

Coleshill in Buckinghamshire



MEMORIES

Mary Alice Helps



Edmund Arthur & Mary Alice Helps

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Coleshill History Group
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Mary Alice Helps – Foreword by Peter Helps

This little book, published by Duckworth & Co in 1924, comprises extracts from the diaries of Mary Alice Helps, familiarly known as Molly Helps (née Tapson), daughter of a London physician, co-worker and friend of the well known clinician and medical scientist, Sir Archibald Garrod. She was my paternal grandmother and the book was edited posthumously by her husband Edmund (Helps). Their Coleshill home was the house now known as 'White Roses', then called 'Coleshill Cottage'.

She had been a senior school mistress and he was Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools and we have a letter from him to her, still a spinster, written from the Garrick Club, recommending his selected and edited books of poems for young people, for her pupils. Father Edmund as we knew him was rather a shy man with a beard, suffering from living in the shadow of an illustrious father, married late in life and they had one son, her "ewe lamb", my father Arthur (Helps) referred to in the book wherein people's names are subtly disguised, as Roland. An insight into how Edmund and Molly came together was revealed to me at a consultation at their home with the G.P. of two charming elderly sisters, one of whom was inscrutably ailing. I was introduced to the patient whose eyes lit up when the name of Helps came up, and they both exclaimed, "Are you anything to do with Edmund Helps, H.M. Inspector of Schools", and when I replied in the affirmative they became very animated and recalled how helpful he had been to them, "we liked him a lot". They had been headmistresses.

I was only an infant when I met her on my first return from Malaya (where I was born) in 1921, so my memories of her are based on hearsay and her letters. They are mostly very caring letters to her beloved only son at school, deeply concerned about his clothing, food and welfare. Ironically, his account of his school-days as given to us, mainly emphasised the rigours of Littlefields House at

Marlborough, where in winter, the only heating in the Junior Common Room came from (or rather didn't come from) a tiny radiator, always blanked off from the room by the backsides of the two largest and strongest boys in the group. Unsurprisingly there used to be a significant morbidity, even mortality, in the Easter term. And the other feature of his account was that the freshly laundered Eton collars of fair young boys had to be smudged with dirt or ink, to discourage inappropriate interest in chapel!

Memories reveals Molly to have been modest and self-deprecating about her lack of the fashionable accomplishments of young Victorian women, singing and music making, but a warm-hearted shrewd and sympathetic observer of human nature and above all a lover of Coleshill. A close friend, Martin Ross writes of her in the published letters of Somerville and Ross (Irish RM), "Molly has certainly Radical tendencies, but is a fine creature. Knows everything, and more especially the lower grades of London slums, sweaters, Board Schools, and gives her opinion very squarely — but moderately. She is distinctly the fine woman's character in a book — clever and sensible, and womanly and motherly, as good as they are made, and as tender to wrong doing".

She and her husband are buried in All Saints' churchyard under a Celtic Cross and the person to whom my copy of the book was given with an affectionate note from the editor, was Lucy Taylor, my great-aunt and sometime governor of Coleshill primary School who lived in Porch House, and is also buried in our churchyard with her faithful nurse and cook.

My sister, Ann Thornton, provided the photographs.

Peter Helps, Porch House, December 2012

To

Dear Lucy Taylor,
from the editor,

Xmas 1924

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MEMORIES

BY THE LATE
MARY ALICE HELPS

EDITED BY E. A. HELPS



DUCKWORTH & CO.
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As the earth when leaves are dead,
As the night when sleep has sped,
As the heart when joy has fled,
I am left lone, alone.

Shelley.

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MEMORIES

MEMORIES

" Whilome, thou comest with the morning mist
And with the evening cloud,
Showering thy gleaned wealth into my open breast,
(Those peerless flowers which in the rudest wind
Never grow sere,
When rooted in the garden of the mind,
Because they are the earliest of the year.)"

Tennyson.

" Looking back along Life's trodden way
Gleams and greenness linger on the track;
Distance melts and mellows all to-day,
Looking back.

" Rose and purple and a silvery grey,
Is that cloud the cloud we call so black?
Evening harmonizes all to-day
Looking back."

Christina Rossetti.

WE have to leave London. The doctor's fiat went forth some weeks ago, and we had to come to the melancholy decision that the only chance of my health would be to go and ruralise for a year at all events. When once E. has made up his mind, not much time

is lost in carrying his resolution, and I am resting here this Sunday morning trying to forget that to-morrow the exodus begins, and only to remember that it will also bring me my Roland back from his first term at school. As I lie here I can look out into the great trees that have hidden so much of the ugliness of brick and mortar from us through the summer months, while their black boughs and delicate branches have made a graceful screen even in the winter. The sound of the long slow rain is delicious music after the dusty drought we have had for six weeks, and the fresh breeze "volleying through the trees" reaches me here by the open window. There have been no "wet bird-haunted lawns" this June and July; they have been brown and parched, and all birds but the London sparrows, those cheerful gamins whom nothing much disturbs, have been silent in the still heat. The great plane trees and the poplars are swaying and rustling and talking to each other in mysterious whispers and with sighs of relief, for there are sounds of running gutters, and the grey skies are low and dark, promising more than mere showers to satisfy the thirsty earth.

This is our last Sunday here, and it is exactly twelve years since E. brought me home after our brief honeymoon. By my side is a pile of twelve little volumes, my diaries for this period, and I have spent a long morning looking through them, "looking back."

For this one day, I am resolutely turning my back on the future, and my face to the past. The dear past, with its thousand joys, which nothing can touch or spoil. It is good to be a little ill sometimes, so as to have leisure to "learn and love it all over again." Modern life allows no counting over of the treasures

from the storehouse of memory. They are there, and the consciousness of them enriches all the present. That, too, is full of happiness, but so little has one learned the lesson of trust that the moment one says one is happy, the thought of the future with its dread uncertainty slays the new-born joy like a sword.

But as to my diaries. It is exhausting to attempt to live over twelve years in a few hours. How much alike these diaries probably are to the diaries of any other man and woman in our walk of life ! Our holidays at all events have shown our desire to escape the trammels of society, and fleeting glimpses of remote romantic regions in lovely Norway, and its great pine forests and wild cataracts, of Alpine pastures full of crocuses, of snowy heights in Switzerland, of " dead cities " in Holland, of wild tarns in Scotland, of fishing adventures in Irish loughs, of long days on lonely rivers have flashed before me in an enchanting mental cinematograph.

But the London days ! I feel a little amazed at all these diary records of committees and councils, of classes, of lectures given and heard, of bits of literary work, luncheons and dinners, of teas and At Homes, of studios and galleries, and concerts and theatres. Names, which I had forgotten, recall whole episodes. Thankfully one can look back on some small bits of work accomplished, on some tangled webs straightened, but these sometimes half untangled themselves; whereas of much strenuous toil I can see but little result. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity !

And some blank pages mean so much ! One long blank with a scrawled word here and there standing for that terrible time of illness in the old home, when

the shadow of Death lingered so long, and so many precious lives were threatened, though only one was taken.

And another blank, after a sentence abruptly broken off, means Roland's arrival on the scene !

One line records a glimpse of the great Gladstone at a Royal Academy private view, another of the delivery of the judgment after the Lincoln trial in Lambeth Palace, recalls a never-to-be-forgotten picture—the great Archbishop throned in state among his brother prelates, his silvery hair, his noble face, and the music of his voice amid the echoes of the great library, and the eager crowd of listeners, are indeed worth recalling. Ah yes! and another entry brings back too, the beautiful woman in her Sister's dress who had accompanied me, her unfinished story, her tragic death, so soon to follow. Another brief entry recalls the heaped-up flowers on her coffin on which the sunlight was pouring through stained glass; the crowd of mourners, the streaming tears, all testifying to the love and homage of her many friends, as the first part of the funeral service was performed in the chapel of the hospital where she had been so loved and revered.

There are stories of my baby in his various stages of delightfulness. I will mention but one saying, when he was about six, and was sitting on the floor, busily playing with his toys, but still with a thoughtful air. He looked up with grave, blue eyes, and said : " Do you think, Mummie, if God had known all that would happen, He would ever have planted Eden?" The old, old difficulty so well summed-up in his baby words! I must tell you another anecdote of a very different kind. You remember his devoted nurse

with her cockney pronunciation ? When he was three, I was chafing his little feet in my hands, and spoke of his heels. " Call them hoofs, Mummie dear ; heels live in the water, and are wriggly things."

Now to turn to the near past—how we found our new home. As soon as E. had settled, in accordance with the doctor's verdict, that we were to live in the country, he lost no time in going to find an abode. Strange but true, he found it at once. He came back one evening after an expedition, or rather one of his somewhat prolonged country walks, after a run of twenty miles or so by rail to get beyond the smoke of town, and said he had passed a small roadside house, which at once struck him as suitable, as it stood in a very quiet rural village, high and dry and not too inaccessible from the rail; the garden, walled on three sides, showed on the other a lovely view, and the house was quite " possible ! "

The very next day I was taken there, very incredulous as to any good results of the visit, but I was so captivated by the view and the possibilities of the garden, even at a first glance, that I viewed the house with a lenient air, and was disposed to praise rather than to blame. When painters and paperers have done their work, when dingy drabs and dusty terra-cottas are replaced by whites and yellows and greens, when a new big latticed window has been thrown out of the chief sitting-room, it really will not make a bad little house. It is old-fashioned, long and low and many-windowed. There is a small hall, an ante-room, in which we shall dine, a large room in which we shall live and be happy, and a small drawing-room with a large French window opening on to a lawn, in which to receive our visitors. There

is a sufficiency of bed-rooms and two small rooms upstairs for my husband and myself. But to tired London lungs and eyes the air and the view were the attractions.

II

OUR GARDEN

"A careful observer of life,' says Bernard, 'has no need to invent. Nature romances it for him.'"

Charles Lamb.

OURS is a wonderfully remote village, though, after all, it is within thirty miles of Charing Cross as the crow flies. By-the-bye, one of H.M. Inspectors of Schools, who have to chronicle their daily mileage for "my Lords' " information, was questioned as to the discrepancy between the mileage in his diary and the actual distance "as the crow flies." "H.M.I. is not a crow," was his delightful answer, and not another word.

I will attempt later to give you a bird's-eye view of the village, and an account of some of our neighbours, My description will not be very closely connected, for I fear my old habit of *Flying* off at a tangent still exists, my very elliptical conversation being sometimes a sore trial to my husband.

The making of even a small garden is most absorbing, and we have had everything to do. We found a tangled mass of old fruit bushes, a small, neglected lawn, but with a sun-dial, old and grey and weather-beaten, itself a compensation for many deficiencies,

masses of Michaelmas daisies, white and mauve, and of small perennial sunflowers. No one had touched the little garden for more than a year except to plant potatoes. Still, there are hawthorns and plum and apple trees—(I already fancy I see them covered with blossom)—and lilacs in profusion, and these are a good foundation. Now the beginnings of order are visible, dry paths, a trim lawn, dug-over beds, and bulbs innumerable besides hundreds of plants waiting to be put in. I am too impatient to wait for seeds, though in the spring of course these will play their part.

We have put in gorse and yellow brooms to give a brilliant foreground to the sunset view, and there is a pink almond tree to herald spring, and a mountain ash to announce the autumn in its cheerful fashion by its red berries. The new enclosure takes in a great walnut tree whose boughs nearly sweep the ground on one side and form a delightful screen from sun and wind. Round its smooth trunk I have had a low seat made and on one of its thick boughs a hammock will be slung when summer comes. Two young copper beeches are planted to break an angle in the fence and to give extra value to the blue distance beyond ; their bronze foliage has a special power of bringing out richness in colour.

In the old garden we have replaced a strawberry bed by another little lawn, all enclosed by roses, tall standards and low bushes alternating, with an oval bed of malmaisons in the middle. An additional grass walk, which will be hedged by sweet-peas, and which leads under a shady plum tree, makes a new vista and carries on the eye.

Mrs. Tubby, an old neighbour from one of the cottages up the road, has been in to help with the

weeding. She herself dearly loves a garden and has a true feeling for Nature. She is very hardworking and industrious herself, and her cottage is a model of cleanliness and order. You can see yourself in her pots and pans, they are so bright, and quite as ornamental as many people's silver.

We walked round the garden to look at the improvements, and I attracted her attention to a spray of white pear-blossom that was on the same bough as a fine cluster of ripe "Williams."

"Lor now, Ma'am," she exclaimed with a great start, "that be terrible to see, they allus says that means the death of a near relatyve. Dear now, that is terr'ble. I be main glad to have seen that," and then, seeing her remark was capable of being misconstrued, she tried to explain; "that is if any think *do* happen; I could say, 'Well there, didn't I say it, now Ma'am,' you understand." So I did, but I sincerely hope the old woman will not have the satisfaction of a fulfilled prediction.

III

GLORY FARM AND OLD MR. GIBBS

" He was chief in all the rustic trades,
His steady hand the straightest furrow made;
Full many a prize he won, and still is proud
To find the triumph of his youth allow'd."

Crabbe.

It was a crisp, bright autumn day, and the sunshine made the upland path through fresh ploughed fields and by the side of the great beechwoods very attractive.

There are some delightful old farmhouses in our neighbourhood. One day I turned in at one—Glory Farm. The quaint old name dating from Quaker days, has a very old-world sound, and it was a shock when I was shown into an appalling modern parlour, upholstered in blue rep, and suggestive of the Edgware Road. When I had been duly impressed with the grandeur of the best parlour, I was shown into the big comfortable kitchen with its deep fireplace, its well-stored dresser, its shining pewters and copper pans. The fine old chairs were polished with age and much rubbing. At the table, before a plentiful meal sat the only son, a half-witted fellow with a plain pale face and a tongue that rarely ceases wagging.

He finds the purpose of his existence in carrying round for sale the delicious butter made in this farm by his mother; it is firm, cool, a delightful colour, and the best butter made in this neighbourhood. Then I was taken upstairs to see a series of lofty bed-rooms, with white-washed walls, but decent solid furniture. I wanted lodgings for an overworked friend, and things looked very promising, but no ! Mrs. B. was proud to show her rooms, but couldn't take lodgers; she had no time herself, what with the farm and the butter-making, and her good man, and " women servants about a place she couldn't abide, such plagues they were, and up to no good." So I went on my way, the refusal considerably softened by observing that the windows of the parlour looked out on a very much-used farmyard, with abundant reminders to nose and eye of its uses.

The next farm-house was less imposing, a low two-storied building, standing sideways to the road, with two doors and several windows opening on to a delightful strip of flower-garden, gay with hollyhocks, dahlias, and sunflowers, while beyond were rows of well-tended fruit-bushes. On the north side were substantial farm-buildings, with red tiled roofs. The door-steps were spotless, and flanked by great pots of geraniums, making an extra warm corner for a tortoise-shell cat, who lay sunning herself, and blinking lazily as I approached. I knocked, and a kind-faced woman came to the door, and listened to what I had to say. Yes, true enough she had had lodgers in the summer, and she had had children too from Lunnon town to look after. She hadn't any of her own to plague her, " bless the Lord ! " but now she has the old gentleman, Gibb's father, in her best rooms, and she couldn't

nohow manage any lodger. " Why, you come in and see for yourself," she prattled on, and she brought me into her sunny parlour, where was sitting a hale and hearty old man. I had quite a long talk with him; he told me that till a fortnight ago, he had lived in his own cottage two or three miles off, where he had been for thirty years and more. All his children, and most of his grandchildren were out in the world. Farmer Gibbs was his youngest son. He himself had been a labouring man, and with his wife had brought up nine children; and he showed me his framed certificates over the mantelpiece, showing that he had never had help from the parish, and had taken prizes in various agricultural pursuits.

Twelve shillings a week ! Nine children, and, as he told me, bread often at famine prices, and every necessary—let alone the luxuries every working-man has now—far dearer. He made many wise and interesting remarks as to the change in the whole manner of living, the wonderful cheapness of clothes, the openings before every man who would stick to his work.

It has been a very comforting reflection that this dear old man, whose keen eyes and clear-cut features and wholesome fresh face made him look like a rural Gladstone, had found life so well worth living, even in these conditions, and that eighty-three years had left him a little rheumatic, not quite so upright, but strong and able to garden several hours a day. He told me with pride that " ne'er a one did a stroke of work " in the well-kept garden I so much admired, but himself. He was full of praise of the " missus," his daughter-in-law, and of all her kindness and cleverness.

I went to see him again soon, for talking to people of this stamp is as refreshing as contact with nature. This time he was very busy writing a letter, which seemed rather a laborious undertaking for his stiff old fingers. I ventured some remark on his occupation, and then with an occasional inward chuckle of amusement he explained: " It b'aint to one of my childer I am writing ; it's to a rare orkard old lady."

It was in this wise; his neighbour in the cottage that he had so regretfully left was an old woman, a spinster of eighty-six, who was living on her savings. She had been a dressmaker, and was very sparing in her ways, as was no doubt quite necessary. He had done all her gardening, set her potatoes and peas, and her other vegetables and flowers. " She was a rare 'un for vigittables she was," and she had always paid him his modest wage, very contentedly, and they had been the best of friends, and had many a neighbourly " crack." One day Mr. G.'s youthful spirits got the better of him and he began building castles in the air : " If I was rich, had plenty of money, mind you, and could drive *her* about in a pony-chaise, well, I should marry again." Whereupon Miss S. turned on him with, " Then why don't you marry me ? " And at this point Mr. G. laughed out, as I am afraid he had done at the time, and told her that she was too old for him, and he would have to look after her, and not she after him. That was why she had turned " rare orkard," and would not pay him any more money, although she owed him quite a little sum. So this letter was to threaten her with County-Court proceedings unless she paid her debt.

To refuse her offer of marriage, and to talk of suing her in a court of law ! It was really very hard on

the poor old lady. One wonders whether at eighty-six the lonely spinster still retained the feminine desire for a conquest ?

IV

APRIL

" Toss up your soul to the lark,
Walk at peace with mouse and worm."

Meredith.

I PROMISED to go and see Mr. G. at the farm in the spring when his Crown Imperials would be cut. So I went off rather early to-day. The larks were singing in a very ecstasy of delight over the ploughed fields, a faint tinge of green was making itself seen even over the woods, the blackthorn was silvery, gleaming against the purple black of its stocky wood. The primroses, never very abundant here, were in dainty clusters in the fallen leaves of the beeches as I went through the woods. I said my favourite spring bits of Browning and Wordsworth over and over aloud.

I almost shouted them, as I do not sing.

Why is the gift of musical expression entirely denied to so many ? It would be such a safety valve for pent-up feelings. Why can one not write poetry when poetry seems the very heart of Nature ? Why can one not put down on paper or canvas, or only in so terribly inadequate a fashion, even a momentary

expression of the great joy, the solemn mystery, the rhapsody of delight that Nature inspires ?

" Death hunts you, yea, but reft of sting;
Your bed is green, your shroud is white :
Hail I Life and Death and all that bring
The Goal in sight."

Christina Rossetti.

I went again to Glory Farm, for I had heard the master was dead, and I wanted to try to say a few words of sympathy to the widow, who, I had heard, was giving up the farm. How hard it is sometimes to find the right words. I sat down rather silent and stupid by the big old fireplace. The widow was in her working clothes, the grand cap with its puffings and weepers hung on the corner of a screen, and in her apron she looked familiar enough. The half-witted son was not there with his incessant flow of talk ; but a daughter, a dressmaker from a neighbouring town, had come to keep her mother company till the move. Her prim figure in its genteel mourning looked quite out of keeping in the homely kitchen, and I could not but think how much more congruous she would look in the parlour with its bead-work cushions and wool mats. After a while she began to tell me about her father's illness.

It was short and sharp. One day about as usual in his farm with all its urgent engrossing cares, and the next he was called to face the great Unknown !

" But ere his death some pious doubts arise,
Some simple fears which ' bold bad ' men despise,
Fain would he ask the parish priest to prove
His title certain to the joys above."

Crabbe.

Had any one from Church or Chapel been to see him, I asked, hoping to hear some kindly soul had

been. I shall never forget the widow's answer. " No, no one came anigh us to say a prayer or a word, and when he was mortal bad he called out several times, ' Do one of you say a prayer, I want someone to say a prayer.' But lor ! I couldn't."—Poor lonely soul, poor dumb lips !

