THE CHILDREN AND THE PICTURES

LADY TENNANT

THE CHILDREN AND THE PICTURES

Hoppner.

MARIANNE AND AMELIA.

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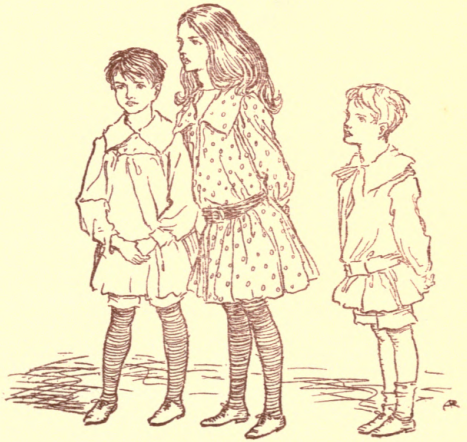

THE SKETCH ON THE TITLE-PAGE
IS BY ARTHUR RACKHAM, A.R.W.S.
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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER I

If there were dreams to sell
What would you buy?
Some cost a passing bell
Some a light sigh.
That shakes from Life's full crown
Only a rose-leaf down,
If there were dreams to sell,
Merry and sad to tell
And the crier rang the bell,
What would you buy?

THOMAS L. BEDDOES

NATALIE had been left downstairs, there was no doubt about it. She was not in her cradle, she was not in the toy cupboard, she was not on the shelf, she was not on the dresser; she must be downstairs on one of the drawing-room tables, and what is more, face downwards.

This is what passed in the mind of Natalie's mistress as she lay warmly in her bed. She lay

looking at the nightlight shadows, but with this last thought she sat upright, and looked round her. Yes, she must have been asleep, for the nightlight was burning brightly and fully, as it does when it has been alight some time; not showing that melancholy little humpbacked flame with which its vigil commences. "I wonder what time it is," thought Clare, "I wish I had remembered to bring Natalie up to bed with me."

She lay down again, and tried to go to sleep, but one feels very wide awake indeed if one keeps thinking of one thing in particular. You feel even if you buttoned your lids down, they would still flutter wide.

There is a writer called George Herbert of whom you have heard, and in one of his poems he says,

> I hasted to my bed,
> But when I thought to sleep out all these faults
> (I sigh to speak)
> I found that some had stuffed the bed with thoughts,
> I would say thorns,

and rest was impossible. So it was with Clare. She kept seeing Natalie nose downwards.

"I'll go and fetch her," she said, and she was out of bed in a twink.

Quietly she passed through her little room to the door, passing all the familiar shadows. There was the big one cast by the cupboard, that looked like a cloaked figure by the door. And there was the black corner with the sharp shadow jutting out of it, that was really only the chair-back, for she had moved the chair one night to make sure. And there lay her little pile of clothes on the chair itself, but even the sight of these did not make her remember to put on her slippers, and passing all these things and so through the room, she opened the door, and went out into the passage.

How light she felt! as if she'd left her body in bed and was going downstairs in her soul. The stair-rods touched the back of her heel strangely cold; how soft and deep the carpet was.

The floor round about the big landing window was flooded by moonlight, and by this Clare moved, but it did not reach very far, and soon she had to feel along the wall towards the drawing-room. Then she saw beneath the door a thin streak of light shed on the carpet, showing the lights had not yet been put out within.

"I wonder if they've been forgotten, or if Mummie's still in there," thought Clare, and she turned the handle.

The room was partially lit by one of the lamps, and Clare ran in to seize Natalie. There she lay, her furry eyelashes sweeping the faultless contour of a china cheek.

But in the far end of the room by the shaded light, some one was seated, writing. It was the figure of a woman. Clare ran forward eagerly, but a strange face was turned to her, strange, yet not wholly so, in some way it was familiar. The lady was dressed in white material, rather like stiff muslin, her face was eager, and shrewd. She had sharp brown eyes, and as she leaned back in her chair, turning sideways, Clare recognised her. She was Mrs. Inchbald. And as Clare realised this a little wave of fear swept from the nape of her neck to her heels, as she stood looking.

"Why aren't you in bed, child?" Mrs. Inchbald said, in measured tones. She spoke slowly, with a controlled stammer. Clare felt as if she were not going to like her, very much.

"Why aren't you in bed, child?" Mrs. Inchbald repeated. "Good Heavens, the way the children over-run this house is something unparalleled! Collina, Beppo, Dolorès and Leslie, not to mention Robin and Fieldmouse; but I see now, you are one of the others. Well, they make noise enough

Romney.

MRS. INCHBALD.

in all conscience. Why, I repeat, are you not in bed ? "

All this time Clare had been looking at the lady, and was now quite sure she didn't like her. The wave of fear she had first experienced had receded, and she had only an overmastering inclination to be " rude back." She knew now she was talking to one of the pictures, and " Why aren't you in your frame ? " was on the tip of her tongue to utter. But she knew she mustn't say it, so she just stood and let her eyes grow as hard as Scotch pebbles, and she Scotch-pebbled Mrs. Inchbald with all her might.

Evidently that lady was one of those who do not need any answer, on the contrary who prefer conducting the talk, for she continued with a stammering fluency,

" I suppose there are nurses in the house ; to be sure, I've seen them. But it's all this modern movement among Mothers to have their children with them, I suppose. *The Parent's Review.* I've seen it lying about on the tables. By the way, child, your Mother reads remarkably uninteresting books. I found mine on the table once, but only one was cut, and that partially. Why doesn't she read Mrs. Radclyffe ? "

" I suppose people who live framed by themselves,"

thought Clare, "may grow rather prosy"; but she had discovered the value of making comments inwardly. Even had she been about to speak, Mrs. Inchbald would have given her small hearing.

"Goodness me! I've heard the poor lady herself allude to her own room as Piccadilly when two nurses, three children, somebody with a note, the cook and the clock-winder, all focus their energies upon it at the same time.

"Then at dressing time it is like this:

"'Will you hear me say my prayers to-night?'

"'And mine?'

"'And mine?'

"'And mine?'

"'Can I have a joo-joob?'

"'Don't you think Juno was awfully interfering?'

"'When do we go to Peter Pan?'

"'Well, good-night, good-night, I won't speak again really,—but you'll come and kiss me, won't you Moth'?'

"'Is to-morrow football?'

"'O, my lips are so sore!'

"'And mine!'

"'And mine!'

"'What have you got on, Mummie?'

" ' What ? '

" ' O, your *yellow*. Well, good-night, boys ! '

" ' When do we go on our expedition ? '

" ' Oh ! it's *soup*.'

" ' I've got a flea-bite.'

" ' Have you ? Where ? '

" ' Will somebody brush the crumbs out ? '

" And so on, indefinitely. How she stands it I can't imagine, but there is peace at last. And then it's the turn of the other children ; but I'll say this for them, they make very little noise."

" What other children ? " asked Clare, with a sense of growing excitement, " do you mean——"

" I mean the picture children of course, child. Leslie, Beppo, Collina, and the little Spencers. You interrupt me as callously as you do your poor Mother. My next novel shall be concerned with the amazing difference in the up-bringing of children, then and now. But how different it all is to Grosvenor Square ! "

This caught Clare's fancy. She loved people to criticise and draw comparisons. " O, what ? " she said. " Is it different ? Of course I know it is, but do tell me, don't you like it ? And did you like Grosvenor Square ? "

"They knew how to live there," said Mrs. Inchbald severely: "everything was in order, my dear. There was a butler, with all the punctuality of a heavenly body surrounded by his satellites, the footmen, who could be thoroughly depended on to keep up the fires . . ."

"Yes, even in the very warmest weather, Mother says. She doesn't like footmen, you know, except in palaces; she'd rather men were soldiers, or ploughed fields. She doesn't like to see them hand plates about, which women do far more prettily; besides, men stamp so, and blow down your back."

"Perhaps the furniture," continued Mrs. Inchbald, regardless of interruption, "perhaps the furniture was unsuited to child-life, holding the priceless china as it did . . . the move was certainly courageous. But O, how we were loved!"

