw that Louis was ashamed of the mistake he had made, but I was so thankful to be safe that I paid little heed to what he said. The next day he rode down to the Big Sugar Creek, sure enough, to identify the slain, as he said. When he came back, a couple of hours later, he was in high good-humour. [293]

"'I shall not be afraid to tell the story against myself now,' he said. 'What do you think I found in the stump?'

"'What did you find?' asked I, full of interest in this, the only highwayman I ever met.

The Last Laugh

"'*Sixteen bullet-holes!* You see, there have been other fools as great as myself, but they were ashamed of their folly and kept it dark. I shall tell mine abroad and have the last laugh at all events.'" [294]

Dorothy's Day

BY

"My costume!" said Dorothy Graham, jumping up from the breakfast-table.

Dorothy played a highly important part at a critical period in the life of her father. She begins in disgrace and ends in triumph.

"You need not smash *all* the china!" observed Dick.

"The parcels post never comes so early," murmured Dorothy's mother. "How impulsive that child is!"

In a few minutes Dorothy came back with a crestfallen air and laid a brown, uninteresting-looking envelope by her mother's plate.

"I might have known he never comes so early, except with letters," she remarked, sitting down again.

"Of course you might," said Dick, clearing the bacon dish, "but you never know anything worth knowing."

"Don't tease her," said Mrs. Graham kindly; "it is not often she gets a new frock."

"A *costume*," corrected Dick, imitating Dorothy's voice. "A *real* tailor one—made in Bond Street!"

Mr. Graham rustled his newspaper, and Dick succumbed.

"Why, Dorothy!" Mrs. Graham was looking at her letter. "Dear me!" She ran her eyes quickly through its contents. "I'm afraid that costume won't come to-day. They've had a fire." [295]

A Fire in Bond Street

"'Prescott's, Bond Street,'" said Mr. Graham, reading from a paragraph in the morning paper. "Here it is: 'A fire occurred yesterday afternoon in the ladies' tailoring department. The stock-room was gutted, but fortunately the assistants escaped without injury.'"

Dorothy, with a very long face, was reading over her mother's shoulder:

"In consequence of a fire in the tailoring department Messrs. Prescott beg to inform their customers that some delay will be caused in getting out this week's orders. Business will, however, be continued as usual, and it will greatly facilitate matters if ladies having costumes now in hand will repeat the order by wire or telephone to avoid mistakes."

"It's very smart of them to have got that notice here so soon," said Mr. Graham.

"Mother," said Dorothy, swallowing very hard, "do you think it is burnt? After being fitted and all!"

"It is a disappointment," said her mother kindly, "but they'll make you another."

"It's a *shame!*" burst out Dorothy, with very hot cheeks. "These sort of things always happen to *me!* Can't we go to Chelmsford and get one ready-made?"

"That's a girl all over!" exclaimed Dick. "Now the man's down, let's kick him!"

Mr. Graham turned his head with a sharp look at Dick, who immediately, getting very red, pretended to be picking up something under the table.

"I didn't say *anything* about *any* man!" said Dorothy, appealing all round. "Mother, can't I have a costume from Chelmsford?"

"No, dear," said Mrs. Graham coldly; "this one is ordered."

"Dick is right, Dolly," said her father. "Don't you see it is the people who have had the *fire* we should pity? And is it not bad enough to have their place burnt, without losing their customers?" [296]

Dorothy sulked. She thought every one was very unkind, and it seemed the last straw when father took Dick's part against her.

It was time for Mr. Graham to go to town. He had eaten scarcely any breakfast, and Mrs. Graham, who had been anxiously watching him, had eaten none at all, but things of this sort children don't often notice.

When he passed his little girl's chair, he put his hand kindly on her shoulder, and the tears that had been so near welled into her eyes.

"Poor Dolly!" Mr. Graham said presently, as he reached for his hat, "everything seems of a piece." And he gave a great sigh.

Mrs. Graham always went as far as the gate with him, and he thought they were alone in the hall, but Dick had followed them to the dining-room door. It was holiday-time, yet Dick was going to Chelmsford for an examination. He had come out intending to ask his father before he went to London for half a crown. Dick was just at the age when schoolboys try to appear exactly the reverse from what they are. He squabbled constantly with Dorothy, though he loved her very much, and now, when he heard his father sigh, he put his hands in his pockets as if he didn't care about anything, and went upstairs whistling.

When Dick got to his room, he took a money-box from the mantelpiece and smashed it open with the poker. He had been saving up for a new bat, and the box contained seven shillings. He put the money in his pocket and ran down again in a great hurry.

"Dick! Dick!" exclaimed his mother, catching him. "Come here! Let me brush your collar. How rough your hair is! Dick, you must have a new hat! You can't go into the hall with that one."

"All serene, mother," said the boy, submitting impatiently to be overhauled. "I can buy a new hat and pitch the old one away."

[297] "How grandly some people talk!" said his mother, pinching his ear. "As if the world belonged to them. Well, never mind, dear boy! If you get on well and *pass*, no one will remember your hat was shabby. Have you got your fare?"

A Telegram

"Oh, mother, how you *do* worry!" exclaimed Dick, wrenching himself away; "I've got lots of money—*heaps!*"

He ran across the lawn, and just because he knew she was watching, jumped right over the azalea-bushes and wire fence instead of going out at the gate, and yet the tired look went out of Mrs. Graham's eyes, and a smile crept round her mouth as she watched him.

Dorothy, standing at the dining-room window, saw him go too, and thought how horrid it was of Dick to look so glad when she was so unhappy.

"Boys are always like that," she thought. "They don't care a bit about any one but themselves."

Mrs. Graham came back into the room holding a telegram in her hand which she tore open quickly. Her face went red and then rather white.

"What is it, mother?" said Dorothy eagerly. "Have they arrived?"

"They have been in London two days," said Mrs. Graham, with a curious catch in her breath, and she glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece. "They want me up for a day's shopping. If I had known, I could have gone with father."

Dorothy stood staring at her mother with wide-open eyes. Half a dozen castles in the air seemed tumbling about her head at the same time.

They were expecting her mother's cousins over from America. Dorothy had been chattering about them to the girls at school all the term, and it was in honour of these very cousins she was having her first Bond Street costume. Her mother had not said that was the reason, but Dorothy knew it. She had a *sweet*, really *big* hat too, with tiny rosebuds, and new gloves and boots. As a rule her mother was not particular about getting everything new at the same time, but she had [298] taken enough pains this time to please Dorothy herself.

"They do dress children so at Boston," Dorothy had overheard her mother say to Mr. Graham, as a sort of excuse. "I should like Dollie to look nice."

And from that one sentence Dorothy had conjured up all sorts of things about these wonderful cousins. Of course she thought they were coming to stay with them. She expected there would be girls of her own age, and that they would be so charmed with their English cousin that they would invite her to go back to Boston with them. She had talked about them, and thought about them so much that she imagined her mother had *told* her all this, but really Mrs. Graham, who talked very little, didn't know much about her cousins herself, so she could not have given her little daughter all this information if she had been inclined to.

And now it all seemed so *tame*. First no costume, then an ordinary wire to ask mother to go up for a day's shopping. They might have come from Surrey instead of America. And two whole days before they wired at all.

Perhaps Mrs. Graham was thinking something of the kind too, for she stood biting her lip, with the colour going and coming in pretty blushes on her cheek, as if she could not make up her mind.

She was just "mother" to Dorothy, but to other people Mrs. Graham was both pretty and sweet.

"I *must* go," she said at length, "and there is scarcely time to get ready."

"Oh, *mother!*" cried Dorothy, "can't I come too?"

Mrs. Graham still seemed to be considering something else, and she merely answered, "No, dear," and went quickly upstairs.

Dorothy sank down on the sofa in a terribly injured mood. Nobody seemed to be thinking of *her* [299] at all. And before she had got over the first brunt of this discovery her mother was back again ready to go, with her purse-bag and gloves in her hand.

Left in Charge

"Dorothy," she said, arranging her hat before the mirror of the overmantel, "you may choose any pudding you like, tell cook. Here are the keys"—she paused to throw a small bunch in Dorothy's lap. "Get out anything they want. And Dick won't be in till half-past one, tell her. And Dollie"—there was again that queer little catch in her voice—"it is possible Miss Addiscombe may call this afternoon. I have told Louisa to

show her right into the drawing-room without telling her I am out, and come and find you. I want you to be very nice to her, and explain about the Merediths. Tell her I was obliged to go because they only gave me the place of meeting, and I have not their address. I shall be home as soon as possible, between four and five at latest, so do your best to keep her till I come back."

"Did you say Miss *Addiscombe*, mother?" said Dorothy dismally, yet a little comforted by having the keys, and with the thought of choosing the pudding, "I don't think *she's* likely to call."

"I said Miss Addiscombe," Mrs. Graham answered decidedly. "Do you understand what I wish you to do, Dollie?"

"Yes, mother," said Dorothy, subdued but mutinous.

Then she ran after her to the hall door.

"Mayn't I ask some one to spend the day, mother?" she called, but Mrs. Graham was almost at the gate, nearly running to be in time for her train, and did not hear her.

Mrs. Graham came home looking very white and tired. "Did Miss Addiscombe call?" were the first words she said.

Louisa, who was bringing in the tea, looked meaningly at Dorothy, and went out without speaking.

"Oh, mother!" said Dorothy, "I am so sorry, I had been in all day, and Helen Jones just asked me to come to the post with her, and when I came back there was a motor at the door, and——" [300]

"She *came!*" exclaimed Mrs. Graham. "And you did not give her my message! Oh, Dorothy!"

Her tone was almost like a cry of pain. Dorothy was startled. "She wouldn't wait, mother, and—and of course it *was* strange she came to-day when she hasn't called for ages and ages! I didn't think she would, or I wouldn't have gone," she explained.

Mrs. Graham did not argue the point. She lay down on the sofa and closed her eyes. Dorothy longed to ask her about the American cousins, but did not dare. Presently she poured out a cup of tea and brought it to her mother.

"If you take some tea you will feel better, mother," she said softly.

"If I had asked Dick to do something for me he would have done it, Dorothy," said Mrs. Graham bitterly, and without seeming to notice the tea she got up and gathered her things together. "I have a headache," she said. "I am not coming down again. Father will not be home to-night, so you can tell Louisa there will be no need to lay the cloth for dinner. I don't wish any one to come near me." And she went out of the room.

Poor Dorothy felt dreadfully uncomfortable and crestfallen. She had been alone all day, and it did seem such a little thing to go to the post with Helen Jones, who knew all about her costume, and quite agreed with her that it was a 'horrid shame' for people to be so careless as to have *fires*, when they had the charge of other people's things.

Louisa had scolded her, and been very cross when she came in, but Dorothy really saw no reason why it mattered very much what Miss Addiscombe thought. It wasn't like mother to mind anything like that so much.

Dick came in about half an hour later. He had been home to dinner, and had gone out again to a cricket match. [301]

"Mother has gone to bed," said Dorothy rather importantly. "She doesn't want to be disturbed, and you are not to go to her. She's got a headache, and father isn't coming home."

Dick's Strange Silence

Dick looked at her very hard, and without speaking went straight upstairs, listened a little, and opened his mother's door. "He *is* a tiresome boy!" thought Dorothy; "now mother will think I never told him."

Louisa brought in a poached egg, and some baked apples as he came down again.

"Cook says it's so late, you had better make it your supper, sir," she said.

"Mother wants a hot-water bottle," answered Dick; "she's as cold as ice. I think you or cook had better go up and see about her. Perhaps she'd better have a fire."

"A fire in August! Oh, Dick, how *ridiculous!*" exclaimed Dorothy.

"All right, sir," said Louisa, taking the indiarubber bottle he had brought down; "don't you worry."

Dick took a book, and planting his elbows on the table, seemed to be reading; in reality he was blinking his eyelashes very hard, to keep back tears.

Dorothy thought the whole world was going mad. As far as she knew the only trouble in it was

her own.

"Aren't you going to take any supper, Dick?" she said plaintively.

Dick pushed the egg and apples away, and cutting himself a hunch of bread, went out of the room without speaking.

"Every one is very polite to-night," thought Dorothy. However, she sat down, ate Dick's egg and helped herself to apples with plenty of sugar, and felt a little comforted.

At eight o'clock she went up to bed, glad the tiresome, miserable day was at an end. She trod very softly, but her mother heard her and called her in.

Dorothy was glad, for she spoke in her natural voice and not at all as if she were angry. [302]

She was still dressed and lying on the bed, but her hand, which had frightened Dick by being so cold, was now burning.

"I spoke hastily to you, Dollie," she said. "You didn't know how important it was. I am going to tell you now, dear, for it may be a lesson to you."

Dorothy stood awkwardly by the bed; she didn't like her mother to apologise, and she didn't want the lecture which she imagined was coming.

"Father," said Mrs. Graham, "is in a very bad way indeed. I can't explain to you all about it because you would not understand, but a friend he trusted very much has failed him, and another friend has been spreading false rumours about his business. If he doesn't get enough money to pay his creditors by Saturday he must go bankrupt. Miss Addiscombe was a friend of his long ago. She has not been kind to him lately, and she has always been rude to me. I didn't tell father because I knew he would not let me, but I wrote and told her just how it was, and asked her to let bygones be bygones. I was hoping so much she would come, and if she came she would have lent him the money. She has so much it would mean nothing to her. Then I was disappointed in London. I thought Mr. Meredith would have been there—he is rich too—and my cousin, but he is not over at all: just his wife and daughter, and they are rushing through London. They were so busy we had scarcely time to speak. I half wonder they remembered my existence."

"Oh, mother!" protested Dorothy; and then with great effort: "You could go over to-morrow to Miss Addiscombe, or write, mother; she would understand."

"No, dear. It is no use thinking of it. To offend her once is to offend her always. Besides, I am tired out, and there are only two more days. I have told you because I didn't want it to all come quite suddenly, and you are so wrapt up in yourself, Dollie, you don't notice the way Dick does. If you had told me he had *passed*, Dorothy, when I came in, I should not have felt quite so bad." [303]

"But I didn't know, mother," said Dorothy. "Dick didn't tell me. *Has* he passed?"

"Whose fault was it, Dollie? He came home to dinner and found you all alone. Did you *ask* him how he had got on?"

Dorothy hung her head. Mrs. Graham kissed her. "Well, go to bed and pray for dear father," she said. "It is worse for him than for any of us."

Dorothy felt as if she were choking. When she got to the door she stood hesitating with her hand on the handle.

"I have a hundred pounds in the Bank, mother, that grandma left me. Father can have that if it would be any use." She had made the offer with an effort, for Dorothy liked to have a hundred pounds of her own. What little girl would not? But her mother answered peevishly: "It would be no more use than if you offered him a halfpenny. Don't be foolish."

Dick's door was open and Dorothy went in.

"Isn't it dreadful, Dick!" she said. "What is *bankrupt?* How much money does father want?"

"About fifteen hundred," said Dick savagely. "It's all that old Pemberton backing out of it. Father wanted to get his patents to Brussels, and he's got medals for them all, but it cost a lot of money and now they are not bought. So the business will go to smash, and he'll lose the patents besides, that's the worst of it!"

"Dick," said Dorothy wistfully, "don't you think it would be better if father attended to his proper business and stopped inventing things when it costs so much?"

Dick sprang up with blazing eyes.

"You little brute!" he said, "go out of my room. No, I don't. Father's the cleverest and best man in the world. He can't help being a genius!"

The Last Straw

This was Dorothy's last straw; she went away and threw herself, dressed, on her bed, sobbing as if her heart would break. And only this morning she thought she was miserable because her new dress had not come. [304]

Dorothy cried till she could cry no longer, and then she got up and slowly undressed. The house was very still. A clock somewhere was striking ten, and it seemed to

Dorothy as if it were the middle of the night. She was cold now as her mother had been, but no one was likely to come to her. She felt alone and frightened, and as if a wall had descended between her and Dick, and her mother and father. Among all the other puzzling and dreadful things, nothing seemed so strange to Dorothy as that Dick showed better than herself. He had gone up to mother when he was told not, and yet it was *right* (even Dorothy could understand that) for him to disobey her, and *she* had just gone to the post, and all this dreadful thing would come of it. Dorothy had always thought Dick was such a bad boy and she was so good, and now it seemed all the other way. She was *father's* girl, too, and father was always down on Dick, yet—her eyes filled when she thought of it—Dick was loyal, and had called her a little brute, and mother said it was worst of all for father.

She knelt down by her bed. Until to-night Dorothy had never really felt she needed Jesus as a friend, though she sometimes thought she loved Him. Now it seemed as if she *must* tell some one, and she wanted Him very, very badly. So she knelt and prayed, and though she cried nearly all the time she felt much happier when she got up.

"I am so selfish. I am so sorry. Please help me!" was the burden of poor Dollie's prayer, but she got into bed feeling as if Jesus had understood, and fell asleep quite calmly.