Not long ago in the house opposite to this, there had been an old couple and their daughter. The woman died and the husband and the daughter at once took up their abode in the home of the married daughter, where I was calling. A lady visitor said in a somewhat shocked way, " You don't mean to say you have left the body all alone." The daughter's answer was, " Well, father, he always goes across and smokes his last pipe with her of an evening." A quite original last act in the drama of life.

This reminds me that only this afternoon, I was talking to a neighbour about old Mrs. Timmin's death, who also has been stone-deaf for several years. She had suffered very much, and was getting so helpless that she was dreading unspeakably that a time would come when she could do nothing for herself, and be just a helpless burden on her dear, brave, cheery old husband, who for years had come home to a tidy hearth, and neat, comely old wife, doing all she could, and managing to read his wishes on his lips in an astonishing fashion.

She was talking to a neighbour of her husband, and she said, " And all these years, stupid, deaf old thing that I am, he has never had an unkind word for me in his mouth, nor an unkind look in his eyes," and thanking God for His mercies and looking forward so confidently to a future meeting, she passed away. His grief is piteous to see.

V

MAY

" The May is come again ; how sweet
To sit upon my orchard seat;
The Birds and Flowers once more to greet."
Wordsworth.

" Oh the brilliancy of blossoming orchards !
Oh the savour and thrill of the woods!
When the leafage is stirred
By the flight of the Angel of Rain."
Henley.

MAY, and a snow-shower is falling! Not real snow, for the sky is deep blue, but the fresh breeze is blowing down the apple blossoms till they lie in pinky-white drifts on the lawn. I think their work is done, and that their beauty heralds a splendid crop of ruddy apples.

The morning is exquisitely fair, and the garden is looking its best. There is such a wealth of blossom, beside that of the fruit trees; the lilacs, white and purple, perfume the air; there are myriads of dainty pheasant-eyed narcissus twinkling like stars, and rows of pale yellow tulips stand up behind a wide blue border of forget-me-not. The guelder-rose is covered with light green clusters which will soon be white balls, and the mays and laburnums seem to be coming out

as one watches them. The pansies make a brave show, and some great crimson oriental poppies have burst their calyxes and make glowing spots of colour against the warm red of the wall. The fine weather has agreed so well with the birds, which seem to be more numerous than ever in our quiet garden. There are two nests in the ivy behind me, one where a devoted pair of robins are bringing up their second family, the first alas ! having fallen a prey to our handsome and wicked Persian cat, and the other to a distinguished-looking pair of water wagtails, which by-the-bye, are called " dishwashers " in this part of the country.

The robins are gradually losing their fear of me, but they were very shy and eyed me most suspiciously, approaching with short little flights from one hiding place to another, till they were quite near, and then—a sudden whirr of wings, a rustle among the ivy, and the great worm or other delicious morsel was dropped into a gaping beak, and the parent-bird was off again. " Game is plentiful" just now it is evident, the birds are to and fro so constantly.

VI

WHITSUNDAY

" And as I mounted up the hill
The music in my heart I bore
Long after it was heard no more."

Wordsworth.

WE had a fine anthem to-day. The solo was sung by Elsie St. John, one of our neighbours; lately she has been studying in Paris, and has come back to the village as a person of some importance. A distinguished musical critic prophesies a great future, and we were all anxious to hear her again. She has a fine voice, rich and full, and it rang through the little country Church in Attwood's splendid setting of the Whitsunday hymn, " Come Holy Ghost, our souls inspire."

Was there perhaps a trace of the operatic training she has had in her method ? I hardly know, at all events the rustic voices of the children joining in took away all such impression, and she looked very simple and pleasing in her trailing black dress, her dark eyes shining and her pale face framed in dusky hair.

I notice that the custom of wearing white dresses for the first time on Whitsunday is kept up here.

There was a noticeable rustle of freshly starched white frocks in the Church, and now after Evening Church, when the whole village population is walking up and down, the white dresses give a gala air and their freshness is in keeping with the exquisite verdure of hedges and trees. One also notices how rapidly the standard of dress has gone up among the young men. No more rustic swains in homespuns, alas! but instead, they nearly all ' wear black jackets and resplendent ties. A great many happy looking " me's and my's " are lingering along the road, and I notice our blacksmith's tall handsome son bending most attentively to listen to the remarks of a pleasant round-faced little damsel.

This morning " the glory of the sun " as St. Paul has it, was making all Nature rejoice. Spring was in the air, which was sweet with the perfume of a thousand flowers and came in soft warm puffs. The laughing voices of girls, the shrill cries of children, though somewhat subdued for Sunday, mingled with the humming of bees and the song of birds. The long legged lambs were bleating and calling for their mothers, whose side they had forsaken in their mad gambols of delight. Everything spoke of renewed life, of growth, of gladness.

It seemed to make the cold logical series of affirmations and negations of the Athanasian Creed more than ever hard, narrow, and unsatisfactory. One's spirit rose in rebellion, one's mind recalled the teaching of our Lord " God is a Spirit"—a breath, St. John's creeds, " God is Love," God is Light, vast, vague, mysterious, and yet so full of rest, of comfort, for ever beyond the reach of the proudest intellect, for ever within the grasp of the humblest heart.

The damnatory clauses bring a sad curve to one's lips as one thinks of the hearts they have troubled. I watched the interesting impassive face of our curate as he read them in a rapid monotone, but neither face nor voice ever betray any feeling. He has a fine head, large and well proportioned, with massive waves of grey hair ; his regular features having the appearance of being carved out of ivory. He is a man of good birth and culture. His sermons are dreamy with poetic quotations, and a good deal above the heads of our villagers. He would, I think, be sorely perplexed if anyone were to come to him for advice in spiritual matters. He does not visit the poor, as he explained one day with a strange smile : " I always think half-a-crown will do them so much more good," and with these he is liberal; he is very kindly in act and charitable in speech.

Our junior Curate is a hard worker, and visits a great deal. Of one young man, who was much comforted by his ministrations, his mother told me how much pleased he was with the prayers read beside his bed: "It was such a 'própós prayer.' " she said, and repeated the phrase several times, much pleased to shew her learning.

VII

A GIFTED TRIO

" The mighty power of Harmony,
Behold how soon its charms can chase
Grief and gloom from every face ;
How swift its raptures fly,
And thrill through every soul, and brighten every eye."
Hughes.

YESTERDAY I took a friend—a London slum worker—to call on our neighbour, Mrs. T. T., the widow of a well-known critic and dramatic author of the Victorian era. It was a brilliant afternoon, and the scent of the freshly-cut hay was wafted in from the meadows behind the house, as we walked up the drive, and we could hear the voices, and see the sun-bonnets and light dresses of the maidservants at work among the pale green wathes. The scent of hay mingled with that of the pot-pourri in an old china jar which stood just inside the open hall door. No one heard the bell at first, and we stood waiting in the porch, but before long a shy little kitchen-maid came forward and showed us straight into the morning-room, whence we had faintly heard the sound of violins.

A charming picture greeted our eyes. Round the table with its green cloth and three music stands sat

the three sisters, Mrs. T. T., and her elder and younger unmarried sisters, each with her instrument in her hand. Greetings over and the threatened interruption of the performance averted by our earnest entreaties, we settled down to listen and to look, and, for my part, mentally to record the scene.

The three sisters, whose combined ages would, I think, amount to about two hundred and twenty years, are all good-looking, with faces full of character. The unmarried sisters were dressed in quaintly patterned gowns, of subdued colour with delicate lace lapels and caps. Mrs. T. T. was in black silk, with a more imposing cap, resting on her thick white hair. Her blue eyes were shining with excitement, and her cheeks were flushed a delicate pink, matching the cluster of roses in her breast.

They all looked very pretty, like the Graces grown old, and they handled their instruments with ease and distinction. Miss Lucette, the eldest, has very refined classical features, with a pathetic expression, which made me wonder what sad or tender memories of a bygone lover, who had died perhaps fifty years ago, the music brought back. Besides being a musician she is an accomplished artist, and the composition of some of her groups is so clever, it reminds me of Lady Waterford's paintings, who, according to a distinguished R.A., was "the greatest untaught genius of the age." She was playing the second violin in the family trio.

Miss Leila has stronger features, less regular, but still harmonious, and a much more cheerful expression, a nature set in the major, as distinctly as Miss Lucette is in the minor key, even as the tones of her splendid "cello" were richer, fuller, more responsive and

human than those of her sister's, which seemed a little impersonal and cold, though tenderly played. The background of this group was the greenhouse full of blossoms, a rich glow of colour.

The first movement finished, Mrs. T. T., bow in hand, explained that they had been playing an overture to a composition of her own, just composed for dear Lucette's birthday.

" This first movement is fresh, bright, crisp. It is Lucette waking up in the morning—The Reveille. Now, my darlings, begin." Then when the adagio movement followed, sad, slow, a little tired—" This is the evening"—was explained. And then the performance ended with a birthday march. It was charming music, bright, original and artistic, and altogether a most remarkable composition for one of more than four score years.

The music over, our thanks and congratulations expressed, Mrs. T. T. hastened to tell me that she had been meaning to bring her sisters to tea with me this afternoon, as all the servants were out in the hayfield. " When Majesty invites itself," etc., etc., I said, and prayed her to give me this pleasure.

Very soon the dear ladies were sitting in the Louis XV. chairs in my little white and yellow drawing-room, drinking tea and eating cake, and looking out into the sunny garden.

One little episode pleased me much. It is a very bad strawberry year, but ours are promising well, and there was a dainty dish of fruit and a jug of yellow cream for tea. They were vastly pleased, and the eldest sister said in her pretty faded voice, " I feel quite like a greedy little girl sitting in the corner, eating strawberries and cream."

" Ah, but strawberries and cream are like nothing else," sweetly chirped Miss Leila.

" Strawberries and cream are like Beethoven, and I can say no more," wound up Mrs. T. T. in her deep voice.

VIII

MRS. TREVOR

JUST now I see passing Mrs. Trevor, a young widow who lives in a cottage nearly opposite with her one child, a sweet little maid of four. I am deeply interested in them already, and I expect I shall have a good deal to say about them as the days go by. She is tall and slight, with a graceful willowy figure and great wondering child's eyes set in an oval face, surrounded by masses of dark hair. She has a most pathetic droop at the corners of her curved lips, and yet when she laughs she looks radiant. The child is a fluffy-haired, blue-eyed creature with a flower-like face and poise of head. I hear the father was a very ordinary, middle-aged person, a merchant in Australia, who fell in love with his wife when she was hardly out of the school-room. He won her heart, married her, carried her off abroad and there he lost his money and died in six months, leaving her poor and very desolate, as meanwhile her mother had died and the home had been broken up.

I have already got to know her pretty well, and she has talked once or twice about her husband with a quiver in her voice, and as if no one so good or so kind had ever existed. She has rich relations, who want her

to live with them, but she wisely prefers her independence and her tiny cottage with its scrap of a garden full of poppies and lilies, and its wide sunset views.

We see such wonderful sunsets from our hill-top, and as I sit writing here, the whole western sky is a blaze of glory with one clear yellow star shining out, and against the glow is outlined a great group of Scotch firs with grand stems and rounded tops.

I am anxious she should marry again, but I do not know of any possible "parti" in our village, or even in our town. I hoped that after her fairly frequent visits to the fashionable sister in Belgrave Place, some eligible suitor might appear on the scene. However, though the sister and various cousins have from time to time come to see her, I have not seen or heard of anyone like a lover.

But since I have come home again, I have heard from herself that she was really ill, and that Dr. Hamilton was very kind to her. The neighbours tell me he was indeed most attentive, took incredible trouble to get her the best of nurses, and that his visits were very frequent and very long. I hear also that Dr. Hamilton used very constantly to take the young pretty cousin, who lives with his old mother and himself, to sit with her, thus giving himself an excuse for informal and unprofessional calls. I had always heard he was engaged to marry this cousin, but she seems quite content to play second fiddle. I suppose that rumour was only as true as half the reports one hears in a village are, but this last week or so Christel has had an attack of measles of a very slight nature, as I know, having been to see her every day, but for all that, Dr. Hamilton seems to think that it is necessary to see her very often, and I see

his green dog-cart being walked up and down during long periods, which cause his sprightly, well set-up groom to relax into attitudes of unmitigated boredom.

Christel is now quite well and out of doors again, but my pretty widow is herself looking very pale and worn, not in the least like her bright self. She seems worried, and she amuses me by her anxiety to appear quite unconscious, when she is obliged to speak of Dr. Hamilton. She is determined, too, that I shall understand that his kindness is entirely due to the fact that his cousin and she had been at the same Convent School near Paris. To-day she was looking very charming in flowing white draperies, which are a great relief after the rather ugly black garments in which she is usually swathed up to the chin.

I offered to read aloud to her and took up the book beside her at the place where it was open, beginning to read before I had noticed that it was "Any Wife to any Husband." You remember the poem, how the dying wife is proudly and absolutely sure of her husband's love and devotion while her life lasts, however worn and faded she may be, yet also knowing his character, she feels that while cherishing her memory, and believing that nothing can change "the love still kept for her," he will yet seek the solace of a second lesser marriage, betrayed by the very affectionateness of the nature that had clung to her.

She says:

"Might I die last and show thee ! Should I find
Such hardships in the few years left behind,
If free to take and light my lamp, and go
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit."

As I came to this line, although I read it in the dull-est and most unemotional voice possible, with none of

the dramatic expression with which I am said to read even Family Prayers, I heard a stifled sob, and I saw her dear face was buried in her pillows to hide the tears. I was so thankful to hear Christel coming in, so that I could leave her to recover herself while I fetched the child upstairs, inventing many little delays by the way. Then she caught sight of one of her favourite nursery books, and I had to read to her till she was gurgling with laughter and exclaiming, " Muzzer, you must laugh too." So we all laughed, and tea came in and we became cheerful and commonplace over hot muffins, but how am I to convey to her that that poem has no possible relation to her brief married life ?

Last night her little girl was sitting on her knee and looking up she saw her mother's eyes full of tears. It was her birthday ! " Has oo a bad pain, Muzzer ? " She was answered and seemed to forget, but half-an-hour later when her Nannie was twisting up little curls in preparation for bed, she saw tears running down the round baby cheeks, and then Christel said, her voice broken with sobs, "Oh Nannie, go down quick and see if Muzzer is better and send for a doctor quick to make her quite well; she has a werry bad pain."

Sweet little soul! This morning she has not forgotten, and when she put up her face to be kissed she whispered tender words of enquiry about the " bad pain." Surely a child like this will grow up wise and tender and pitiful.

IX

GEORGE

" There are who ask not if thine eye
Be on them; who in love and truth,
Where no misgiving is, rely
Upon the genial sense of youth :
Glad Hearts ! without reproach or blot
Who do thy work, and know it not."

Ode to Duty.

I NEVER knew any more of his name than this, and it is quite in accordance with his simple nature that he should be known only by his Christian name. I met him first one afternoon trudging along the lanes with his bundle of brushes over his shoulder, and was struck by the sweetness of his expression, by his clean-cut, ascetic face, his blue eyes with a wistful dreamy look, and the extreme courtesy of his greeting as he passed. Then I asked him to call. He told me of his home and his wife, and one knew without telling that he had a good wife, he was so daintily neat in his well-worn garments. It was a pleasure to invent wants that he might supply them. Now he never fails to call when he is passing, and is proud to display his goods ; pleased if you buy, or, if nothing is wanted, he departs with a pleasantly said: " Next time,

perhaps Ma'am," and goes on his patient way. He stops for a frugal meal sometimes, or for a rest by the fire. He says little at any time, but his face preaches faith and content, and in his eyes shines the inner light of a guileless spirit.

To-day the cook, who is going to be married, was telling him of the brushes she would want.

" I hope you'll be as happy as we are, Miss," he said. " Anybody will tell you that George—that's me"—pointing to himself—" and Mary are the happiest couple in C——"

I would like to go and see them, but I can picture the humble home so well, and can see him as he sits in his conventicle with eyes uplifted in prayer or praise, or to the preacher, as he drinks in each word of admonition of hope and trust. I fear the advancing tide of modern life will not long leave us such quaint old-world figures on our roadsides as " George."

X

OUR SEXTON

Hamlet: Hath the fellow no feeling of his business,
That he sings at grave-making?

Horatio: Custom hath made it in him
A property of easiness.

" HARD work ! you say, Ma'am, in coorse it is, is grave-digging, but it's all fate ! I was allus a-diggin' of little graves when I was in my petticutts, and I allus said as when I growed up I'd be the grave-digger here. And so I am, as you see. Queer sort of work to choose, p'raps you think, Ma'am, and yet I don't know as there's anythink else I'd rather be. I was born for it, it's all fate." And then, with a twinkle in his cheerful grey eyes, he went on, " If I'd been born to be the hangman, there wouldn't a been any help for it, the hangman I should a had to be."

Our sexton thus discoursed to me as we walked along the steep path from the cemetery, where I had found him, to the place I wished especially to see. It was a misty December morning with a pale sunshine lighting up the scene. A fresh fall of snow lay on the dark gabled roofs of the comfortable looking little town, on which we were looking down, and had sharply

outlined the black gaping mouth of the freshly dug grave, in which the old man was standing up to his neck, levelling the bottom, when I found him. His coat lying on a low mound guided me to the spot, and as I got near I could see his head bobbing up and down, and hear the dulled sound of his pickaxe.

I had called on the sexton's wife on my way to enquire where I should find him. She is quite a crony of mine, and I am glad of an errand to her quaint little shop for the sake of the sight of her cheerful winter-apple face, wrinkled and rosy. She wears a black flowered dress, a silk apron and a cap with the most wonderful bows of vivid violet ribbon. Her shop has two rooms, one is full of that quaint medley of fish, fruit, vegetables and comestibles of many kinds peculiar to these village shops, where the bananas and tomatoes introduce quite a discordant note of modernity. The other has a wonderful jumble of sweets and toys, including the now rare wooden Dutch dolls, and other penny toys hailing from Nüremberg very likely, and I devoutly hope no fiscal policy will interfere with these old-world toys delighting the village children, as they delighted us long ago. This department is presided over by a daughter, whose pretty face must be a replica of her mother's thirty years ago.

To return to the Sexton !

" Well, Mr. Fair, your wife says you are not very busy. Will you show me the Quakers' burial ground and the chapel this morning ? "

" That I will with pleasure, Ma'am," said Mr. Fair, scrambling with cat-like ease out of the grave, promptly pulling himself into his coat, and mopping his brow with his blue handkerchief. " This is for an old un,"

he went on pointing to the grave. " They're mostly old folk that die hereabouts, and sometimes they do hang on that long, I wonder what the Lord leaves 'em for, they don't seem no good to theirselves or anyone else. Well, Goody," this was addressed to an old woman, who was hobbling along the path, " you know you are getting on, you are well past eighty, you are, and it will soon be your turn."

" Lawks, Master Fair, you are a-talking nonsense. Why, I am as well as ivver I wor, and don't mean to trouble you for a long time yet, that I don't. I may have the laying out of you for that matter," and with this somewhat testy, but well deserved retort, the old woman almost trotted away, as if she wished to show her youthful energy.

In a few minutes we reached the chapel which stood in a walled-in yard of its own. " John Knox preached there, Ma'am, and Spurgeon too. I heard him. He wasn't a highly eddicated man. People liked him well enough, but I thought his sermon very vapid! As for John Knox, I don't hold at all with him. He traduced Mary Queen o' Scots shameful and I'm a reggler ladies' man, and so I don't approve of him at all." We had walked round the quaintly ugly little building, its square lines and crude corners chastened by time, as ugly faces often are, into something with beauty and individuality. At each door, the sexton shook the handle vigorously, the emptiness beyond reverberating, but no entrance was effected.