Something in Mrs. Inchbald's voice made Clare listen. She liked her better now that her hard face softened so.

"Ah, that was something like belonging! it warmed us, my dear, it warmed us; that's what made us alive. Do you think if your Grandpapa had never loved us in the way he did that we should be here walking and breathing—we, but semblances

of human form dwelling in pigment and paste ? It's only love that can make alive, and he did it. Sometimes, after all the lights were out and the folks in bed, the door would open and he'd enter. I can see him in his dressing-gown and slippers, the light shining on the mahogany door ; his clean white hair, and shrewd face. His hands so swift in movement, so beautifully kept, his beard trimmed so neatly. Did you ever see him untidy, I wonder, or harassed, or wasting time ? Never—it all went so easily, he had the long-houred day of a busy man. Time to read aloud to others, time to look over his old French books, time to saunter out and play golf earnestly, and time, above all, to spend, upon us. How he loved us. We shall never have *that* again."

" O yes you shall," said Clare, for she was warm-hearted really, for all the Scotch pebble in her eyes on occasion—" O yes, you shall. Why—we all, all like you we are all going to learn about you, Mother says so ; it is only Lady Crosbie who sometimes . . . bores her, you know."

This came out rushingly, and Clare would have withdrawn it, but the spoken word is like a sped arrow, there is no calling either back. Mrs. Inchbald changed completely. Her brown eyes twinkled

comfortably, and she leaned in her eagerness, right out of her chair.

" You don't say so ? Well, I agree with her. I believe I shall get on with your Mother, after all, though she does let you all victimise her, and reads such dull books. But I shouldn't have chosen the word *bore* exactly. I shouldn't say Lady Crosbie ever *bored* people . . . dear me, O no, she's vastly entertaining, my dear, to those she thinks worth it . . ."

" Well, Mother says however charming she must have been in life, it is rather tiresome, in a picture, to be looking permanently mischievous. She says, although Lady Crosbie is flitting off into such a lovely landscape, she's not really going to know how to enjoy the country at all."

" My dear, your Mother's talking about something she doesn't rightly know about, begging your pardon, if she calls that country. That's studio, my dear, sheer studio, and a very good studio landscape it is. But all the same, your Mother's opinion interests me ; I notice she keeps the light on some, and not so often on others. I wonder what she thinks about it all."

" O well," said Clare, " once she's made up her mind she's not to have bare walls (which is what

Reynolds.

ROBERT MAYNE, M.P. FOR UPPER GATTON.

she likes best to live among), she says she likes you all, and Miss Ridge she loves. She says she knows she was a darling, and of course she loves Miss Ross, and so do we all, only we long to make her happy. And we like Lewis the actor, because he's showing off so finely, and Bimbo longs for his sword. Robert Mayne's got the loveliest clothes, and such a kind, face, Mother says she feels he knows everything, before she's spoken. She feels sure he's a dear, and she says his face makes her feel bound to tell him what she's been doing; and he's never bored by trifles. And often when we come into the room, just for fun, Mummie says, 'Well, we've come in again; it's very windy and cold, but the crocuses are showing. I had a few things to do at Woollands, but it's so vexing, I couldn't find a match anywhere for the blue . . . ' And then she goes on, looking at him in his picture, and makes up all sorts of enjoyable nonsense, and says get away with us, she's talking to Robert Mayne; and we love it when she's in that mood; and say 'Go on, go on,' and sometimes she tells us what he says to her—but, the best of all was when . . . "

"Was when . . . was when . . ." echoed a very pleasant voice beside her, and a hand was set on Clare's shoulder. And, looking up, she saw Robert

Mayne standing there, M.P. for Upper Gatton. Never did she think his face looked nicer than at that moment, or his coat so warm and red.

"It's only love that makes alive," he repeated, looking at Mrs. Inchbald. "Was I right or was I wrong, Madam? Should you and I be talking to this little thing here to-night if they didn't care?" His voice was so extremely comfortable that Clare felt wonderfully happy, just as one always feels if people are near one that understand. You feel stroked down and peaceful, and as if you needn't talk much, because they know. And you think you never need feel as if your inside were made of red serge soaked in lemon juice, which is the feeling that another kind of person brings about. So Clare stood and watched him talking to Mrs. Inchbald, and enjoyed it very much.

"I think I had the pleasure, Madam, of travelling in the van with you, when we made the much-dreaded move?"

"You did, Sir, and you were mightily helpful staying as you did the needless chatter and tittle-tattle of the occasion."

"It was the morose forebodings that I felt grieved by," said Robert Mayne, "the faithless despair, the manufactured misery of morbid minds. Why,

Reynolds.

BEPPO.

what need was there to fill the children with apprehension, to chill our own hearts with fear? You yourself, madam," he continued with a charming bow, "had need that day of all your energy of character for which I have so much respect. You would not let the weaker moods possess your heart. How I wish we might then have shown those who were fearful, these sheltering walls, these fair white rooms, this Home!"

"You might show some folk the loaves upon the table, and they'd swear they were going to starve," said Mrs. Inchbald crisply. "The children are well housed too, for that matter; really better than before. I don't think yellow satin and brocade suits children—white-wash and brown holland, say I. And this house is as near to white-wash as the Mother can compass. Even the drawing-room curtains, I'm told, are to have a decidedly brown-holland appearance."

"But the children," said Clare, "are they really in the house? O, do let me see them, will you, Ma'am?"

"It's time I were framed, and you were in bed, my dear, so we may as well go together"; and the brisk old lady rose in her stiff muslin and walked towards the door. Clare just had sight of Robert

Mayne settling himself comfortably to read in an arm-chair. Then Mrs. Inchbald led her out into the passage, and up the stairs to her own room. But one strong impression remained in Clare's mind, that the passage seemed in some way different.

"That's not my door," she said, as she looked before her, "and Mother's room is further on. I never noticed a door there before. O, Mrs. Inchbald, is it the children's room ?"

She stood in a long low apartment, the light shed from a nightlight falling softly on six beds. On each pillow lay a little head.

Clare stepped quietly beside them ; how pretty they looked in their sleep, Collina and Beppo and Leslie, Dolorès and Fieldmouse and Rob.

There they lay, the pillows scarce dinted. How clearly she recognised them. And as she bent over the white bed of Dolorès, Clare saw the tear glisten wet on the rounded cheek.

CHAPTER II

" Who are thy Playmates, boy ? "
" My favourite is Joy,
And he his sister Peace doth bring to play,
The livelong day.
I love her well, but he
Is most to me."

J. B. TABB

HEN Clare woke next morning it was almost time to rise. She could guess the hour by the wan light of a wintry sunbeam touching the inner edge of her window curtains, and the sound of housemaids stirring in the house. There lay the grapes by her bedside that her Mother had brought for her to find on waking. She put out her hand for these, and gradually as she lay there, there came back upon her remembrance, the strange experience of last night.

Had she dreamed it ? If so, it was a vivid dream. How sincerely she hoped not. " Because if I've

dreamt it I shan't be able to go on with it and, if it really happened, there is no reason why I shouldn't see all the others, and what fun that might be. I should ask what it was Fieldmouse had just told Rob that made his eyes so round and shining, and what it is makes dear Miss Ross so sad, and I should ask how long Kitty Fischer has had her doves, and if they lay eggs all through the winter like Mummie's; and . . . "

" Clare! d'epêche toi, ma mignonne, voyons, voyons, voyons; " and Mademoiselle entered the room concerned to find Clare still in her nightgown, and dawdling, with bare feet. But all day long, through the hurry and skirmish of an ordinary day, through the tedium of lessons and the ballyragging of the boys, Clare hugged her precious secret to her heart. She couldn't bear to speak of it, for if it were only a dream, her longing for it to continue would be intensified. She had seen Mrs. Inchbald and Robert Mayne, and spoken to them, and the children in the pictures were real. If this were only a dream, then she'd rather not talk about it; but if it were true, if it were really true, then she'd tell Bim and Christopher about her wonderful discovery, and to-night, this very night it would be proved.