In the morning Dorothy awoke early. It was scarcely light. It was the first time in her life she had woke to sorrow, and it seemed very dreadful. Yet Dorothy felt humble this morning, and not helpless as she had done last night. She felt as if Someone, much stronger than herself, was going to stand by her and help her through. [305]

Dorothy's Project

Lying there thinking, many things seemed plain to her that she had not understood before, and a thought came into her head. It was *her* fault, and she was the one who should suffer; not father, nor mother, nor Dick. It would not be easy, for Dorothy did not like Miss Addiscombe, and she was afraid of her, but she must go to her.

Directly the thought came into her head Dorothy was out of bed and beginning to dress. And that mysterious clock which she had never heard before was just striking five when she stole like a little white ghost downstairs, carrying her shoes in her hand, and unbolting the side door, slipped out into a strange world which was still fast asleep.

Miss Addiscombe lived ten miles away, but Dorothy did not remember anything about that. All her thought was to get there as soon as possible. One thing, she knew the way, for the flower-show was held in her grounds every year, and Dorothy had always been driven there. It was a nearly straight road.

About ten o'clock that morning a gentleman was driving along the high-road when he suddenly pulled up his horse and threw the reins to the groom. It had been quite cool when Dorothy started, but now it was very hot, and there seemed no air at all. A little girl in a white frock was lying by the roadside.

He stooped over her and felt her pulse, and Dorothy opened large, startled blue eyes.

"What is it, my dear?" he said.

"I am dying, I think," said Dorothy. "Tell mother I did *try*."

He lifted her into his trap and got in beside her, telling the groom to drive on, and wondering very much. Dorothy gave a great sigh and began to feel better.

"I think it is because I had no breakfast," she said. "Perhaps I am dying of *hunger*." [306]

The gentleman smiled, and searched his pockets. After a time he found some milk chocolate. Dorothy would rather have had water, but he made her eat a little. Then he took off her hat and gloves, and with a cool, soft handkerchief pushed back the hair that was clinging about her damp forehead and carefully wiped her face.

"You'll feel better now," he said, fanning her with her hat, and putting it on again, as if he had never done anything but dress little girls in his life.

Dorothy smiled with a great sigh of relief, and the gentleman smiled too. "Now tell us all about it," he said in a friendly way. "Where do you live, and where are you going?"

When Dorothy told him he looked very much surprised, and at the same time interested, and before she knew what she was about, he had drawn from her the whole story, and the more she told him the more surprised and interested he became.

"What was the name of the friend who failed your father?" he said at last, but Dorothy could not remember.

"Was it Pemberton?" he suggested.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Pemberton," said Dorothy. "At least, Dick said so."

"You don't happen to be *Addiscombe* Graham's little daughter," he said with a queer look, "do

you?"

"Father's name is Richard Addiscombe," said Dorothy doubtfully.

"Well, the best thing you can do now is to come home with me and get some breakfast," he said. "It is no use going to the Park, for I have just been to the station, and Miss Addiscombe was there, with all her luggage, going off to the Continent."

Poor Dorothy's heart sank like lead.

"Oh, dear!" she said, "then it's been no use. Poor father!" and her eyes filled with tears.

The gentleman did not speak, and in a few minutes they drove in at the gates of a beautiful country house, and he lifted her down and took her in with him, calling out "Elizabeth!" [307]

A tall girl, about eighteen, came running to him, and after whispering to her for a minute, he left Dorothy in her charge, and went into the room where his wife was sitting.

"I thought you had gone to town?" she said.

Mr. Lawrence's Mistake

"Providentially, no," he said, so gravely that she looked surprised. "Do you remember Addiscombe Graham, dear?"

"Has anything happened to him?" said Mrs. Lawrence. "I have just been reading about him in the paper; all his life-saving appliances have had gold medals at the exhibition. What is it, Edward? Of course, I know you are a friend of his."

"A Judas sort of friend," said Mr. Lawrence. "Do you know what I've done? I've nearly landed him in the Bankruptcy Court. Pemberton told me a few weeks ago he had promised to give him some spare cash that would be loose at the end of the year, and I persuaded him to put it in something else. I said, 'Graham doesn't want it, he's simply *coining* over his inventions,' and I thought it too. Now it appears he was *counting* on that money to pull him through the expenses."

The tall girl took Dorothy upstairs to a beautiful bathroom, got her warm water, and asked if she would like a maid to do her hair.

After a little while she came for her again and took her into a very pretty room, where there was a dainty little table laid for breakfast.

"When you have finished," she said, "just lie on the sofa and rest. I am sorry I can't stay with you, but I must go and feed the peacocks."

Dorothy took a little toast and tea, but she did not feel so very hungry after all, and for a time was quite glad to lie down on the couch. Once or twice she got up and looked out of the window. Her girl hostess was moving across the lawn. She had evidently been feeding the peacocks, and was now gathering flowers. How pleasant all this wealth and comfort seemed to Dorothy! And then, by comparison, *she* was feeling so miserable! [308]

HER HOSTESS HAD BEEN FEEDING THE PEACOCKS.

Everything was quite quiet in the house save for the telephone bell, which kept sounding in the hall. Then she heard Mr. Lawrence calling out: "Are you *there?* Look sharp! Yes, to-day. Money down! Do you understand?" Then he would ring off and call up some one else. Last of all his voice changed from a business tone to a very friendly one. "Are you there? What cheer, old chap? *That's* all right! I'll see you through. Two o'clock, Holborn Restaurant."

Dorothy could not hear what was said on the other side. How surprised she would have been if she had known the last conversation was with her own father!

Then a very kind-looking lady came in and kissed her. "The motor is round," she said. "I'm so glad to have seen you, dear. We all admire your father very much."

Dorothy felt bewildered but followed her out, and there was a lovely motor, and her friend in it!

"You won't faint by the way this time," he said, "eh? Now, if you can keep your own counsel, little lady, you may hear some good news to-night."

They were tearing along the level road already, and almost in a flash, it seemed to Dorothy, they were passing the church of her own village.

"Oh, please let me get out!" she said to Mr. Lawrence in an agony. "If mother heard the motor she might think it was Miss Addiscombe, and be so disappointed. You have been kind, very, very kind, but I can't help thinking about father."

He let her out, and waving his hand, was soon off and out of sight. Dorothy walked slowly and sadly home. It seemed as if she had been away for *days*, and she was half afraid to go in, but to

her surprise nothing seemed to have happened at all. Only Dick came rushing out, and, to her surprise, kissed her. [309]

A Heroine

"I say, Dollie!" he began, "where *have* you been? You gave me an awful fright. Don't tell any one I called you a brute."

"Is mother frightened?" said Dollie. "I—I meant to help, but I've done nothing."

"How could you help?" said Dick, surprised. "Mother stayed in bed; she is only getting up now."

A boy came up with a telegram. Dick took it and after holding it a moment tore it open.

"Oh, Dick!" expostulated Dorothy, "opening mother's telegram!"

But Dick threw his cap high up in the air, and shouted "*Jubilate!*" Then he rushed up the stairs, Dorothy timidly following.

This was the wire:

"*See daylight. Meeting Lawrence at Holborn Restaurant.*—Father."

"Don't shut Dorothy out," said Mrs. Graham, holding the yellow paper, and with tears of joy standing in her eyes. "Why, my little girl, how pale you are! I wish I had not told you. You need never have known. Mr. Lawrence is just the man."

"Oh, mother!" said Dorothy, springing into her arms, and beginning to laugh and cry at once, yet happier than she had ever been in her life before. "But if you hadn't told me it couldn't have happened."

When Mr. Lawrence and father came down together that evening and the whole story was told, Dorothy, to her surprise, found when thinking least about herself she had suddenly become a heroine, even in the eyes of Dick. [310]

A Strange Moose Hunt

BY

Henry William Dawson

A very unusual hunting episode, that nearly ended in a tragedy.

Some years ago, while living in Canada, in a village situated on the bank of a large river, I was a spectator of a moose hunt of a most novel and exciting character.

That you may the better understand what I am going to relate I will first introduce you to our village Nimrod.

As his real name is no concern of ours I will here give him his popular nickname of "Ramrod," a name by which he was well known not only in our village but for a considerable distance around. It was conferred upon him, I suppose, because he walked so upright and stiff, and also perhaps because he at one time had worn the Queen's uniform.

A queer old stick was Ramrod. He knew a little of most mechanical things and was for ever tinkering at something or other, useful or otherwise as the case might be. He could also "doctor" a sick cow or dog, and was even known to have successfully set the broken leg of an old and combative rooster.

His mechanical turn of mind was continually leading him to the construction of the most wonderful arrangements of wood and iron ever seen. In fact, his operations in this direction were only held in check by one want, but that a great one, namely, the want of a sufficiency of cash. [311]

A Mystery

Now for the greater part of one spring Ramrod had shut himself up in his woodshed, and there he was heard busy with hammer and saw all day long, except when called forth by the tinkle of the little bell attached to the door of his shop, where almost anything might have been purchased.

Many were the guesses as to "what can Ramrod be up to now?" And often did we boys try to catch a glimpse of what was going on within that mysterious shed; but in vain. Ramrod seemed to be always on the alert, and the instant an intrusive boy's head appeared above the first dusty pane of the small window by which the shed was lighted, it was greeted with a fierce and harsh gar-r-ar-r-r, often accompanied with a dash of cold water, which the old fellow always seemed to have in readiness.

But one day as a lot of youngsters were down on the river bank preparing for an early swim they were startled by the advent of another lad, who, with scared looks and awful voice, declared that Ramrod was "making his own coffin," and that he, the boy, had seen it with his own eyes.

The rumour spread, and many were the visits paid that afternoon to the little shop by the river.

But Ramrod kept his secret well, and baffled curiosity had to return as wise as it came. Ramrod was determined that his work should not be criticised until completed. He had evidently heard the saying that "women, children, and fools should not be allowed to see a thing until finished."

At last one day the great work *was* completed, and turned out to be, not a coffin, but what the happy builder called a boat. But to call it a boat was a misnomer, for the thing was to be propelled not by oars but by a paddle. [312]

And certainly through all the ages since the construction of the ark of Noah was never such a boat as this. It would be impossible to convey in words a true idea of what the craft was like. Perhaps to take an ordinary boat, give it a square stern, a flat bottom without a keel, and straight sides tapering to a point at the bow, would give an approximate idea of what the thing actually was, and also how difficult to navigate.

The winter had been unusually uneventful. Nothing had happened to break the cold monotony of our village life, so that when one day an excited and panting individual rushed up the river bank screaming out "A moose, a moose in the river!" it was only natural that we should all be thrown into a state of ferment.

Some who possessed firearms rushed off to get them out, while others ran along the bank seeking a boat.

As, however, the ice having only just "run," the boats and punts ordinarily fringing the river were still all up in the various barns and sheds where they had been stowed at the close of navigation, their efforts were in vain, and they could only stand fuming and casting longing eyes at the now retreating moose.

For of course the animal had turned as soon as he perceived the hubbub which his appearance under such unusual circumstances had created. Instead, therefore, of crossing the river, it now made for an island which was about half a mile out in the stream.

It had a good distance to swim, however, before it could accomplish that, and in the meantime preparations were being made a short way up the river which promised serious trouble for Mr. Moose.

Of course, you may be sure that Ramrod had caught the excitement with the rest of us, and was equally desirous of the capture of the moose. But he was a modest man and would let others have a chance first.

After a little while, though, when it became evident that unless something was done pretty soon the moose would escape, it was noticed that he became graver, and that his face wore a puzzled look of uncertainty. [313]

Ramrod's "Coffin"

All at once, however, the doubt vanished, and Ramrod started off towards his house as fast as his long stiff legs would carry him.

When he emerged he bore in one hand an ordinary rope halter, with a noose at one end, just such a halter as was used by all the farmers for securing their horses to their stalls. In his other hand was a paddle, and with these harmless-looking implements he was about to start in chase of the moose.

Quickly proceeding to the river bank, he drew out from beneath a clump of bushes the "coffin," and, unheeding alike the warnings of the elders and derisive shouts of the youngsters, elicited by the appearance of his curious-looking craft, he knelt down in the stern and set out on his perilous adventure.

But he had not gone far before it was seen that something was wrong.

The boat had a will of its own, and that will was evidently exerted in direct opposition to the will of its owner.

It went, but how? No schoolboy ever drew a truer circle with a bit of string and a slate-pencil than that cranky craft made on the placid surface of the river each time Ramrod put a little extra strength into his stroke.

At last, however, the gallant boatman managed to make headway, and, aided by the current, he now rapidly approached the moose, which was considerably distressed by the great length of its swim.

But the instant the animal became aware that it was being pursued, it redoubled its efforts to gain the island, which was not very distant. And this it would have succeeded in doing had it not been for the almost herculean exertions of Ramrod, by which it was eventually headed up stream again.

And now a stern chase up and down and across the river ensued. It really did not last long, though it seemed hours to us who were watching from the bank. [314]

Just as Ramrod thought he had made sure of the moose this time, and dropping his paddle would seize the halter to throw over the head of the animal, the latter would make a sudden turn,

and before the baffled hunter could regain command of his boat, would be well on his way down stream again.

All this time the crowd collected on the bank were greatly concerned about Ramrod's safety.

They saw, what he did not, that the affair would end in his getting a ducking at the very least. But worse than that was feared, as, once overturned, the miserable conception of a boat would be beyond the power of any one in the water to right it again. And, moreover, the water was still intensely cold, and a very few minutes would have sufficed to give the cramp to a much stronger man than Ramrod.

Perceiving all this, some of the more energetic had from the first bestirred themselves in preparations for launching a boat.

But this occupied some time, for, as I have said, the boats usually to be seen fringing the bank during the summer months had not yet made their appearance. Oars also and tholepins had to be hunted up, and by the time all this was accomplished the need of help out there on the river was very urgent indeed.

Plenty of pluck had Ramrod, or he would have given up the chase when he found himself becoming so exhausted, by the tremendous exertion necessary to keep control of his cranky craft, that he had scarcely sufficient strength left to follow the deer in its many dodges and turnings.

But strong as the moose was, its time had come. Suddenly the animal stopped, gave a scream that made the blood curdle in all our veins, and would have sunk out of sight only that, with a last desperate effort, Ramrod got up with it, and this time succeeded in throwing the halter over its head and drawing the noose tight. [315]

An Upset

Thoroughly exhausted as the moose appeared to be, this act of Ramrod's roused it to make one more effort for life and freedom. Turning quickly about and snorting furiously, it made for its assailant, and before Ramrod could check it had capsized the boat and sent that worthy head over heels into the water.

Presence of mind is a splendid quality, and Ramrod possessed it to the full. Retaining his hold of the halter, he endeavoured to right the boat, but soon perceiving the impossibility of so doing, he relinquished the attempt, and being a good swimmer, boldly struck out for the island, that being the nearest land.

Refreshed by his involuntary bath, and not yet feeling the effects of the cold, Ramrod made no doubt but that he should easily accomplish the task.

As for the moose, it was completely done up, and was now no more trouble than a log of wood. The effort by which it had overturned the boat was the last it made, and its captor was now quietly towing it ashore.

But cold water does not agree with all constitutions, especially if the body has been fatigued and heated before its application.

Cramp seized upon poor Ramrod, and though he made a gallant and desperate struggle to reach land with the aid of his arms alone, he felt that only by a miracle could he do so.

Moment by moment he felt himself growing weaker and less able to withstand the chill which was striking through to his very heart.

At last the supreme moment came. He could go no farther. Brave and collected to the last, he raised his eyes to heaven as in thought he commended his soul to his Maker.

At that instant the sound of oars struck his ear, and the hope it brought him gave him sufficient strength to keep up until a friendly hand grasped him under the arm.

[316] With his last little bit of strength he raised his hand, still grasping the halter, and smiled triumphantly; then he lost consciousness.

The "coffin" was brought ashore afterwards, but no one had the hardihood to navigate it. Even towing it was a trial of temper, for it kept swinging from side to side with a heavy jerking motion with every pull at the oars.

Ramrod, I am glad to say, lived to have many a quiet paddle in his queer boat whenever he went a-fishing; and this, it appears, was all he intended it for when he built it.

Thus ended this famous moose hunt, but the talk of it lasted for many a year; and whenever a pleasure-party were out on the river enjoying a sail by moonlight, this was the one story that was never stale, and mention of "Ramrod's coffin" would cause a smile to appear on the face of even the most grave.

The moose, when brought ashore, proved to be quite young, though full-grown, as its horns were not much more than "buds." [317]

A Girl's Patience

BY

C. J. Blake

"A letter from Rachel! Is it possible she can have relented at last?"

Edith Harley was called upon to play a rather difficult part. But her patience and her obedience to the call of duty brought their own reward.

Dr. Harley looked across the breakfast-table at his wife as he spoke; and the children, of all ages and sizes, who were busy with their bowls of porridge, stopped the clatter of tongues and spoons to listen.