At this juncture, a bright-eyed, hawk-nosed baker's man went by, who, it appeared, was a light in the chapel community. " Where are those keys to be got ? " shouted the sexton to the retreating form, and there was a pause, the warm delicious smell of

new bread reaching me as I stood aside among the tombstones on the cold, rimed grass. " This lady and I are a-talking about John Knox." " Ah, fine man he," said the baker's man. " He had a great work to do, and he did it too." This was a challenge, and as the men walked off together to get the keys, it was evident that a brisk argument was going on as to the treatment of Queen Mary by that great divine. The keys arrived very soon, brought by an eager grocer's apprentice who, as it turned out, also had his views about John Knox, and an equal desire to air them. Alas for my expectations, the interior of the chapel had been ruthlessly modernised, varnish and paint had destroyed any semblance of the picturesque or of association with old times. It turned out that when Spurgeon had preached there, the chapel would not contain the audience, and the discourse, " vapid " or otherwise, had been delivered in the grave-yard. Perhaps the square tomb I had noted with the quaint inscription :

" Boast not thy might,
I was here at noon and gone at night,"

was his pulpit. There were, after the terribly unhygienic custom of the day, a few old graves beneath the worm-eaten boards of the floor, and also the old dipping place. " But lor, it weren't no manner of use," commented the sexton, " it leaked so, they kep' on fetching water, but it couldn't keep full, so they took 'em all off to B. . . They could have had 'em done right enough at the other chapel, but they had schisms with it, they mostly do have schisms. They're that ignorant, why," chuckled the sexton, " if that there baker, and he a preacher, didn't mix

up Mary Queen o' Scots and Bloody Mary in his argyment! Lor, such iggorance! I told him he hadn't had his larning flogged into him as I had, or he'd a known they were near a century apart."

A sense of justice to the baker made me risk checking the flow of language, by suggesting that as the ladies were first cousins, the difference of date was probably not so great, but fortunat'ely he paid no heed, and went on discoursing about "leaden-hearted Philip," and the mischief he did.

Where we stood, we could see a path straight and steep leading from the churchyard up a hill into a beech wood, where stood the stately Rectory. "Over there, down that path from the Rectory, is where they used to roll them down in tubs stuck full of tenter hooks; it makes one well-nigh sick to think of it, and out there in Huckle's field they had the burnings," and he showed me a stony patch on another rounded hill lying peacefully in the pale winter sunshine. "Ever since they say they can't get nothing to grow there, they've tried all manner of things, time after time, but it's no good, that patch is always bare," and then after a pause and with a cynical twinkle in his eye, he added: "Not to say that the ground's that full of flints." Be the cause what it may, there remains the broad, bare space, as a painful reminder of the cruel scenes that once made hideous the fair country-side. All round the grass grows freely enough, and then a sort of fringe of knot grass and ugly weeds, and then the space of desolation. One shuddered as one looked, and the awful memory of that unspeakably gruesome memorial of mediaeval devilry, the "Five cornered Tower of the old Nürem-

burg castle," containing the Iron Maiden and other nameless awful engines of torture, flashed into one's mind.

Then my guide led me to the little walled enclosure, green and flat save for a few low mounds, which was the Friends' burying-ground. " That's where they Quakers were buried; there used to be a sight of 'em about here, but they're all gone now, time too ! This place is buried three times over." This countryside is full of traces of that once noteworthy community, which bore so noble a witness to the great truth of the "fellowship of the Holy Ghost "—a doctrine which the Church of that day so completely ignored. Not far from here, " Jordans " lies buried in cherry orchards ; they were gold and carmine in the autumn, when last we were there, with robins singing in their branches. That is where Penn and the wife of his youth, the beautiful Gulielina Springett, lie buried with some of their children, while near by reposes Thomas Elwood. Small headstones mark out their graves.

Out in this ground not a name nor a sign of any kind distinguishes one grave from another. The severe simplicity of the Quakers was not at all to the mind of the admirer of the Stuarts, and certainly there was not much to see and it was too cold to linger long. So I turned away and was for bestowing a guerdon and saying good-bye. But no, " Maybe you'd like to hear a poem as I wrote about Queen Mary." Next in wrath to the lover scorned, is the poet slighted, so I had to stay and listen. It was very long, and in many parts, describing scenes in the ill-fated queen's life, but the enthusiasm of the reciter was so real, and the kindling eye and hand " sawing the air " interested

me in the speaker at all events, so I shivered and listened and gained a friend.

When I climbed our hill again, I looked back and noticed with fresh pleasure, another link with the past, the house where Oliver Cromwell's mother* lived , and died, nestling amongst the trees.

* widow?

XI

ASPIRATIONS

A LABOURER and his wife have lately taken up their abode in a very small cottage near by. They are both well advanced in middle life, and she has had enough complaints of various kinds to more than account for her being the sallow, wizened, pockmarked creature she is. She has also that rumbled up, bundly appearance that makes ugliness and unwholesomeness so much more conspicuous. She received me when I called with much affability, and most fluent talk. First she gave me a complete catalogue of all her illnesses, but, when I asked the history of a beautiful child of two years old, who was lying soundly sleeping on the carved mahogany horsehair sofa which completely blocked up her little window, she became less dolorous and more animated. He is a nurse child, that she has taken care of since he was a few weeks old, and he is evidently the apple of her eye, and the chief interest in her life. The mother is a married woman, whose husband seems to have disappeared some years since, during which time she has been house-keeper to a doctor at a town not very far off. He sometimes comes to see the child, in whom he does

not attempt to conceal his interest. The boy is handsome and winning enough to compel anyone's love, and Mrs. Joe Timms poured forth a stream of praises of his sweetness and cleverness.

When, in a momentary pause, I stood up to come away, she suddenly asked me if I "played music." I confessed my musical deficiencies, when she opened a strange old piano of a flat oblong shape, something like a folded-up bagatelle board, but which bore the name of Broadwood. She seated herself before it, while she told me that she had learned music long ago when she was quite a girl to help a blind brother, but that now she had quite forgotten how to read, and could only play by ear. And by ear accordingly she proceeded to pick out a hymn tune in the treble, thrumming away with the left hand in the bass. "That lagged sadly," she explained. "I can play as well with one hand as the other, but I can't make the left hand move as fast as the right. They don't sympathise at all."

It was a quaint performance, but one could see she was imagining the music while she made the discords. I managed to get away with due politeness, though she rather wished me to stay for more, assuring me she could play "sekkeler" music as well as sacred.

Poor old thing, she had her aspirations, and I am sure means well, but a less artistic and more practical nature is more useful in a working-man's home, and despite the good wages her husband earns and the money for the nurse child, there was an air of discomfort and thriftlessness about the room, and an utter absence of preparations for the mid-day meal, for which the time was approaching; so that I could too easily understand her confession that she and her

husband had been " having words " since they came to Hillside, and I was duly glad of the information that lately they had been " comfortable " again, for he is " that fond of the baby, and baby's so fond of me."

Their own children were grown up and married long ago, and the home I felt would have been very sad and dreary but for the child that loved its unattractive adoptive mother, and beamed alike on her and the really kindly though sorely tried husband.

XII

THE PASSING OF OLD ROGERS

" Himself he propped, his body, limbs and face,
Upon a long, grey staff of shaven wood;
Motionless as a cloud the old man stood;
That heareth not the loud winds when they call
And moveth altogether, if it move at all."

Wordsworth.

HE was very sociable, and had a remark for every passer-by whom he thought he might induce to stay and have a chat. He was proud of his great age, and on more than one occasion he remarked to one of our neighbours, who is more than common talk: " I be the oldest man in Hillside, that I be, and you be the foinest woman."

In bad weather, when he was kept indoors, I used to call on him sometimes with small presents or papers to amuse him. He lived with his elderly daughter and her husband, both good, kindly people. The daughter is quite a character, and always looks so nice with a snowy handkerchief pinned round her head; she keeps her home in wonderful order, and looks well after her old father, for whom she has only the parish half-crown a week.

A few mornings ago one of the neighbours came

round to say that he was seriously ill, and to ask for broth to be sent.

When I went a little later I was warmly welcomed by the daughter, with a hand-clasp that means more than many words. I made a sign to her, for she is very deaf, that I would go up and see her father, when I found he no longer occupied his chimney corner.

Stumbling in the dark up the crazy staircase I found as I turned the corner, my old friend lying in the open landing that in so many of these cottages—these abodes of rural felicity !—is the only sort of a second bedroom. It was dreary and draughty, so small that there was scarcely room for the wretched pallet on which his gaunt form was stretched, nearly six feet in height even now when bowed with the weight of his eighty-six years, and broad in proportion. Beside the bed stood a three-legged stool, on which I sat down.

I was astonished to see his changed expression, his rugged face was shining with joy, his faded blue eyes were beaming. He knew me and held out a feeble hand, and yet there was the dreaminess in his manner as of a person entirely absorbed in his thoughts. For a few minutes I waited, I wondered and I gave thanks. Whence came the extraordinary change in his looks ? For of late he had been sorely depressed. He was a religious man I knew ; I had often found him reading his Bible, or sometimes the " War Cry," and from our talks I had gathered that for some years he had, in his own language, "had religion." But with the growing nearness of the end, had come great searchings of heart, and the memory and the weight of many years of open sin and carelessness pressed heavily on

him; and he had, as he told me, been sore tempted by the devil, and was full of doubt as to whether he could ever be forgiven. The great Accuser of man seemed ever to stand between him and God, recalling transgressions.

I had opened his Testament, had shown him one after another the countless words of love and forgiveness, had repeated over and over some of the gracious sayings of our Lord, and sometimes, deaf as he had become, he heard and seemed for a moment comforted ; he would grasp my hand and smile. Soon the weary look would come back, and with a great sigh he would say, as he shook his head : " That is not for me."

But to-day all was changed. Two days ago he told me he was lying there in his dark corner praying, and suddenly : " I saw, Ma'am, as plainly as I see you, over yonder a wonderful sight, a vision of bright angels. I heard them singing and then one of them came to me, and told me that my sins were all forgiven, and said words of peace to me, and ever since I haven't had a doubt or a fear, how could I ? " and he burst forth into fervent thanksgiving. " He has let me, me the old sinner, see the angels worshipping and more than that, oh the goodness! to send an angel to tell me all is forgiven, that all my stains are washed away."

Later, I asked him if he had any pain. " No, thank the Lord, not an ache or a pain, but I am very weak, just waiting; I shall soon be gone," and again the radiance of a great joy transformed the worn face, as the sunrise transforms the sad cold earth into beauty and glory. Little to-day did the squalor of his surroundings matter. The wretched abode was the very antechamber to the Presence of the King in His beauty.

His daughter, herself quite old, and with the wistful shut-in look that you sometimes see in the eyes of very deaf people, told me when I went downstairs the same story. How two days before she had been up again and again to look at her father, and see if he wanted anything, but each time he seemed as if asleep, only there was no distressed breathing, and his eyes were open. Later she took him some broth, and found him then evidently awake. So she said: " Father, I have brought you your dinner." " And then, Ma'am, he said : ' I have had all I want,' " and when she pressed him as to what he meant, he told her in a clear strong voice, joy giving him strength, of the wonderful sight he had seen, and the blessed voices he had heard, " and ever since that he has been quite happy and peaceful like."

Was he asleep and dreaming, or was his spirit rapt away into the Heaven Paul saw, and found no words to describe ? Who can tell—but it was the tender mercy of God to a doubting child, and I can never forget the reflected light as of Paradise in his world-worn, battered face. He was unconscious the next day and night, and died as the dawn was breaking.

We stood with bowed heads as the humble procession passed by. A lark suddenly mounting into the sky, soaring and singing, seemed a fit symbol of the spirit, whose worn-out vesture was being carried to its resting place.

" Though narrow be that old man's cares, and means,
 The poor old man is greater than he seems;
 For he hath waking empire wide in dreams ;
 An ample sovereignty of eye and ear."

Wordsworth.

The humble funeral procession came slowly down the

road this morning on its way to the town cemetery, which lies on the other side of the valley. As it moved along it made a sad black blot against the delicate spring greenery and the white glory of the cherry-trees which have transformed our workaday village into a fit scene for a fairy play.

It is difficult to say where our village ends, or where it begins, it straggles so indefinitely along the roads, first on one side, then on the other, rarely on both sides at once. But there is no question as to where the middle is, because there is the church in its little tufted enclosure with its yews and its roses, and there is the pond, and hard by are the two public houses, the Crown and the Red Rose ; and the Chapel is not far off, nor the Clubroom, so all the centres of life are near to each other. The pond is a notable feature, for it is quite a large sheet of water, and looks very picturesque both when it is frozen over in winter, affording the joys of sliding and tumbling to a rosy-cheeked juvenile population, or in the summer when tired horses stand knee deep in it, and break up the clear reflections from the banks and overarching skies. Quaint pollarded willows grow on a narrow tongue of land that, stretching half across the pond nearly divides it into unequal halves, and affords a notable vantage ground to youthful anglers with bent pins.

Beyond the ground falls away so rapidly that looking across the pond from the main road you see only the roofs, then the chimneys and finally only the smoke of the more distant cottages in the lower road, that forks off at the Church.

Opposite the pond is the forge, where the pleasant sound of the clank of the anvil may usually be heard,

for our blacksmith is a notable one, and horses come in from far and near to be shod. In a few moments now you will reach the brow of the hill marked by the post-office on one side, and on the other by the windmill, the set of the sails of which is much studied by the weatherwise.

On the brow we generally stop to admire the sweep of the wide panorama on three sides. The broken lines of the steeply sloping common in the foreground surrounded at wide intervals by groups of cottages mostly set in cherry-trees, while beyond the fields and hedgerows slope upward again in charming irregularity to the great masses of the beech-woods. These are beautiful and impressive, be it in the tender freshness of early spring foliage, in the rich full outlines that summer brings, or in the glory of autumn. They are grand even in the sadness of their apparent death in January, when on a grey day their wintry blackness suggests some wonderful mezzo-tint, and not a note of colour is seen from a distance, and they look still as death. Seen from near, their stems perhaps are brilliant with green lichen and the carpet at their feet is of a warm red tone. January passes and even as early as February you may see the purplish tints which will go on deepening in colour till all at once they are veiled in tender green.

Beyond our beech-woods lie a range of hills bounding the Thames river-basin on this side, and again beyond lie faint blue ranges clearly seen in the sunset glow. Windsor lies among the trees to your left, and many an old-world village whose blazing bonfires were counted from our hill on the Great Jubilee night.

It was on this view that we had been gazing when we saw the funeral of old Rogers passing down the

road. The coffin was on a hand-cart, decently covered with black, and the friends walked behind. There were not many of them. He had been for a long time the oldest inhabitant of the village, and was a striking figure. He might usually be seen on fine days walking up and down, dressed in white ducks, a much-worn blue cloth coat with brass buttons, and a faded red muffler round his neck. He leaned heavily on his staff and moved very slowly in a way that made one think of Wordsworth's description of the leech gatherer.

XIII

SARAH

"That house where nut-brown draughts inspired,
Where greybeard mirth and smiling toil retired,
Where village statesmen talk'd with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round."

Goldsmith.

ONE of my village friends is Sarah, who keeps one of the public-houses. She is a tall woman, upright as a dart, though she is past seventy, with handsome strong features, thick, reddish-brown hair, untouched with grey, neatly parted beneath an imposing cap of an old-fashioned pattern, while she wears her spotless linen apron, and the little crossover that covers her still shapely shoulders, with a certain air of distinction. She had an accident a little while ago, that made her a village heroine; another of our neighbours, and a relation of Sarah's (but nearly everyone in H. is related to everyone else) had "had enough" as Sarah describes it, and she justly prides herself on never serving anyone who is across the dividing line between "enough" and "too much"—a very elastic line generally. However, there was a difference of opinion; the man would not take his dismissal, and Sarah promptly used her stalwart arms

and pluckily tried to turn him out, but he was too much for her, and she had a bad fall. Were all the other men present at the stupid stage, that no one came to her rescue ? There is not much gallantry in public-houses, I fear. As the hour grows late, many a fine manly creature does, and allows, things his better nature would utterly condemn. If Philip sober and Philip drunk could only see each other in their true light!

Poor Sarah ! She was upstairs many a day, and it was common talk that she would never get over her accident, but her hold on this life is very strong, and she is now about much as usual, only she takes life more easily, and you may find her any afternoon in her big parlour, sitting by the fire-side in her fine old Buckinghamshire chair, with the tea-tray standing ready. A pleasant room it is, with its sanded floor, a great grandfather's clock solemnly ticking in one corner, a fine dark oak bureau and long rows of highly polished chairs with gracefully curved backs. They date from a period when men prided themselves on their work, and before they had lowered themselves to the level of machines, with but two aims—as many chairs as possible, in exactly the same pattern—as if variety were a crime. Oh ! for a Ruskin in every village !

Sarah's daughter-in-law is a " superior person," irreproachably neat and rather uninteresting on the surface. She helps a great deal with the customers. Her husband, Jim, is a clever carpenter (he has been making a new window for us), and withal so different from the purely village-bred man, that though it was a shock, it was not a surprise to learn his history the other day. Sarah had never been married ; she had

lived in London with a medical student for several years, and then came back in her maiden name, alas ! and two children. She never said a word about her London life, and seemed neither shame-faced nor brazen. Is it for the sake of the past, that she has never married, for village suitors are not squeamish, and the money that enabled her to set up at the " Rose of England " would have more than atoned for the two fine boys and the moral blemish ? " Whatever our Sarah was thinking of to do such a thing," was the brother's simple comment.

XIV

FAITHFUL SOULS

... " true inseparable faithful loves,
Sticking together in calamity."

King John.

" There the Muses sing of happy swains,
Because the Muses never know their pains."

Crabbe.

MY next call was on the father and mother of Mr. Joe Timms. They are very old people, he is nearly eighty, and yet he has only quite lately given up his regular work as farm labourer, and he sometimes frets a good deal over having had to do so, and being in consequence " on the parish." If it were not for his " old woman " he would I believe still try to earn his living. But she is helpless with rheumatism, and cannot move herself or do the least thing without help, and as it is quite beyond their means to pay for all the care she needs, he has to stay at home, at all events till she gets downstairs between 10 and 11 o'clock.

" Why, it takes a good hour, it do, to get her into her clothes," said Mr. Timms. " Yes, and he do get that irritable, he do," put in Mrs. Timms with a smile.

I am afraid I should in his place, his old hands are accustomed to the plough and the hoe, but to dress his helpless wife like a baby must be very trying work, for him and for her. Old and rather dirty, if the truth is to be told, as she is, she still rules him as she evidently has done from the days of her far off youth, when she was somewhat of a spoiled beauty.

To make a diversion, I began asking him questions as to what his wife was like when she was a girl, since even now she had such a pretty nose and such dark hair. Every trace of vexation disappeared from his face, and his eyes beamed as he answered, " Why there now, her hair was so long right down her back, and all about her," and he stretched out his arms, " and as black as a coal. All the men was after her, and how ever she took up with a poor thing like me, I can't think," and he seemed to see the vision of her in all her youth and beauty. " There weren't another like her all about the county." " I suppose she had plenty of suitors," I said, to draw him out. " Might have," was the old lady's laconic remark, " but then there's fate." I congratulated her on her good choice, and came away leaving them to a fireside nap. Mrs. Timms' classic profile and fine deepset eyes had been much admired by me, ever since I knew her, but her little mouth has peevish lines, and the poor thing is nearly always very full of complaints. She has been petted all her days, and now that pain and poverty come together, she finds life very hard. Her husband is a cheery old man, with a brown weather-beaten face. I asked him one day why he always kept his cap on, even when he was sitting over his fire. They both laughed and he took off his cap with a positive blush to shew me his bald head, while his wife explained

that he was so bald he thought it quite "ondacent like, and enough to frighten folk." And truly the contrast between the ruddy brown face and the unnaturally white skin of his head had a strange effect. However, I assured him I had seen many people with less hair. Then he narrated with amusement that a few days ago he had been helping his son, the gardener, at his work, and had been invited in to dine with the servants. He felt that he could neither remain capped or uncap without explanation, so he made a preparatory speech and then took off his cap !

This old couple manage fairly well on their parish allowance of 8 /- a week, with the odd shillings he earns, or that his sons give him, and a little help from the Church.*

She cries bitterly if any friend tries to persuade her how much better she could be looked after in the Workhouse-Infirmary. I hope the dear folk will stay together till " death them do part."

Just conceive from an outside point of view the monotony of a life time of work like Mrs. Stewards, or Mr. Timms ! In his case eighty-one years, of which more than seventy have been passed in daily toil, " week in, week out, from morn till night," and all for a bare subsistence, leaving no margin for pleasures, which require time and money—however there are many that can do without these.

One is glad to recall Henry Drummond's fine words, " In this doom of work, man's soul is made, for surely God intends some higher outcome from three quarters of life than bread and butter and resignation. Integrity, thoroughness, honesty, conscientiousness, faithfulness,

* This was written before the old-age pension lifted a heavy burden from many a decent old couple.

patience, these unseen things which complete a soul are woven into it in work."