Hogarth.

PEG WOFFINGTON.

Have you ever lived through a day that has some treasure of knowledge or expectation, that lies hidden beneath everything tiresome, beautifying the prosaic features of the day? To Clare it made it wonderfully easy to put up with all sorts of difficulties, this enchanting secret of hers.

Bedtime came, and after the usual bath-skirmish all three children were in bed. Prayers said, lights out, and the shadows in possession. Then, because she had had a long day and was tired, Clare slept. And when she awoke she heard her name repeated. She sat up wide awake, and saw Dolorès by her bedside—her little bodice crossed as prettily as in the picture, with tiny skirt, and lifted eyebrow, there she stood.

"Are you coming to play with us to-night, Clare? We've got the drawing-room to ourselves for an hour before the party, and it's lovely, for the furniture is moved away. But we shall have to go to bed when Mrs. Inchbald says so, but there's still time before that. Shall we go and fetch the others?"

Clare's heart beat quickly, but she was out of bed in a moment, following Dolorès from the room.

"I must wake up Bim and Christopher," she said. "Will you wait for me? Their room is not far away."

She ran off, but came headlong in collision with somebody round the corner of the stairs.

"Mercy," exclaimed a sharp voice, "the children again, I'll be bound." This was said with great asperity, and Clare, recovering as best she might from a stinging box on the ear, had just time to see Peg Woffington pass round the corner in the shortest skirt, and jauntiest little bodice imaginable.

"Bim said she looked cross, and isn't she!" thought Clare, as she ran on into the boys' room.

But what was her surprise to find the beds empty, Bim and Christopher were gone. "Never mind, come downstairs," said Dolorès; "I dare say Leslie may have taken them down."

No steps of Clare's could take her sufficiently swiftly. To be left behind was to her something intolerable; the boys were already down and perhaps having all sorts of fun, and she'd gone in to wake them up, and it wasn't fair. If you sound the letters *pr* very quickly for a second, it will give you some idea how quickly she ran downstairs.

Bim and Christopher were standing together talking to a group of children, and Clare heard Bim explaining:

"I'm so sorry; it's my fault, but you must come, boys, another day. You see two of my

CHILDREN PLAYING AT SOLDIERS.

G. Morland.

friends mayn't play with children they don't know, and so I hope you'll come again and have a game with Christopher and my sister. My Mother wants you to wipe your boots on the mat as you go out, and I'll send word when next we want you. Good-bye, good-bye, here's a bun for each—and, wait a moment, take all this cake, won't you ? "

Clare's first thought was, " Bim's got his Wilsford village boys here, but how has he managed it ? "

" O Bim," she cried out, " who are they, what are you doing, why are they going away ? "

" Wait a minute, I'll tell you. You see, Leslie woke me and Christopher, and said we were going to have a jolly game. I had asked in the village boys as usual, and found out too late that Charlotte and Henry Spencer aren't allowed to play with them, you know. I felt dreadfully awkward, but it's all right *now*. I don't know how people can have such swabs for Mothers. Anyhow, there it is, and as Charlotte and Henry came down first, I can't very well go against it. Come on, children," he called out suddenly, and Leslie and Beppo rushed up, their eyes glancing. But not before Clare had a glimpse of an astonishing sight. It was this. All the dear children to whom Bim had given cakes filed out into the passage. With her own astonished

eyes, she saw them walk up to the Morland pictures, and disappear into them among the trees. They were "the apple stealers," and the "children playing at soldiers," and as she ran up to the pictures with all her heart in her eyes to look closer she was just in time to hear that sound of ineffable beauty when the wind blows softly among a myriad leaves.

There was a cool smell of moss.

A bough swayed under the weight of a climbing boy, and she heard a dog bark in the distance.

Then the branches closed over, there was a rustle in the greenwood, and everything was still.

THE APPLE-STEALERS. *G. Morland.*

CHAPTER III

. . . That ancient festival, the Fair,

. . . .

Below, the open space through every nook,
Of the wide area twinkles, is alive
With heads ; the midway region and above
Is thronged with staring pictures and huge scrolls,
Dumb proclamations of the Prodigies,
With chattering monkeys dangling from their poles
And children whirling in their roundabouts,
With those that stretch the neck and strain the eyes,
And crack the voice in rivalship. . .

THE PRELUDE

FTER the village children had disappeared into the wood, Clare turned to join her brothers. She found them clustered round Fieldmouse and Robin.

"Whose fortune shall I tell now, good people?" Mousie was saying, her upper lip drawn into a point, so that her mouth was shaped like the tiniest V.

"Mine, please," said Clare, "how do you do it?"

"O," said Rob; "she learnt it in our great adventure; she learnt it from the gipsies. Didn't you know we'd had a great adventure?"

"No, when?"

"We were stolen by gipsies, and kept away from Mother and Father a whole six weeks," said Robin.

"And then we only got back by being tied up in bags, so that they thought we were barley."

"Oh, tell us all about it," cried the others.

And as they cared to hear it, perhaps you will care to hear it, and so here is their story from beginning to end.

The Story of the Children and the Gipsies.

Charlotte and Henry Spencer lived with their father and mother at Blenheim Palace, in the County of Oxfordshire. Blenheim Palace was the name of their home, and it may be seen to this day, standing in all its magnificence in the midst of a great park. For Charlotte and Henry were the children of the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, and Blenheim Palace was the gift of a grateful nation to their great-

Reynolds

THE FORTUNE-TELLER

grandfather, John Churchill, the first duke. He it is you read of in your History books, who won the battles of Ramilies and Malplaquet, Oudenarde and Blenheim, fighting against the French; and his Duchess Sarah was famous for her beauty, and was the friend of Queen Anne.

These children then lived, as I have said, at this great Palace, and were dressed in red velvet and feathers, and taught to dance the minuet and gavotte. There were no trains in their day, and no telegrams or motor-cars. They travelled by the stage-coach if they came up to London, and life was in many ways rougher and cruder then than it is now.

If a message were needed, a man had to saddle a horse and gallop miles with it, or perhaps foot-runners were engaged. And this means that a man, footsore and mud-stained, might arrive suddenly at your father's door, having run or ridden over half the country, with a note to deliver in his hand. Charlotte and Henry knew a very different England to what we know now in many ways; yet essentially it was the same. The flower seeds in their garden plots grew in just the same manner as do yours, and when they went bird-nesting they found just the same kind of nests in the same kind of

hiding-places as you do now. The wren's nest, made of last year's leaves, because it is built in a beech-wood, and the one made of green moss, because it is built in a yew-tree; these they knew just as you know them, because these belong to the kind of things that don't change. So you may imagine them, when at last they had finished their lessons, which occupied many more hours of the day than yours, you may imagine them running out to the hay-field, which looked to them just as you see it, or running to the dairy, which held the same cool pans of creamy milk. But in one way perhaps their condition was different; they were so rarely left alone. They had always a nurse or governess or a tutor with them; and if they were with their parents, they had to sit so quiet in the large rooms that it was little or no pleasure to be there. They lived in the days that Miss Taylor writes of when she says:

Good little boys should never say
"I will," and "give me these!"
Oh no—that never is the way,
But "Madam, if you please."

And "If you please," to sister Anne,
Good boys to say are ready;
And "Yes, Sir," to a gentleman,
And "Yes, Ma'am," to a lady.

Those were the days of strict upbringing and formal manners. If a little child wouldn't dress quickly, she was left in her night-gown all day; or if two little girls quarrelled over two new dolls that they loved intensely, their mothers would send these two new dolls back at once to the shop from which they were bought; and no matter how many tears, no forgiveness.

Well, as one result of all this strict surveillance Charlotte and Henry developed a passion for being alone. The words "to escape" were to them words of magical import, and they would sometimes lean out of their little beds towards each other whispering long plans. It began something like this:

"Mousie?"

"Yes——?"

"Are you asleep?"

"No—are you?"

"No. I say."

"Yes?"