"Read it, dear," said Mrs. Harley, in her slow, gentle voice. "It must be ten years since Rachel wrote that last dreadful letter. Surely she must have learnt to forgive and forget by this time!"

"Send some of these children away, then. Maude and Jessie can stay; but it is time the others were getting ready for lessons."

There was a hurried, scrambling finish of the simple breakfast; then a little troop of boys and girls filed out of the rather shabby dining-room, and Dr. and Mrs. Harley were alone with their elder daughters.

> "'My dear Brother,'" began the doctor,—"'I am growing an old woman now, and in spite of the good reasons I had for ceasing to write, or to communicate with you in any way, I do not feel that I can keep up the estrangement from my own flesh and blood any longer.

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> "'If you like to let bygones be bygones, I, on my side, am quite willing to do the same. I am writing, too, because I have heard a good deal, in one way or another, about your large and expensive family, and the difficulty you have in making both ends meet. It has been more than hinted to me that I ought to render, or at least offer, you some assistance. I have thought perhaps the best thing would be to take one of your girls for a six months' visit; to stay longer, or, indeed, always, if I should, after such a trial, continue to be pleased with her.

> "'I don't want a young child, but one old enough to be companionable. Of course I would provide for education, and everything, so long as she stayed with me. It would surely be a relief to have even one of such a number taken off your hands, and it would be the girl's own fault if the relief were not made permanent. If this should meet your views, write at once, and fix a date for one of your daughters to come to me. Your affectionate sister,

> "'Rachel Harley.'"

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed Maude and Jessie in a breath, "how could we ever leave you, and dear mamma too! We should be miserable away from home."

"From Aunt Rachel's letter, I should think she must be a dreadfully stiff sort of person," added audacious Jessie. "Please don't say that we shall have to go."

"Not so fast, my dear," returned her father. "Only one of you all can go, and I do not think either you or Maude could possibly be spared. But what does mamma say?"

"You know my wretched health, Henry," said Mrs. Harley. "I never could do without Maude to look after the housekeeping; and Jessie saves both school and governess for the younger ones. But then there is Edith. Why should not Edith go?"

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Edith Harley

"Why, indeed?" repeated the doctor. "Edith does nothing but mischief—at least, so far as the account of her doings reaches my ears. She is quite too big for Jessie to teach, and we cannot afford to send her to a good school at present, which is the thing that ought to be done. It really seems to me a providential opening for Edith."

"Poor Edie!" sighed the mother again. "It would be a hard life for her, I am afraid."

"Oh, nonsense, Maria! You were always unjust to Rachel. You think, because she took such deep offence, that there can be nothing good in her. Surely I ought to know my own sister's character! Rachel would do her duty by any inmate of her home—of that I am quite certain."

"Well, Henry, it would be a help in many ways. Edith is growing such a great girl, nearly fifteen now, and if it would lighten your cares to have her provided for, I ought not to resist. But at least it would be well to let her know what you think of doing, and hear what she says."

"I don't know that what she says need affect the question much. The fact is, Maria, something will have to be done. We are exceeding what we can afford even now, and the children will be growing more expensive instead of less so. For my own part, I can only feel glad of Rachel's offer. I must go now; but you can tell Edith, if you like; and tell her, too, to hold herself in readiness, for the sooner the matter is settled the better."

Edith Harley, called indifferently by her brothers and sisters the Middle One and the Odd One, was the third daughter and the fifth child of this family of nine. She was a rather tall, awkward girl, who grew out of her frocks, and tumbled her hair, and scandalised her elder sisters, in their

pretty prim young ladyhood, by playing with the boys and clinging obstinately, in spite of her fifteen years, to her hoop and skipping-rope. An unfortunate child was this chosen one, always getting into scrapes, and being credited with more mischief than she ever really did. [320]

It was Edith who had caught the whooping-cough through playing with some of the village children, and had brought it home, to be the plague of all the nine for a whole winter and spring.

It was Edith who took Johnnie and Francie down to the pondside to play, and let them both tumble in. True, she went bravely in herself and rescued them, but that did not count for very much. They were terribly wet, and if they had been drowned it would have been all her fault.

It was Edith who let Tom's chickens out for a run, and the cat came and killed two of them; that was just before she forgot to shut the paddock-gate, when the donkey got into mamma's flower-garden and spoilt all the best plants.

So poor Edith went on from day to day, thankful if she could only lay her head upon her pillow at night without being blamed for some fresh escapade, yet thoroughly happy in the freedom of her country life, in the enjoyment of long summer-day rambles, and endless games with the little brothers, who thought her "the jolliest girl that ever was," and followed her lead without scruple, sure that whatever mischief she might get them into she would bravely shield them from the consequences.

A country doctor, with a not very lucrative practice, Dr. Harley had, when Edith was about ten years old, sustained a severe pecuniary loss which greatly reduced his income. It was then that the governess had to be given up, and the twin boys who came next to Maude and Jessie were sent to a cheaper school. These boys were leaving now, one to go to the university, through the kindness of a distant relative, the other to pass a few weeks with the London coach who would prepare him for a Civil Service examination.

Jessie, a nice, clever girl, with a decided taste for music, could teach the four younger ones very well—had done so, indeed, ever since Miss Phipps left; but in this, as in everything, Edith was the family problem. She could not, or would not, learn much from Jessie; she hated the piano and needlework, and even professed not to care for books. [321]

"Would it help Papa?"

Yet she astonished the entire family sometimes by knowing all sorts of odd out-of-the-way facts; she could find an apt quotation from some favourite poet for almost any occasion, and did a kind of queer miscellaneous reading in "a hole-and-corner way," as her brother Tom said, that almost drove the sister-governess to distraction.

And now the choice of a companion for Miss Rachel Harley, the stern, middle-aged aunt, whom even the elder girls could scarcely remember to have seen, had fallen upon Edith.

The news came to her first as a great blow. There could not be very much sympathy between the gentle, ailing, slightly querulous mother and the vigorous, active girl; yet Edith had very strong, if half-concealed, home affections, and it hurt her more than she cared to show that even her mother seemed to feel a sort of relief in the prospect of her going away for so long.

"Don't you *mind* my going, mamma?" she said at last, with a little accent of surprise.

"Well, Edith dear, papa and I think it will be such a good thing for you and for us all. You have been too young, of course, to be told about money matters, but perhaps I may tell you now, for I am sure you are old enough to understand, that papa has a great many expenses, and is often very much worried. There are so many of you," added the poor mother, thinking with a sigh of her own powerlessness to do much towards lifting the burden which pressed so heavily upon her husband's shoulders.

"Do you think it would help papa, then, if I went?" asked the girl slowly.

"Indeed I do. You would have a good home for a time, at all events; and if your Aunt Rachel should take to you, as we may hope she will if you earnestly try to please her, she may be a friend to you always." [322]

"Very well, then; I shall try my best to do as you and papa wish."

That was all Edith said, and Mrs. Harley was quite surprised. She had expected tears and protests, stormy and passionate remonstrances—not this quiet submission so unlike Edith.

Perhaps no one understood the girl less than her own mother. It might have helped Mrs. Harley to know something of her daughter's inner nature if she could have seen her, after their talk together, steal quietly up to the nursery, where there were only the little ones at play, and, throwing her arms round little Francie, burst into a fit of quiet sobbing that fairly frightened the child.

"What is it, Edie? Don't cry, Edie! Francie'll give you a kiss, twenty kisses, if you won't cry," said the pretty baby voice.

"Your poor Edie's going away, and it will break her heart to leave you, my pet," said the girl through her tears, straining the child in a passionate embrace. Presently she grew calmer, and put the wondering little one down.

"There, Francie, I've done crying now, and you needn't mind. You'll always love Edie, won't

you, if she does go away?"

"Yes, always, always love Edie," said the child; and Johnnie chimed in too, "And me—me always love Edie."

But there were the boys to be told after that—Alfred and Claude, the two bright boys of ten and eight years, who had been her own especial playmates; and loud was their outcry when they heard that Edith was going.

"We might as well have no sisters," said the ungrateful young rascals. "Maude and Jessie don't care for us. They only think we're in the way. They're always telling us to wipe our feet, and not make such a noise; and Francie's too little for anything. We'd only got Edith, and now she's to go. It's too bad, that it is!" [323]

But their protest availed nothing. The very same night Dr. Harley wrote to his sister, thanking her for her kind offer, and adding that, if convenient, he would bring his daughter Edith, fifteen years of age, to her aunt's home at Silchester in a week's time.

There was much to do in that short week in getting Edith's wardrobe into something like order. Each of the elder sisters sacrificed one of their limited number of dresses to be cut down and altered for the younger one.

The May sunshine of a rather late spring was beginning to grow warm and genial at last, and the girl really must have a new hat and gloves and shoes, and one or two print frocks, before she could possibly put in an appearance at Aunt Rachel's.

Almost anything had done for running about the lanes at Winchcomb, where every one knew the Harleys, and respected them far more for not going beyond their means, than they would have done for any quantity of fine apparel.

Goodbye!

But the preparations were finished at last, the goodbyes were said, and Edith, leaving home for the first time in her life, sat gravely by her father's side in the train that was timed to reach Silchester by six in the evening.

She had been up very early that morning, before any of the others were astir; and when she was dressed, went out into the garden, where she could be alone, to think her last thoughts of the wonderful change in her life.

She had gone on always so carelessly and happily, that the new turn of affairs sobered and startled her. She seemed to herself to say goodbye, not only to her home, but to the long, bright, happy childhood that had been spent there. And her thoughts were full of the few words Mrs. Harley had spoken about her papa's expenses and worries. [324]

"If I had only known," she said to herself; "if I had only thought about things, I would have tried to learn more, and be some help while I was here. But it is no use grieving about that now; it seems to me I am come to what our rector calls a 'turning point.' I can begin from to-day to act in a different way, and I will. I will just think in everything how I can help them all at home. I will try to please Aunt Rachel, and get her to like me, and then perhaps I shall grow in time to bear the thought of staying with her for a long, long while. Only, my poor boys and my dear little Johnnie and Francie—I did think I should have had you always. But it will be good for you, too, if I get on well at Silchester."

When she had gone so far, Nancy, the housemaid, came out with broom and bucket, and the mingled sounds of laughing and crying, and babel of many voices that floated out through the opened windows, told Edith that the family were rising for the last breakfast together.

It was a good thing when all the farewells were over, and for the first few miles of the journey she was thankful to sit in silence in the stuffy second-class carriage, and use all her strength of will to keep back the tears that would try to come.

"Papa," she said shyly, as her father laid down his newspaper, and woke up to the fact that the two ladies who had begun the journey with them had got out at the last station—"papa, I want you to promise me something, please."

"Well, Edith, what is it?"

"I want you to promise not to tell Aunt Rachel about all the things that I have done—while I was at home, I mean."

"You have never done anything very dreadful, child," said the doctor with a smile. "Your Aunt Rachel has not been accustomed to little girls, it is true; but I suppose she won't expect you to be quite like an old woman." [325]

"I will do my very best"

"No; but if she knew about Johnnie and Francie falling into the water, and about the chickens, and how Alfred and I let Farmer Smith's cow into the potato-field, and the other things, she might not understand that I am going to be different; and I shall be different—I shall indeed, papa."

"Yes, Edith, it is time you began to be more thoughtful, and to remember that there are things in the world, even for boys and girls, far more important than play. If it will be any comfort to you, I will readily promise not to mention the cow, or the chickens, or even that famous water escapade. But I shall trust to your own good sense and knowledge of what is right, and shall

expect you to make for yourself a good character with your aunt. You may be sure she will, from the first, be influenced much more by your behaviour than by anything I can say."

"Yes, I know," murmured Edith. "I will do my very best."

She would have liked to say something about helping her father in his difficulties, but the shyness that generally overcame her when she talked to him prevented any further words on the subject; and Dr. Harley began to draw her attention to the objects of interest they were passing, and to remark that in another twenty minutes they would be half-way to Silchester.

It seemed a long while to Edith before the train drew up in the large, glass-roofed station, so different from the little platform at Winchcomb, with the station-master's white cottage and fragrant flower-borders. Silchester is not a very large town, but to the country-bred girl the noise and bustle of the station, and of the first two or three streets through which they were driven in the cab Dr. Harley had called, seemed almost bewildering.

Very soon, however, they began to leave shops and busy pavements behind, and to pass pretty, fancifully-built villas, with very high-sounding names, and trim flower-gardens in front. Even these ceased after a while, and there were first some extensive nursery grounds, and then green open fields on each hand. [326]

"It will be quite the country after all, papa!" exclaimed Edith, surprised.

"Not quite, Edith. You will only be two or three miles out of Silchester, instead of twenty miles from everywhere, as we are at Winchcomb. Look! that is Aunt Rachel's house, just where the old Milford Lane turns out of the road—that house at the corner, I mean."

"Where?" said Edith, half-bewildered. Her unaccustomed eyes could see nothing but greenery and flowers at first, for Miss Harley's long, low, two-storey cottage was entirely overgrown with dense masses of ivy and other creeping plants. It stood well back from the road, in a grassy, old-fashioned garden, shaded by some fine elms; and one magnificent pear-tree, just now glorious in a robe of white blossoms, grew beside the entrance-gate.

"Oh, papa, what a lovely old house!" cried the girl involuntarily. "Did you know it was like this?"

Dr. Harley smiled.

"I suppose you think it lovely, Edith. I have often wondered, for my own part, why your aunt should bury herself here. But come—jump out; there she is at the door. The King's Majesty would not draw her to the garden gate, I think."

Edith got out of the cab, feeling like a girl in a dream, and followed her father up the gravel walk, noting mechanically the gorgeous colouring of tulips and hyacinths that filled the flower-beds on either hand.

A tall, grey-haired lady, well advanced in life, came slowly forward, holding out a thin, cold hand, and saying in a frigid tone, "Well, brother, so we meet again after these ten years. I hope you are well, and have left your wife and family well also." [327]

A Doubtful Welcome

"Quite well, thank you, Rachel, excepting Maria, who is never very well, you know," said the doctor heartily, taking the half-proffered hand in both his. "And how are you, after all this long time? You don't look a day older than when we parted."

"I am sorry I cannot return the compliment," remarked the lady, with a grim smile. "I suppose it is all the care and worry of your great family of children that have aged you so. And Maria was always such a poor, shiftless creature. I daresay, now, with all that your boys and girls cost you, you have two or three servants to keep, instead of making the girls work, and saving the wages and the endless waste that the best of servants make."

"We have but two," said the doctor, in a slightly irritated tone of voice. "My girls and their mother are ladies, Rachel, if they are poor. I can't let them do the rough work. For the rest, they have their hands pretty full, I can assure you. You have little idea, living here as you do, how much there is to be done for a family of nine children."

"No, I am thankful to say I have not. But you had better come in, and bring the girl with you."

With these ungracious words Aunt Rachel cast her eyes for the first time upon Edith, who had stood a silent and uncomfortable listener while her father and aunt were talking.

"Humph!" ejaculated Miss Harley, after looking her niece over from top to toe with a piercing, scrutinising gaze, that seemed to take in every detail of figure, face, and toilette, and to disapprove of all; "humph! The child looks healthy, and that is all I can say for her. But bring her in, Henry—Stimson and the boy can see to her box. I suppose you will stay yourself for to-night?"

"I should not be able to go home to-night, as you know," replied Dr. Harley. "But if my staying would be at all inconvenient, I can go to one of the Silchester hotels." [328]

His sister Rachel proved to be the same irritating, cross-grained woman he had quarrelled with and parted from so long before, and he was a little disappointed, for it is wonderful how time softens our thoughts of one another, and how true it is that—

"No distance breaks the tie of blood,
Brothers are brothers evermore."

Although Miss Rachel ruffled and annoyed him at every second word—"rubbed him up the wrong way," as her maid Stimson would have said—the doctor had a real regard for her in his heart, and respected her as a woman of sterling principle, and one whose worst faults were all upon the surface.

"There is no need to talk about hotels," and Miss Harley drew herself up, half-offended in her turn. "It's a pity if I can't find houseroom for my own brother, let him stay as long as he will. Now, Edith, if that is your name, go along with Stimson, and she will show you your room, where you can take off your hat and things. And be sure, mind you brush your hair, child, and tie it up, or something. Don't come down with it hanging all wild about your shoulders like that."

Poor Edith's heart sank. She was rather proud of her luxuriant brown tresses, which her mother had always allowed her to wear in all their length and beauty, and she did not even know how to tie them up herself.

"This way, miss," said the prim, elderly servant. "I knew as soon as I saw you that your hair would never do for Miss Harley. I'll fix it neatly for you."

"Oh, thank you!" said Edith, much relieved; and in a few minutes all the flowing locks were gathered into one stiff braid, and tied at the end with a piece of black ribbon.