AN old woman came to see me from a neighbouring hamlet. She has such a nice, ugly, deeply pock-marked face with a badly broken nose, but she has an expression of kindness that redeems any face. She is seventy-eight and her husband, who is a strange old creature, and as deaf as the proverbial post, is a few weeks older, and they have been married over fifty years. " Well," I said, " I daresay you often hope that one of you won't have to live long without the other! " She said so prettily, with such an earnest voice : " Oh ! I *do* hope I'll live to see him out! People don't want to be bothered with a deaf man, and he never has done much for himself—he could *never* manage, but I could get along somehow. It would be lonesome," and her eyes filled with tears, "but not so bad for me as for him."

" Since you saw me, Ma'am, you see, I have had all my teeth out, every one but one, not that I ever should have had 'em out, if it hadn't been that my leg swole up that awful. My husband, he wor quite frightened, and if Mrs. Smith hadn't had her baby, so that the doctor he came up and Dan'l ran in and fetched him ; and I says to him, ' Maybe it's my teeth as is that bad and always a-grumbling with pain that makes me bad altogether,' but the doctor he says, well no, he didn't quite think so; still, I had much better make up my mind and have 'em out. So I plucked up courage, and 'ad 'em out, but the pity of it was that my boy that came over from Meriky, he were gone, and he'd a given me new ones, he always had said as he would, but now he's gone back agin."

All this, and much more about Ada, who wanted a place, and Annie " who must stay at home, but oughter to be out too," and Kate, the tiresome daughter who after many failures, brought about by her habit of wearing her mistresses clothes on all opportunities, had at last succeeded in keeping a place for three months, was poured forth in one long, inconsequent stream, while the dear woman, pale and weak, sat opposite with folded hands.

XV

THE SISTERS

" But milder natures and more free ;
Whom an unblam'd serenity
Hath freed from passions, and the state
Of struggle these necessitate;
Whom schooling of the stubborn mind
Hath made, a birth hath found, resigned
These mourn not that their goings pay
Obedience to the passing day."

Crabbe.

I NOTICED very soon after our arrival here, on the first Sunday in fact, several nice looking young ladies sitting in a pew near us, and I was told they were some members of a family of six unmarried sisters, who lived with their father and mother in a charming sunny, creeper covered house, facing south.

The Martin family includes six unmarried sisters, their ages somewhere between fifty and thirty-five, all perhaps (excepting one who is more or less of an invalid) without any definite occupations or tastes or interests, all good looking and intelligent, some of them very decidedly so.

This waste of energy seemed very sad, and when I happened to touch on the subjects of women's work,

the delights of a professional career, and of some amount of wholesome independence, my words fell on desert ground, the mother seemed to think that to make the beds, and their own dresses, to garden, to go out to tea, to stay at home above all, " a woman's true vocation," was quite sufficient to fill the time, the heads and the hearts of any half-a-dozen young women. The father, a handsome and rather tyrannical old person, with long and snowy hair, and the blue eyes of an angel, hated that they should go away, even for short visits; he liked to keep them all round him. Occasionally they escape to the one married daughter—whom he had not quite forgiven for the gross indelicacy of falling in love, and whose marriage was only accomplished by a series of innocent subterfuges—or the son who also I believe, had had to elope, but whose marriage, as marriage, did not need forgiveness; Mr. Martin's somewhat unworkable theory seeming to be, that men may marry without impropriety, but not women.

Since I have known them better, I have heard various stories of his paternal vigilance. One of the elder daughters had been a great beauty, and one feels sure that for all the father's precautions, she and her sisters must have had plenty of would-be lovers; indeed I have heard of them, and of how, in various ways, the love stories were nipped in the bud: how when it was discovered that young men would suddenly find afternoon church attractive, and having some small thread of acquaintanceship with the family, would try to follow it up by walking home with the six sisters across the fields, crushing diatribes on feminine immodesty, and the underhand ways of men would be uttered. Even the exciting pleasure of

afternoon church was forbidden, and bolder lovers who took their fate in their hands fared no better. Like a grim dragon the father seems to have laid in wait for victims. He kept his vantage post at the dining-room window, and when a young man was descried coming up the drive, sometimes even before he had rung the bell, the ogre would appear and politely demand " what business had brought him there ? "

Is it mere force of habit that keeps him now walking up and down, up and down in front of his house for his chief occupation on fine days ? Alas ! the bloom is gone from the maidens' cheeks, and, if that were not so, there are no marriageable men in our village and his watch is needless. The invalid daughter was very confidential one day lately, and told me how she had been asked to run away with a man when she was seventeen, and took some credit to herself for refusing. I, seeing her pretty face growing pinched and worn, almost as much perhaps from want of love and interest in life as from illness, said decidedly: " I think it is a great pity you did refuse his invitation." " Oh well," said she naively, " he was not a very good man."

Heaven forgive me if even a most unhappy marriage seemed preferable to the dwarfed and stunted life she has come to lead.

The eldest daughter, still comely for all her fifty years, occupies herself in a most praiseworthy manner in growing vegetables for her family's consumption. She has really made herself an interest, in this world seething with passion, in getting good supplies of " early and late." " Jewels, windows full of them, don't tempt me," she once said, " but a good

manure-heap " (she used a still homelier word) " I can hardly keep my hands off."

The second daughter is a very handsome woman with an air of distinction that would have fitted her to grace any position. Her nose must be a perennial source of pleasure to her, it is so delicately modelled and firmly cut. She dresses well and takes a wholesome interest in her appearance, that does her real credit, when after all her chief admirers are the old women, the few lacemakers in our village, whose benefactress she is. She spends much time walking about in muddy or dusty lanes visiting them, and in writing letters to get them commissions, in which she is very successful. They are truly devoted, but very outspoken, and she tells with quaint humour, odd stories of their plain speaking about her appearance at a time when the ruthless fiend Influenza, that terrible despoiler of beauty, had made her look very worn and weary.

" You do look old and plain, Miss, as it is right down sad to see-ye," was by no means an unusual remark. But the worst stab, because from nearer home, came in the words of a spoilt little cousin, who was watching her one day making her toilet before going out to tea. The hat was put on carefully, the locks arranged to their best advantage, the veil adjusted, and as she took the last glance in the mirror the little girl's shrill voice broke out with " And yet you look faded ! "

The dear lady's saving sense of humour and marvellous good temper enabled her to take even this thrust sweetly, " for," as she said, " you see it is quite true."

There is something wonderfully nice about them,

but the terrible bondage of an enforced and prolonged childhood has of course told on them. This summer the mother died after a rather short illness, the youngest daughter, who has been more away from home and has suffered much less in loss of energy mental and physical than the others, nursed her with great devotion night and day till she was thoroughly exhausted. I was seeing a good deal of them at the time, and Sister Isabel, who was staying with me for a well-earned rest, insisted on offering her services for the night, for the other five sisters all at home, all devoted to their mother, had not nerve between them to be with their mother for the one night that must intervene before a nurse could arrive. This seems strange, but if you had been mentally and morally kept in arms, so to speak, all your life, your capacity for usefulness must suffer. It was not their fault, but that of their upbringing. " You see," said one of them, " we never have been allowed to go anywhere or to do anything. I had never been at anything more exciting than a school-treat till I was twenty-one."

The wonder is that they are so nice, each in her own way, that they are so contented, so good-tempered and kind-hearted. I often wonder what they will do when the gates are opened, as I suppose they must be before long, for the father is eighty-four at least. Of course, he has many good points ; when he knows that any one of them is ill, he is perpetually up and downstairs to make enquiries after the patient, and to bewilder the cook with fresh orders for beef-tea and jellies, although probably they are not in the least wanted. The sisters interest me greatly, they are such an interesting contrast to most of the women belonging to this

restless, eager generation. They are so admirable, why have the ordinary joys of life been withheld from them by a mistaken sense of duty ?

XVI

THE SCHOOLMASTER'S WIDOW

"Beside the last who sweetly slept,
The widowed mother sat and wept
O'er years of love gone by;
And as the sobs quick gathering came,
She murmured her dear husband's name,
With that sad lullaby. "

Wilson.

It was a pathetic sight I saw to-day, when I went to say a few words of sympathy, or to look them, rather, for words seem so impossible on these occasions, to our schoolmaster's widow. He died yesterday.

I took a cross of white chrysanthemums. She led me upstairs. A tiny whitewashed room, a low bed, on which lay a narrow coffin containing his wasted form, waxlike, with deep-sunken eyes. It had been such a comely, good-looking face, with neat features, dark curling hair and a smart pointed moustache. He was always very carefully dressed, very nice in his ways, and must have had a very good influence in all respects on his scholars. I remember when we first met him walking after church with his two little girls holding on to his carefully gloved hands, we were struck by the refinement of his dress and manners.

Later, we made his acquaintance, and he came in sometimes to talk over school matters with my husband, and to have books lent him, rather than to borrow, if you understand the difference. He was not much of a reader—to kill all pleasure in books is too often the result of our present elaborate system of training teachers—nor much of a talker, though an earnest patient worker, loved and respected. Soon a hacking cough came, more and more often, to interrupt his conversation. He had had influenza at Whitsuntide, and had never recovered his strength, for he began work too soon, and so when the summer holiday came, he was too tired to rest and pick up. He was too weary to want to live, and the final breakdown came very suddenly. He was delirious in his last illness, and it was always of his work that he raved, about classes and examinations. The burden had been too great for him. Somehow one has felt so painfully that this need not have happened, that probably help given in time, might have averted his too early death. I cannot forget my last glimpse of him in life, seated on a high stool with flushed cheeks and burning eyes, listening to the Inspector's examination. It was a good report that came when he was at rest. He has left four little children.

I was talking to her to-day—the brave, gentle soul, who has worked so well to keep her home together and to bring up the children as he would have wished. And yet when he was alive she seemed a mere girl; heedless, not much of a manager, not even a very devoted or wise mother. She was nice and refined in her ways, and fond of her husband and

proud of him, though hardly entering into his mind, and a little impatient of his devotion to his work.

" I seem to think more and more of him, Ma'am, and of all he said to me, every year I live. Often and often I think how that when I was tired and just hurried into bed, he would say, ' Why, Lizzie girl, you haven't said your prayers,' and he would take my hand ever so gentle and firm and lift me up to kneel down and say them. Many and many's the time I thought of what he said to me when he knew he was dying, and I wouldn't have it that he was, for it seemed so cruel that he was to leave me : ' Don't be afraid, my girl, you'll never want.' And it's been just as he said"—and her patient eyes filled with unshed tears. " It's been hard enough sometimes, but it's always come right. And then the children, they're often a-talking of him, and little '*Lizzie*, the baby you know that was born months after he died, she loves to talk about ' my father.' One day when old Mrs. Brown said, ' Why, child, you never had a father,' she burst out *crying* and took on so. One thing I can say—*I have never done anything since he died that he wouldn't have wished me to do*"

And then one of the children, a dear boy, came running in with the news that the eldest sister, who lives with the husband's mother and has long been earning her living, was coming home for a holiday, which was to be quite a festival. And there was cheerful gossip about the second girl, who is in that marvellously rare training school, a houseful of old faithful servants, and who will soon be a perfect domestic treasure ; while the third girl is longing to be a nursery maid, a wish surely not very hard to gratify. That will only leave the nine-year old boy

and the six-year old girl to be worked for. So the brave little mother has weathered the storm, and may look forward to a peaceful haven when old age comes, and always the sense of dear and close communion with her husband to sustain her, and the thought of the re-union beyond this little life.

XVII

ELIZABETH

" Courteous though easy and gentle though retired,
The joy of health and youth her eyes displayed,
And ease of heart every look conveyed :
A native skill her robes express'd,
As with untutored elegance she dress'd."

My heart (the small domestic one for every-day use)
is broken !

A few days ago, my cook Elizabeth gave me notice. It is a wonder that I have not told you more about her before, seeing that she is the mainstay of the house, and gives us all such a comfortable sense of security and propriety, that I can hardly imagine domestic life without her. The moment I heard her staid knock at the door, I dreaded what she had come to tell me, for the hour was unusual, and Elizabeth is essentially a person of habit. I took the bull by the horns. " Well, Elizabeth, are you going to be married ? "

" Yes, Ma'am," she answered in her soft up-and-down Buckinghamshire voice. " My young man says as it's now or never, he won't wait no longer, and so please, Ma'am, we are to be married at Easter."

She looked such a picture of a douce sensible young woman, with her modest blue eyes looking shyly from under her fair brows and the neatly parted flaxen hair gathered up so prettily with a stray curl here and there under her white cap, and her hands crossed so meekly on her big apron, that I felt her young man was a very fortunate person, and so I told her. Of course I stifled my own feelings, and expressed my hope that she would be very happy. She took it very quietly.

" There's a deal to give up when one's married, I know," she said.

" Oh no, not if you really love him, Elizabeth," I answered rather quickly. " And you ought to be quite sure of that after being engaged so many years." " Well, Ma'am, I don't see anyone I like better, anyway."

And so it is settled, and she will leave just in time to get the wedding-gown and put the final touches to the trousseau she has been making for several years. However, I am pleased to see a look of quiet happiness in her face, and I notice that there is a sort of under-current in her mind, though she is just as interested as ever in the great questions of dinners and luncheons. She is one of a type that is always rare and is, alas, likely to become rarer still. She had only been in one situation in which she had been for seven years before she came to me. Very modest but extremely self-respecting, and though she is only twenty-six, she has a curious dignity, and is a keen observer of character. She has native wit, and some of her criticisms have a touch of the cynic that contrasts oddly with her round innocent face. She was speaking of some rather rapid ladies, who had for a short time rented her mistress's house.

" Call herself nineteen, Ma'am, why she hadn't a tooth of her own in her head! She was forty if she was a day. There! you see, Ma'am, I took up her breakfasts in the morning afore she woke up, so I know. You never do rightly know how old anyone is till you see them in bed in the morning. Downstairs, why that's quite a different thing."

She had been scandalised at the cases of champagne that were consumed by these ladies and their guests.

" To my mind, Ma'am, cases of champagne and general servants don't at all accord."

Another day she was speaking of a small houseboy. " Slow, Ma'am ! He's terble slow, and if you see him over his vittles, you won't wonder, for I've allus noticed that if anyone eats slow, he does everything slow, he's bound to."

* * * * *

I must not gossip any more about Elizabeth, but I shall find it very hard to replace her, and I shall miss her demure remarks and sharp criticisms, almost as much as her neatly turned-out and punctual dinners. Very few of the young women about here go into service. They nearly all take up " bead work," the poor substitute for the beautiful lace that was once the pride of the county, and that is still carried on by a few old women, several of whom have been lace-makers for nearly seventy years! But bead work pays much better, and many of the girls go into our little town and work in a large work-room, others again do their work at home, and manage to get some sort of a living out of it. Beautiful silk embroideries are also done by some skilled workers, and it seems strange to see these shining breadths of silks and satins spread out in the little cottage homes. Even

the small boys are pressed into the service, and may be seen in their play-hours sewing on sequins and learning the elements of the work.

The married women are very glad to make a little extra money, when there are many mouths to be filled, and the public-houses swallow up so large a proportion of the men's wages. " My husband, he b'aint a bad 'un, he nivver takes *my* money," said a young woman to me one day.

Chair-caning also offers a meagre livelihood, for chair-making is, of course, one of the great Buckinghamshire industries.

There is a really beautiful girl of sixteen, with great dark eyes and waving raven locks, who lives with an old aunt and earns an honest livelihood at this work. It was of her aunt, that a neighbour remarked lately, " Ah, poor thing, she won't nivver be no better, her brains is boiling. Yes," she repeated, solemnly shaking her head, " the doctor says her brains is boiling, so she can't get no better."

What the doctor really did say remains a mystery.

XVIII

THE LADY-SCHOOLMISTRESS

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, said the Lord of Hosts."

Zechariah iv. 6.

SHE was a wisp of a woman, a mere thread-paper, and it did not seem as if she ever could manage the village hobbledehoy. But an iron will lay concealed in the frail frame, and one day before she had been a week in the school, she turned out of it one of the most turbulent leaders of mischief, a boy whom his mother pronounced "outrageous and that orkard as there's no doing nothing with him." She did not turn him out by the scruff of his neck, she could not have done it, but by the magnetic force of her will, expressed in her indomitable eye, and a few stern words. Then, having spoken she stood waiting, with a smile on her face, and the whole school waited, and waited, and then the boy got up and sheepishly shambled out—and the work went on as usual.

She saw him alone at his mother's house that same evening, and she cast her spell over him, and he is now her devoted slave. The school is the most popular subject of conversation round village tea-

tables. What teacher says, or does, or wears, has become the rule of conduct.

At first there was a good deal of quiet opposition and of prejudice to overcome. The assistant teachers were up in arms at an interloper from the upper class. The mothers thought a fine lady would never teach the girls useful things, and are much astonished at finding that her influence is all on the side of making them practical and helpful. She insists on real stockings in need of real mending being brought to school to learn darning on, instead of the usual canvas squares; and she talks to them of the dignity of service ; and she knows herself how everything should be done. The teachers are all won over, though not without much tact and forbearance on her part, and some needful exercise of authority.

One day when in passing, we saw a little crowd of boys gathered round Farmer Dobbins' magnificent grey cart-horse, and in the middle of it, holding up in her slim hand one of the grand creature's huge hoofs, was Miss B. She was giving them a lesson that will be of lasting good on the uses and abuses of the horse-shoe, and then on the folly of the bearing-rein for working horses. The farmer was himself holding the horse's head, and his round red face was beaming, and one can imagine that he himself learned some hints from her lesson. For these farmers are very careless in the way they overwork and overdrive their young horses. " Shouldn't I bring a cow another day, Ma'am, or may so be a sheep ? They're wonnerful ignorant these children," I heard him offer when the lesson was over, and I believe the offer was accepted, though I was not fortunate enough to see the lessons given.

She sometimes takes the boys and sometimes the girls for Saturday walks, and makes them notice a hundred things they have not seen or noticed before. They worship her, and the effect on those imitative creatures, young girls, is noticeable in many ways. They try to copy her way of holding herself, and to modulate their fresh young high voices to her gentle contralto. The teachers have been shamed out of their lace-trimmed finery into severe, plain dresses with picturesque washing overalls.

She goes to see the parents, talks over their children with them, listens with the utmost patience to their views on education, and gives her own with a playful deference that is quite irresistible.

I knew of her before she came. In early youth indeed we found that we had attended the same classes—those first lectures for women given at University College, in the evening, by various professors, but notably the lectures on literature by Professor Henry Morley. It has been a pleasure to recall those hot summer evenings, when very young and unformed, but with a sense of being rather "advanced women" we took our places in the dusty benches. It comes back so clearly in every detail. The dingy buildings, grey, ill-kept, but not without dignity, the flights of pigeons circling round, much disturbed by the wheeling manoeuvres of the volunteers who were often drilling in the courtyard as we passed through.

One recalls so vividly, too, the sturdy figure and homely face of the dear Professor, transfigured with enthusiasm, as he lectured on the old poets, whom he knew and loved so well. How inspiring he was, and with what energy he carried us through the mazy

lengths of the *Faery Queen*, and made its scenes pass before one's eyes like a wonderful pageant. As for Chaucer, he revelled in his English humour, his keen characterisation, his backgrounds of daisied lawns and gardens. For everything that "is lovely, and of good report" in our amazing literature he had the keenest eye, the quickest appreciation, so that one may look upon these summer evening lectures as the foundation of a life-long joy in poetry and of a sense of the value of true goodness that is one of the special characteristics of English literature.

Miss B. was brought up in the old-fashioned home of a leisurely and cultivated family. Her mother, whom I knew well, was one of the first club-women in London, a clever caustic old lady, an artist, a poet, a woman of society, and our schoolmistress was one of the youngest of her large family. She threw herself very young into the then new movement for women's education, became a High School teacher, spent some wonderful years in a Government School in Japan, and then came home to be near her aged parents.

I lost sight of her for a time, and now find her again in this wholly unexpected fashion. Am I a sentimentalist? "Cherchez la femme," the witty, wise French say when a man's career comes to grief. I, for my part, wonder sometimes when I admire the interesting careers of many a modern woman—where has the *man* come in?

A charming and handsome woman whom I greatly like, tells me no man ever made love to her or wanted her. And to my natural suggestion that it must have been because she never gave them the chance, she answered seriously, "No, not at all—I should have been grateful for any polite attentions."

A little girl of nine said the other day : " I am not going to be clever, I mean to marry, and I notice that very often clever women don't marry." And another little girl, aged six, said lately: " I believe *mother* means me to be a lady doctor, but *I* mean to marry and have a little girl just like me."