"Shall we escape?"

"O-O-Oh . . . . "

This was Mousie putting her lips in that particular way she has, and running her little eyebrows up. And this was not a conversation of one evening, it was a conversation of a hundred rush-light vigils, the burden of a hundred corner-talks. And to run from one end

of a hay-field to another was a joy, and to look at the wide world from the window of the family coach, was an enchantment.

One day, as they were walking with their governess in the gardens, something unusual occurred. Mousie cut her hand badly with a sharp strand of Pampas grass, and the blood flowed so swiftly from the fingers that the governess became alarmed. Hurrying the child into the gardener's cottage she asked for cold water and a bandage for the wound. Robin followed, distressed and silent, while the gardener's wife eagerly fetched everything she could supply.

"We must bathe it in vinegar before bandaging," said the governess, "and if this is beyond your power to provide, my good woman, I will myself go and fetch some from the house. Lady Charlotte must take no undue exertion till the wound is properly tied." And Mrs. Goodenough left the cottage immensely perturbed, walking past the good gardener's wife in the doorway, as if no such person held open the door.

Mousie had other manners, however, and now her whole mind was centred on the actions of the kindly woman who had done all so willingly.

"I'm afraid your basin is stained, I am so sorry, I didn't know that grass cut."

"And how should you, my lady? 'tis a nasty cut surely, and as for the basin there's no manner of harm done at all. I'm that sorry I've no vinegar for your ladyship, but Peter was to buy me some coming back from the fair."

"From the fair! O, what fair?" said both the children.

"Why, Woodstock Fair," said the woman; "the road has just been packed with gipsy vans and menageries, and tinkers, and droves of ponies—just packed, for the last few days! But you wouldn't be seeing that, being never on the common roads, as a body might put it. But George and Peter are away to see the fun, and to bring us all fairings." Smiling she went to the lintel to see if Mrs. Goodenough were returning from her quest. Mousie and Rob looked at each other, and their eyes exchanged the same thought.

What longing possessed them to visit the fair; they knew well enough what it meant, for they had had a nursery maid who used to tell them; and now to think the fat lady, and the mermaid in a bottle, and the double-headed calf and the clowns, and the cocoanuts were, so to speak, at their very door. How should they get there? It was no use asking to go, for fairs were common things; only common

people went to them, that is how Mrs. Goodenough would have answered the request. Yet go they must, thought Rob; and "Mousie," he whispered, "shall we escape?"

Mrs. Brown was standing at the doorway and heard no sound of Robin's whisper, nor caught a glimpse of Mousie's bright-eyed response. She only turned away as being satisfied Mrs. Goodenough was not yet in sight, and she might set about some household task.

But Robin held his little black hat with the white plume across it in his hand, and in his finest manner stepped to meet her.

"We thank you very much, Mrs. Brown," he said, "for your kindness. Charlotte's hand is no longer bleeding, and we will follow Mrs. Goodenough from your door."

"Do'ee stay, my dear," said the cottage woman. "I shouldn't like to see 'ee leave the cottage till Madam return: do'ee sit down by the settle and I'll fetch the kittens for 'ee, they are but in the wood-shed at the back."

But Robin's mind had but one thought, and Mousie's hand was clasped in his.

"Come away, come away," he said, "Mousie, we'll escape, we'll escape to the fair."

Do you think Mousie needed any further instigation? wasn't the lovely freedom implied in the word "escape" enough? They had no one round them to whom their naughtiness would give pain; displeasure had till now but followed the commission of a fault. It is only when children really love those around them, that they hold some rein upon their fitful desires. Only when they stop to say: "Will it grieve Mummie if I do it?" is there a chance of their denying themselves.

Robin and Mousie knew only severity, so their inclination was a thing to be pursued, especially if it outweighed in pleasure the chastisement it might bring. They were soon running down the drive, and dodging among the bushes, clambering over fences, dropping into ditches, in the best manner of a runaway thief. How their hearts pounded against their ribs, how their cheeks glowed from running. And how wonderful it was to be alone; and to be so excited and happy.

Sometimes a rabbit would dart away among the bracken, its white scut bobbing up the hillside. And once when they sat down to rest, shielded by the high undergrowth, a large heron rose majestically from near.

"How lovely it all is," sighed Robin; "at last we've escaped."

CHAPTER IV

The bramble, the bramble,
The bonny forest bramble,
Doth make a jest
Of silken vest,
That will through greenwood scramble.

T. L. PEACOCK.

IT was not long before Robin's pretty red coat had a good many holes in it. The lace was torn away from his throat and his flying cape, and that delightful little hat of his had disappeared altogether. Mousie was the best off in the matter, for her skirts had been kilted before starting. That is to say, the puce-coloured overskirt that she generally wore rather long, had been turned up round her waist, showing the cream-coloured petticoat.

It was an early fair and took place in the month of September, so they had good weather for their exploit.

While they were resting, rather weary, yet trying still to think it was pleasant, they heard strange voices among the trees. It sounded as if a man and a woman were quarrelling, and something about the sound made the children afraid. The man's voice rose very roughly above that of the woman's, and she seemed to be in pain. "Not if you strike me dead; I won't do it, Bill, not if you strike me dead."

"Then take that, and cease your misery, and leave your betters to do the work they've planned."

And there followed the sound of blows and a clamour, half a strangled sob or cry, then a thud as if some one fell heavily. And silence for a time. And then there was the sound of footsteps slowly withdrawing through the dead leaves of the wood.

There was something dreadful to the children in this, something very frightening. Was somebody really lying there, quite close to them and quite still; somebody who had been talking and moving about just now, and who now made no movement whatever? What had happened? Had that dreadful man gone away? O, should Robin go and see? "No, no," cried Mousie, hiding her face close to him, "no, no; let us go home, let us go home."

But Robin was made of sterner stuff, and Mousie's

fear only served to strengthen him. He found many brave things to say to her. Very soon he was upright and stealing through the trees, peeping and peering as he crept forward. Then he saw the figure of a woman lying quite still upon the ground. She had long black hair, and brown clothes on, and her face looked as if she were asleep. It was so white and pretty that Robin didn't feel afraid of her, so he went quite near to look. And he touched the hand and thought how cold it was, and Mousie soon came creeping up.

Then the best thought that could have come to Robin, made him say: "I think she's only asleep, because I saw her eyelids move. Run to the brook Mousie, and dip your hands in and bring as much water as you can." And together they brought water, and patted the white face with it, and Robin laid his wet hands on the pale lips. And after a time the woman opened her eyes, very languidly and raised her head, and looked about her. And when she saw the children her eyes asked the questions her lips could hardly frame.

"You're better now," said Robin. And, Mousie, said, "I didn't think dead people could come alive." But the woman said: "Where's Jasper?"

"If you mean the man who was, who was . . .

talking to you," said Robin politely, "he went away into the wood . . . afterwards."

"That was Bill, that was," murmured the girl, "I remember now." A sudden light came into her dark eyes, making her look scared and hunted.

"O, 'twasn't to serve men like Bill that I come into the world, with his foul tongue, and his black heart, and his lies and cruelty and wickedness. 'Twasn't to serve men like Bill, I tell yer! O my Gawd, why didn't I die?"

"Because Robin told me to fetch water from the brook," answered Mousie, "and directly I put the water on your face you came alive again."

The girl rose slowly from the ground, and stood for a moment uncertainly, then she put out her hand to the children.

"Where do you come from, you innercents?" she asked, "dropped out o' the clouds, eh? or may be fairies?"

"We're not fairies, thank you," said Robin. "I'm Henry Spencer you know, and this is Charlotte my sister, I'm eight and she's nine, and we are on our way to the fair."

"Then you kin take this here bit o' paper for me. Keep straight along the road, and you'll get a lift from a cart or a waggon, and do you take this bit o'

paper to the door of the mill by the stone bridge in the valley ; and say it's from Freedom Cowper."