"There, now you look more like a young lady should!" cried Stimson, surveying her handiwork with pleasure. "You'll always find me ready to oblige you, miss, if you'll only try to please Miss Harley; and you won't mind my saying that I hope you'll be comfortable here, and manage to stay, for it's frightful lonely in the house sometimes, and some one young about the place would do the mistress and me good, I'm sure." [329]

A Great Improvement

"Oh, thank you!" said Edith again. She could not trust herself to say more, for the words, that she felt were kindly meant, almost made her cry.

"Now you had better go down to the parlour," Stimson went on. "Miss Harley and your papa won't expect you to be long, and the tea is ready, I know."

With a beating heart Edith stepped down the wide, old-fashioned staircase, and went shyly in at the door which Stimson opened for her. She found herself in a large, handsomely-furnished room, where the table was laid for tea; and Miss Harley sat before the tray, already busy with cups and saucers.

"Come here, Edith, and sit where I can see you. Yes, that is a great improvement. Your hair looks tidy and respectable now."

After this greeting, to Edith's great relief, she was left to take her tea in peace and silence, the doctor and his sister being occupied in conversation about their early days, and continually mentioning the names of persons and places of whom she knew little or nothing.

Only once the girl started to hear her aunt say, "I always told you, Henry, that it was a great mistake. With your talents you might have done almost anything; and here you are, a man still in middle life, saddled and encumbered with a helpless invalid wife and half a score of children, to take all you earn faster than you can get it. It is a mere wasted existence, and if you had listened to me it might all have been different."

"How cruel!" exclaimed Edith to herself indignantly. "Does Aunt Rachel think I am a stock or a stone, to sit and hear my mother—all of us—spoken about like that? I shall never, never be able to bear it!" [330]

Even the doctor was roused. "Once for all, Rachel," he said in a peremptory tone, "you must understand that I cannot allow my wife and children to be spoken of in this manner. No doubt I have had to make sacrifices, but my family have been a source of much happiness to me; and Maria, who cannot help her health, poor thing! has done her best under circumstances that would have crushed a great many women. As for the children, of course they have their faults, but altogether they are good children, and I often feel proud of them. You have been kind enough to ask Edith to stay here, but if I thought you would make her life unhappy with such speeches as you made just now, I would take her back with me to-morrow."

"Well, well," said Miss Harley, a little frightened at the indignation she had raised. "You need not take me up so, Henry. Of course I shall not be so foolish as to talk to the child just as I would to you. I have her interest and yours truly at heart; and since I don't want to quarrel with you again, we will say no more of your wife and family. If you have quite finished, perhaps we might take a turn in the garden."

The rest of the evening passed quietly away. Edith was glad when the time came to go to her room, only she so dreaded the morrow, that would have to be passed in Aunt Rachel's company, without her father's protecting presence.

Soon after breakfast in the morning the doctor had to say goodbye. It was a hard parting for both father and daughter. Edith had never known how dearly she loved that busy and often-anxious father till she was called to let him go. As for the doctor, he was scarcely less moved, and

Miss Rachel had to hurry him away at last, or he would have lost the train it was so important he should catch.

[331] Somehow the doctor never could be spared from Winchcomb. There was no other medical man for miles round, and people seemed to expect Dr. Harley to work on from year's end to year's end, without ever needing rest or recreation himself.

A Close Examination

As soon as they were left alone, Miss Rachel called Edith into the parlour, and bidding her sit down, began a rigorous inquiry as to her capabilities and accomplishments—whether she had been to school, or had had a governess; whether she was well grounded in music, and had studied drawing and languages; what she knew of plain and fancy needlework; if her mother had made her begin to learn cookery—"as all young women should," added Miss Rachel, sensibly enough.

Poor Edith's answers were very far from satisfying Miss Harley.

"You say you have had no teacher but your sister since Miss Phelps, or Phipps, or whatever her name was, left. And how old is your sister, may I ask?"

"Jessie is eighteen," answered Edith. "And she is very clever—every one says so, especially at music."

"Why didn't she teach you, then, and make you practise regularly? You tell me you have had no regular practice, and cannot play more than two or three pieces."

"It is not Jessie's fault," said Edith, colouring up. "Papa and mamma liked us all to learn, but I am afraid, aunt, I have no natural talent for music. I get on better with some other things."

Aunt Rachel opened a French book that lay on the table.

"Read that," she said shortly, pointing to the open page.

Edith was at home here; her pronunciation was rather original, it is true, but she read with ease and fluency, and translated the page afterwards without any awkward pauses.

[332] "That is better," said her aunt, more graciously. "You shall have some lessons. As for the music, I don't believe in making girls, who can't tell the National Anthem from the Old Hundredth, strum on the piano whether they like it or not. You may learn drawing instead. And then I shall expect you to read with me—good solid authors, you know, not poetry and romances, which are all the girls of the present day seem to care for."

"Thank you, aunt," said Edith. "I should like to learn drawing very much."

"Wait a while," continued Miss Harley. "Perhaps you won't thank me when you have heard all. I shall insist upon your learning plain needlework in all its branches, and getting a thorough insight into cookery and housekeeping. With your mother's delicate health there ought to be at least one of the daughters able to take her place whenever it is needful. Your sisters don't know much about the house, I daresay."

"Maude does," answered Edith, proud of her sister's ability. "Maude can keep house well—even papa says so."

"And Jessie?"

"Jessie says her tastes are not domestic, and she has always had enough to do teaching us, and looking after the little ones."

"And what did you do?" demanded Aunt Rachel. "You can't play; you can't sew. By your own confession, you don't know the least thing about household matters. It couldn't have taken you all your time to learn a little French and read a few books. What *did* you do?"

Edith blushed again.

"I—I went out, Aunt Rachel," she said at last.

"Went out, child?"

"Yes. Winchcomb is a beautiful country place, you know, and Alfred and Claude and I were nearly always out when it was fine. We did learn something, even in that way, about the flowers and plants and birds and live creatures. Papa always said plenty of fresh air would make us strong and healthy, and, indeed, we *are* well. [333] As for me, I have never been ill that I remember since I was quite a little thing."

We will Change all that!

"My patience, child! And did Maria—did your mother allow you to run about with two boys from morning till night?"

"It is such a quiet place, aunt, no one thought it strange. We knew all the people, and they were always glad to see us—nearly always," added truthful Edith, with a sudden remembrance of Mr. Smith's anger when he found his cow in the potato field, and one or two other little matters of a like nature.

"Well, I can only say that you have been most strangely brought up. But we will change all that. You will now find every day full of regular employments, and when I cannot walk out with

you I shall send Stimson. You must not expect to run wild any more, but give yourself to the improvement of your mind, and to fitting yourself for the duties of life. Now I have letters to write, and you may leave me till I send for you again. For this one day you will have to be idle, I suppose."

Edith escaped into the garden, thankful that the interview was over, and that, for the time at least, she was free.

The very next day she was introduced to Monsieur Delorme, who undertook to come from Silchester three times a week to give her lessons in French, and to Mr. Sumner, who was to do the same on the three alternate days, for drawing. It seemed a terrible thing to Edith at first to have to learn from strangers; but Monsieur Delorme was a charming old gentleman, with all the politeness of his nation; and, as Edith proved a very apt pupil, they soon got on together beautifully.

Mr. Sumner was not so easy to please. A disappointed artist, who hated teaching, and only gave lessons from absolute necessity, this gentleman had but little patience with the natural inexperience of an untrained girl.

But Edith had made up her mind to overcome all difficulties, and it was not very long before she began to make progress with the pencil too, and to enjoy the drawing-lesson almost as well as the pleasant hours with Monsieur Delorme. [334]

These were almost the only things she did enjoy, however. It was hard work to read for two hours every morning with Miss Rachel, who made her plod wearily through dreary histories and works of science that are reduced to compendiums and abridgements for the favoured students of the present day.

But even that was better than the needlework, the hemming and stitching and darning, over which Stimson presided, and which, good and useful as it is, is apt to become terribly irksome when it is compulsory, and a poor girl must get through her allotted task before she can turn to any other pursuit.

Every day, too, Edith went into the kitchen and learned pastry-making and other mysteries from the good-natured cook, who, with Stimson, and the boy who came daily to look after the garden and pony made up Aunt Rachel's household.

What with these occupations, and the daily walk or drive, the girl found her time pretty well taken up, and had little to spare for the rambles in the garden she loved so much, and for writing letters home.

To write and to receive letters from home were her greatest pleasures, for the separation tried her terribly.

It was difficult, too, for one who had lived a free, careless life, to have to do everything by rule, and submit to restraint in even the smallest matters.

In spite of her efforts to be cheerful and to keep from all complaining, Edith grew paler and thinner, and so quiet, that Aunt Rachel was quite pleased with what she called her niece's "becoming demeanour."

The girl was growing fast; she was undoubtedly learning much that was useful and good, but no one knew what it cost her to go quietly on from day to day and never send one passionate word to the distant home, imploring her father to let her return to the beloved circle again. [335]

A Welcome Letter

But the six months, though they had seemed such a long time to look forward to, flew quickly by when there were so many things to be done and learned in them. Edith began to wonder very much in the last few weeks whether she had really been able to please her aunt or not.

It was not Miss Harley's way to praise or commend her niece at all. Young people required setting down and keeping in their proper places, she thought, rather than having their vanity flattered. Yet she could not be blind to Edith's honest and earnest efforts to please and to learn, and at the end of the six months a letter went to Winchcomb, which made both Dr. and Mrs. Harley proud of their child.

"Edith has her faults, as all girls have," wrote Miss Rachel; "but I may tell you that ever since she came I have been pleased with her conduct. She makes the best use of the advantages I am able to give her, and I think you will find her much improved both in knowledge and deportment. You had better have her home for a week or two, to see you and her brothers and sisters, and then she can return, and consider my house her home always. I make no doubt that you will be glad to yield her to me permanently, but be good enough not to tell her how much I have said in her favour. I don't want the child's head turned."

"It is very kind of Rachel," said Mrs. Harley, after reading this letter for the third or fourth time. "I must say I never expected Edith to get to the end of her six months, still less that she should gain so much approval. She was always such a wild, harem-scarem girl at home."

"She only wanted looking after, my dear, and putting in a right way," said the doctor, in a true masculine spirit; and Mrs. Harley answered, with her usual gentle little sigh: [336]

"I don't think that was quite all. Maude and Jessie, who have been brought up at home, have done well, you must admit. But I sometimes think there is more in Edith—more strength of character and real patience than we ever gave her credit for. You must excuse my saying so, but she could never have borne with your sister so long if she had not made a very great effort."

"And now she is to go back to this tyrant of a maiden aunt," laughed the doctor. "But by all means let her come home first, as Rachel suggests, and then we shall see for ourselves, and hear how she likes the prospect too."

That week or two at home seemed like a delightful dream to Edith. It is true the fields and woods had lost all their sweet summer beauty; but the mild late autumn, which lasted far into November that year, had a charm of its own; and then it was so pleasant to be back again in the dear old room which she had always shared with Jessie, to have the boys and Francie laughing and clinging about her, and to find that they had not forgotten her "one bit," as Johnnie said, and that to have their dear Edith back was the most charming thing that could possibly have happened to them.

"You must make much of your sister while she is here," said the doctor. "It will not be long before you have to say 'Goodbye' again."

"Oh, papa, can't she stay till Christmas?" cried a chorus of voices.

"No, no, children. We must do as Aunt Rachel says, and she wants Edith back in a fortnight at the outside."

Both father and mother, though they would not repeat Miss Harley's words, could not help telling their daughter how pleased they were with her.

"You have been a real help to your father, Edith," said Mrs. Harley. "Now you have done so well with Aunt Rachel, we may feel that you are provided for, and I am sure you will be glad to think that your little brothers and sisters will have many things they must have gone without if you had had to be considered too." [337]

A Trying Time

Edith felt rewarded then for all it had cost her to please her aunt and work quietly on at Silchester, and she went back to Ivy House with all her good resolutions strengthened, and her love for the dear ones at home stronger than ever.

For a while things went on without much change. The wild, country girl was fast growing into a graceful accomplished young woman, when two events happened which caused her a great deal of thought and anxiety.

First, Aunt Rachel, who had all her life enjoyed excellent health, fell rather seriously ill. She had a sharp attack of bronchitis, and instead of terminating in two or three weeks, as she confidently expected, the disease lingered about her, and at last settled into a chronic form, and made her quite an invalid.

Both Edith and Stimson had a hard time while Miss Harley was at the worst. Unaccustomed to illness, she proved a very difficult patient, and kept niece and maid continually running up and downstairs, and ministering to her real and fancied wants.

The warm, shut-up room where she now spent so many hours tried Edith greatly, and she longed inexpressibly sometimes for the free air of her dear Winchcomb fields, and the open doors and windows of the old house at home. Life at Silchester had always been trying to her; it became much more so when she had to devote herself constantly to an exacting invalid, who never seemed to think that young minds and eyes and hands needed rest and recreation—something over and above continued work and study.

Even when she was almost too ill to listen, Aunt Rachel insisted on the hours of daily reading; she made Edith get through long tasks of household needlework, and, to use her own expression, "kept her niece to her duties" quite as rigidly in sickness as in health.

Then, when it seemed to Edith that she really must give up, and petition for at least a few weeks at home, came a letter from her father, containing some very surprising news. A distant relative had died, and quite unexpectedly had left Dr. Harley a considerable legacy. [338]

"I am very glad to tell you," wrote her father, "that I shall now be relieved from all the pecuniary anxieties that have pressed upon me so heavily for the last few years. Your mother and I would now be very glad to have you home again, unless you feel that you are better and happier where you are. We owe your Aunt Rachel very many thanks for all her kindness, but we think she will agree that, now the chief reason for your absence from home is removed, your right place is with your brothers and sisters."

To go home! How delightful it would be! That was Edith's first thought; but others quickly followed. What would Aunt Rachel say? Would she really be sorry to lose her niece, or would she perhaps feel relieved of a troublesome charge, and glad to be left alone with her faithful Stimson, as she had been before?

"I must speak to my aunt about it at once," thought Edith. "And no doubt papa will write to her too."

But when she went into the garden, where her aunt was venturing to court the sunshine, she found her actually in tears.

"Your father has written me a most unfeeling letter," said the poor lady, sitting on a seat, and before Edith could utter a word. "Because he is better off he wants to take you away. He seems not to think in the least of my lonely state, or that I may have grown attached to you, but suggests that you should return home as soon as we can arrange it, without the least regard for my feelings."

"Papa would never think you cared so much, Aunt Rachel. Would you really rather I should stay, then?"

[339] "Child, I could never go back to my old solitary life again. I did not mean to tell you, and perhaps I am not wise to do so now, but I will say it, Edith—I have grown to love you, my dear, and if you love me, you will not think of going away and leaving me to illness and solitude. Your father and mother have all their other children—I have nothing and no one but you. Promise that you will stay with me?"

"I have Grown to Love you!"

"I must think about it, aunt," said Edith, much moved by her aunt's words. "Oh, do not think me ungrateful, but it will be very hard for me to decide; and perhaps papa will not let me decide for myself."

But when Edith, in her own room, came to consider all her aunt's claim, it really seemed that she had no right, at least if her parents would consent to her remaining, to abandon one who had done so much for her. It was, indeed, as she had said, a very difficult choice; there was the old, happy, tempting life at Winchcomb, the pleasant home where she might now return, and live with the dear brothers and sisters without feeling herself a burden upon her father's strained resources; and there was the quiet monotonous daily round at Ivy House, the exacting invalid, the uncongenial work, the lack of all young companionship, that already seemed so hard to bear.

And yet, Edith thought, she really ought to stay. Wonderful as it seemed, Aunt Rachel had grown to love her. How could she say to the lonely, stricken woman, "I will go, and leave you alone"?

"Well, Edith?" said Miss Harley eagerly, when her niece came in again after a prolonged absence.

"I will stay, Aunt Rachel, if my father will let me. I feel that I cannot—ought not—to leave you after all that you have done for me."

So it was settled, after some demur on Dr. Harley's part, and the quiet humdrum days went on again, and Edith found out how, as the poet says—

"Tasks, in hours of insight willed,
May be in hours of gloom fulfilled."

[340] For Miss Harley, after that involuntary betrayal of her feelings, relapsed into her own hard, irritable ways, and often made her niece's life a very uncomfortable one.

Patiently and tenderly Edith nursed her aunt through the lingering illness that went on from months to years; very rarely she found time for a brief visit to the home where the little ones were fast growing taller and wiser, the home which Jessie had now exchanged for one of her own, and where careful Maude was still her mother's right hand.

Often it seemed to the girl that her lot in life had been rather harshly determined, and she still found it a struggle to be patient and cheerful through all.

And yet through this patient waiting there came to Edith the great joy and blessing of her life.