In our schoolmistress's face there is a look of having suffered and having conquered, and also a certain settledness of expression that rarely is seen where the supreme need of loving has not been satisfied.

She has chosen as her home a quaint cottage standing quite away from the road, in the seclusion of a large park-like field. It is a cottage, too, with a history, being, it is said, part of a house, where a well-known poet of Commonwealth and Restoration times was born, and it is old enough for the legend to be true. It has an open fireplace, where logs are burned, and low pitched ceilings, and latticed windows, commanding one of the finest views in Hillfield.

And by this fireside, we have many talks, or else in the summer we sit on the gnarled roots of an oak, under the shade of whose boughs the poet is said to have written much of his work. It is vast and ruinous, cleft in twain and hollowed to a mere shell, and yet still crowned every spring with the freshest verdure like a skull wreathed in roses.

It is quite wonderful that this gifted woman should settle down so happily in this little village to so obscure a life. Being already a strong advocate for the leaven of well-born men and women among the ranks of elementary teachers, it is delightful to see the success achieved under our eyes, and in this case not by the young, robust woman, whom one would generally recommend to take up this work, in which there is

considerable monotony and drudgery, but by a woman no longer young, by no means strong, and of a sensitive refinement that might seem to make her unfitted to work amongst village children. Time will show, Eternity still more, the good her wise, pure personality has done, in raising the tone of Hillfield, for her unobtrusive influence seems to be felt everywhere.

XIX

SUMMER

" Oh the shadows that flit o'er the springing wheat,
Oh the magic of running water ! "

Henley.

MRS. STEWART

YESTERDAY I went down a long winding lane with beautiful high hedges, so far untrimmed by the County Council, whose regulations certainly do not make for beauty ; the wild roses were waving their long branches of exquisite blossom, the early roses of that exquisite shell-like transparent pink being at present the more numerous, though the later ones with their more solid petals of snowy whiteness are also coming out. There were trailing masses of clematis and honeysuckle, and a warm soft rain was falling all the time, bringing out the most delicious odours. It has been so dry an early summer that it is quite a luxury to be out in the rain.

I went to see old Mrs. Stewart, who lives in one of the most diminutive cottages you ever saw. From outside it looks like a slightly magnified dolls' house, and one wonders how two people can live in it. Mrs.

Stewart is one of the few lace-makers remaining in this part of the county, and her shaky old fingers still ply the bobbins most industriously. She is eighty-one, very lean and small, but she manages ! How much management the life of the respectable poor always needs ! She gets a little help from the parish, and by working very incessantly, she earns two or three more shillings. Here too, the Church and friends help a little, and a neighbour is paid to keep her house clean for her. The amount of the cleaning is not very great, by-the-bye, and, as in other cases, one wishes it included the person of the owner, which reminds me that an autocratic parish visitor insisted upon the washing, by the district nurse, of a peculiarly dirty old man in her district.

Mrs. Stewart has been a traveller according to her own ideas; she has once been in a train to London, and that before there was any station nearer than that of B., nine miles off, and the nine miles were done in the " bus." To hear the graphic description the old lady gives of all she saw and heard and felt in that train is more amusing than some people's stories are who have been round the world. She shared her dolls' house with a brother for many years. He was a dried-up, silent specimen of humanity, who seemed not quite "all there" to most people, but to his sister he was cleverness and wisdom personified, and she had always a great deal to say about " our George." He seemed to spend all his time crooning over the fire, or working in their few square feet of garden. The lace-lady, as we call Miss Martin, who takes much pains in getting orders for our lace-workers, was a frequent visitor, and after she had known him fourteen years, he said to her one day: " I never rightly

knowed whether ye was Ma'am or Miss, but I allays called you Ma'am to make it safe-like." He died a little while ago, and was most sorely and sincerely mourned by his sister. " Miss him ? Well, wouldn't you miss anyone you'd sat opposite for nineteen years ? " she said rather sharply to Miss Martin in answer to her condolences.

Then the doctor came under discussion, and on this topic Mrs. Stewart became eloquent. " Irish was he ? It's as well I didn't know it, for *once* before I had a doctor, and he was Irish, and when he was a-talkin' at me, he gave me such blows athwart the belly," and this was told with ocular demonstration, " that I says, ' nivver no more Irish doctors for me ! ' But this one wor very pleasant-like. Miss Mary, when he was a-poking and a-prodding at me, he says, ' Now undo your dress,' and when I did, them old stays of yours they just fell to pieces under his eyes." Well did Miss Mary know that the whole story of their origin had been given to the doctor.

Now a sister-in-law, with a wooden leg, also a widow, lives with Mrs. Stewart. She has a very long tongue and a tiresome way of absorbing all the conversation, in which Mrs. Stewart with her quaint sense of humour, used to take her full share. One Sunday lately, when E. called, the one-legged lady was making her toilette. She shouted out to him to come in, which, considering her deshabelle, he was very shy about doing, but she went quietly on lacing her corsets and pouring forth so voluble a stream of talk that E. was fain to thrust his gifts into Mrs. Stewart's hands and to depart as quickly as possible.

A QUARTETTE

" Of all the Arts beneath the heaven,
That man has found a God has given,
None draws the soul so sweet away,
As music's melting mystic lay."

James Hogg.

" By turns they felt the glowing mind
Disturb'd, delighted, raised, refin'd."

Collins.

WE have been specially invited to hear quartettes played by the three sisters and Mrs. T. T. and daughter.

We were introduced to much the same scene as I described before, only that we were in the dining-room, and so, instead of the background of flowers, with the scent of roses and hay coming in at open windows, there were walls covered with pictures and a dresser laden with old china. The fire crackled in a cheerful manner, and the winter sunshine streamed in and illuminated Mrs. T.'s snowy hair and pink be-ribboned cap with its gold pins, falling softly on the meeker heads of the maiden sisters, and her daughter's strenuous face. They began with the first movement of one of Haydn's quartettes, on the wings of which one floated away in a dream world, far away from the little room, into a region of unlimited space and light.

Then they played the Farmyard movement, so charming in its cheery homely fashion, cocks crowing, birds chirping, donkeys braying; there is the rattle of the milkmaid's pails and the singing of the plough boy, the sharpening of scythes, the multitudinous sounds of rural life. We had one more specimen of many sided Haydn in the Austrian National Hymn, and then it was proposed that we should have some of Mrs. T.'s own compositions.

There was an interlude, and much tuning up of fiddles, and modest praise from the appreciative audience. "Gentle Spring" was the name of the first; it was an illustration of Rogers' lines :—

" Sweet Memory, wafted by thy gentle gale,
Oft up the stream of Time I turn my sail,
To view the fairy haunts of long-lost hours,
Blest with far greener shades, far fresher hours."

It had been originally composed as a four-part song, and had been sent to the old poet, who had acknowledged it in most courteous fashion. In early days it had been sung by the young fresh voices of the sisters, and now that their voices had gone, Mrs. T. had arranged the songs for string quartettes. Afterwards they played an illustration of Virgil's lines out of the second Georgic :—

" O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,
Agricolas! "

But there was another tuning up first, and the dear hostess sat waiting, bow in hand, dreaming over the far past. "Oh," she said as her daughter handed back her violin, "I do remember so well sitting under the great quince tree in blossom, and my father reading these lines," and she recited them in her full voice,

" and how he praised them, so that I thought at once I would make a song of them, and I did."

" Now, my darlings," she went on, " one, two, three." She marked the time with her bow and off they started. But the piece had not been played for many years, and it took several repetitions before she was at all satisfied. Even then it did not go with *elan* enough to please her, and her face was troubled, but it was with herself only she was vexed. She saw so plainly the gap between the ideal she aimed at and what her hands could now achieve in expressing.

When they had finished, she exclaimed, " Oh, I feel it all just as keenly as ever, but I can't do it, I can't do it, and it hurts. I shall never play again as I used to."

" Well, in the next life, very likely," said someone present, " you will have the very best violins to play on that could ever be imagined," thus choosing rather to impute any falling off to the instrument than to herself, for that day she was not playing on the Stradivarius.

" Yes," she said, " that's pretty, I hope I shall, and straight fingers to play with," she continued, holding out her kind, clever hands, somewhat knotted and gnarled with rheumatism, but yet the very skin showing the sensitive, quick artist temperament.

Her taste in music was catholic, and her musical library covered the whole range. It was rather astonishing to see how well she could enter into the work of modern composers, Brahms and Greig, Dvorak and Tschaikevsky, but naturally the older masters and methods appealed more fully to her. It was to Beethoven and Mozart that her deepest homage was paid. Her own methods of playing resembled those of Madame Schumann.

XXI

SEPTEMBER

" Now came fulfilment of the year's desire,
The tall wheat coloured by the August fire
Grew heavy-headed, dreading its decay,
And blacker grew the elm-trees day by day
About the edges of the yellow corn,
And o'er the garden flowers somewhat outworn,
The bees went hungry to fill their store;
The apple-boughs bent over more and more."

Morris.

AN UNFORGIVING FRIEND

" HOME is the most unforgiving of friends, and always resents absence." Are not those true words ? We have been away rather too long this year, in Scotland, and on the East coast, and then for ten days or so in London, before we came to settle down for the autumn, and home had its complete revenge. No doubt the absence of our old servants had much to do with it, and partly accounted for the want of familiarity in the appearance of our rooms and of the garden. The garden had been rather neglected by the gardener put in charge, but that does not matter so much in August and September, and it was wonderfully full of blossoms and flowers; but somehow one felt they

were not blooming for us, we were quite unknown and uninteresting to them. We had not watered them, or watched their buds unfold. It was not till some days had gone by that one began to feel in the least at home. One's favourite easy chair seemed to hold out its arms in a more or less repellent manner, one's writing bureau seemed as if the very pigeonholes were in the wrong place. We resented the unfriendly aspect of things, and th'e first Sunday afternoon turning out very wet, we devoted our energies to moving about the furniture and ornaments in the library, and drawing-room, even the beloved blue china, and we put E.'s writing table in a new recess, so that now he has two long shelves of books, all loved and known, to look at—George Eliot and Meredith, Rossetti, Arnold, Maurice, Llewellyn Davies, Kipling and Stevenson, Jefferies and others, the very outsides of which are more suggestive of thought than the insides of many books. Then above the shelves and on either side of the shallow recess are etchings and engravings of Millet and Millais, of Burne Jones and Frederick Walker, of Herkomer and Macbeth and if one or two French artists less known, not much less delightful, including a charcoal study by Emil Grizet, of the moose-deer fleeing over snow fields in weird moonlight which casts deep shadows from the fir forest in the background and from the agonised creature himself. It hangs nearly opposite the west window, and when it is lighted up by the sun it is wonderfully effective. There was a charming American bride at tea here one day last winter, and she charmed me by her frank enjoyment of everything. When she saw that drawing, she exclaimed, " As I look at that, I seem to hear the moose cry across the snow," and a

far-off look came into her brown eyes. Her husband was a clever young man who had only left Harvard a year or two ago. They live near Boston, and there was a real New England flavour about them both. They were in raptures over everything English. " Why the ride all the way from Liverpool to London seemed as if we were coming through a garden," they told me, " and this rural old-fashioned village seemed the crowning charm." As they owned in answer to a sympathetic questioner, they were " just living in a story-book."

After we had potted about that Sunday, and on a few other odd hours, we felt we had again established our jurisdiction, and that we were forgiven for our long absence. But we had to go through much the same process in the garden. There we showed our discontent at our cold reception by at once planning great alterations. We have taken in another acre lately, and this autumn will be devoted to making it into a garden.

For my part, after ten days of the dear old London life of picture galleries, of music, of book shops, of streets with their endless interests and teeming humanity, of the joys of seeing one's old friends, and of acquaintances at every turn, of little club dinners and informal teas—for people were only just dropping back to town—there have been moments when I could have echoed Lamb's cry : " Give me old London at fire and plague rather than these tepid gales, healthy country airs and purposeless exercise." But I grudged buying in London fruit and vegetables. It was a real hardship to pay for apples and plums, for cauliflowers and spinach, when I knew that ours were all wasting at home. Then I thought how Lamb grudged buying

quill pens which had been his perquisite at the India House. " I cannot bear to pay for articles I used to get for nothing. When Adam laid out his first penny on Nonpareils at some stall in Mesopotamia, I think it must have been painful to reflect upon his old goodly orchard where he had so many for nothing."

XXII

A COUNTRY HOLIDAY

" Go out children from the mine and from the city,
Sing out children as the little thrushes do,
Pluck your handfuls of the cowslips pretty.
Laugh aloud to feel your fingers let them through ! "
Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

I HAVE just had a visit from a girl, who comes from a London slum, and who attends one of the schools for weakminded children, which are one useful new department of the London County Council. She has been here at the old Mill House for nearly a fortnight, and I think one object of her visit to-day, was to get herself invited to stay a week longer. It is marvellous to see what country air and beauty, good food and kindness have done for her. She had never been out of London before, and the only brightness in her life came from her school and her teacher, one of those women with a genius for kindness, who are to be found giving themselves heart and soul to the difficult task of training these poor children, so handicapped in life's race.

Mrs. Brown, Lilian's hostess, tells me that her astonishment when she woke up the morning after her arrival, and her eyes fell on a blossoming pear tree

outside the open window at the foot of the bed, was great. She could not think where she was at first: " Seemed as if it might be heaven; I know that's full of flowers, teacher says so," she remarked afterwards. Her joy in all the country sights and sounds, in seeing the cows milked, in collecting the eggs, in gathering flowers, in fetching water from the well is charming to see. She made friends at once with the animals, and the birds, and it would seem that she is already more at home here in the heart of Nature than she has ever been in all her thirteen years in London. It is a thousand pities that she must soon go home, but it is a comfort to think that she will take some of the joys with her, and that her wonderful capacity for happiness will help her.

Last week she and two of the Brown children came to tea, and afterwards as the evening was wet, they came into the library and looked at pictures. That seemed like another window into heaven, and her enjoyment of the fun of " Struwel Peter" quite astonished me.

When she came to see me again, I was more than ever struck with the improvement and development of mind and body. She stood beside me very confidentially and poured forth a great deal of information about her home—the father, who is a rag-sorter, and evidently very fond of the children, the mother, who I am afraid is not very sober, and the sister of seventeen who is too delicate to work. " You see," went on Lilian, " some time ago, the teacher at the school what she went to, hit her on the head with a thimble, and ever since she has had *St. Viper's Dance*. It makes her that nervous ! " It was a sad little picture of an over-wrought sensitive creature. A great

surgeon said the other day, " It's nearly always the nice children who have chorea." Each year one sees more and more the immense importance of preventing, or rather of undoing the vast mischief to the race done by these great London slums, where healthy life is impossible. Till this is done by legislation and wise measures—of which one despairs—country holidays will do something appreciable in lessening the misery ; still, it is only a very small number after all, that can be helped.

It is a strange, though very unimportant matter, to find how many of our villagers have never been to London, or seen any town of more than 3,000 inhabitants.

This spring, our Squire's wife took all the "mothers" who attend her " meetings" to the Earl's Court Exhibition. It made a very great impression, being in some cases the first time the women had made a railway journey. Some of them went up in the great wheel, and saw the wonderful view of vast London; others had ventured on the water-chutes, and felt they had risked untold dangers.

Perhaps after all the most unmixed enjoyment was afforded by the sumptuous meals provided for them, with smart waiters to look after them, and secondly by the sense of having seen the gay world and yet got safely home again, when dazed and delighted, they were deposited at their own doors in the evening.

I have just received a letter from Lilian's school-mistress, in which she says that the improvement in her appearance and whole conduct still goes on most satisfactorily, and that she has become an ornament to her class. She is trying to keep herself neat and

clean, as she was in the country, and has developed an ambition to improve herself, which is quite new, and one of the happy results of the self-respect first aroused by finding herself treated as a friend and a visitor by her kind hosts at the Mill. She talks much of coming again next year.

XXIII

AUTUMN

" The long cloud edged with streaming gray
Soars from the west:
The red leaf mounts with it away,
Showing the nest
A blot among the branches bare :
There is a cry of outcasts in the air."

Meredith.

I AM all alone here this evening. E. is in town, not on pleasure bent, but in order to visit a night school in the West End. These continuation classes are a development of our day. I fancy as yet the general public know very little about them, or there might have been—with more show of reason—a more violent Philistine out-cry than that which greeted the very necessary introduction of pianos into Board Schools, to accompany the teaching of singing and of musical drill, which has done so much to brighten the lives of the children. The instinct that made slave-owners refuse all education to their slaves is still very strong among us. There is a delightful story in Archbishop Benson's Life, of two old ladies who, from personal feeling towards himself, as they said, gave a contribution to the new night schools then being started

in Lincoln, but who also remarked, " Sister and I prefer an ignorant poor."

It is really a pleasure to see these men and women after their long monotonous days in shops and various places of business, flock in to be taught French, arithmetic, book-keeping, history, or perhaps to refresh their tired minds with Shakespeare, Tennyson and Even Browning. There was a middle-aged policeman learning arithmetic at a school where H.M.I. was last week (his own boy was a day-scholar there), and he, being very far behind his ten-year old son, was laughingly saying to the master, " Oh, you mustn't tell him what I am learning, he thinks I know all this." When one remembers the keen joy of work in one's student days, and how each new idea seemed like a fresh rift in the clouds of ignorance, one is very glad that these schools with their keen, enthusiastic teachers should widen the mental horizon of the many, and that the aristocracy of mind is to some extent open to all.

What a long dissertation, and I remember I was meaning to recount what a perfect St. Luke's Day this has been. The east wind has gone and with it all the hard greyness. This autumn the trees are a real phantasmagoria of colour. Opalescent mists veiled all the distance very tenderly, but many an exquisite suggestion of delicate amethystine tints peeped through as the breeze gently stirred the veil. The giant elms stood grandly out in bold feathery masses, those most sunward of pure Indian yellow, the others tinted and sprinkled and outlined in gold, but vivid green still predominating. The hedges, beside which, much rolled in rugs, H. had established me to sketch, make one think of a masquerade : every

single bush and shrub and tree had changed its dress for gala attire. Carmine wild cherries, rich purple viburnum straight and stiff and supporting in its arms great wreaths and festoons of pale green clematis, oak branches, some greenish-blue, others warm pink, scarlet hips and crimson haws. One laughed aloud with sheer inexpressible, irrepressible delight.

Just now the glow and the glory stir a wild rapture. Very soon one will say with Watson :—

" Oh be less beautiful, or be less brief,
Thou tragic splendour, strange and full of fear!
In vain her pageant shall the Summer rear?
At thy mute signal, leaf by golden leaf
Crumbles the gorgeous year."

and later:—

" And poignant grows the charm of thy decay
The pathos of thy beauty, and the sting,
Thou parable of greatness vanishing!
To me thy woods of gold and skies of grey
With speech fantastic ring."

I must not quote it all, but you remember the last lines:—

" O past and future in sad bridal met,
O voice of everything that perishes,
And soul of all regret."

The pretty young widow, Mrs. Trevor, came to tea this afternoon, and we got quite confidential talking over our children, her one girl and my one boy, " your firstborn and your lastborn too, Mummie," as he said to me one day.

XXIV

THE MEET

"Delightful scene!
Where all around is gay, men, horses, dogs,
And in each smiling countenance appears
Fresh blooming health, and universal joy."

Somerville.

THIS has been a glorious day, a sort of day " on which shall no man work but play." And my play took the form of driving to the meet of the S——'s Fox-hounds.

It was at the Three Crows, a well-known and too well frequented inn at the cross-roads, and close to the woods. These beech-woods are just now of a colour that defies description and would certainly baffle most painters. Homer's delightfully vague epithet of " wine-coloured " is nearest the mark, for there is a glowing depth and elusive quality in the shimmering tints which vary from palest gold to ruddiest brown. The sky behind them was deeply blue, and in the foreground was a most animated scene ; crowds of people on horseback, in carriages and on foot, and the ever-picturesque hounds. The huntsmen and whips here ride gorgeous in a yellow plush livery, which harmonises well with the woods, and there was the usual variety of hunting costumes,

with a rather unusual number, for this part of the world, of men in pink and of pretty girls. The Cabinet Minister, Mr. W., has a country house not far off ; his handsome daughters were there on fine animals, and our own squire's daughters are very attractive creatures and always well mounted. The Rector was there; a strong weather-beaten face, and well set up for all his odd seventy years. He is a first-rate shot, they say, as well as a hard rider, and was a strong bat a few years ago. He boasts that he never misses a good race, and he must be a humorist too. " Give you as good sermons as ever I can, you know, can't be extravagant, as good as can be got for half-a-crown," he said gaily the other day. " Got rather a dull tap on now, eh ? Must write and stir the fellow up." (The *Sporting Times* is the chief literature to be seen in his bachelor drawing-room in the fine old Rectory, a stately building in extensive grounds. When not engaged in field sports, or racing, the parish sees little of him except on Sundays, when he invariably takes a full share of services.)