She swayed as she spoke, and Robin thought she was going to die again, for her eyes half closed, and she leaned against a tree. But soon she was speaking urgently, "O Gawd in Heaven, take the paper, give it to the man . . . at the mill . . . run, for I hear my folk comen, and they'll never let you go, they'll never let you go."

There was a distant sound of footsteps, a far stir in the leaves. Robin and Mousie fled from the girl away among the trees, to the little wattle that surrounded the woodland, and scrambling over as best they might, they lay down on the further side.

They heard voices talking, and the girl's voice hardly audible, and then footsteps going further and further away. At last there was silence and, their courage returning, they arose and pursued their way along the road.

But not now, alas, with a joyful anticipation. How willingly now would Mousie have seen home's familiar aspects, and Robin was far hungrier than he had ever been. For it was now about six o'clock in the afternoon, and they had made their escape

about eleven, and they had walked and scrambled for seven hours, and had a severe fright as well.

But Robin held the bit of paper, and perhaps the idea of a lift in a waggon, made him urge Mousie along the road.

It was not long before they heard the sound of wheels behind them, and a hooded farm-cart appeared.

"Please give us a lift," cried out Robin, and they were soon up beside the driver.

"We want to be put down at the mill, please, by the stone bridge in the valley."

"Whoi that be farmer Dreege's mill," said the man; "but Farmer Dreege he be at the fair surely; there'll not be a soul about I'm thinking, without Jasper Ford be left to mind the place."

"Yes; that's the man we want to see, Jasper Ford; we've got a message for him."

But the driver of the cart was a man who minded his own business, for he said nothing more. He seemed content to drop the children with a nod, at their destination, when they reached the mill by the bridge.

Robin knocked at the door stoutly. A young man opened it, and stood looking quietly out upon them. He had the swart face of a gipsy, and the dark hair and flashing teeth; but his eyes were set

well under a broad brow, and looked out kindly upon you. So that Robin had no trace of fear and said: "This piece of paper's for you, if you are Jasper Ford?"

Jasper read and re-read his bit of paper, the first time half-aloud; he was so earnest in his eager interest, so careful to decipher each word:

"*Warn Doctor Thorpe's household, rick-burning to-night, and robbery. Freedom.*"

"Rick-burning to-night, and robbery! That means when the folk are all out to quench the fire, Bill and his lot will have the house to themselves. O, Freedom, if you would but have listened to me, and had nothing to do with the gang. But the Doctor, who Freedom owes her life to——" and Jasper thrust the paper in his pocket. "I must go, d'ye hear, youngsters? I must go now. Do ye sit and rest, and eat your bread and sop here, and I'll come back and get your names from you when I return."

"But tell us," cried out Robin as Jasper turned to leave them, "tell us, how long does the fair go on; is it all over?"

"The fair? Why, the fair 'll go on till ten o'clock at night, youngsters: but you'd better be in bed by then."

Mousie and Robin, well refreshed by food and drink, felt all their former zest for adventure returning.

"O, we'll go to the fair, Mousie; it's only half a mile further, and we'll see all the shows after all." And putting down the mugs and plates they had eaten from, Mousie and her brother left the mill.

CHAPTER V

Vessels large may venture more,
But little boats should keep near shore.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

THE children set out with renewed pleasure, enheartened by the rest, and food.

Soon they heard a strange medley of sounds that their beating hearts told them came from the fair. Men's voices shouting, the sound of wheels and stirring, a clamour of many musical instruments, each one not having anything to do with any other, and then they saw lights; and very shortly they were surrounded by a crowd of humanity, and an overwhelming sense of excitement and unrest.

The next time your father takes you to the Tate Gallery look at Mr. Frith's picture of the "Derby Day." It will give you some idea of the crowd of busy people and pleasure-seekers that Mousie and Robin suddenly found themselves among. The

lights were being lit along the little booths, blending strangely with the summer twilight, and Robin saw acrobats in spangles and scarlet climbing and leaping before their master's show. He heard a roar of laughter and applause at a fellow grinning through a horse-collar, for there was a competition as to who could make the most excruciating grimaces, his visage embellished by this frame. The crowd was to determine who was the winner, and there had been already four competitors upon the little stage. This one was acquiring by his efforts immense applause, as he seemed to be able to twist his face anyhow; he stretched it longer than you would think possible; he would open his mouth and raise his eyebrows, so that his chin dropped still further and his forehead shot up into a point. Then, while the crowd was shouting encouragement, he would collapse his face suddenly, and all the length of it would fold into wrinkles, like the gurgoyle on the church tower at home. His very head seemed to flatten, and his ears grow out. Certainly he was a master of the art, and the children watched in amazement till their interest was taken by some other marvel of the fair. But Captain Marryat has described all this so well in "Peter Simple." Why should we not have his words here?

"The coloured flags flapping in all directions, the grass so green, the white tents and booths, the shining gilt gingerbread. The variety of toys and the variety of noise, the quantity of people and the quantity of sweetmeats; little boys so happy and shop people so polite. The music at the booths and the bustle and eagerness of the people outside was enough to make one's heart jump. There was Flynt and Gyngell, with fellows tumbling head over heels, playing such tricks, eating fire and drawing yards of tape out of their mouths. There was the Royal Circus, all the horses standing in a line with men and women standing on their backs waving flags, while trumpeters blew trumpets. And the largest giant in the world, and Mr. Paap the smallest dwarf in the world, and a female dwarf who was smaller still. The learned pig, the Herefordshire ox, and finally Miss Biffin, who did everything without arms or legs."

So writes Captain Marryat. What a gay scene he paints. All honour to him for one of the best story-tellers. May all children read his books.

Just as Robin and Mousie were leaving Miss Biffin's bower they heard shouts of "Fire! fire!" and suddenly the crowd of strollers and sight-seers all moved with one accord. Mousie and Rob were shoved and jostled till they were borne along in

the rush of people, as helpless as a couple of corks on a Scotch burn.

When they passed out from the narrowed alleys of the fair, made by the lines of booths and side-shows, the press became less great, and they were able to keep clear of the rush.

How frightened they were at this sudden stampede; and now, to add to their dismay and the general excitement, they saw a fierce conflagration among some ricks. These ricks were standing about four fields' distant, and what at first had been one fitful tongue of flame climbing stealthily the side of the dark mass, swiftly grew to be sevenfold and leaping. And from sevenfold it spread like molten gold over the stack, as if fire had been poured over it. And now a strange rushing sound grew out upon the air, and the stack was brilliantly illumined. The figures of the onlookers were cut out black against the glare. Then a heavy scroll of smoke mounted up into the divine beauty of the night sky, defiling it with thick vapour. Now and then there would come a lull in the fierce demolition, as if even the insatiable maw of the fire were momentarily replete. Then again it would break out all the more fiercely, and a bevy of sparks would swing out, and sail away against the darkness, like

a great swarm of golden bees. The flames would mount ever higher and higher, and the rushing sound grow, and grow. How the antlered flames leaped and roared into the night sky, what a fierce light they shed on the surrounding world. How black and jagged the shadows were, how vast the columns of drifting smoke. The great elms in the hedgerow stood changed in the strange light, their lofty stillness intensified by the clamour, and all the depths of their cool leafage showing grey in the strong light.

The birds flew into the very faces of the onlookers, witless of their direction, and the rats ran from the burning hayricks among the crowd, blinded by the glare.

To Rob and Mousie, who had lived such sheltered lives, it was as if they had been transported to some other planet, to a world of tumult and alarm. They had no words to express their pitiful state; they stood dumbly clinging together.

And then two figures came towards them as they stood somewhat in the shadow—the figures of two men.