Mr. Finch, the elderly medical man who had attended Miss Harley throughout her illness, grew feeble and failing in health himself. He engaged a partner to help him in his heavy, extensive practice, and this young man, Edward Hallett by name, had not been many times to Ivy House before he became keenly alive to the fact that Miss Harley's niece was not only a pretty, but a good and very charming girl. It was strange how soon the young doctor's visits began to make a brightness in Edith's rather dreary days, how soon they both grew to look forward to the two or three minutes together which they might hope to spend every alternate morning.

Before very long, Edith, with the full approval of her parents and her aunt, became Edward Hallett's promised wife.

They would have to wait a long while, for the young doctor was a poor man, and Dr. Harley could not, even now, afford to give his daughter a marriage portion.

But, while they waited, Edith's long trial came to a sudden, unexpected end.

Poor Miss Harley was found one morning, when Stimson, who had been sleeping more heavily than usual, arose from the bed she occupied in her mistress's room, lying very calmly and quietly, [341] as though asleep, with her hands tightly clasped over a folded paper, which she must have taken, after her maid had left her for the night, from the box which always stood at her bedside. The sleep proved to be that last long slumber which knows no waking on earth, and the paper, when

"AS HE KISSED THEIR FIRSTBORN UNDER THE MISTLETOE."

the dead fingers were gently unclasped, was found to contain the poor lady's last will and testament, dated a year previously, and duly signed and witnessed.

Miss Harley's Will

In it she left the Ivy House and the whole of her, property to her "dear niece, Edith Harley, who," said the grateful testatrix, "has borne with me, a lonely and difficult old woman; has lived my narrow life for my sake, and, as I have reason to believe, at a great sacrifice of her own inclinations and without a thought of gain, and who richly deserves the reward herein bequeathed to her."

There could be no happier home found than that of Edith Hallett and her husband in the Ivy House at Silchester. Nor did they forget how that happiness came about.

"We owe all to your patience," said Dr. Hallett to Edith, as he kissed their firstborn under the mistletoe at the second Christmastide of their wedded life.

The Tasmanian Sisters

BY

E. B. Moore

A story, founded on fact, of true love, of changed lives, and of loving service.

The evening shadows were settling down over Mount Wellington in Tasmania. The distant city was already bathed in the rosy after-glow.

It was near one of the many lakes which abound amongst the mountains round Hobart that our short tale begins.

It was in the middle of January—midsummer in Tasmania. It had been a hot day, but the heat was of a dry sort, and therefore bearable, and of course to those born and bred in that favoured land, it was in no way trying.

On the verandah of a pretty wooden house of the châlet description, stood a lady, shading her eyes from the setting sun, a tall, graceful woman; but as the sun's rays fell on her hair, it revealed silver threads, and the sweet, rather worn face, with a few lines on the forehead, was that of a woman of over forty; and yet she was a woman to whom life's romance had only just come.

She was gazing round her with a lingering, loving glance; the gaze of one who looks on a loved scene for the last time. On the morrow Eva Chadleigh, for so she was called, was leaving her childhood's home, where she had lived all her life, and going to cross the water to the old—though to her new—country.

Sprinkled all down the mountain sides were fair white villas, or wooden châlet-like houses, with their terraces and gardens, and most of them surrounded by trees, of which the eucalyptus was the most common. The soft breezes played round her, and at her feet the little wavelets of the lake rippled in a soft cadence. Sounds of happy voices came wafted out on the evening air, intermingled with music and the tones of a rich tenor voice.

That voice, or rather the owner of it, had made a havoc in that quiet home. Till its owner had appeared on the scene, Eva and her sister had lived quietly together, never dreaming of change. They had been born, and had lived all their lives in the peaceful châlet, seeing no one, going nowhere.

A Belated Traveller

One night, about a year previously, a belated traveller knocked at the door, was given admittance, and, in return for the hospitality shown him, had the audacity to fall in love with Blanche Chadleigh, Eva's twin sister. Then, indeed, a change came into Eva's life. Hitherto the two sisters had sufficed to each

other; now she had to take a secondary position.

The intruder proved to be a wealthy settler, a Mr. Wells, a man of good family, though alone in the world. In due course the two were married, but Blanche was loath to leave her childhood's home. So it resulted in their remaining there while his own pretty villa, a little higher up the mountain, was being built.

And now Eva too had found her fate. A church "synod" had been held; clergymen of all denominations and from all parts of the earth being present. The sisters had been asked to accommodate one or two clergymen; one of these was an old Scotch minister with snowy locks, and keen dark eyes.

How it came about Eva Chadleigh never knew; she often said he never formally proposed to her, but somehow, without a word on either side, it came to be understood that she should marry him. [344]

"Now you're just coming home with me, lassie," said the old man to the woman of forty-five, who appeared to him as a girl. "I'll make ye as happy as a queen; see here, child, two is company, and three is trumpery, as the saying goes. It isn't that your sister loves ye less," seeing a pained look cross her face, "but she has her husband, don't ye see?" And Eva did see. She fell in love, was drawn irresistibly to her old minister, and it is his voice, with its pleasant Scotch accent, that is now rousing her from her reverie at the time our tale begins.

"Come away—come away, child. The night dews are falling; they're all wearying for ye indoors; come now, no more looking around ye, or I'll never get ye away to-morrow."

"But you promise to bring me back some day, Mr. Cameron, before very long."

"Ay, ay, we'll come back sure enough, don't fret yourself; but first ye must see the old country, and learn to know my friends."

Amongst their neighbours at this time was a young man, apparently about thirty years old; he had travelled to Hobart in the same ship as Mr. Cameron, for whom he had conceived a warm feeling of friendship. Captain Wylie had lately come in for some property in Tasmania, and as he was on furlough and had nothing to keep him at home, he had come out to see his belongings, and since his arrival at Hobart had been a frequent visitor at the châlet.

Though a settled melancholy seemed to rest upon him, his history explained it, for Captain Wylie was married, and yet it was years since he had seen his wife. They had both met at a ball at Gibraltar many years ago. She had been governess in an officer's family on the "Rock" while his regiment had been stationed there. She was nineteen, very pretty, and alone in the world. They had married after five or six weeks' acquaintance, and parted by mutual consent after as many months. She had been self-willed and extravagant, he had nothing but his pay at that time, and she nearly ruined him. [345]

Captain Wylie

It ended in recriminations. He had a violent temper, and she was proud and sarcastic. They had parted in deep anger and resentment, she to return to her governessing, for she was too proud to accept anything from him, he to remove to another regiment and go to India.

At first he had tried to forget all this short interlude of love and happiness, and flung himself into a gay, wild life: but it would not do. He had deeply loved her with the first strong, untried love of a young impetuous man, and her image was always coming before him. An intense hunger to see her again had swept away every feeling of resentment. Lately he had heard of her as governess to a family in Gibraltar, and a great longing had come over him just to see her once more, and to find out if she still cared for him.

He and Mr. Cameron had travelled out together on a sailing ship, and during the voyage he had been led to confide in the kindly, simple old gentleman; but so sacred did the latter consider his confidence that even to his affianced bride he had never recalled it.

All these thoughts crowded into the young officer's mind as he paced up and down in the stillness of the night, disinclined to turn in. He was startled from his reverie by a voice beside him.

"So you have really decided to come with us to-morrow?" It was Mr. Cameron who spoke. "Ye know, lad, the steamer is not one of the fine new liners. I doubt she's rather antiquated, and as I told ye yesterday, she is a sort of ambulance ship, as one may say. She is bringing home a good many invalided officials and officers left at the hospital here by other ships. It seems a queer place to spend our honeymoon in, and I offered my bride to wait for the next steamer, which won't be for another fortnight or three weeks, and what do you think she said? 'Let us go; we may be of use to those poor things!' That's the sort she is." [346]

"She looks like that," said Captain Wylie, heartily. "I should like to go with you," continued the young man. "Since I have decided on the step I told you of, I cannot remain away a day longer. I saw the mate of the *Minerva* yesterday, and secured my cabin. He says they have more invalids than they know what to do with. I believe there are no nurses, only one stewardess and some cabin boys to wait on us all."

The night grew chill, and after a little more talk the older gentleman went in, but the younger

one continued pacing up and down near the lake, till the rosy dawn had begun to light up the summits.

It was in the month of February, a beautiful bright morning; brilliant sunshine flooded the Rock of Gibraltar, and made the sea of a dazzling blueness, whilst overhead the sky was unclouded.

A young lady who stood in a little terraced garden in front of a house perched on the side of the "Rock" was gazing out on the expanse of sea which lay before her, and seemed for the moment oblivious of two children who were playing near her, and just then loudly claiming her attention. She was their governess, and had the charge of them while their parents were in India.

The house they lived in was the property of Mr. Somerset, who was a Gibraltarian by birth, and it was the children's home at present. Being delicate, the climate of Gibraltar was thought better for them than the mists of England. Major and Mrs. Somerset were shortly expected home for a time on furlough, and there was great excitement at this prospect.

"Nory, Nory, you don't hear what I am saying! When will mamma come? You always say 'soon,' but what does 'soon' mean? Nory, you don't hear me," and the governess's dress was pulled.

[347] This roused her from her reverie, and like one waking from a dream she turned round. "What did you say, dear? Oh, yes, about your mother. Well, I am expecting a letter every mail. I should think she might arrive almost any time; they were to arrive in Malta last Monday, and now it is Wednesday. And that reminds me, children, run and get on your things, we have just time for a walk before your French mistress comes."

At Gibraltar

"Oh, do let us go to the market, Nory, it is so long since we went there. It is so stupid always going up the 'Rock,' and you are always looking out to sea, and don't hear us when we talk to you. I know you don't, for when I told you that lovely story about the Brownies, the other day, you just said 'yes' and 'no' in the wrong places, and I knew you were not attending," said sharp little Ethel, who was not easily put off.

"Oh, Nory, see the monkeys," cried the little boy, "they are down near the sentry box, and one of them is carrying off a piece of bread."

"They are very tame, aren't they, Nory?" asked Ethel. "The soldiers leave bread out for them on purpose, Maria says."

"Yes, but you know I don't care for them, Ethel. They gave me such a fright last year they came down to pay a visit, and I discovered one in the bathroom. But run to Maria, and ask her to get you ready quickly, and I will take you to the market."

In great glee the happy little children quickly donned their things, and were soon walking beside their governess towards the gay scene of bargaining and traffic.

Here Moors are sitting cross-legged, with their piles of bright yellow and red slippers turned up at the toe, and calling out in loud harsh voices, "babouchas, babouchas," while the wealthier of them, dressed in their rich Oriental dress, are selling brass trays and ornaments.

The scene is full of gaiety and life, and it is with difficulty that the young governess drags the children away. But now fresh delights begin: they are in the narrow streets where all the Moorish [348] shops with their tempting array of goods attract the childish eye—sweets of all sorts, cocoanut, egg sweets, almond sweets, pine-nut sweets, and the lovely pink and golden "Turkish delight," dear to every child's heart.

"Oh, Nory!" in pleading tones, and "Nory" knows that piteous appeal well, and is weak-minded enough to buy some of the transparent amber-like substance, which is at all events very wholesome. The sun was so powerful that it was quite pleasant on their return to sit in the little terraced garden and take their lunch before lesson-time, and while their governess sipped her tea, the children drank their goat's milk, and ate bread and quince jelly.

The warm February sun shone down on her, but she heeded it not; a passage in Mrs. Somerset's letter, which had just been handed to her, haunted her, and she read again and again: she could get no farther. "I believe it is very likely we shall take the next ship that touches here, it is the *Minerva* from Tasmania. They say it is a hospital ship, but I cannot wait for another, I hunger so for a sight of the children."

The young governess was none other than Norah Wylie. She had never ceased following her husband's movements with the greatest, most painful interest. She knew he had lately gone to Tasmania; suppose he should return in that very ship? More unlikely things had happened. She was at times very weary of her continual monotonous round, though she had been fortunate enough to have got a very exceptional engagement, and had been with Mrs. Somerset's children almost ever since she and her husband had parted.

As Norah sat and knitted, looking out to sea and wondering where her husband was, he, at the very moment, was pacing up and down the deck of the *Minerva*. They had so far had a prosperous journey, fair winds, and a calm sea. Some of the invalids were improving, and even able to come to table, for sea air is a wonderful life-giver. But there were others who would never [349]

see England. It was a day of intense heat in the Red Sea, and even at that early season of the year there was not a breath of air.

Amongst those who had been carried up out of the stifling cabin was one whose appearance arrested Captain Wylie's attention, as he took his constitutional in the lightest of light flannels. He could not but be struck by the appearance of the young man. He had never seen him before, but he looked so fragile that the young officer's kind heart went out to him. He was lying in an uncomfortable position, his head all twisted and half off the limp cabin pillow.

Something in the young face, so pathetic in its youth, with the ravages of disease visible in the hectic cheek, and harsh, rasping cough, touched the strong young officer. He stooped down and put his hand on the young lad's forehead; it was cold and clammy. Was he dying?

Mrs. Cameron had come over and was standing beside him. She ran down and brought up the doctor, explaining the young man's state.

The Doctor's Verdict

"He will pass away in one of these fainting fits," said the tired man as he followed her. He was kind in his way, but overwhelmed with work. "This may revive him for the time being," he went on as they ascended the cabin stairs, "but he cannot live long. I do feel for that young fellow, he is so patient. You never hear a word of complaint."

By this time they had reached the sick man. "Here, my good fellow, try and take this," said the doctor, as Eva Cameron gently raised the young head on her arm. The large dark eyes were gratefully raised to the doctor's face, and a slight tinge of colour came to the pale lips.

"Now I am going to fan you," said Mrs. Cameron, as she sat beside him. Now and then she sprinkled lavender water on his head and hands.

"NOW I AM GOING TO FAN YOU," SHE SAID.

"Thank you," he said; "how nice that is! Would you sing to me? I heard you singing the other day." [350]

Eva softly sang a Tasmanian air which was wild and sweet.

"Will you do me a favour?" asked the young man. "Please sing me one of the dear old psalms. I am Scotch, and at times yearn for them, you would hardly believe how much."

She sang:

"God is our refuge and our strength,
In straits a present aid:
Therefore, although the earth remove,
We will not be afraid."

As she sang tears rolled down the wan cheek, but a look of perfect peace came over the pale face. She went on:

"A river is, whose streams do glad
The city of our God,
The holy place, wherein the Lord
Most High hath His abode."

He was asleep, the wan young cheek leaning on his hand in a child-like attitude of repose. Eva sat and watched him, her heart full of pity. She did not move, but sat fanning him. Soon Mr. Cameron and Captain Wylie joined her; as they approached she put her finger on her lips to inspire silence.

She had no idea what the words of the dear old psalm had been to the young Highlander—like water to a parched soul, bringing back memories of childhood, wooded glens, heather-clad hills, rippling burns, and above all the old grey kirk where the Scotch laddie used to sit beside his mother—that dear mother in whom his whole soul was wrapped up—and join lustily in the psalms.

The dinner-bell rang unheeded—somehow not one of the three could leave him.

"How lovely!" he said at last, opening and fixing his eyes on Eva. "I think God sent you to me." [351]

"Ay, laddie," said the old Scotchman, taking the wasted hand in his, "but it seems to me you know the One who 'sticketh closer than a brother'? I see the 'peace of God' in your face."

"Ah, you are from my part of the country," said the lad joyfully, trying to raise himself, but sinking back exhausted. "I know it in your voice, it's just music to me. How good God has been to me!"

They were all too much touched by his words to answer him, and Eva could only bend over him and smooth his brow.

"Now mother will have some one to tell her about me," he added, turning to Mrs. Cameron, and grasping her hand. Then, as strength came back in some measure to the wasted frame, he

went on in broken sentences to tell how he had been clerk in a big mercantile house in Hobart, how he had been invalided and lying in the hospital there for weeks. "But I have saved money," he added joyfully, "she need not feel herself a burden on my sister any more; my sister is married to a poor Scotch minister, and she lives with them, or was to, till I came home. Now that will never be. Oh, if I could just have seen her!"

"But you will see her again, laddie," said the old man. "Remember our own dear poet Bonar's words:

"Where the child shall find his mother,
Where the mother finds the child,
Where dear families shall gather
That were scattered o'er the wild;
Brother, we shall meet and rest
'Mid the holy and the blest."

"Thank you," said the dying lad. "I think I could sleep." His eyes were closing, when a harsh loud voice with a foreign accent was heard near.

"I say I will, and who shall hinder me?"

"I say I will!"

"Hush, there is a dying man here!" It was the doctor who spoke. A sick-looking, but violent man, who had been reclining in a deck chair not far off, was having a tussle with a doctor, and another man who seemed his valet. [352]

"Indeed you should come down, sir," the man was saying, "there is quite a dew falling."

"You want to make out that I am dying, I suppose, but I have plenty of strength, I can tell you, and will be ordered by no one!"

"Well, then, you will hasten your end, I tell you so plainly," said the doctor sternly.