I went to a Confirmation the other day. Our young people have gone up with little or no preparation. As one of the curates, who has since gone, said, " I told the lads if they came just a few times, and I found they knew the Lord's Prayer and Creed, and that sort of thing, I would give them their tickets." And this is the Year of Grace 189— !

When the Bishop's dreary address was over the young people came rushing out with a great air of relief, the girls fluttering out like a flock of pigeons, in their white or light dresses, and the lads, in Sunday black, looked like crows. It was very picturesque as they streamed into the old town-hall to get their

wraps, but it made one's heart ache, as one felt how little such a Confirmation had prepared them to "fight the good fight of faith."

This is a very long digression from my account of the meet. By the way, Mrs. Trevor was also there with her little girl, and I noticed how much she was admired. She does so very much need to have some one to take care of her. Another neighbour, old Mrs. T. T., and her daughter were also at the meet. She is the widow of the distinguished dramatic and art critic. She has known nearly all the art and literary notabilities of the day, and has moreover lived every hour of her long life in an intense yet simple fashion, so that now at upwards of eighty, she retains the heart, the outspokenness of a child, even to the expression sometimes of candid criticisms that most of us would leave unspoken. She is a true musician, one with a soul, I mean, not only with great powers of execution. She has both, and it is delightful to see her keen face, with its regular strong features.

XXV

SNOW

" To-morrow brings a change, a total change,
Which was now, though silently, performed,
And slowly, and by most unfelt, the face
Of universal nature undergoes."

Cowper.

WE are snowed up to-day. Two feet and more of snow lie over the broad hill-side, and there are deep snow drifts in the lanes and at the corners of the road, which are exposed to the wind. All traffic is stopped and the postman was belated, and yet a few days ago there was a definite foretaste of spring in the air, the birds were singing blithely, and I noticed yellow gleams of aconite in the borders, and snow-drops delicately rearing their heads.

What an extraordinary physical and mental, almost moral, relief it seems when the threatened snow has really fallen. Beforehand, " the weary weight of all this unintelligible world " presses on one. You say to yourself that after all it means nothing, that the feeling will pass, that there is not any reason for the nameless sense of oppression, of overwhelming and of unutterable dreariness; but nothing avails. You sigh yourself to sleep at night with the burden still

heavy. And then in the morning, as you wake to see your morning cup of tea and a cheerful face, and to hear a voice, which exclaims: " There's been such a fall of snow, Ma'am, the ground's all white/' you laugh at last night's gloom, and as you gaze over the white expanse a feeling of peace and joy fills one's heart, and you say perhaps the words one so often turns to, " And I said, it is mine own infirmity, and I will remember the years of the Most High."

There had been a sort of warning, too, one might have known what was coming, for in the afternoon there was a curious shower of soft blobs of snow which for a moment sprinkled the cold green grass like daisies, and then disappeared. There was a yellow sky with deceitful gleams, and then the air got heavy and dull and the trees began to strain ominously against a dark and angry sky.

I shall enjoy this brief spell of being snow-bound, and shall make a plunge into some old books that E. picked up at a secondhand book-stall a few days ago.

How delightful to find one's thoughts shared and so exquisitely expressed. Out of last night's *Westminster Gazette*, I cut this, and wish I could let the writer know what pleasure the lovely lines had given :—

" When darkness stole across the sky last night
 The earth was grey, the gaunt black trees were bare,
 A sense of desolation chilled the air
 As though each wind wailed for the dying light.
 To-day, the silent dawn came great and white,
 Showing a world re clothed, most strange, most fair;
 And we beheld it, breathlessly aware
 Of a pure message from the Infinite."

" Ah ! who shall turn and fashion into speech
 This inarticulate, divine reply,
 This answer to the night's despairing cry
 Shown in the morning? Who among you teach
 God's message, writ so fair on field and tree,
 That, hearing, men may know the thing ye see? "

Have you not often noticed among the "contrari-nesses" of life, that when one has so much to do that leisure is for the time being impracticable, one's mind is full of ideas clamouring to be recorded, epigrams as revealing as flash-lights come into one's mind, one's creative faculties are at their best, but all ends in smoke. Then on days of leisure, the absolute leisure that ill-health and continued bad weather give one in the country, where callers are few, one's mind seems a vacuum, and it would need an earthquake to bring to the surface the ideas that I suppose lie dormant.

To-day there has been an overwhelming sense of leisure, and instead of virtuously working at one or two odds and ends of literary work I have in hand, I have been rearranging my fireside shelves, and what was meant to be an hour's work, stretched out into a delightful morning of tasting rather than reading the varied treasures of this favourite corner, where mostly in choice bindings, in themselves a pleasure to touch, are some of the works of most of the great masters of English.

It was a delightful morning, and now being quite too dissipated after this feast to settle down to work of any kind, I have just energy to scribble.

XXVI

STORIES OF DOGS

" Mine is no narrow creed ;
And He who gave thee being did not frame
The mystery of life to be the sport
Of merciless man ! There is another world
For all that love and move—a better one
Where the proud bipeds, who would fain confine
Infinite Godship to the little bounds
Of their own charity, may envy thee."

Southey.

SOME of our younger neighbours came to tea this afternoon, and round the fire afterwards we fell to telling dog stories. One of the girls was saying that when she had been away from home, and was returning, her dog was always on the doorstep to meet her with a real smile of welcome. Then one of the other girls present told us about a dog she had had in Canada.

" When we took a house one year, we found there a very ugly dog of no particular breed and very ill-tempered, so cross indeed that at first we thought we could not keep him, but he got so very fond of us before long, that we could not have thought of getting rid of him. As I said, he was very ugly, with smooth shiny black hair ; we called him the Butcher. After a time I had to go away, and he became very miserable

and restless and not to be comforted when my packing was going on. Some friends took the house over from us, and promised to take care of poor Butcher. When I was saying good-bye, I told him I was coming to see him in ten days. Our friends wrote a little triumphantly to me in a few days, saying that Butcher was getting on very well, and was not at all sad. But I was delayed a little in my visit and heard that at the end of the tenth day he got very depressed. He was locked up as usual at night in a shed, but in the morning it was found that he had gnawed a hole and got away. We traced him for about 60 miles, as far as Niagara, and then all traces of him were lost. Had he been drowned in trying to cross ? "

We were all quite quiet when Violet had finished her story, and then I told them your Will's story in his words as nearly as I could remember them. He told it to us one hot summer evening long ago.

" When I left Ceylon, I had a little rough terrier called Smike, and I gave him to a lady. He seemed quite happy with her till one day a man came to her bungalow riding a horse that had also belonged to me. Smike went nearly mad with joy, and jumped upland licked the horse's nose and ran frantically about barking, till suddenly he discovered that it was another man, and not I, who was riding the horse. He just slunk away, no one could comfort him, and he died that night."

I was glad the story was so short, that I could get through it without showing emotion, but I got up and poked the fire and rang for lights and meanwhile, my husband relieved the gloom by a more cheerful story of a dog of his called Nigger.

" When I left the country and came to live in town

in chambers, I gave my little dog to some charming young ladies, who lived not very far off. Nigger found out that I still came down every Saturday to Monday, so he stayed contentedly with his new owners through the week, but trotted over every Saturday and stayed with me till Monday or Sunday evening, when he would trot back again. This went on for some time, till I think my own visits had become very uncertain."

When this story was told, we grouped ourselves round the table and played round games, and the young people got very merry.

XXVII

" HOURS OF INSIGHT "

" We are dumb; we are dumb : and may not tell
What stirs within us, though the soul may throb
And tremble with its passion ; though the *heart*
Dissolve in weeping:—dumb."

Lewis Morris.

ALL day long the metropolis was plunged in Cimmerian gloom, the sky being completely hidden by a dense pall of " high fog "—that is a quotation from to-day's " Daily Mail "—and as the slight wind that was hoped for has not sprung up, I fear the same condition of things must be going on, and that London is still " a city of dreadful night."

Yesterday here in our Hillside, a clinging white fog made the day raw and nipping, and when last night I looked out between the heavy curtains which shut us and the warm fire and bright lamp in, I saw a moon peering at intervals through a thick white nun-like veil; she looked a cold and pallid Bride of Heaven. But to-day the sun has conquered, and the heavy mist has been transformed into sparkling frost on every leaf and twig, while the ground is hard and ringing under the horses' hoofs, in whose veins the quickened blood is coursing. Roland and a school friend are out

tobogganing, my husband is superintending emergency works in the garden, where the great gales of a few days ago have wrought havoc. A luxuriant growth of ivy, which had been so beautiful with its masses of dark berries that it had escaped its due pruning, had become top heavy with its added weight of snow and had been blown over, bringing down with it in its fall the top of the wall,—while the newly planted yew hedge had been laid prone. One of the great cedars, not our own, but a notable feature in our view, has lost two immense limbs, which lie across the road, and a pear tree, which in the springtime "leans to the field and scatters on the clover blossoms and dewdrops"—is rent in two. How I shall miss its whiteness against the red trunks and blue-green darkness of the foliage of the Scotch firs behind it. It looks an utter wreck, beyond the annealing power of Time or the magician hand of spring to renew, but we shall see.

A week of illness has set me dreaming and idling again. If I were to practise actual abstention from food as a means of spiritual grace, I think I could only secure real good by at the same time staying in bed and in a dark room. Fasting in these circumstances has been enforced upon me on board North Sea steamers, or in illness at home, and when as in the first case the active misery was over, and only a sense of absolute prostration and indifference to all things remained, the fast leads to extraordinary mental clearness and promotes great vividness of the imagination. At these times, life seems so readily to fall into a scheme, the unimportance of external surroundings is apparent, and the far-reaching importance of the attitude of the soul both towards God and towards

man is seen as a fact, not as a platitude, while the deepened perception of soul values, as opposed to sense values, is keen and bracing. These have been true "hours of insight," when no task seemed impossible, when this life seemed truly but as a ladder into the Infinite, sometimes shining, sometimes dark, but always leading upwards, provided the soul be true and trustful. But do not seek to prolong the moments of the mount. Return as quickly as may be to practical life. Human nature is weak. Therefore eat, drink, do not dream, live in the actual, or the same imagination which helped you upwards, now working on a low and exhausted physical nature, will exercise itself on the small and the hateful, or some half forgotten revelation of badness, on your neighbour's faults, on the defects of those you love best.

This tendency surely explains, in part at all events, the temptations of the hermits and anchorites of old. The imagination strained too long to spiritual exercises, by an only too natural reaction created the exquisite sirens and the fleshly temptations which had to be exorcised by further tormenting of the already weary flesh.

For me the return is easy to the work-a-day world, including as it does my Roland and the healthy natural atmosphere which surrounds a young and ardent life, to whom everything is very good. "There is no fear of his overworking," wrote his master lately, "he enjoys life and so gets recreation out of work." And being very earnest over play, he gets work out of that, so the balance is kept true.

XXVIII

VILLAGE MORALITY

ONE of my first calls was to a cottage some way off, that is not in our parish, but so far from the village it does belong to that its inmates are never visited. It is a good enough six-roomed cottage in a charming position, but for all that it presents a picture of squalor and dirt that bid fair to rival that of a London slum. The fat frowsy mother sat with one child on her knee, another—the special object of my visit—in a dirty perambulator that served as cradle. The floor was covered with herring bones, crusts of bread, and quarrelling children—the table with spilt milk and flies. A grown-up daughter, unwashed, and with a shock of unbrushed hair, but rather well-looking for all that, was sitting idle on the other side of the rusty grate. It was sadly evident that she would soon be a mother. She did not feel the slightest shame in the matter, and her mother's chief grievance was that her confinement and her unmarried daughter's would happen so inconveniently near to each other !

My business here is to look after the last baby but one, a child of two-and-a-half years old, but weighing

less than a well-grown child of six months. A more pathetically old and wizened little face I have never seen; there is a constant expression of pain that haunts one, it is so hard to bring a smile to lips so unused to anything but moaning. We had it taken up to Kings' College Hospital, but they said it was a case that only wanted care and fresh air and plenty of milk. With milk it is now provided, and I go as often as I can to see that there is the improvement one has a right to expect, and if not, to turn on the officer of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. The mother thinks it is sure to die, and I am much afraid she will not give it the milk, with the idea that it is wasting good food, unless she sees that she is obliged to do so. Oh that such women should be allowed the priceless joy of Motherhood !

Next door live a rather nice-looking family of healthy little heathens. Four of them have never been baptised, the mother seeming to think that her poor health was quite a sufficient reason. She has now consented that they shall be " done " provided that we send for them and find the sponsors.

On my way back, I saw pretty Kate Smith, who had been married about two months ago, smiling over the garden fence of her neat little home. She was the best dressed and prettiest girl in the village, and was considered to hold her head very high, it was therefore all the more of a painful shock to see how close her motherhood was at hand. The pity of it! Another girl lately married was married on a Saturday, and her baby was born the day after.

This girl's mother came to ask for help and thereby gave me the opportunity of expressing my grief at her careless training and bringing up, for her daughter

had been living at home. " Oh well, it came afore it was expected," was her answer.

Who is to give these women and girls the sensible, simple, strong teaching on these subjects that is so greatly needed ? Why can our clergy not exercise something of the same influence that the Irish priesthood, with all their faults, do over the girls and young women of their congregations. Apart from moral suasion, one serious cause of this special evil is the difficulty of getting cottages. Many a marriage has been unduly delayed because there seems no possibility of finding a home for the young couple.

But when all this is said, the mothers do not attempt now-a-days to exercise any authority over their growing girls and boys. As long as they are at school, all responsibility is shifted on to the teachers, and afterwards, they are allowed an extraordinary amount of independence.

The better mothers are so anxious to give their children—girls especially—a good time, that they slave for them, while the worse mothers make the children drudges, but hardly attempt to control their conduct. How few are the really wise mothers in any class! In our own class one serious difficulty in the training of children often comes from the unsettled belief and absence of definite religious faith of many mothers, who are most anxious to train them rightly, and are painfully conscious that they do not know what to teach them. One is constantly reminded of the truism that when women have thrown overboard their anchor of a settled faith, and lost the compass of steadfast belief in God and Immortality, they drift so much more wildly in the frailer bark of their womanhood, than men in the heavier craft of

their strong practical manhood. Sometimes these latter can steer fairly straight for Home by the fixed stars seen sometimes through gaps in the clouds of doubt; more impatient, more exacting woman can rarely do this ; with her it is more often all or nothing.

Then again some mothers go wrong in the training of their children because they are too anxious for them to be happy, making this a direct and primary aim instead of an indirect or secondary one.

One of the wisest women of our day said to me lately, in speaking of the great value, in spite of its defects, of the strict Evangelical teaching of her youth: " Now the other day a girl wrote to me from Girton to say, ' You will be glad to hear that I am happy here.' Now," continued my friend, " we should never have thought that that was a matter of much importance, we were taught to do our duty, and not to consider much our likings and our feelings, still less to think they mattered to other people."

There is so much truth in this comparison, between the new system and the old, and we mothers, whose Puritan conscience is inherited, are perhaps still fairly strict with ourselves, but find it almost impossible to be strict with our children, and we are so afraid of their chafing under restrictions, that we make as few of them as possible. We treat our children so much as our equals that we may be very thankful if they do not come to consider themselves our superiors.

The story of the Board School girl's answer to a question as to application of the fifth Commandment: " It means that I am to take my parents for walks on Sunday afternoons, and to try not to let them see

how much more I know than they do," is quaintly significant.

I, who a few years ago was thought advanced, find I am old-fashioned, so fast swings the pendulum, and I could wish that our modern children were trained to know such poems as the " Ode to Duty " at least as well as " Alice in Wonderland," and that in days of growing militarism it might be at all events tempered by such a spirit as it set forth in the " Happy Warrior."

XXIX

TEMPERANCE

" O'er hills and dales the jovial savage reels,
Fire in his head and frenzy at his heels,
Now safe arrived he thunders at the muddy walls,
The well-known sounds an equal fury move,
And rage meets rage, as love enkindles love."

Crabbe.

PERHAPS there is no subject that so thoroughly bores and wearies the average public as Temperance or Intemperance.

Whichever way it is put, whether an eloquent discourse on the immense gain to the national character and to the race generally, in the development of national industries and productiveness that would follow on National Temperance, the wonderful levelling up of the standard of comfort and cleanliness, the decrease of crime and of madness that would ensue with sobriety, or whether the miseries, the wastefulness, the mad folly, the lowering of individual and national character that are produced by intemperance are graphically depicted, the same look and feeling of utter boredom is usually shewn.

When some irrefutable and startling statistics are quoted, the look of boredom may be succeeded by

one of irritation, or by a well turned joke or cynical remark. The same people will perhaps be roused to a frenzy of excitement over the aggressiveness of Russia on our N.W. Boundary in India, or the threatening activity of some other warlike nation or sovereign, but they only smile or sneer at the evil which not merely threatens, but in places already is sapping the moral supremacy on which the true ascendancy of our race is surely based.

Drink is not at our gates, it is in our midst.

One has gone through most stages of feeling oneself, one has been bored and irritated in turns by the intemperance of temperance advocates, one has lent a dull and unwilling ear to their arguments, has been frivolous, when they were most in earnest, and now Nemesis has overtaken one. Here in Hillside, one has learned to know, to like, sometimes to loathe, the individual drunkard, and to hate the system that is for ever thrusting temptation before him, that refuses to protect the children and the weak, and now one would fain be a Temperance Reformer. One no longer wonders that workers are sometimes carried into extremes, but only that all, who know the extent and magnitude of the evil are not almost rabid in their desire to fight it to the death without quarter or to suppress it with a strong hand.

If it were only the Devil to be fought! But it is the Demon of Respectability, of smug and self-satisfied religiosity, that quotes the letter and ignores the spirit of the Bible. It is the inertia of a settled custom and established habit of stupidity of the well-meant tolerance of opinion of the strong, who do not see the need of the weak, and the young being guarded against a temptation, which they do not feel. It is the in-

difference of those who do not wish to face a painful question on account of its bristling difficulties, and perhaps it is one's own carelessness in the past reflected in other people that is amongst one's worst enemies. Let anyone who is really in earnest in taking up this work, count the cost. He must prepare for personal unpopularity, and for what is harder, the sense that only a degree of persistence, which makes one realise painfully that one is a bore, will accomplish anything in the face of the steady trend of public opinion.

We have been much interested by the answers by letter or word of mouth to a kind of circular drawn up and sent round by our committee to employers of labour, as to the possibility of offering a choice of nonalcoholic drinks to the labourers at harvest time, or in any way preventing the usual scenes of intoxication.

" I call it interfering with the liberty of the subject," said a most excellent and kind-hearted landowner.

" Of course, I know there are people here, who if you set them in front of a beer barrel won't stop till the beer stops; but then——" The sentence remained unfinished, but the balance in the speaker's mind was evidently in favour of leaving man and barrel alone.

Our Squire's wife, herself a member of the Committee, took great pains to see that in their numerous hayfields, great cans of good tea were provided in the afternoon. She afterwards said : " Well, one result was that at the end of the first week, when they came to be paid, they could all stand, and last year hardly any of them could."

Our first temperance meeting was widely advertised, and to our great satisfaction the room was well filled, and there was quite a fair proportion of the working

men, we so wished to reach. The admirable address was listened to open-mouthed. We were elated. As one of the men left the room, he was heard to say, " Well, I should never have gone, but I thought I was goin' to get summat," and I can but think that in some way the meeting had been connected in their minds with free drinks, hence the attendance.

The next meeting was as widely advertised, and the popular Squire was most kindly going to speak. The evening came, the Committee and their families were well represented. There were a few dear old women, a sprinkling of little girls and babies, and the leaders of the temperance movement at the Chapel. After a time, two of us went out to see whom we could find and bring in. It seemed like a village of the dead, no one was to be seen, the public-houses' *outside* benches were empty, there were no men smoking outside their cottage doors, or lads loafing about the pond, as usual. We went into one or two cottages, and I think one man, still lame from an accident mainly the result of drink, did follow us on his crutches.