"The mischief's done right enough, but it's all for nothing, and we'll get nothing for our trouble. We're lucky if we gets quit of this; they've got

news of it after all. I've been to the side-door and the front-door, but the whole place is barred; why, the very windows have their shutters up, and the great bulldog in the yard that Freedom said she'd poisoned, standing right up against the opening, showing his teeth. There's been foul play somewhere; we've been split upon; and if I can lay my finger on who's done it, I'll——" his speech lost itself in a string of oaths and maledictions while he trod heavily forward to where the children stood. And as he turned his great ugly visage upon them, Mousie screamed, "It's the man in the wood, Robin! it's the man who killed the woman in the wood!" And before Robin could say a word in answer, he felt a great blow, as if the earth had jumped up and slapped him, and he knew nothing more. Then one of the men caught the frightened Mousie and tied a cruel bandage so quickly round her that she could neither scream nor speak, and another picked up Robin where he lay quite still upon the ground, and between them they carried the children away swiftly.

The men walked till they came to a belt of trees, far out upon the Down. Here they set their burdens by the embers of a fire of charred wood. Two or three rail-backed ponies were picketed out

upon the green, and a great van loomed dark in the half-light. Several rough, unkempt faces peered at them, and dark forms crouched about the fire, stirring its embers to a fitful flame.

Mousie and Robin were in a gipsies' encampment, and the very thick of their adventure about to begin.

CHAPTER VI

How can a bird that is born for joy
Sit in a cage and sing?
How can a child when fears annoy
But droop his tender wing
And forget his youthful spring?

W. BLAKE.

IT was late the next day when Mousie opened her eyes. She had lain sensible of discomfort for some time before she wholly woke, and now a sense of movement and the gritting of wheels on a road shook sleep finally from her. She raised herself and looked round. She was lying in a little box-bed, only just large enough to hold her. A rough sheet was thrown across her of the dingiest nature, and the muscles of her neck and shoulders ached when she turned about. And there in the corner of the van, lying on the floor with his head on a bundle of clothes, lay Robin. A very old woman sat in a chair beside him, and every now and then

she would bend down and look earnestly into his sleeping face.

"Robin, wake up," cried Mousie; "Robin, where are we?"

"Whist there, with your wake up," said the woman in a low voice. "Be silent, will 'ee? rousing him from the first bit o' quiet sleep he's had the whole night long."

She looked at Mousie long after her half-whispered words were uttered, scowling from under her shaggy brows; and the child kept her eyes fixed on the old woman's evil face. She had never seen so sinister and wrinkled a countenance—it held her spell-bound; she dared not so much as move in her box-bed. Slowly the van ground along the flinty roads, sometimes lurching this way and that, sometimes almost overturning in the stony inequalities. The old hag moved about, but was never far from Robin, bathing his temples with a moistened rag, or forcing the pale lips asunder, and giving him a spoonful of brown liquid. Then Mousie saw that Robin moved languidly, and every now and then opened his eyes. That he should be awake and not seek her seemed strange, but so long as the old hag watched over them, she dared say nothing.

Then the van stopped, and the door was thrown roughly open. The old woman climbed down the steps into the fresh air.

"Now then, get up, and let's see what you're good for," she said crossly, as she looked back threateningly at Mousie, and disappeared. The child rose from her box-bed and followed.

The delight was great to feel the warm clear sunlight round her, as she stepped out on to the soft grass. They were in a wide track with ragged thorn hedges, and two or three gipsies were unharnessing the horses. Freedom, the girl who had swooned in the wood, was building a fire with sticks and great branches. Mousie ran eagerly towards her, but to her surprise Freedom seemed hardly to recognise her, and Mousie shrank back before the strange void of her face. It was as if she moved in her sleep, barely conscious of her surroundings.

The gang consisted of seven gipses, three men and three women, and a boy. There was Bill and Mr. Petulengro, a shrivelled old man, whose grey hair toned ill with the deep brown of his complexion. There was a younger man than Bill, whom they called Farrer, and the boy Abel. The other woman, Maria, had a baby in the shawl at her back.

Soon the men had picketed out the ponies, and gone their various ways, leaving Freedom, the old grandmother, and Maria, in charge of the encampment on the Down.

Mousie was made to do the old Grannie's behests. She had to clean the utensils, see to the fire, haul out the murky rags that made their tents, and generally fetch and carry. She got more scoldings in half-an-hour than she had in a month at her own home, and there was no time to look peaky over it.

"Just 'ee set that sack down where 'ee took un from, and come 'ee here, and peel these potatoes, and if 'ee cut deeper than the rind, I tell 'ee I'll cut into 'ee! Oho, my sweet pigeon, and it's fine ladies we are, and the likes as I never see; and when you've done the potatoes do 'ee cut up that hill in double-quick time and bring me back some tent-pins, and if 'ee gather crooked ones, I'll prick yer skin with them, I promise ye—I'll prick yer pretty skin for 'ee! I'll prick yer skin!"

She leered, and scowled, and coughed, and spat, while she shambled about talking, sometimes pinching Mousie's cheek with her clawlike hand, or raising her skinny arm as if to strike her. It was a new experience for Mousie, and had she been given less to do, would have frightened her severely.

As it was she just obeyed, and dared not question, far less object or make delay. Meanwhile Maria sat on the steps of the van, crooning over her baby. And the words of her song were these :—

"Holly stands within the hall, faire to behold ;
Ivy stands without the door, she is full sore a-cold.

Holly and his merry men they dancen and they sing ;
Ivy and her maidens, they weepen and they wring.

Ivy hath a smooth leaf, she wraps it like a cloak
Round about the ash-tree, round about the oak.

Holly hath his berries as red as any rose.
The foresters, the hunters, they keep them fro' the does.

Ivy hath her berries as black as any sloe.
For wayfarers a bitter wine as any they may know.

Holly hath his birds, a full faire flocke—
The nightingale, the perpinguy, the gentle laverocke.

And Ivy, good Ivy, what birds hast thou ?
None but the howlet that crieth Whoo, whoo."

Mousie heard these words as she peeled the potatoes, and liked the list of the birds' names. She didn't know, however, that she was listening to a song hundreds of years old, a song that has been sung by voices long since dead and silent. Yet

there was the holly-tree in the hedge, as lusty as ever, his strong spiny leaves giving back the sunshine, each one a polished green. And below at his feet, creeping through a wattle and wrapping an old ash pollard, was the insidious ivy.

"Ivy and her maidens, they weepen and they wring."

There are some characters like Ivy, gentle and clinging, yet as terribly strong. They cannot stand alone, others must support them—yes, till the weight kills. And Ivy, the dependent, takes this service. At first tentatively, even timidly—one tender little trail innocently feeling its way up the great stem; no one would think there is any mischief here. But Ivy must know while she weaves her mats and meshes, that she kills to live. For all the fruit she bears is bitter.

Throughout that day Robin lay sick and ailing in the gipsy's van, and when Freedom came back from a long errand, she climbed into the van and stayed there, speaking to no one.

Towards evening the men returned, and old Granny prepared the dinner. Mousie liked the tripod with the heavy kettle hanging from it, and the smell of the burning wood. Then Freedom stepped out again carrying Robin in her strong

arms, and brought him to the camp fire. But when Mousie looked at him she cried out, for he was as brown as a nut all over. His little face and neck, and his hands and arms, and his feet and legs, all stained with walnut juice, and his curls cropped like a convict. This was Freedom's doing, and Mousie's heart sank when she realised it, for she had silently counted on Freedom as their friend. How should they ever get home again if Freedom wanted to hide and disguise them?

However, as the days went on, the children learnt to look on her once more as in some sort an ally, partly because she got almost as many harsh words as they, partly, because when no one was looking, she would do them a kindness if she could.

And so the hard days passed over, full of work and blows, and chidings; ugly with the sound of oaths, and rough voices, and coarse food.

CHAPTER VII

I love to rise on a Summer morn
When birds sing on every tree.
The distant huntsman winds his horn,
And the skylarks sing with me.
O, what sweet company!

W. BLAKE.

ONE day the children went on a long expedition with Freedom. It was to a neighbouring race meeting. They started in the early morning, and it was a treat to them to escape for once the morning maledictions of Granny Petulengro, and the rough service of the camp. Freedom liked to have them with her, and it was the one day in all their long adventure that the children looked back on with delight.