The man's face altered as he spoke, a kind of fear came over him, as he rose to follow the doctor without a word. As he passed near the young Highlander, he glanced at him and shuddered, "He's young to die, and have done with everything."

"He would tell you he is just going to begin with everything," said Mr. Cameron, who had heard the words, and came forward just then. "Doctor, I suppose we need not move him," he added, glancing at the dying lad, "you see he is going fast."

"No, nothing can harm him now, poor young fellow. I will go and speak to the captain—will you help Mr. Grossman to his cabin?"

As they reached the state-room door, Mr. Cameron said, "Friend, when your time comes, may you too know the peace that is filling the heart of yon lad."

"He is believing in a lie, I fear," said the other.

"And yet, when you were in pain the other day, I heard you call loudly, 'God help me!'"

"Oh, well, I suppose it is a kind of instinct—a habit one gets into, like any other exclamation."

"I think not," said the old man. "I believe that in your inmost, soul is a conviction that there is a God. Don't you remember hearing that Voltaire, with almost his last breath, said, 'Et pourtant, il y a un Dieu!'"

Returning on deck, Mr. Cameron took his watch beside the young Highlander. There was no return of consciousness, and very soon the happy spirit freed itself from its earthly tenement without a struggle. [353]

Next morning they consigned all that was mortal of him to the deep, in sure and certain hope that he shall rise again. God knows where to find His own, whether in the quiet leafy "God's acre," or in the depths of the sea.

The year was advancing. It was towards the end of February. At Gibraltar great excitement prevailed in the house perched on the side of the "Rock." Major Somerset and his wife were expected! Norah paused suddenly to look out over the blue expanse of sea, to-day ruffled with a slight breeze—and then exclaimed:

"Children! children! come, a steamer with the British flag is coming in! Hurry and get on your things."

There was no need for urging them to haste—the outdoor wrappings were on in no time, and they ran down to the landing-stage just as the ship had cast anchor. Numerous boats were already making their way out to her. They soon learnt that the ship was from Malta, though she was not the *Minerva* they had expected.

How Norah's heart beat as she eagerly, breathlessly, watched the passengers descend the ladder and take their places in the different boats. A keen breeze had got up, and even in the

harbour there were waves already.

"There is mamma!" exclaimed little Ethel—"see her, Nory, in the white hat! Oh, my pretty mamma!" she exclaimed, dancing with glee as the boat came nearer and nearer.

"There is Mamma!"

Then came exclamations, hugs and kisses, intermingled with the quick vivacious chattering of the boatmen bargaining over their fares. A perfect Babel of sound! Several passengers were landing—so a harvest was being reaped by these small craft.

[354] The children clung to their parents, and Norah followed behind, feeling a little lonely, and out of it all—would there ever come a time of joy for her—a time when she too would be welcoming a dear one?—or should she just have to go on living the life of an outsider in other people's lives—having no joys or sorrows of her own, she who might have been so blessed and so happy? How long those five years had seemed, a lifetime in themselves, since she had last heard her husband's voice! Well, he had not come, that was clear.

That evening as Norah was preparing to go to bed, a knock came to her door, and Mrs. Somerset came in.

"I thought I might come in, Norah dear; I wanted to tell you how pleased my husband and I are with the improvement in the children, they look so well, and are so much more obedient. You have managed them very well, and we are very grateful," and Mrs. Somerset bent forward and kissed her. "Now, dear, we want you to accept a small present from us—it is very commonplace—but there is little variety where we are stationed."

Norah undid the cedar box put into her hand and drew out a most lovely gold bracelet of Indian workmanship.

"Oh, how very good of you, it is far too pretty!" she exclaimed, returning Mrs. Somerset's embrace. "But, indeed, I have only done my duty by the children: they are very good, and I love them dearly."

"Well, dear, I hope you will long remain with them—and yet—I cannot wish it for your sake, for I wish a greater happiness for you. You remember when you first came to me, telling me your history, Norah, and begging me never to refer to it? Well, I have never done so, but to-night I must break my promise, as I think I ought to tell you that I have actually met Captain Wylie, though he did not know who I was."

Norah's colour came and went; she said nothing, only fixed her eyes on Mrs. Somerset in speechless attention, while a tremor ran through her being.

[355] "Now, dear, listen to me; I believe you will see him in Gibraltar very soon. You know we were to have come here in the *Minerva*, which is actually in port in Malta now, but as she is detained there for some slight repairs, we did not wait for her. I went on board the *Minerva* with my husband, who had business with the captain—and there he was. The captain introduced us. When he heard I was a native of the 'Rock,' he became quite eager, and asked me many questions about the different families living there, and told me he intended staying a few days here on his way to England. He was standing looking so sad when we came on board, looking out to sea, and he brightened up so when he spoke of Gibraltar. But, dear child, don't cry, you should rejoice."

For Norah had broken down and was weeping bitterly, uncontrollably. She could not speak, she only raised Mrs. Somerset's hand to her lips. The latter saw she was best alone, and was wise enough to leave her.

"Oh Edgar! Edgar!" was the cry of her heart. "Shall I ever really see you? Can you forgive me?"

Just about the same time as Norah Wylie was weeping in her room, her heart torn asunder with hopes and fears, her husband was again pacing the deck of the *Minerva*. They had sailed from Malta the previous day, but owing to fogs, which had checked their progress, were hardly out of sight of land.

Captain Wylie's thoughts as he passed up and down were evidently of a serious nature. For the first time in his life he had began to think seriously of religious things. Ever since the death of the young Highlander, Kenneth McGregor, he had had deep heart-searchings. Besides, another event had occurred that had cast a shadow over the whole ship, so sudden and so awful had it been.

Mr. Grossman had made a wonderful recovery. Contrary to all explanations, he was apparently almost well. It was his constant boast that he had recovered "in spite of the doctor."

"In Spite of the Doctor"

[356] One evening dinner was going on, and Herr Grossman, who was still on diet, and did not take all the courses, got up and declared that he would go on deck. It was misty and raining a little. He sent for his great coat and umbrella, and as his valet helped him on with his coat, the doctor called out to him:

"Don't stay up long in the damp."

"Oh, I'll be down directly," he had answered. "I've no wish to lay myself up again."

The company at table fell into talk, and it was some time before they dispersed.

"It is time Mr. Grossman was down," said the doctor; "did you see him, steward?"

"I saw him near an hour ago, sir, he stopped on his way up to light his cigar at the tinder lamp on the stairs."

The doctor went up, but no Herr Grossman was to be seen. He and others hunted all over the ship. At last a sort of panic prevailed. Where was he? What had happened? The ship was stopped and boats lowered. Captain Wylie was one of those who volunteered to go with the search party. Clouds of mist hung over the sea, and although lanterns were held aloft, nothing was visible.

The search was in vain. No one ever knew precisely what had happened, nor would know. Whether a sudden giddiness seized him, or whether he leaned too far forward, misled by the fog which makes things look so different; certain it is that he had disappeared—not even his umbrella was found.

No one slept that night; a great awe had settled down over the whole ship.

The next day a furious gale sprang up. Captain Wylie, who was an old sailor, crawled up on deck; he was used to roughing it, and the waves dashing over him as they swept the deck had an invigorating effect.

"We ought to be in this afternoon," shouted the captain, as he passed, "but the propeller has come to grief; you see we are not moving, and hard enough it will be to fix the other in in such weather," and he looked anxiously around. The wind almost blew his words away.

Captain Wylie then perceived that they were in the trough of the sea, helplessly tossed about, while the waves were mounting high, and any moment the engine fires might be extinguished. Should that happen, indeed they would be in a bad strait.

With difficulty he made his way to where the men were vainly trying to fix the monster screw. Each time they thought they had it in place, the heavy sea shifted it, and the men were knocked down in their attempts. Captain Wylie willingly gave a hand, and after a long time, so it seemed to the weary men, the screw was in its place, and doing its work.

The brave ship battled on. Already in the far distance the great "Rock" was visible, and the young soldier's heart turned passionately to her whom he loved.

And now a fresh disaster had arisen; the steam steering-gear had come to grief, and the old, long-neglected wheel had to be brought into use. It had not been used for years, and though constantly cleaned and kept in order, the salt water had been washing over it now for hours, and it was very hard to turn. The question now was, should they remain in the open sea, or venture into the harbour?

A discussion on the subject was taking place between the captain and the first mate. The steering-gear did not seem to do its work properly, and the captain anxiously kept his eyes fixed on the horizon, as they were drawn irresistibly nearer and nearer to the harbour. "It is the men-of-war I dread coming near," the captain was saying to his mates; "those deadly rams are a terror in this weather."

A Critical Moment

It was a critical moment. Darkness was coming down, the rain became more violent, the wind cold and cutting, with now and then fierce showers of hail.

On, on they were being driven; nothing could keep them back. The captain shouted orders, the men did their best, but the wheel did not work properly. Captain Wylie as he stood near, holding on while the waves dashed over him, saw the lights twinkling in the town, and felt that the cup of happiness so near might now at any moment be dashed from his lips.

The danger was clear to all, nearer and nearer they drew. "Out with the life-belts!" shouted the captain; "lower the boats!"

There was no time to be lost, faster and faster they were being driven into the harbour.

Captain Wylie rushed downstairs; and here confusion and terror reigned, for bad news travels fast, and a panic had seized the poor fellows who were still weak from recent illness. They were dragging themselves out of their berths.

"Get her ready, here are two belts," he cried, and, throwing them to Mr. Cameron, he hurried to the assistance of the invalids. All were soon provided with belts. A wonderful calm succeeded to the confusion, and great self-control was exercised.

"Courage!" cried the young soldier; "remember we are close to shore. If you can keep your heads above water you will speedily be rescued." The one frail woman was as calm as any.

It came at last! A crash, a gurgling sound of rushing water, a ripping, rasping noise.

"Up on deck," shouted Captain Wylie, as seizing the one helpless invalid in his arms, he hastened on deck. An awful scene met the eye. What the ship's captain feared had indeed come true!

The boats were soon freighted and pushed off.

While this terrible scene was taking place, anxious eyes were taking it all in from the shore.

Early that day the *Minerva* had been signalled, and Norah with her heart in her mouth had watched almost all day from the veranda, scanning the sea with a pair of binoculars. Mrs. Somerset kept the children entirely, knowing well what her poor young governess was going through. [359]

A Weary Night

The storm had raged fiercely all day, but as night came on it grew worse. Norah could remain no longer in the house, and had gone down to the quay. As she reached it she saw a large ship driving furiously forward to its doom. There she stood as though turned to stone, and was not aware of a voice speaking in her ear, and a hand drawing her away.

"This is no place for you, Mrs. Wylie; my wife sent me for you. You can do no good here; you will learn what there is to learn quicker at home—one can't believe a word they say."

Her agony was too great for words or tears. She had gone through so much all those years, and now happiness had seemed so near, she had believed it might even yet be in store for her since Mrs. Somerset had spoken to her on the subject, and now? . . . She let herself be led into the house, and when Mrs. Somerset ran to meet her and clasp her in her arms, it was as if she grasped a statue, so cold and lifeless was Norah.

"She is stunned," the major said; "she is exhausted."

Mechanically she let herself be covered up and put on the sofa, her feet chafed by kind hands—it gave a vague sense of comfort, though all the time she felt as if it were being done to some one else.

And yet had Norah only known, grief would have been turned into thanksgiving. Her husband was not dead.

The weary night came to an end at last, as such nights do. Several times Mrs. Somerset had crept in. They had been unable to gather any reliable news about the *Minerva's* passengers. The ship had gone down, but whether the people had been saved they had been unable as yet to ascertain.

A glorious sunrise succeeded a night of storm and terror, and its crimson beams came in on Norah. Hastily rising, and throwing on her hat and jacket she ran out into the morning freshness longing to feel the cool air. [360]

She only wanted to get away from herself.

She climbed the steep ascent up the "Rock," past the governor's house, then stood and gazed at this wonderful scene.

And she stood thus, wrapped up in sad thoughts and anticipations of evil, a great, great joy lay very near her.

Edgar Wylie had thrown himself into the sea, and lost consciousness from the effects of a blow. Several boats had braved the furious sea, and come out to save the unfortunate people if possible.

Thus it was that he was picked up, as well as a young fellow he had risked his life to save.

When he came to himself, he found he had been brought to the nearest hotel, and a doctor was in attendance. There was, however, nothing really the matter with him. He had, it is true, been stunned by the sharp spar that had come in contact with his head, but no real injury had been done.

A good night's rest had restored him to himself. He woke early the following morning, and rising went out to breathe the fresh pure air.

Thus it came to pass that the husband and wife were passing each other in their morning walk, and they did not know it.

And yet, as his tall figure passed her, a thrill of memory went through her, a something in the walk reminded her of her husband.

Both had arrived at the supreme crisis of their lives, and yet they might never have met, but for a small incident, and a rather funny one.

Norah had taken off her hat and had laid it carelessly beside her on the low wall on which she was leaning, when she became aware of some one taking possession of it, and looking round she saw the impudent face of a monkey disappearing with it up the steep side of the "Rock." [361]

She had no energy to recover it, and was standing helplessly watching his movements when she saw the stranger who had passed her set off in pursuit of the truant.

She soon lost sight of him, and had again sunk into a reverie when a voice said: "Here is your hat; I have rescued it. I think it is none the worse for this adventure."

Oh, that voice! Norah's heart stood still, she was stunned and could not believe that she heard aright. Was she dreaming? "The rascal was caught by one of the sentries, evidently he is quite at home with them, and the soldier on duty coaxed it from him."

Then Norah turned, there was no longer room for doubt, her eyes were riveted on the grey ones fixed on her.

"You are not Dead!"

"Then you are not dead," was the thought that flashed through her mind. Her tongue was dry and parched; her heart, which had seemed to stop, bounded forward, as though it must burst its bonds.

"Oh, Edgar!" she cried, losing all self-command; "oh, if it is you, forgive me, don't leave me. Don't let me wake and find it a dream!"

A strange whizzing and whirling came over her, and then she felt herself held securely by a strong arm and a face was bent to hers. When she recovered herself somewhat, she found that she was seated on a bank, supported by her husband.

It was his voice that said in the old fond tones: "Oh, Norah, my Norah, we are together again, never, never more to part. Forgive me, darling, for all I have made you suffer in the past."

"Forgive you! Oh, Edgar! Will you forgive me?"

The sun rose higher, and sounds of everyday life filled the air, drawing those two into the practical everyday world, out of the sunny paradise in which they had been basking while Norah sat leaning against that strong true heart that all these years had beat only for her. [362]

The Queen of Connemara

BY

Florence Moon

The story of a simple Irish girl, a sorrow, and a disillusion.

The mountains of Connemara stretched bare and desolate beneath the November sky.

Down the bleak mountain side, with his broad-leaved *caubeen* (peasant's hat) pulled well over his face, tramped a tall young countryman, clad in a stout frieze coat. His was an honest face, with broad, square brow, eyes of speedwell-blue that looked steadfast and fearless, and a mouth and chin expressive both of strength and sweetness.

Dermot O'Malley was the only son of Patrick and Honor O'Malley, who dwelt in a little white-washed farmhouse near the foot of the mountain. His father tilled a few acres of land—poor stony ground, out of which he contrived to keep his family and to save a little besides.

The little patch surrounding the farmhouse was, in its proper season, gay with oats and barley, while potatoes and cabbage, the staple food of the peasant, flourished in plenty. With such a desirable home, such a "likeable" face, and steady, upright character, it was no wonder that Dermot O'Malley was the object of much admiration among the people of the mountains, and several scheming parents had offered their daughters and their "fortunes" to him through the medium of his father, according to the custom of the country. [363]

But Dermot resisted all their overtures; his heart, and all the honest true love that filled it to overflowing, was given to Eily Joyce, the carrier's daughter; for her he would have laid down his strong young life.

It was Eily's duty during the summer to take a daily supply of fresh eggs from her own hens to the proprietor of the hotel, and every morning she presented herself at the door, a bewitching little figure, her basket slung on her arm.

Coyly she glanced from beneath her black silky lashes at the little group of men who, cigar in hand, loitered about the hotel steps, chatting on the chances of sport or the prospects of the weather.

The Artist's Model

Beauty like hers could not fail to attract the attention of the artists present, and as day after day went by, flattering remarks and undisguised admiration did not fail to strike home; attentions from the "gentry" were grateful to one who was a born coquette, and Eily's visits were gradually prolonged.

Then one of the artists sought to paint her; he was a young fellow, rising in his profession, and in quest of a subject for his next Academy picture. In Eily he found what he sought, and there, among her own wild mountains, he painted her.

Day after day, week after week, Eily stole from her father's little cabin to meet the stranger, a downward glance in her dark eyes, a blush on her cheek. The handsome face of the artist, his languid manner, his admiration of her beauty, his talk about the great world that lay beyond

those mountains, fascinated and bewildered poor simple Eily, who told him in her trusting innocence all the thoughts of her young heart.