A few speeches sounding very flat and tame were made, and the meeting dispersed. Some of us felt crushed, and sad that evening, I can assure you.

We made no other attempt to attract a village audience by speeches. We provided Lantern Lectures and Entertainments with an address judiciously sandwiched in. Once we gave a party here. It was intended to be a garden party. All day the rain poured down pitilessly, and though it cleared up in the evening, it was too damp to be able to pretend to enjoy ourselves out-of-doors, so we turned it into a musical party, and there is so much local talent that

with the aid of Mrs. S. S. and her daughter, and other friends, there was quite a good concert, after a very substantial tea.

We were fortunate in having a missionary brother-in-law at home, and he had bicycled over and his stirring address did us all good. I saw eyes glistening, and furtive tears wiped away, as he pleaded with us to keep ourselves both in body and soul fit always to do God's work in the world.

One rather wonders at the apathy of the village as regards drink. It might well have been shaken by the many deaths directly due to it that have taken place in quite a short period of time.

The first winter we were here, a fine young yeoman farmer came home drenched to the skin, but so intoxicated that he never changed a garment. He had double pneumonia and died in delirium tremens.

About the same time, a bricklayer fell downstairs in a drunken fit, and broke his neck. Two other deaths by accident, one of an oldish man, by falling from a cherry tree, and another from a cart were due to the men having lost their heads from drink. Another man of some intelligence and brains, who might have been very well-to-do, for he was a clever workman, has slowly killed himself by incessant soaking. He had a very comfortable home kept together entirely by his industrious and devoted wife, whom yet he had many times beaten and kicked in his drunken furies. He was a nice man, when he was sober, and I took various opportunities (being then much more sanguine than I am now) of trying for his wife's sake and "the Cause's" sake to influence him. He talked very openly on the subject and he was a ready speaker, and could quote his Bible with some accuracy in his

own defence ! For while admitting to the full all the wickedness of drunkenness, he would never for one moment allow that he ever took more than enough. One Sunday (I think though early he was already a little maudlin) he told me as a great compliment to my persuasive powers, that I was like a mother to him ! He was well over 55 at the time. Poor wretch, his bouts became more and more frequent, his red-rimmed eyes and pale face showed very clearly the hard drinker.

Still his patient wife would try to keep him within bounds ; and one day I met them going into the woods to get flowers like any pair of lovers.

Then he broke his leg falling off a ladder, and I, still ignorantly sanguine, looked upon this as a great chance for him. It was, however, rather tiresome and contrary to all one's sense of the fitness of things, and indeed, to one's temperance creed, that the leg showed signs of healing on the first intention, and I saw the illness would not be so long as might be desired. I was still hopeful, till one day I saw the inevitable mug of beer in his hand while he was still in bed, and was told that he was already being allowed so many mugs daily. Then all my hopes as a reformer were dashed to the ground. He soon came downstairs and began to hobble about on crutches. Before many days they carried him as far as the " Red Rose " and from that time, I abandoned all hope of him.

A few more drinking bouts and he was in his grave and his wife in heavy crape, which I believe, so wonderful are the ways of women, covered a mourning heart.

XXX

BRIGHTON AND MRS. TREVOR'S COURTSHIP

" Bring therefore all the forces that you may,
And lay incessant battery to her heart,
Plaints, prayers, vows, ruth and sorrow and dismay.
These engines can the proudest love convert."

Spenser.

It is the day, or rather the night, when the great display of leonids is expected. Thirty-three years ago I was one of the " little ones " watching for them, We had never been told anything about this wonderful display, about which all the grown-up world was talking, and we were put to bed just as usual at 8 o'clock, and though I awoke at the sound of all the eager talk and excited exclamations in my father's room, from which a door only separated ours, I only wondered sleepily what it was all about, turned over and went to sleep again. How wrathful, and righteously wrathful and disappointed I was when the next morning we heard about the marvellous and magnificent star showers of the night. It was cold comfort to be told one might live to see another display in thirty-three years' time. I remember my vehement answer, that if I did, what should I care about stars when I should be so terribly old.

And it is true. I am waiting up because a " late sitting " has its charms, and the warm fireside is very pleasant.

I am writing from Brighton. I came here a week ago, driven away by damp and rain, by fallen leaves and sodden foliage, which do not suit me.

I brought my friend, the young widow, with me, and of course Christel and her nurse. Both mother and child seemed to need change, and I rather felt that absence from home and lover might help Mrs. Trevor to make up her mind. She is still struggling hard to maintain her independence, which is an exotic plant in her case, for she was born to be looked after and taken care of ; and she is very angry with her heart for not siding with her in her brave struggle to maintain the ideal of " one life, one love." It is the ideal thing, but then six months is such a little scrap of life ! The little violet shadows under her eyes, the result of wakeful nights, only increase her beauty. Even in this world of pretty well-dressed women, she holds her own and is much admired.

We have been driving in the afternoons. One day we passed Christel taking the air in her cart, but as it happened we were absorbed in talk, and did not notice her till we had passed, and waved our hands in greeting too late for her to see. Her sense of dignity was deeply offended, and she said to her nurse, " Mum not look at me, I not look at Mum next time I am in my calliage." So this afternoon when we again passed her on the Parade her little head was averted, and we thought she did not see us. But the moment we had passed she exclaimed with a half-mischievous, half-serious air, " I did it, Nan." Nurse had forgotten the threat, so asked her what it was she had done, to

which Christel replied, " Didn't look at Mum, Nan, 'cause she didn't look at me." Such dignity and such a memory for sights at three years old is astonishing. What a life she will lead her lovers in a few years' time.

Many times in the intervals of writing over the fire, I have been to the window and gazed and gazed at the unresponsive skies. The world this side of it, at least, seems as if it had gone to sleep. I can watch no more ; sleep almost overpowers me.

It has been real Brighton weather to-day, brilliant, blue, breezy and exhilarating, with the peculiar crispness and saltiness of the air that is so characteristic. I am quite sure that few people properly appreciate the poetry of Brighton. They only associate it with fashion and frivolity, but I assert that there is a great deal of poetry either on a misty morning, or just at sunset time when the long, long line of irregularly built houses stand purplish black against the sky, while rows upon rows of electric lights and gas lamps mingle with the glow from the crimson west. Then the great palaces inhabited chiefly by Israel, or should I say Judah, Benjamin and the half-tribe of Manasseh lose all their garish vulgarity, and look like great illuminated palaces, piled up towards heaven. The sound of the waves, which during the day one hardly hears, so drowned are their voices by the hubbub of life. But now in the stillness you can hear the soft swish of the waves and the dragging sound as they retreat, "the melancholy long withdrawing roar." Rank and fashion are mostly indoors, and the lovers are about in the soft dusk.

This is a long digression. I meant to tell you that this morning we went to the nearest church, Holy Trinity. We had a quiet service and a sermon from

a thoughtful young preacher, with a face too deeply lined for his years ; it was on the " coming " of God ; —not the coming made so terrible to one's childish imagination by that awe-inspiring hymn, " Lo, He comes, with clouds descending"—which I think must have done much to invest what is ecclesiastically called The Second Advent with awe and terror to timid souls—but the gentle comings of God into our souls, of His tender comfortings, of His upholding strength given us, when else our hearts had failed within us; of His coming in the radiant beauty of morning, and in the mystic wonder of the sunset. As I sat and listened, suddenly the sunlight flashed on the inscription on a brass tablet over the altar, " In Memory of Frederick Robertson," and I marvelled no more that one had felt there was such a true spiritual atmosphere in that plain ungainly building with its clumsy galleries and dingy colouring. It was here that those wonderful sermons were preached, which have brought life and freedom to so many bound and straitened souls, sermons so deeply human, and therefore so divinely helpful.

Afterwards, we walked straight to the sea front, drawn by the fresh whiffs of salt air, sweeping up the narrow side street, and were absorbed into the Sunday throng. We admired and criticised by turns the wonderful costumes, the consummately well " built" garments, the attempts, the failures, here and there, the beautiful faces, the pretty faces, the good faces, the bad faces, and the ugly ones, only, as Jefferies says of Brighton in his book, " The Open Air," " Even when you do not chance to meet an exceptional beauty still the plainer women are not plain like the plain women in other places. The average is higher, and

they are not so irremediably uninteresting; the flash of an eye, the shape of a shoulder, the colour of the hair, something or other pleases." But that is from the man's point of view, and these crushes weary me ineffably. I think the Puritan strain in my blood makes them more than usually tiresome after a good service. So we soon left the crowd.

Brighton is so kaleidoscopic. In five minutes we were in a very different crowd, where a Salvation Army captain with a typical face was preaching; and then we lingered for a few minutes to listen to an eager exponent of Anglo-Israelism. He was eloquent, but h'less. A pedigree was lying at his feet, and he was discoursing on the thesis that a very small proportion of Jews had what we were apt to consider the typical hooked nose (he called it 'ooked). He said that Holman Hunt gave us a reason for depicting the Anglo-Saxon type he chooses for "The Light of the World," was that this face was the one he found most commonly among the Jews in Palestine.

So far we heard, and then walked on. Suddenly my companion gave a little start, and as my eyes followed hers, I saw advancing to meet us in the most natural way in the world, Dr. Hamilton. He came up in his quiet self-contained manner, and greeted us without any excuse or reason for his sudden appearance, such as a less well-bred man would infallibly have made and stumbled over. He turned and walked with us to our hotel door. I asked him to luncheon; he declined with courtesy, but requested permission to call later on. So he is giving her time to make up her mind, but for all that, he has evidently come with a decided intention of pursuing his suit, and he does not mean to take "No" as an answer.

Dr. Hamilton has a curious way of twisting himself up in knots, so that you find yourself wondering how he will disentangle himself when he has to get up. I noticed this in the afternoon, when he came and planted himself in the corner of the sofa, and relapsed into a monosyllabic mood. Christel relieved the tension by rushing in radiant from her walk, and gurgling with pleasure at seeing her great admirer, born coquette as she is. She poured forth a stream of questions about all the village friends, complained bitterly that there were "no cows at Brighton," cows evidently standing in her mind for rural life, fields and flowers.

Tea came in and Baby was temporarily silenced with sponge-cakes, while I tried to make it possible for Sylvia to put in a few words. But Christel was in her most self-assertive mood, and decidedly hurt at being put on one side. She stood it for some time, and then, sponge-cake in hand, she solemnly advanced, and standing in front of Dr. Hamilton, she said slowly and distinctly : "What for you come here, Doctor. Muzzer not ill; Muzzer not want to see you." This, in a most imperative and positive little voice. We laughed as naturally as we could, and her mother flushed a little.

To prevent any more *enfant terrible* remarks, I took Christel into the balcony, and amused her with the many things always to be seen at Brighton. It was dark now and the stars were coming out, and the lights were shining in the fishing boats far out at sea, and on the piers. The rows of gaily coloured electric lamps entranced Christel. The piers looked like fairy palaces to her. "Nan says," this in a most dramatic voice, "that God lights the stars, and the lamp yihter

lights the lamps, and them's much bigger." This last daring assertion was made after a pause in a most decided manner, and you can interpret the unconscious parable of her remark for yourself. Without more ado, the little golden head subsided on my shoulder, and I carried the child off to bed in my arms. Just as we had left the drawing-room I had overheard the remark, "I hope Baby is not a *true* interpreter of her mother's feelings," and I wondered what answer had been given to this rather leading question. I did so hope it would have been a satisfactory one.

After safely putting Christel to bed, I came downstairs and went into the drawing-room. Alas ! Dr. Hamilton was looking very grave, and with a sad look in his deep-set eyes, and Mrs. Trevor was very pale. He had said good-bye, I think, for with the briefest of farewells to me, he left. I felt very cross with her, and when she asked me rather timidly if I should mind being alone, as she thought she should like to go to church, I answered her rather tartly that I did not in the least mind her going, and that I would look after Christel if she woke.

Poor girl, when she came in from church, her eyes were shining with a sweet martyr-like expression—so very unnecessary, I think, and her lids were reddened with tears.

I know a dear woman, and so do you, who remained single for twenty years, chiefly in order to remain faithful to a lover who had been her ideal at 16, and who had died of brain-fever. Then she married and was happy ever after. Whenever she had felt as if she might respond to the love and admiration of the various would-be lovers, she used to get out old diaries and rub up her sorrow till it was as fresh as ever.

I am quite sure Dr. Hamilton will not wait twenty years or twenty months for Sylvia Trevor, and if she sends him away, he will never come back unsought, though I doubt if he will marry anyone else, because he is that rare sort of man who takes love like scarlet fever, once for all.

It seems to me very strange to find myself arguing so strongly in favour of a woman marrying for the second time ; but six months, which was the duration of Sylvia's married life is such a short time out of sixty or seventy years perhaps, and as she was barely twenty, and he more than forty-five, and bald and stout—at least, that is what the late Mr. Trevor looks in the photographs his widow weeps over—I feel doubtful whether she had ever known much of love.

XXXI

GROWING OLD

" Grow old along with me
The best is yet to be
The last of life for which the first was made :

Youth shows but half; trust God ;
See all, nor be afraid."

Rabbi Ben Ezra.

THE rooks are cawing and the swelling buds are thickening the delicate tree traceries against the clear pale sky. The rich purple of the underwood grows deeper every day, and the catkins on the willow boughs show silvery downy tips. In the garden the daffodils are in golden luxuriance. Their very abundance and popularity threaten to make them in a measure lose their charm. One dreads lest the poet's daffodil should perish amid the bewildering variety of florists' daffodils. Their exquisite curves and stately lines, the delicious contrast of texture between the silky petals and the crisp brown enfolding spathes remains the same, but I fear me the true charm of the daffodil may disappear. It only remains to associate them with some prosy politician.

Very soon the cuckoo will be here and " his twofold shout from hill to hill " will ring in our ears.

Spring's languor and restlessness have replaced winter's working fireside moods. Dan Chaucer's lines still best express the feelings of townfolk ;

" When that Aprillé with his showres sweeté
The drought of March hath perced to the roote,
Then pricketh them Nature in her courages
Then longen folk to go on Pilgrimages."

Chaucer,

" With whitening hedges and uncrumpling fern " those of us, whose spring has passed, long sometimes to be young again. Most women, even if they are philosophers, have moments then when they are more conscious of the cruel footmarks of time upon brow and cheek; of lines no longer so harmonious; of spirits not so responsive to outside influence; when we echo with some touch of bitterness the poet's cry:

" O man that from thy fair and shining youth
Age might but take the things youth needed not."

Nothing is more unlike the reality than the ideas of youth about middle age. Who of us when we were twenty thought that at forty there would be so much in which we should be unchanged ? We find in ourselves the same capacity for joy and sorrow, the same tastes, though modified by circumstances and years, the same strength of feeling, and, if it is, as we hope somewhat less personal and passionate it is all the deeper. And, though youth could only see the losses of middle life looking on ahead, middle life knows its gains. One's outlook is so amazingly wider, one's interests have multiplied so greatly, one's friendships

are purified and strengthened by suffering shared; our knowledge of the worlds of art and science and Nature have developed so many new avenues of delight and interest, that though one may sigh at the memory of a lost freshness of enjoyment, one would not exchange one's calmer pleasures for the feverish egotistic joys of youth. I reckon the greatest loss is the belief cherished that in twenty years at all events one would have conquered all one's faults, and overcome all one's evil tendencies—a modified condition of the childish creed, "Grown up people never make mistakes, 'cept Kruger and the Boers," as Christel said the other day.

At her age, and indeed much later, I cherished a hearty dislike to growing up, and can remember my father's hearty laughter when I said one day, that it must be so dreadfully dull to get old, that I thought I should kill myself at thirty if I were then alive.

I so vividly remember being impressed with the dulness of the things that grown-ups did, and feeling vaguely that nothing at all likely to happen in our circle could be more interesting than the castles in the air, and the dreamland in which one lived as a child.

Then one awoke to life in real earnest, and to the keen delights of study and art. Later came Love and the sweet joys of Home, and the thrilling touches of baby fingers; and looking back one smiled at the memory of dreams and said real life is sweeter.

So in looking forward, now when sometimes this life seems so warm and sweet and real, and the life beyond the veil so dim and cold and shadowy, I comfort myself in thinking that it is the same story over again, that here we are like children absorbed in toys, grieving over lessons, but that when the Angel Death rouses

us to the Life Immortal we shall find how far reality transcends our best imaginings and highest aspirations. We will not be afraid of life's December.

Our neighbour, Mrs. T. T., is a stimulating example of cheerful old age, she enjoys life to the full, and says she wakes up each morning thinking " Now what delightful thing am I going to do to-day ? "

I had a letter not so very long ago from a friend, whose father, a dear old Scotch physician, friend and contemporary of Dr. John Brown, author of " Rab and his friends," is much over 90. She described how at Christmas he had dressed up in his wedding clothes of 63 years old, in a frilled shirt and beaver hat, and had with fun and laughter enacted Father Christmas for his grandchildren. He has flowing silvery locks, which hang on to his shoulders, and bright blue eyes, so he must have looked a very quaint and picturesque figure. He does not feel old and rather resents what he considers the unnecessary care taken of him by his devoted daughters.

XXXII

MRS. TREVOR FINDS HER WAY

It was a murky winter evening, raw and nipping, there were a few sullen red gleams in the west when, in the gathering darkness, I went across to see Mrs. Trevor.

She has looked so pale and thin lately that we have felt troubled and worried at the perversity that kept her from giving in. And there have been complications. After the Brighton visit, Dr. Hamilton was away for a time, attending an uncle's death-bed. There were rumours moreover that he had had a fortune left him, and that he would probably give up his country practice and go to London. How much of this is true one does not know, but enough I daresay to make Mrs. Trevor's surrender even more difficult I fear, as far as her pride is concerned. I was surprised to hear from the little maid that she was out on such an evening on an errand of mercy to a cottage some way off, and I stayed talking to Christel and expecting every moment to hear her mother come in. But in vain, so I came homewards again preparing a scolding for my imprudent friend. As I passed the turning towards the town I heard voices and two

well-known figures emerged out of the misty darkness, a tall man leading a horse by one hand, which also held a lantern, while the other hand was holding Mrs. Trevor's as far as I could see. I should have passed them by had I not been seen, but the lantern betrayed my presence, so I spoke.

" Why, my dear, that's you, is it. I was getting anxious, thinking you had lost your way coming back."

" No, it's all right," answered the doctor's deep baritone. " I think we have found the way at last, haven't we, Sylvia ? "

And judging by the happy faces I am sure it is the right way. I felt very glad at this happy ending of " My Widow's Romance"—though with feminine inconsistency I felt, for the first time, also a pang as I recalled the lonely grave in far-off Australia !

They came the next day, and I heard the true story of the legacy, which would certainly make no difference in his career, though it would lessen anxiety as to the future. They will be established in Dr. Hamilton's charming old house in the town. Christel grows more and more fascinating. She is still as dignified as ever. Women's careers were being spoken of in her presence, and Dr. Hamilton laughingly said: " You, Christel, must learn to cook." A moment's silence, and then she answered : " *I shall be a Mother to my children* "—a long pause—" I shall *keep* a cook and a nurse." Such dignity at three-and-a-half !

Dr. Hamilton and Mrs. Trevor are to be married very soon, not in London as I had expected, but here, at 8 o'clock in the morning, and no one but two or three old friends are to know the day beforehand. Very pretty and sensible of them.

XXXIII

RUSKIN AND CHARADES

" But if you smile on all, then these designs,
Like the imperfect treasures of our minds,
Will pass for current whereso'er they go,
When to your bounteous hands their stamp they owe."
(A Prologue) Dryden.

I SEE that dear Mr. Ruskin has just passed to his rest. Yesterday, just as the sunset hues, which he had so often watched, which he had loved so well, and taught others to love, were flooding the earth and sky with an unearthly glory ; the golden gates in the West, towards which we too are stepping, were opened for him. Surely he has left some faithful souls at least more reverent, more humble before the Infinite ? As I sat thinking of him in the twilight, my thoughts went back to the treasured scraps of personal intercourse one had in one's youth with the great man, when at C. Rectory that evening so long ago, we were asked to go and amuse Mr. Ruskin with some of our charades. There was music first, and the Professor, who was not, I imagine, really a music-lover—liking it chiefly as an added grace to womanhood and when it was simple and easy to be understood—praised much a song that I have loved ever since—" The Lark now

leaves her watery nest." " The sweetest song ever written," said the great Professor, and C.'s voice was one of those thrilling contraltos that put passion and imagination into every song.