It was nice to be with some one who was not always rating, and Freedom was a good companion for a walk. She stepped free and lightly, a slim brown hand always ready to help any one over

hedges or ditches, and, once away from the camp, the lines about her mouth fell into peace and happiness; and she would sing now and again—

"Full many a night in the clear moonlight
Have I wandered by valley and Down,
Where the owls fly low, and hoot as they go,
The white-winged owl, and the brown.
For it's up and away, e'er the dawn of the day,
Where the glowworm shines in the grasses,
And the dusk lies cool on the reed-set pool,
And the night wind passes."

She showed them how to gather the gipsies' tent-pins, which are the thorns that grow on the sloe bushes. And she picked the thyme, that grew in scented cushions on the turf, to make tea from it later in the day. She saw squirrels before they did, and beetles whose noses bleed a bright ruby drop when you touch them—not because you've touched them too hard, but because that is their weapon of defence when in danger, and they do it to frighten you away.

And she showed them the larder of a butcher-bird, the bird who impales the things he is going to eat on the sharp points of thorns. Beetles and nestlings, and shrew-mice, and it's interesting to

find a strike's larder, because it's not a thing you very often see.

And so on through the lovely day in September they walked on, or sang, or rested, or lay quite flat, and looked up through clinched eyelids to see who could best bear the light of the wide blue sky.

When they arrived at the race meeting, Freedom caught back her hair under a yellow kerchief, which she tied round her head, and the real fun of the day was over, for the children found themselves once more in a crowd. Freedom kept them closely with her, so that they might not get lost, and they were interested in listening to her telling people's fortunes. Have you ever heard a gipsy tell a fortune? It is something like this. You must imagine a very rapid utterance, and a face thrust forward. An almost closed lid, veiling a very sharp eye, the face set sideways looking upwards, and a wheedling tone of voice.

"Shall I tell the pretty lady's fortune? Bless her pretty heart, just cross the gipsy's palm with a silver coin, my dear, and let the gipsy tell the fortune of the pretty lady, so her fate shan't cross her wishes, but everything come true just as the lady (bless her pretty heart!) will be joyful and thankful for the good fortune to be. And

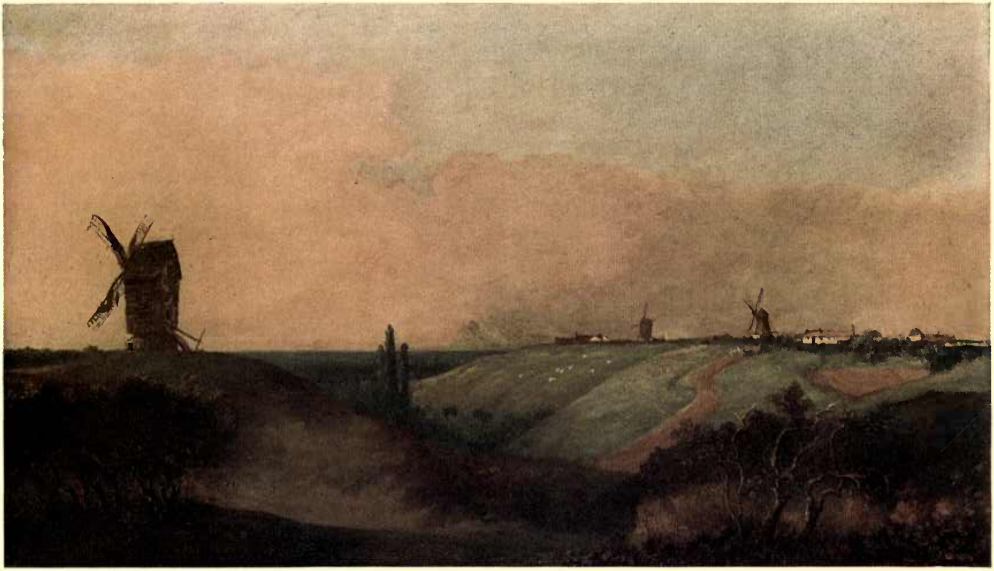
remember the poor gipsy girl when she gives her hand into the hand of her true lover, the sweetheart who has vowed to be true. It's just a coin that does it, thank you, my lovely lady, cross the gipsy's palm with a silver coin, and the good luck will follow it. . . . Thank you, my dear, thank you, place your hand on mine and let the lines tell the gipsy girl what never a print book can't reveal, but only the stars as does it; yes, my dear; there's a ship coming, a long journey, I see a distant land, but there's happiness in store for those as believe it, though for those as sets their hearts agen' it, it may be far from otherwise.

"I see a beautiful young man, a bee-utiful young man, O, but the strength of him, hasn't he got an eye like a hawk, and a chin to him? There'll be never no turning him from the pretty lady as he loves, not though others may say whatsoever they likes, but he'll come straight as a beam of the morning, though I see a dark lady and two enemies what will do what they *can*, but don't you believe 'em, my dear, never you believe the written words of crooked tongues, but you trust the gipsy girl, my dear, and she sees troth plighted, and love united, and a golden blessing, brighter than the stars; and a clergyman standin' by and all.

"Now, there's a letter to you coming, my dear, but don't take nothing written on a Thursday, for the dark lady's in it, and you must turn from your enemies if you trust the poor gipsy girl, for you're one of those as may be led but can't be druv, not though they stand never so. But three moons must shine before you hear what the gipsy girl sees in your pretty hand, but just cross the palm with another bit o' silver, my dear, because then she can do it better with the cards, my dear, and bring the good fortune that tarries. Bless your heart, and thank you, my dear, and may you never go sorrowful, but find the lucky shoe-leather that'll take you where you will."

And so it goes on. The wheedling voice, the cringing manner, the crazy medley of sound and sense, with here and there a pretty phrase that is the garbled garrulity of the gipsy.

Perhaps it was this that made the children glad when the hours spent among the crowd were over. It was not pleasant to see Freedom change herself into this semblance of one of the most artful of her thieving tribe. But we know that she was bound over by the masterful nature of Bill, under whose tyranny she suffered, belieing indeed her beautiful name. While she belonged



Cotman.

MOUSEHOLD HEATH.

to the camp she had to work for it, and to-day had she returned from the race meeting without any money, Bill would have been furiously enraged. She looked back to the days when Jasper had been one of the camp—Jasper who had broken away and had begged her to go with him. But a foolish waywardness had turned her to the stronger mastery of Bill. She had not seen or exchanged words with Jasper since then, with the exception of the written message sent by the children on the evening of the fire and the fair. But all this time she had been growing fonder of the children, and there was a plan for their release maturing in her mind.

She knew that Bill was making for a wide common in the county of Norfolk, called Mousehold Heath. You may see the place in the picture, by Cotman, over the drawing-room mantelpiece. And if you look into it you will see it is an open common with several windmills, eight sheep, some poplars, and a white donkey, and a road of a warm red, that goes up the hill with a sudden jag in it, towards a row of cottages set on the crest of the hill.

It took the gipsies some time to reach this place. They had loitered, and lingered, and trespassed, and

poached their way through four counties, only the poorer by the boy's coat, which had been left in a farmer's hands one night while its owner was stealing hens.

Both children were stained brown, and clad roughly, in old unsavoury garments, and nearly all their high spirits and gaiety cuffed out of them by the old crone. We will not dwell on this part of the story, for at last there came a break in their dark sky.

Mousie woke one night to find Freedom bending over her, whispering.

"Listen, dear; it's Freedom talking. Don't answer now, but just move your hand if you understand. We mustn't wake Granny, and old Petulengro is close outside. When you go with Robin to-morrow to fetch the water, leave the pitcher and make straight for the mill. You'll see it standing high above ye, and never stop running till you reach the lintel, and there knock, and say ye come from me. I've told Robin; do ye understand me? Once in the mill, we'll get ye home."

The words seemed to dance and sing in Mousie's ears. "Once in the mill, we'll get ye home." She saw them gold and shining

before her, and "O Freedom, dear," she said, "O Freedom!"

But Freedom had stepped out again beneath the stars. Only old Granny snored and grunted, in her corner of the van.