So the summer passed by, till at last the picture was completed, and Eily heard, with white face and tearful eye, that the painter was going away. [364]

Time had passed, and the little world among the mountains went on its quiet way, but the summer had left its impress on Eily's heart. No more was her laugh the merriest, or her foot the fleetest; she joined neither wake nor dance, but her eye wore a far-away, thoughtful look, and her manner was cold and somewhat scornful; she looked with contempt on her old comrades, and began to pine for a peep at the great world, where she would see *him*, and he would welcome her, his beautiful "Queen of Connemara," as he had called her.

As though her unspoken words were heard, an opportunity to gratify her wishes soon occurred. Her mother's sister, who had married young and gone with her husband to England, returned to visit her old home; she was a middle-aged, hard-faced woman, with a shrewd eye and cruel heart; she had worked hard, and made a little money by keeping a lodging-house in the east of London.

London! Eily's heart leapt as she heard the word. Was not that the great city *he* had spoken of, where she would be worshipped for her lovely face, and where great lords and ladies would bow down before her beauty?

Shyly, but with determination, she expressed her desire to go there with her aunt. Well-pleased, Mrs. Murphy consented to take her, inwardly gloating over her good luck, for she saw that Eily was neat and handy, and had the "makings" of a good servant. It would enable her to save the wages of her present drudge, and a girl who had no friends near to "mither" her could be made to perform wonders in the way of work.

So a day was fixed for their departure, and Eily's eyes regained their old sparkle, her spirits their wonted elasticity.

Without a regret or fear she was leaving the little cabin in which she was born, her whole heart full of rapture that she was going to see *him*, and of the joy he would experience at the sight of her. Small wonder, then, was it that Dermot sighed as he walked homeward that bleak November day, for his heart was well-nigh broken at the thought of parting from the girl he loved. [365]

As he rounded the shoulder of the mountain the clouds parted, and a shaft of bright sunlight lit up his path. Dermot looked eagerly before him. There was Eily standing outside the cabin door, bare-footed, bare-headed. Cocks and hens strutted in and out of the thatched cottage, a pig was sniffing at a heap of cabbage-leaves that lay on the ground, and a black, three-legged pot, the chief culinary utensil in a peasant's cot, stood just outside the doorway. Eily was busy knitting, and pretended not to see the tall form of her lover until he drew near, then she looked up suddenly and smiled.

"Is it knitting y'are, Eily? Shure it's the lucky fellow he'll be that'll wear the socks those fairy hands have made!"

"Is it flattherin' me y'are, Dermot? because if so ye may go away! Shure, 'tis all the blarney the bhoys does be givin' me is dhrivin' me away from me home. Maybe ye'll get sinse whin I lave ye all, as I will to-morrow!"

"Will ye Stay?"

"Oh, Eily, jewil, don't say that! don't!" he pleaded, his blue eyes looking earnestly into hers. "Whin ye go, you will take all the sunshine out of me poor heart; it's to Ameriky I will go, for nothin' will be the same to me without you, mavourneen! Eily, Eily, will ye stay?"

But Eily was firm.

"Faith, thin, I will not, Dermot! I'm weary of my life here; I want to see London and the world. Shure, I'll come back some day with gold of me own, a rale lady, for all the world like the gintry at the castle below."

He took her hands for a moment and wrung them in his, then, with a look of dumb agony in his blue eyes, turned his back upon her and continued his way down the mountain side.

London! was this indeed London, the goal of all her hopes, the place where *he* lived, and moved, and had his being? [366]

Eily stood, a forlorn, desolate figure, among the crowds that jostled each other carelessly on Euston platform. The pretty face that peeped from the folds of a thick woollen shawl looked tired after the long journey, and her feet—oh, how they ached! for they were unaccustomed to the pressure of the heavy, clumsy boots in which they were now encased.

What a crowd of people, and how "quare" the talk sounded! How grandly they were all dressed! not one with a red petticoat like the new one she had been so proud of only yesterday morning; she glanced at it now with contempt, deciding to discard it before she had been another day in London.

EILY STOOD A FORLORN DESOLATE FIGURE ON EUSTON PLATFORM.

There was a girl sitting on her box not far from Eily; she was evidently waiting for some one to fetch her. Eily eyed her garments with envy; they were of dazzling crimson, plentifully besprinkled with jet; she wore a large hat trimmed with roses; a "diamond" brooch fastened her neck-ribbon, and a "golden" chain fell from neck to waist; but what Eily liked best of all was the thick, black fringe that covered her forehead; such "style" the simple peasant had never before beheld; if only her aunt would be generous she would buy just such a dress as that, but whether or not, the fringe could be had for nothing, and *he* should see that she could be as genteel as any one else, he need never be ashamed of her.

Her plans and projects were alike cut short by her aunt, who, hot and excited after a wordy war with porters and cabmen, ran breathlessly along the platform.

"Make haste, Eily! how long are you goin' to stand there staring like a sick owl? Hurry up, child; the cabman will be for charging me overtime if you're so slow, and it's bad enough to have to pay ordinary fare all that way." [367]

Eily took up the little tin box that held all her worldly possessions, and followed her aunt to the cab like one in some horrible dream. The fog, the crowds, the noises, the strangeness of everything! With a chill at her warm young heart she took her seat in the cab, and was driven swiftly through the streets. The fog was lifting slightly; she could see the houses and buildings stretching as far as eyes could follow them; houses everywhere, people everywhere; men, women, and children hurrying along the pavements; cabs and carts rolling unceasingly.

"Is there a Fair To-day?"

"Is there a fair to-day?" she asked her aunt, who was sitting opposite with closed eyes.

"Fair? Simpleton! it's this way every day, only worse, because this is early morning, and there's only a few about yet;" and Mrs. Murphy's eyes closed again.

The cab rattled along, the streets became narrow and unsavoury, but Eily knew no difference; it was all grand to her unsophisticated eyes; the little shops, with lights that flared dismally in their untidy windows, caused her much excitement and speculation.

At last the cab drew up, and her aunt awoke from her nap in a bad temper.

"Get my things together, quick, and don't dawdle; we're at home now, and you will have to set about your work!"

Eily gathered together bags and boxes and set them down upon the pavement, while her aunt haggled with the driver in a spirited manner; the man went off, grumbling at the meanness of a "couple o' Hirishers," but Eily, not understanding the English manner of using the aspirate, was blissfully unconscious of his meaning.

The house door opened, and an elderly man, looking cowed and humble, shuffled out to meet them.

"We've come at last!" cried out her aunt in a loud voice; "it's the last time I'll take the trouble to visit my folks! What the better am I for all the money I've spent on the trip? Better, indeed! A good deal worse *I* should say! Take in the box, William! what are you stopping for?" she demanded angrily. [368]

"Oh, nothing, nothing, my dear! I'll take the box in at once, certainly!" The old man hurried to do his wife's bidding, and entered the squalid house. Eily followed with her parcels, and stood in doubt as to what her next proceedings should be, while her aunt bustled away somewhere, on food intent.

The old man, having obediently deposited the box in the region of upstairs, shuffled down again, and approached Eily gently. "Are you her niece, my poor girl?" he whispered, with a backward glance in the direction of his departed spouse.

"I am, sorr," answered Eily; "I am come to help me aunt wid the claning and the lodgers."

"Poor child! poor child! I was afraid so," he murmured, shaking his head dolefully; "but, look here, don't notice her tempers and her tantrums, her carries on fearful sometimes, but least said soonest mended, and if you want to please her keep a still tongue in your head; I've learnt to do it, and it pays best. If ever you want a friend your uncle William will stand by you; now, not a word, not a word!" and he shuffled noiselessly away as loud footsteps drew near, and Mrs. Murphy appeared on the scene.

"Now then, girl, come downstairs and set to work; the fire's black out, and not a drop o' water to be had! It's like him; he's got a brain like a sieve"—pointing to her husband, "and here am I

nigh dying of thirst. Drat that bell!" she exclaimed, as a loud peal from upstairs sounded in the passage.

William lit the fire, boiled the kettle, and frizzled the bacon, his wife sitting by criticising the work of his hands, and warming her elastic-sided boots at the fire. She ate her breakfast in silence, and then remembered Eily, who was sitting on the stairs, hungry, forlorn, and desolate, the tears running down her cheeks. [369]

"Come, girl, get your tea!" she called, as she replenished the pot from the kettle; "here's bread for you, better than that rubbishy stuff your mother makes; such bread as that I never see, it's that heavy it lies on your chest like a mill-stone."

Eily took the slice of bread offered her and gnawed it hungrily; she had tasted nothing since the previous evening, as her aunt objected to waste money on "them swindling refreshment rooms," and the stock of bread and cakes her mother had given her was soon exhausted.

"Now, girl, if you start crying you'll find you make a great mistake. I brought you here to work, and work you must! Fie, for shame! an ignorant country girl like you should be thankful for such a start in life as you are getting."

"I'm not ignorant," Eily answered with spirit, "and it's yourself that knows it!"

"Do what you're Told!"

"Then get up and wash that there delf—don't give me any imperence, or you'll find yourself in the street; there's others better than you I've turned away, and the work'us has been their end—so mind your business, and do what you're told!" With this parting injunction Mrs. Murphy left the kitchen.

The winter passed—cold, foggy, murky, miserable winter. Eily was transformed. No longer bright, sparkling, and gay, but pale, listless, and weary—the veriest drudge that ever lived under an iron rule. A thick black fringe adorned her forehead, her ears were bedecked with gaudy rings, and her waist squeezed into half its ordinary size; her clothes, bought cheaply at a second-hand shop, were tawdry and ill-fitting, yet they were her only pleasure; she watched herself gradually developing into a "fine lady" with a satisfaction and excitement that alone kept her from giving way altogether.

Her heart was still aching for a sight of her lover, and many a time when her aunt was out she neglected tasks that she might sit at the parlour window and watch with feverish expectancy for the owner of the fair moustache and languid manner that had so completely taken her fancy; but he never came, and she rose from her vigils with a sore heart. [370]

Two friends she had; two who never spoke roughly, nor upbraided her. "Uncle William," himself cowed and subdued, stood first. Sometimes, when the lady of the house became unbearable, and poor Eily's head ached with all the tears she shed, he would take her in the cool of the evening away to a large green park, where the wind blew fresh, the dew sparkled on the grass, and the noisy traffic of the streets was still; there she would rest her weary body, while the old man soothed her gently and stroked her poor hands, all chapped and red with hard work.

Eily's other friend was a lady who occupied a single top room in her aunt's tall house. She was a gentle, white-haired woman, with faded blue eyes and a sweet smile. She had won Eily's heart from the first by the soft, kindly tones of her voice, and the consideration she showed for the severely-tried feet of the little Irish maid. Mrs. Grey taught drawing and painting; her pupils were few, her terms low; it was a difficult matter to make both ends meet, but she managed it by careful contriving, and sometimes had enough to treat her waiting-maid to a morsel of something savoury cooked on her own little stove.

It was May. Eily was standing at the window while Mrs. Murphy went forth on a bargain-hunting expedition.

"Eily, come upstairs, child; I have something to show you." Mrs. Grey was in the room, looking flushed and excited; she was flourishing a book in her hand. Eily's heart beat rapidly as she ascended the steep staircase in the wake of her friend. Was it possible she could have news of *him?* Then she shook her head, for Mrs. Grey was not in her secret. [371]

They entered the neat little room at the top of the stairs. Mrs. Grey, walking to the table, never pausing to unfasten her bonnet-strings or to unbutton her gloves, opened the book and laid it on the table, exclaiming in triumph, "There you are to the life, Eily! See! it is the picture of the year, and is called 'The Queen of Connemara.'"

A girl with eyes half-defiant, half-coquettish, lips demure and smiling, hair tied loosely in a knot at the back of her proudly-set head, was leaning against the white-washed wall of a thatched cabin—ah! it was Dermot's own! Eily noted the geraniums in the little blue box that he had tended himself.

Eily's heart leapt, and then was still; there were her two bare feet peeping from beneath her thick red petticoat, just as they used in the olden times, and there was the blue-checked apron she had long ago discarded. With face now white, now red, she gazed at the picture, then spelt out its title, "The Queen of Connemara," painted by Leslie Hamilton.

"Arrah, 'tis Misther Hamilton himself! 'twas he painted me!" she cried breathlessly, and sank into a chair completely overcome.

"Then, Eily, you are a lucky girl! Every one in London is talking about 'The Queen of Connemara,' and this Hamilton has made his name and fortune by your picture. Well, well! no wonder you are surprised! Here is the artist's portrait; do you remember him?" She turned over a few leaves of the book and pushed it towards Eily.

"At Last!"

Did Eily remember him? Ay, indeed! There were the clear blue eyes, the straight nose, the drooping moustache. Eily snatched up the book eagerly, "Misther Hamilton! at last! at last!" With a great sob her head fell forward on the table, and Mrs. Grey guessed the young girl's secret.

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Leslie Hamilton, R.A., was entertaining. In the middle of a smart crowd of society people he stood, the lion of the season. "The Queen of Connemara" had made him name and fame. He was smiling on all, as well he might, for his name was in every one's mouth.

Standing about the studio, chattering gaily, or lounging idly, the guests of Leslie Hamilton were admiring everything while they sipped tea out of delicate Sèvres cups. The artist himself was busy, yet his attention was chiefly directed to a beautiful young girl who sat on a velvet lounge, a tiny lap-dog on her knee. She was tall and dignified in mien, with soft grey eyes and bronze-gold hair, among which the sunlight was playing as it stole through a window behind her. She was the beauty of the season, and her father's sole heiress. Cold and distant with others, she was affable and even kind to Leslie Hamilton, and among her friends it was whispered such treatment could only end in one way; and though better things had been spoken of for Bee Vandaleur, the wife of an R.A. was by no means a position to be despised, and if Bee's fancy lay that way, why——! a shrug of its white shoulders, an elevation of its pencilled eyebrows, and Society went on its way.

Leslie Hamilton had taken up his position near the door that he might easily acknowledge each new arrival. He was leaning over the fair Bee Vandaleur, watching the animation in her beautiful face, the grace with which she wore her large picture-hat, and the regal manner in which she sat. He glanced at the gay throng that filled his rooms, growing gayer still as the tinkle of tiny silver spoons increased in number and volume; there was not one to compare with Bee, *his* Bee as he dared, in his own mind, to call her already. Gentle, dignified, graceful, always sweet and gracious to him, and with an ample fortune of her own, it was no wonder the artist felt that she was worth the winning.

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"How I should enjoy a peep at your model!" she was saying as she looked at a rough sketch he was showing her. "Was she as beautiful as you have made her?"

"She was tolerably——" Hamilton hesitated. "Well, of course an artist's business is to make the most of good points, and omit the bad. She was a little rough and troublesome sometimes, but, on the whole, not a bad sitter."

"And her name?" asked Miss Vandaleur.

"Her name? oh, Mary, or Biddy, or Eily Joyce; really I cannot be sure; every one in that part of the world is either Eily or Biddy, and Joyce is the surname of half the population. She was a vain girl, I assure you; no beauty in her first season thought more of herself than did she."

"I do not wonder at that," said Bee gently; "there are few women who possess beauty to such a marvellous degree. If only your Biddy could come to London she would be worshipped by all who were not utterly envious."

Just what he had assured Eily himself nine months back, but it is inconvenient to remember everything one has said so long ago; we live at a pace now, and nine months is quite an epoch in our existence—so many things change in nine months!

A Startling Visitor

Hamilton smiled; it was rare to hear one beauty acknowledge another. He bent his head to make some remark that her ear alone might catch, but as he did so a slight stir at the door attracted his attention, and he looked up.

The sight that met his gaze froze the smile on his lips; with a start which he could scarcely conceal the blood left his cheeks; him face became stern and white as death.

There stood Eily herself, behind her the page who did duty at the door. The boy was pulling angrily at her sleeve, and an altercation was going on.

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"Shure 'tis himself will be glad to see me, ye spalpeen! Shame on yez to insult a poor girl. Musha, is it Misther Hamilton within and ashamed to spake to his Eily!"

One more moment, then within that room in which art, and beauty, and refinement were gathered in one harmonious whole, a figure stole shyly.

It was a young girl, gaudily attired in a blue dress; a hat, encircled by a long pink feather, crowned a face that was beautiful, were it not that it was marred by its many adornments. Gilt earrings glistened in the ears, a dark curly fringe covered forehead and eyebrows, and the chin was embedded in a tawdry feather boa of a muddy hue. An excited flush lay on her cheeks as she looked at the gay crowd within, searching for the loved face.

At last a joyful recognition shone in her dark eyes, and forgetful of everything and everybody, she rushed across the polished floor to the horror-stricken artist.

"Ah, Misther Hamilton, acushla! shure it's your own Eily has found yez at last!" She caught the artist's hand in her own impulsively—"Arrah, but it's the wide world I have searched, and I've found yez at last!"