Later came the charades. One of them, improvised with some fear and trembling as being rather advanced, represented a smart young bachelor who falls desperately in love with a lady doctor. I was " Augustus," and E. was the doctor. The love story ended in marriage, and then the final scene some years later shows how the doctor neglects her home, her husband and her babies, and also introduces the spectators to Augustus, with a weary pile of work beside him, unshaven, unkempt, tubbing his numerous family, which was I think represented by a series of dressed up pillows, and a good deal of amateur ventriloquism for their different cries and wails. It seems so strangely silly and Philistine that one can almost blush for it now, but how the Professor laughed! He laughed till he cried, and clapped his hands till he nearly fell off his chair.

No one knew then what wonderful doctors and surgeons women would become, and what beautiful home lives they would at the same time be the centre of, and how much gratitude the world would owe to them.

There were other charades afterwards, I remember, and we all did our best, inspired by the delightful reception our first effort had met with. I remember too how soon afterwards we translated and acted " Minna von Barnhelm," and gave a series of Shakespeare plays in the big room we called the Barracks, and how on one occasion the forest in the " Two Gentlemen of Verona " was represented by many pots of Jerusalem artichokes.

The climax of our performance was "Romeo and Juliet," when Nell, looking charming in doublet and hose as Romeo, pulled down the whole front of the brown paper, virginia-creepered house, as she made her farewells to Juliet, and thereby revealed the friar crouched at her feet as prompter. Oh ! the dear old days when youth and high spirits supplied all deficiencies !

XXXIV

MARRIAGE AND THE BROWNING LETTERS

" Marriage is the greatest event of life : it is also a new beginning of life. It is a home for the lonely, a haven of rest for those who have been too much tossed by the storms of life. It is the best and the most lasting thing. It is heaven upon earth to live together in perfect amity and disinterestedness and unselfishness to the service of God and man until our life is over."

I AM reading Jowett's Life and came across this delightful passage from a marriage address at Castle Howard. Oddly enough I happen to know a young man who was present at this marriage, and he, his heart no doubt thereto inclined by Jowett's eloquence, promptly fell in love with one of the bridesmaids, and married her a year later. I hope he has found, or begun to find out how true the great man's words are.

I only saw Jowett once, and that was on the occasion that Lord Tennyson was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey. You may remember that the Master of Balliol was one of the distinguished pall-bearers, his white hair and cherubic countenance stood out so clearly against the dark shadows round the grave, that I can recall his appearance distinctly. No one

who was there that day will ever forget the grandeur of the rendering of the Funeral Service, and still more the impression produced by the singing of Sullivan's setting of the " Crossing of the Bar." How the music rose and fell among the arches, like the dark solemn tide it represented, and how at the end the silvery voices pealed out in strains of half-pathetic triumph :

" I trust that I shall see my Pilot face to face,
When I have crossed the Bar."

Now I am on the topic of marriage I am reminded of a recent discussion on the same subject with some dear friends, when seated in our garden.

Hay was being made in the great meadow that slopes away from our garden down to a band of trees beyond which the land rises in undulating lines to the far horizon, to-day of a deep rich blue. The delicious drowsy warmth and sweetness of the July day pervaded everything, great wafts of scented air came bringing the murmurous hum of bees, and the very voices of the children in the hay-field seemed mellowed and soft.

The garden was a brilliant blaze of colour in the sun. We were sitting in the deep shade of the lime trees.

Our friends were Mr. R. the great animal painter and his wife. As we sat and sipped coffee, our minds woke up and we fell into animated talk of a book we had been reading—the much discussed Browning Love Letters. I will recount as far as I can in conversational form, the drift of our talk.

Mrs. R. It seems to me too terrible to publish such sacred confidences. If I thought that anyone would read the letters I write to R. when he goes away

("which is not very often," put in the painter) or those he writes to me, I would never write to him again except on a postcard.

Mr. R. Well, but you see the happiness of such humble folk as ourselves, though very good for our small corner of the world, is of quite a different order. The record of it however much appreciated by our wives is *not* literature, and, forgive me, dear (turning to his wife), perhaps not so very well worth keeping. But Robert Browning knew what he was doing when he left those letters so carefully arranged to his son with permission to do with them as he liked. He felt perhaps that in one sense the letters were even a greater gift to the world than his and his wife's poems had been, and their value he never ignored, because while the poems show forth a glorious ideal of married love, the letters show that the ideal had been made real.

E. After all, the letters tell us little more than the poems do, in some ways much less.

Mrs. R. It is so very comforting to know that all this worship was given to a woman, who was, well—dare I say it?—positively pl——

Mr. R. No, you shall not say it. You shall not tell me that Mrs. Browning had a large mouth and a very thin face. You forget the touches of description he has left, the "great brow and the spirit-small hand propping it." You forget the dark eyes and the clustering hair, and no doubt she always retained the spring and charm of youthfulness. You have only to read the letter announcing her death to see that she was always beautiful to him.

I. I shall never forget the thrill of emotion which

positively tingled through me when I first saw Robert Browning. It was at a Private View in the early days of the Grosvenor Gallery, and there was a wonderful assemblage of interesting men and women.

Mr. R. The most remarkable thing was, I think, the wonderful proportion of his features. No doubt brow was predominant, but each feature held its own so harmoniously. His face very well expressed both the versatility of his mind and his strong feeling that "all good things are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul."

E. You spoke of his versatility just now. It reminded me of my father's first interview with him. My father was waiting in a friend's house for his return, when the footman showed in a gentleman unknown to him. They soon entered into talk, which became animated and passed rapidly from one subject to another, so that my father, much interested, began to wonder much to whom he was talking. First he took him for a distinguished diplomatist, then for a physician, a country gentleman, then for a barrister with literary leanings, once again for a philosopher, and before he could at all make up his mind, Sir A. W. came in and introduced Robert Browning.

Mr. R. I think that is a very characteristic story which I am glad to have heard, and I think you women ought to be glad that his letters have been published, because, in a way, they have raised the high water mark of married happiness. We hear a great deal of talk of unhappy marriages, but what age can show so many true and noble unions, beginning with the Queen's, and her great ministers'—Beaconsfield, Salisbury, Gladstone, chiefest.

H. And the Tennysons.

Mr. R. And the Huxleys I Yes and the Bensons ! Archbishop Benson loved his wife from the time she was only a little girl, young enough to sit on his knee and put her arms round his neck. So there is another beautiful example of " one life one love."

Mr. R. Judging by the examples you have named, and I could name many others, married love must be a stimulating sort of thing. What noble work, what noble workers—Brownings, Tennysons, Gladstones, Salisburys, Bensons !

Mrs. R. It does seem as if examples like these might do something to stem the foolish talk of marriage as bondage and sinful slavery, and of free love as the only possible union for exalted souls.

I. Roland and I were staying not long ago at C. K. with our dear old friend Mr. W. W., and one of his sons, a most high minded young fellow, a scholar, and a Fellow of his college, with a pale ascetic face, talked to me one day of marriage as the curse of society, and as if free love was the only basis for pure and virtuous lives. I told him I had seen so much of free love, when working in his father's old London parish, as to be convinced that it was rather demoralising than otherwise to family life.

Mr. R. I suppose you saw something of the seamy side of life in that West End Slum !

Yes, a great deal. Much of it is too painful to discuss, but, there was sometimes a humorous side to the tragedy. There was a drunken laundress (why whitening clothes should blacken souls I don't know, but it does), and I was trying, rather stupidly perhaps,

to persuade her to leave the disreputable man, with whom she was living, and to go back to her husband, who was alive and living not far off. She drew herself up with much dignity, and answered, " Oh well, I did go to see him the other day, and the other lydy wot's living with him insulted me crool, she did." The air of injured innocence was quite indescribable.

Oh, that was a terrible court! I have stood against a door, where a woman very ill was lying with her new born baby, to prevent an inrush of drunken men. The sin, the dirt, the misery of the place—the only decently dressed girls were the bad ones.

Mr. R. Your village friends must be a refreshing change I should think. Now, who lives in that idyllic looking cottage over there with the blue smoke curling up from the chimney and the cherry trees almost hiding it ?

E. You might have asked us about almost any other cottage, for really most of the people here are a decent sort; a good deal of hard drinking perhaps, but taken all round they are a nice enough set. But in that cottage !

Mrs. R. (with some curiosity). Well, what about that cottage ?

I. There has been a very painful illustration of free love. The woman left her home 15 years ago, when she was quite a girl, driven away they say by a drunken father, and came to live with a middle-aged man, whose family was grown up. They had several beautiful children and he had always been kind to her—such a strange gnome-like old creature he is, with very bright eyes under regular penthouses of

shaggy brows, a pointed ragged beard and toothless jaws.

Mrs. R. Why didn't he marry her ?

I. At first he wouldn't because she had such a hot temper, and he thought he wouldn't tie himself, and then later on she wouldn't, but they pretended they had been married, and were whitewashed in the village society, and she attended Mothers' Meetings and was looked on as quite respectable. Then about a year ago, there were ugly rumours about another man being always there, and dreadful scenes, and then the old man tried his best to induce her to be married to him. She was stubborn ; she had come to hate him. One day he bitterly said to me, " I know now what it means, ' Thy sin has found thee out! ' I tried to persuade her to be married to the father of her children—not then knowing that there was an unborn child not his. I cannot forget a scene in which the wretched woman, usually a very stone, broke down in bitter sobs crying out, " It's no good, it's no good, whichever way I turn, I see nothing but sin."

Mrs. R. And where is she now ?

I. She went away when the child was born, leaving her pretty girls just growing up—one was 14—to begin another story of sin and shame. The other man will never marry her, because the law would make him responsible for the support of all the first family of illegitimate children.

At this point, our neighbours, the Squire's family, came into the hayfield and the scene grew lively. We wandered about with them among the grey fragrant hay-cocks, and talked and laughed, till tea came, and not very long after the pony carriage came

round, and our delightful visitors went away. We miss London friends down here, but sometimes a long day like this makes up for many shorter, less happily convened meetings in London drawing rooms.

XXXV

THE PONT DU GARD

WE were staying at Nimes and intended to linger there; but day by day the whole place became obsessed with the approaching bull-fight, fixed for this Fête du Pentecôte ! Flaring posters on the grey walls of the amphitheatre described among the chief attractions " Dix taureaux magnifiques à tuer." We heard afterwards that in addition to the ten noble animals, tortured and killed without chance of escape, that twelve horses had been gored to death. Crowds poured in from the neighbourhood to fill the grand old Roman arena, which seats 18,000.

We fled to the Pont du Gard. Travelling thence in our carriage—a third class one—for one always gains knowledge and pleasure from the people met there—we found a joyous company of girls from a French College, holiday-making. We fraternized and found them charmingly bright and amiable. It was their first journey and they were naturally excited. They introduced their English teacher—a bright pretty young girl whom they adored—to us, and proceeded to exhibit their proficiency in English. They asked us many intelligent questions about " Roudeyard Keep-ling " and other authors.

They were greatly astonished at the wide views over the plains we traversed.

At their teacher's suggestion they sang to us, with fresh pure voices and well-opened mouths ; displaying excellent sets of snowy teeth. Rule Britannia was sung in our honour, with as much *verve* as the most ardent believer in the Entente Cordiale could desire. Later they sung plaintive peasant songs.

As we neared our destination note-books were produced, and we were asked to write what we liked in them. Their amusement and gratitude when they found themselves described briefly and complimentarily, with our good wishes for their journey, was delightful. We were quite sorry to part and their handshakes were truly British in their heartiness. How different they were from the girls of our training colleges.

Arrived at our Hotel at the Pont du Gard we found the grounds swarming with people and automobiles—a fair was being held. Crowds poured in from Aries, Nimes and many a neighbouring village. Groups of young men flocked in, and family parties established themselves in the numerous tents in the front of the hotel, or on the ground. Déjeuner began, some clamoured for food, others brought quantities of bread and meat and bottles of wine—the family which worked the Merry-go-round sat on the ground eating an enormous omelette flanked by rolls of great length and substance. At times the young members of the crowd broke into song. The Booths, served by wrinkled old crones and frequented by crowds, were heaped with sweets, favours and toys—all the gilded rubbish that is always to be found on them.

The roads to the Pont du Gard are blocked by

visitors in automobiles, but none showed an interest in the beautiful scenery. The whole thing was very primitive and reminded us of a similar scene in the Nilgiris.

The great event of the day for the younger members of the crowd was the dancing. The music was provided by a band on a lofty platform raised among the trees. From this leafy bower, the cornets and fiddlers played with great energy for hours, the people dancing in a glade of trees on the grass below them. As usual the soldiers in uniform were in the greatest request as partners. Among the women were some good-looking and dainty Arlesian women in the peasant Arlesian costume; they are famed for beauty. I heard one of them whisper " Anglaise " as I stood looking at them, so I introduced myself as a visitor to far-famed Provence. I asked them if they had read their Mistral in Provençal. " Oh yes ! " they said, " We generally talk Provençal " They were greatly pleased that I had seen his statue at Aries, and asked me if I had seen that of Daudet in Paris. I asked them why they had powdered their faces and made themselves like millers. They were amused and said they were hot with dancing.

We then left the noisy crowd to explore the Pont du Gard. Those who have seen the Pont du Gard will understand our horror when we heard that the owner had threatened to blow it up unless the Government paid him some enormous sum as a ransom.

As the guide-books tell us, it was built 19 B.C. to carry water to Nimes, 22 miles distant. Some 200 years ago the lower tier of arches was widened so as to form a carriage road—a utilitarian undertaking that failed. Its history has of course many points of interest—Napoleon, it is said, in characteristic

fashion, inscribed his name on it—but its supreme interest lies in the magnificent strength, solidity and grace of its soaring three tiers of arches ; five spanning the river Gardon and resting on its rocky banks, surmounted by a tier of eleven, one side losing itself among the luxurious foliage of the wooded heights, the other, with a graceful curve, blends its masonry with massive rocks, the third tier of 35 arches carrying the aqueduct, its golden ochre stonework framing glimpses of azure sky and floating clouds. One can ascend by a staircase to the third tier, and traverse the bridge by a passage from bank to bank.

The surroundings form a worthy setting. If you wander along the left bank, on one side the ground steeply rising and densely covered with the pink and white cistus—rightly called rock rose—for its roots spring from among the rocks. Wild strawberry blossoms, anemones, columbines, and many a wild flower cover the ground, with, in some places, masses of uncurling bracken. Each turn showed new beauties. On the left bank, which is thickly wooded, a carriage road runs following the windings of the river, leading to a grey walled château with battlements but modernised, and a still more interesting fortified farm-house of the middle ages. But even more delightful than the river-side strolls was the climb to the hills through disused vine fields. Below the Pont Du Gard the river widens, and an old mill stands on one bank, and on the other are olive gardens and vineyards. But the charm and spell of the Pont du Gard and its surroundings are indescribable.

On our return late in the evening we found peace reigned ; the crowd had departed, leaving, however, many traces in the sad state of the lawns and the litter

scattered about. The proprietress was cheerful. I asked her how many hundreds she had entertained,— " Mon Dieu, des milles," she exclaimed. The patience she and her helpers had shown in serving the hungry clamourous crowd was wonderful. No doubt the profits were large, but that was not the only, or perhaps indeed the chief incentive on such an occasion. Like many French women, she was a born organiser.

It was characteristic that we, the only pensionaires, did not suffer any inconvenience. Our table, with people surging round it, was reserved for us, and our dinner, from the hors d'oeuvres, was as perfect as if the state of affairs was normal.

That night, beneath a crescent moon, we enjoyed the scent of the acacias, the silence broken only by the nightingales.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

MARY ALICE TAPSON was the sixth of ten daughters of Dr. Alfred Tapson, a contemporary of Jenner, Garrod and Ericson. They all specialised in medicine or surgery, but he adopted general practice, settled at Gloucester Gardens, Hyde Park, and became one of the leading practitioners of his day. In 1864 his wife died, but fortunately for his daughters they had a devoted nurse. She mothered them and taught them all in turn to read. In those days it was not thought necessary to delay beginning a child's education until seven years of age. At the age of four they were proficient enough to be presented with a Testament, and on the fifth birthday with a Bible.

Alice was a particularly bright and intelligent child. She developed an artistic temperament as she grew older, and had some of its defects as well as its qualities; her sense of order was somewhat lacking and she was always losing things. Marmie, the old nurse, was once heard to say, "O Alice, if you could, you would lose your head." She also was romantic; she declared that she would follow the example of her grandmother, Avise Springett, who ran away from her home at Finchcox, Goudhurst, to marry Mr. Tapson. These Springetts were descended co-laterally

from the same grandparents as Gulielma Springett, who married William Penn, and is buried beside him in the little Quaker burial ground at Jordans.

All the daughters had a very liberal education, not only had they highly-qualified governesses, chief among whom was Miss Watts, the daughter of Alaric Watts, a highly-cultivated woman, but supplementary teachers of French and German—even an old sergeant to drill them. But they owed much of their moral and religious training to their nurse—as Lord Shaftesbury said he did to his nurse. Oddly enough, she had entered their father's service as housemaid, because "she did not like children"; but somehow each child when born took possession of her heart, and she lived for them all, deeply interested to the end of her life in everything that concerned them.

All the daughters were imbued with a desire to be of some use in the world. The oldest, Grace, was the first to break through the conventions of that time. She took up work in the East End and eventually married a civil servant who was also working among the poor. They did much Evangelistic and Bible exposition work in many parts of the world until he died. Another daughter married a missionary whose work lies in Japan, where he and she have worked hand in hand for many years, and a third had earlier dedicated her life to missionary work in the same country.

Alice, after finishing her home education, resented a life of idleness—for with so many hands home duties were not needed—and satisfied her eager spirit by studying drawing, first at South Kensington and then under a charming niece of George Macdonald. It was to working in water-colour however that she

eventually turned her attention, and her accurate drawing was a strong point in this. In later life she did much sketching when she and her husband were on holiday tours in Switzerland and Italy. It proved a great source of enjoyment to her, and made her travels doubly interesting.

The daughters were brought up very strictly; not one of them went to a theatre or played a game of cards until after marriage; but theatricals at home were not forbidden; and charades, and even *Romeo and Juliet* were performed: a piece called "*Matri-mony*," a skit upon the emancipation of women, was acted by several of the daughters before Ruskin, who it is recorded "laughed until he cried, and nearly fell off his chair with chaffing."

Partly through circumstances, but mainly owing to congenial tastes in literature, Alice was the favourite pupil of Miss Watts, and when she wished to take up teaching, for which she was well qualified, having passed the Senior Cambridge Examination, Miss Watts encouraged her, and did her best to induce her father to allow her to teach in a school; for in those days it was unusual for a girl in her position to do any work unless compelled by financial reasons. Her father consented, and she began work as an assistant mistress at the Maida Vale Girls' Public Day School. These schools, under the wise and capable management of a council, numbering among its members Lady Stanley, Lord Reay, Miss Gurney and W. H. Stone, revolutionized the teaching of girls' schools, and paved the way for Girton and Newnham.

After two years' work in this school, she was appointed Head Mistress at the Companys' school at Norwich. There she achieved considerable success,

and gained the esteem and friendship of many. Many of her pupils were devoted to her, and corresponded with her and visited her for many years. She had a remarkable influence with girls, chiefly owing to her faith, sympathy and the charm of her personality.

In the spring of 1884 she resigned her Head Mistressship of the Norwich School and in the same year married E. A. Helps, one of His Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. Soon after her marriage she took up work in Lisson Grove under the Rev. Llewellyn Davies, whose friendship became a valuable possession. But, owing to ill-health, she was obliged to leave London and to live in the country. There she also did much visiting among the villagers whose friendship she gained. Her " simple annals of the poor " which are recorded in this little book, express better than any words of mine could, her qualities of heart and mind.

She attempted no literary work beyond the collection and editing of a volume of the artistic recollections of Mr. Horsley, R.A. (a life-long friend), and the editing of a selection of Wordsworth's poems for schools. The sketches and memories recorded in this little book were jotted down at intervals during a happy married life of nearly 38 years, in which her son's education and career and the lives of those dear to her were her chief interests.

It was always difficult to make her take care of herself, and in April, 1922, a neglected cold brought on an attack of pneumonia, which ended fatally.

E.A.H.