Silence had fallen on that part of the room where this little *contretemps* was taking place. Hamilton saw the looks of wonderment on his guests' faces change into an amused smile as the little comedy progressed.

The girl was looking earnestly at him.

"Shure, you do not forget your own Eily—the girl you made into the picthur, your colleen oge! But maybe it's the jiwils and the clothes that has changed me; it's mighty grand they make me, to be sure, but it was so you should not be ashamed of me I put them on. Arrah, shpake to me, and let me hear the sound of your voice!"

She looked pleadingly into his eyes, but he was speechless. At last by a mighty effort he turned with a sickly smile to some of his guests—

"Here is the original of 'The Queen of Connemara'—scarcely recognisable in her new clothes, is she? Why, Eily, my child," with a paternal air, "whatever brought you here to London?" [375]

It was an unwise question; the answer was plain enough.

"Faith, thin, 'twas yourself, Misther Hamilton! You promised to come back to me, and said you would make me the finest lady in the land; and I waited, but faix, I got sick and sore, so I came to find yez, and it's well-nigh at death's door I was till I heard of yez and found where ye live—and musha, but it's a grand place, God bless it!"

Eily was looking around her now at the beautiful room, the lovely women, their smart attire, and shyness seized her; she hung her head in dismay; every one in the room was pressing forward to see the girl whom Hamilton had immortalised, and comments on her appearance passed from lip to lip.

"Stand there, Eily," said Hamilton kindly, placing her on a low stool that stood near. The game should be played out now.

The crowd pressed around eagerly, delighted and curious.

A Pleasant Surprise!

"What a pleasant surprise you have prepared for us, dear Mr. Hamilton! quite unprepared, I assure you! but ah, how you artists idealise to be sure! who but genius itself could find anything picturesque under so much glitter and vulgarity?" and so on and so on, until Eily's blushing face grew paler and paler.

"Now, Eily, you may go; the ladies and gentlemen have looked at you long enough. Here is something to buy a new gown and bonnet," and Leslie Hamilton, with a patronising smile, put some gold into her hand.

"How kind and considerate!" murmured the highborn dames as they turned away.

He escorted the girl to the door, and drew aside the *portière* courteously, but his face became livid with rage as he spoke in a low, stern voice, "Go, girl! never dare to come here again—if you do, I swear I will call the police!" [376]

He closed the door after her retreating figure, and turned with a smile to the company; his eyes sought those of beautiful Bee Vandaleur, but she had gone.

Outside in the busy street Eily stood, leaning for support against a stone pillar. She heard nothing, saw nothing. A mist swam before her eyes; she was dumb with shame and disappointment; her face, a moment before so eager, was pale as death, and deep sobs that came from her very soul shook her poor body. She clenched the gold in her hands, and then with a bitter, passionate cry threw it into the street, and watched while two street-urchins picked it up and ran off with their treasure-trove.

"May I help you, my poor girl? Are you in trouble?" Bee Vandaleur spoke gently and softly; she had heard all that passed between the artist and his model.

Eily looked up. "Oh, me lady, God bless ye! but I'm past the helping now! I loved him, I would have died to save him from a minute's sorrow, and he threatened the police on me!"

"Come with me; I will take care of you, and you shall tell me all." Miss Vandaleur hailed a passing hansom and jumped in, followed by Eily, white, shivering, and limp. "Now tell me all," she said, as they were driven at a rapid pace through the streets. Eily, won by her gentleness, told her the pitiful story of her love; told her of her simple mountain home, of the handsome stranger who had promised to return and carry her to a land where she would be fairest of the fair; told it with dry eyes and white set lips, while her heart was breaking and her temples beat, beat, beat, like sledge-hammers beneath the weight of the fringe with which she had thought to please him.

Miss Vandaleur heard all, and made no sign, save that her lips tightened now and then, and an expression of pain stole into her soft grey eyes. [377]

It was a pathetic story, and the rich girl was touched as she listened to the poor simple one at her side. "Where do you live, Eily?" she asked, as the girl stopped speaking, and lay back with closed eyes.

"At me aunt's, your honour, but I won't go back! shure, I cannot! Oh, me lady, let me go; it's not for the likes of me to be keeping your ladyship away from her grand friends. God's blessing upon ye for your kindness to a poor girl!"

Bee was silent, wondering what she could do with the unhappy creature beside her; presently a bright thought struck her.

"I am looking out for a girl who will attend on me, Eily; do you think you would like the place if you are taught?"

"Arrah, me lady, me lady! it's an angel from heaven ye are!" cried Eily gratefully, but her head sank back again, till the gaudy pink feather in her hat was spoilt for ever.

"An Angel from Heaven!"

That night Eily was taken to hospital. Brain fever set in, and the doctors and nurses feared the worst.

Bee Vandaleur sat in her boudoir thinking. Her pretty brow was puckered as she gazed at the photograph of a young man, tall, fair, and handsome. For some time she cogitated, then, setting her lips together, she tore the card straight across, dropped it into the waste-paper basket beside her, and shrugged her pretty shoulders, exclaiming in a tone more forcible than polite, "Brute!"

Leslie Hamilton stood outside the door of Mr. Vandaleur's handsome town residence. The footman, gorgeously attired, opened the heavy door.

"Not at 'ome, sir," he answered pompously in answer to inquiries.

"My good man, you have made some mistake; I am Leslie Hamilton, and I wish to see Miss Vandaleur." [378]

"Very sorry, sir, no mistake, sir; Miss Vandaleur is not at 'ome!" and the door closed in the face of the astonished artist.

It was June in Connemara. Where else is the month of roses half as lovely? where does the sky show bluer, or the grass greener? and where is the air so clear and cool and fragrant, or the lakes half as still and azure as in that blessed country?

The sun rode high in the sky, monarch of all, and men smiled as they went about their daily toil, and thanked the good God who was sending them favourable weather. Here and there, dotted about the hillsides, the tiny white-washed cabins were full of life; the cocks crowed proudly as they strutted in and out among their plump, sleek wives; the useful ass brayed loudly, roaming about field and lane in enjoyment of a leisure hour; the men were in the fields, cutting the sweet-scented grass, and the women busied themselves about the midday meal, while babies, with dirty faces and naked feet, tumbled about among the wandering pigs and quacking ducks in blissful content.

Along the white road that bordered the lake a cart was jolting slowly along; it was painted in a startling shade of blue, with shafts of brightest red that projected both back and front; upon it was arranged, with neatness and precision, a load of turf just cut from the bog; on one side, painted black, that all who run might read, was the name of "Patrick O'Malley" in crude lettering, and Patrick himself, in working dress of coarse cream homespun, walked beside his slow-going jennet, idly smoking his tin-topped pipe. From time to time he drew from his trouser pocket a letter, which he fingered with respect, gazing at it with profoundest wonder.

"Shure, 'tis the grandest and the natest letther ever seen, and the ilegant picthur on the back! Musha, musha, 'tis not the likes o' that comes to Biddy Joyce ivery day, no, nor to no one else neither in these parts! It minds me of a letther her ladyship at the castle aksed me to take to the posht, and her in a hurry; begob, but the paper's thick and good entoirely!" and he rubbed it softly between his finger and thumb. "Shure 'tis from London itself, and maybe the one as wrote it is some friend o' Eily's. Ah, but it's she is the foolish one that she did not take the boy! it's long ere she'll find another such a match again, and him with cattle and sheep and pigs o' his own, a house that many a girl would be wild for to get, and maybe—maybe—a bit laid by for a rainy day into the bargain!" [379]

The jennet jogged slowly on as Patrick soliloquised. "The poor lad, but it

"Too Good for Her!"

makes me heart ache to see him so low-like, setting so quiet in the house, and him thinking, thinking all the blessed while, and never a word out o' his mouth to complain. He's a rale good lad, and it's sorry I am that he should take on so bad, and all for the sake o' a pair o' bright eyes! To see him when Biddy Joyce was sick and Mike got laid up with rheumatics; who was it minded the cattle, and fed the pigs, and sat early and late 'tending on the pair o' thim but Dermot! It's mighty high the girl is, with her talk o' the gintry and the ilegant places she seen in London, and never a mintion o' his name in all her letthers, the foolish craythur! it's too good the bhoy is for the likes o' her!" The old man was beginning to wax indignant over his son's unfavoured suit when a voice, rich and strong, called to him across the loose stone wall that divided the road from the fields.

"Any news going down Lissough way, father?" It was Dermot, who had stopped for a moment in his task of cutting down the long grass.

"Arrah, phwat news is it likely an old man like me should bring? You ask me so eager-like that I misdoubt me but it's some colleen that's caught your eye!" Patrick's eyes twinkled merrily as he made his little joke. Dermot's face saddened, and he turned to his scythe once more. [380]

His father, sorry that he had brought back the cloud once more to his son's face, pulled the letter from his pocket and laid it on the wall.

"Now, there's for yez! as lovely a letther as ever you seen, all the way from London, with a little picthur of an agle on the back o' it! 'Tis for Biddy Joyce, and maybe ye'll take it, Dermot, seeing your legs is younger than mine?"

Dermot was off already, climbing the mountain slopes in hot haste.

Biddy Joyce stood watching him from the door where Eily and he had parted months before.

"The poor fellow! it's like me own son he has been all this time, so kind when the sickness took hould o' Mike and me! It's meself that wishes he could forget me daughter, for it's poor comfort she will ever be to him. Faith, thin, Dermot," she exclaimed, as he came towards her, "phwat is it at all at all that ye come hurrying like this when the sun is warm enough to kill a body? Come inside, lad, and taste a sup o' me nice, sweet butther-milk; shure the churn's just done, though the butther's too soft entoirely"—she shook her head sadly.

"A letther!" cried Dermot, drawing out the treasured epistle from between the folds of his shirt, where he had hastily thrust it, that his hands might not soil the creamy paper.

"Thanks be to God!" exclaimed the woman, raising her eyes and hands for one moment to heaven. "'Tis long sence she wrote to me, the poor darlint, and it's many a time I lie awake and think o' the child all alone wid sthrangers not of her own blood. Whisht, boy, but you are worse nor meself I make no doubts"—as Dermot snatched the letter from her and hastily tore open the envelope. His face was pale with excitement and dread, for he feared, with a lover's jealous fear, that this was an announcement of Eily's marriage with some of the grand folks she had talked about. [381]

"Rade it, Dermot; 'tis long sence I was at school, and the writin's not aisy."

Dermot obeyed, and this is the letter he spelt out slowly, with no little difficulty and several interruptions—

> "Miss Vandaleur is sorry to tell Mrs. Joyce that her daughter Eily has been suffering from a severe illness; she has been in hospital for three weeks with brain fever, and until a few days ago was unable to give her mother's address. She is now much better, and the doctors hope to allow her to leave soon; she is being taken every care of by friends, but if some one could be spared to come such a long distance to see her, it would be the best thing for the poor girl, as she is always wishing for her home, and seems tired of living in London."

Biddy Joyce was weeping bitterly before the end of the letter, with her blue-checked apron held up to her eyes; three or four of the little ones had gathered around, staring with wide-open eyes.

Dermot's Resolve

Dermot kept up bravely till the last sentence, and then he could stand it no longer; he rushed out of the house, down the stony boreen. Eily sick and ill! Eily well-nigh at death's door! Eily far away in hospital with strange hands to tend her! Poor girl, his love, his darlint! she was tired of it all, wishing for home; oh, how his heart yearned for her, and he longed to take her in his arms and comfort her.

He wandered aimlessly about the mountain side until his emotion had well-nigh subsided, and then he plunged into the Joyces' cabin once more.

"Mrs. Joyce, it's to-morrow, early mornin', you and me musht shtart for London!"

Biddy looked up quickly. "To-morrow! the bhoy's crazy entoirely! It will be a week before I can go. Who will look after the house and the hins, and the childer, not forgetting Mike himself? I musht wait till me sister comes from Ballinahinch, and thin I will go to the child. She's betther, and near well, or the docthors wouldn't be for lettin' her out o' hospital, and faith, her aunt, me sisther Delia, will look afther her for a bit until I find it convaynient to lave; shure Mike himself will write to Eily and tell her I'm coming; that will cheer her heart up, the poor sowl." [382]

"Maybe ye are right, Mrs. Joyce." Dermot said no more, but turned slowly away.

With a firm step and an air of decision he walked homewards across the fields.

"Mother, it's going to London I am," he said as he entered the house; "will ye see me clothes is ready, and put me up a bit o' bread? That's all I'll trouble ye for."

Honor O'Malley looked at the tall, manly figure of her only son, at the frank, proud face, the bright blue eyes, and the firmly-set mouth; the exclamation that was on her lips died away.

"God bless ye, me own bhoy!" she cried instead, in a half-smothered voice, and bent, down over the hearth to hide the tears that rose to her eyes and choked her utterance.

Dermot climbed the ladder that led to the tiny room in the roof where he slept; from beneath the mattress he drew a box, which he unlocked carefully. A small pile of sovereigns lay at the bottom; he counted them carefully, although he knew exactly the sum the little box contained; after fingering them almost lovingly for a few moments he transferred them to a small canvas bag, which he put in his pocket. "Maybe 'twill all be wanted," he exclaimed, with a happy gleam in his eye; "maybe, and maybe not, but howsoever it goes, one look at her blessed face will be worth it all!"

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[383] In a pretty, low-ceiled parlour, whose windows looked out upon a pleasant garden, lay Eily. The wide, old-fashioned sofa was drawn close to an open window, that she might feel the soft, cool air on her cheeks, and sniff the fragrance of the mignonette that filled the beds outside. It was a very thin face that lay upon the soft down pillow, but a slight tinge of pink on her cheeks told of returning health. Her abundant black tresses had been ruthlessly shorn away, and tiny curls clustered around forehead and neck; her eyes, dark as sloes, were large and thoughtful. Two days before she had been removed from the great London hospital, and brought by Miss Vandaleur to her father's country-home, where the kindliest of white-haired house-keepers watched over her beloved Miss Bee's *protégée*, tending her with gentlest care.

"Good-morning, Eily;" Miss Vandaleur, in a simple morning gown of white, entered the room.

Eily struggled to her feet. "Good-morning, miss, your honour!"

Bee laughed good-naturedly; it was funny to hear herself addressed by such a title.

"Now lie still, Eily, you are not quite strong yet. Tell me, are you happy here?"

"Happy! Arrah, it's like heaven, miss; my blessin' and the blessin' of God on ye for all your kindness to a poor girl. Shure, but for yourself I would have been in me grave this day."

"Is there no one else?"

"I am glad you are happy, Eily; but is there no one you would like to see, no one from home, I mean? Just say the word; perhaps I can manage it," she said slyly.

"Shure there's me mother—maybe me father too; but you could scarce get them here, miss—beggin' your honour's pardon," she added hastily.

"Is there no one else, Eily? no one that you think of sometimes—no one who was kind to you, and loved you dearly?" Bee was leaning over the wan face eagerly, and what she saw for answer was a deep crimson flush that covered face, neck, and brow, while tears rolled down the cheeks. [384] Eily had been thinking of Dermot continually of late, wishing with all her heart that she had not so scorned his love; she had learnt many lessons in the quiet watches of the night and the weary hours of weakness through which she had passed.

Bee Vandaleur said no more, but patted the dark curls gently. "Don't cry, Eily, all will be right soon," and she left the room.

Eily was alone once more.

"Ah, Dermot, Dermot asthore! why was it I trated ye so!" The tears were trickling through her fingers, and her heart was aching with self-reproach.

"Eily, mavourneen!"

The tear-stained fingers were taken in two big, strong hands, and Dermot, with a depth of love in his eyes, bent over the sorrow-stricken face and laid a kiss on the quivering lips; not another word was spoken, but Dermot's protecting arms were around her, and with her head on the heart that throbbed with love and devotion all the past was blotted out, all her folly forgotten, and Eily found rest.

In a surprisingly short time Eily regained her health; happiness is the best of medicine, and Eily felt she had as much as her heart could hold. Looking at Dermot with a lover's eyes she found out all that was noble and good in him, and when he asked her to be his wife ere a week had flown by she gave a glad consent.

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Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Varied hyphenation retained between different authors' stories.

Page 63, A character named "Robert" appears in a sidenote and one paragraph. In the next paragraph his name is changed to Max. The first two instances have been changed to Max to conform. (Uncle Max) and (it was so, Max.)

The story entitled "Poor Jane's Brother" is credited to M. Ling in the table of contents and in the list of authors, but the page on which the story begins lists Marie F. Salton as the author. This discrepancy was retained.

An illustration was included in this volume originally on page 38. However it does not seem to belong with any of the stories this book contains. It is included here.

AT THE PICNIC: "I SHAN'T PLAY IF YOU FELLOWS ARE SO ROUGH!"

The remaining corrections made are indicated by dotted lines under the corrections. Scroll the mouse over the word and the original text will appear.

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