CHAPTER VIII

Anything is worth what it costs; if it be only as a schooling in resolution, energy, and devotedness; regrets are the sole admission of a fruitless business; they show the bad tree.—G. MEREDITH.

HAT day could not dawn too early for Mousie. She lay, after Freedom's whisper had ceased, staring upon the darkness with wide lids. Her stay among the gipsies had deepened her nature in some measure. Before this the course of her being had been like that of a little burn, full of kinks and babblings, frothing round some obstructing but tiny stone, now conveying a straw as importantly as it had been a three-decker, now leaping in the sunshine doing nothing at all. But she had moments now of much thinking, and had gained some of that self-control, that comes to those who have faced the realities of life.

Soon the camp was stirring, and she rose from

her box-bed. She saw a look in Robin's face that had not been there yesterday, and her heart gave a great throb.

"Where are the childer?" screamed the old Granny, who was always at her crossest in the morning, spoiling the shining hours with her rasping old tongue.

"Where be the childer? Off with yer! off with yer, I tell 'ee; and if 'ee don't fetch the water in double-quick time, it's Granny Petulengro that 'ull know it, and make *you* know it, ye lazy, loitering varmints, yer good-for-nothing brats! Now then get off wid 'ee, I tell 'ee; get off wid 'ee, ye brazen everlastin' nuisance. I'll come after ye, I will!" She stood and shook her fist, muttering angrily.

Robin and Mousie took up the pitcher and ran swiftly. They climbed over the little fence and bent their steps towards the brook, then hardly exchanging a word between them, they set the pitcher down, and crossing to the other bank, they sped up the rough hillside. How far off the hill looked—it seemed to recede before them. They ran and ran, till at last they had to slacken their pace, but now the mill seemed nearer. O, how thankful they were when they came up to

it, and heard the clank and lumber of the great sails going round in the fresh wind.

They flung themselves against the door that was to shelter them; they battered in their eagerness. And then the door opened, and Jasper Ford appeared. He drew them in with kind broad hands, that seemed full of pity and protection, and Mousie fell sobbing against his shoulder. The mill seemed full of people, about six pairs of eyes were looking on, expressing various degrees of sympathy.

Mousie and Robin were given something to eat, but every footstep outside was a terror. Then Jasper told them what was about to happen, that Freedom and he together had planned their escape. There was to be no time lost in getting the stain off, the hour of their departure was close at hand. Only Jasper required one thing of them—implicit obedience; and they were to trust him through all. Even if it seemed sometimes long, and as if he'd forgotten them, they must still trust him, and wherever and however they found themselves, they were to wait patiently and still.

Of course both children said "Yes," and Mousie hugged Jasper, and thought how good his mealy

coat smelt, and said "yes" a hundred times more.

And then Jasper took out two sacks and tied the children up in them, and in half-an-hour's time they were placed with about twenty other sacks in a long waggon, that came to the mill.

So once more they were upon the road driving. And Mousie and Robin spent the next hours learning to weave that garment of the soul called Patience, that hardly any children, and very few people, know anything about.

In the afternoon of that same day they reached Downham Market, and here Jasper was to deposit his empty sacks and return next day with them replenished, to Mousehold Mill. But in the meantime he must find a sure retreat for the lost pair, for it was thought Bill would come seeking them; but if once beyond a certain point, they might consider themselves safe.

Jasper's first duty was to go to the Inn, where they kept post-chaises, and hire a messenger mounted on horseback, to take a note. He had money for this—the good people at Mousehold Mill had provided it when he told them the case. This mounted messenger was to ride straight to the town of Woodstock, taking with

him a small packet, neatly sewn in canvas to be safe. This parcel contained Mousie's head kerchief, and one of Robin's little shoes—two things that had been stored away by Freedom all this time. On a slip of paper were written the words :—

"That which was lost is found.
Apply to Master Larkynge,
The Wheatsheaf, Ely."

When the messenger had mounted his grey, and was well upon the road, Jasper had a difficult matter to settle. He had to decide the means to get them farther on their way towards Ely, for he himself had to return in the early morning to Mousehold Heath. And to do this he decided to hire a cart and drive them far on into the night, till he reached a turnpike cottage. Here an old hunchback lived to whom he had shown kindness. This turnpike cottage was on the public road, and the carriers' carts passed it. He intended hiding the children with the hunchback, and commissioning him to put them into the carrier's van on the morrow, with the message that they were to be left at Master Larkynge, till called for, at the "Wheatsheaf Inn."

It was a lovely September night when Jasper drove the children from Downham Market in the hired gig. The moon rose large and full above them, but Mousie didn't see it, for she was sound asleep at Jasper's feet on a warm sheepskin.

Robin sat beside Jasper and counted the glow-worms till his eyelids began to droop.

And as they drove along the silver'd highway, the gorse bushes black against the grey Down, and the woods lying like great dark mantles thrown across the wold, Jasper sang. Surely a stanza of Freedom's song, Robin thought. And the words of his song were these:—

"Full many a day, have I found my way,
Where the long road winds round the hill.
Where the wind blows free, on a Juniper lea,
To the tune, and the clank of a mill.
For the miller's a man who must work while he can,
With the rye, and the barley growing,
While the slow wheels churn, and the great sails turn,
To the fresh wind blowing."

At last they arrived at the turnpike cottage. The steam from the heated horse rose in clouds upon the night air, and the cart moved to his flanks heaving.

Jasper roused Mousie, and the door opened to his knock. A little bent old man with a great hunch on his back appeared with a lantern, a lantern that served more to blind every one than to help them to see, as he held it up inquiringly into their faces, narrowing his own eyes, to make out what manner of folk these were. Then Jasper carried the children in, dazed and sleepy, to the tiny room. And soon they were sound asleep in a bed in a corner of the cottage, for there was no upstairs whatever.

Mousie woke just enough to feel happy all over, with the comfortable knowledge that Jasper had really come and taken them away. So thankful did she feel that she tried with drowsy nodding head, not to forget her prayers.

"Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
Bless this bed that I lie on.
Four corners to my bed,
Four angels at my head,
One to watch, one to pray,
And two to bear all fears away."

And they blest it, for she slept profoundly. She dreamed she was playing with a white kid, on the lawn at Blenheim.

And it was daylight when she woke.

CHAPTER IX

There is no private house in which people can enjoy themselves so well, as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so great plenty of good things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that everybody should be easy; in the nature of things it cannot be: there must always be some degree of care and anxiety. . . Now at a tavern there is a general freedom from anxiety. You are sure you are welcome: and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give, the more good things you call for, the welcomer you are. . . . No, Sir, there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn.—SAMUEL JOHNSON.

HE children were so glad to be free from the arduous service of Granny Petulengro, that all through the early hours of the morning they were hardly aware of the anxiety that filled the hunchback's heart. He feared lest the gipsies should appear before the carrier. Mousie could not restrain her eagerness to run hither and thither, but he would

not let the children out upon the road. Once inside the carrier's hooded van he thought they would be safe, and though they were, properly speaking, no concern of his, his friendship was such for Jasper that he wished with all his heart to serve him. And a very good heart it was that beat within his shrunken body; a heart that would serve well to remind one, of the jewel hidden in the uncouthness of the toad.

At last there sounded a distant rumbling of wheels, and soon the hunchback was out upon the threshold. The children were bundled into the waggon in the sacks Jasper had brought with him, but they were not tied up as before. The sacks were to be secured round them only if any of the gipsy gang appeared. And so they started off once again upon their travels. But home was getting nearer and nearer.

After a wonderfully slow drive with old Thorn the carrier, who glowered out upon all wayfarers from the shadow of the hood, they reached the town of Ely; and here they were taken to Master Larkynge, at the sign of the Wheatsheaf. Thorn had been well paid by Jasper for his share in it, and asked no questions as to who the children were, yet both children were glad to see the last

of him; he had none of the hunchback's gentleness, or the kindness of Jasper Ford.

There are some folk made of very common clay, very rough pottery turned on the potter's wheel. People who go through life, morally shouldering their brothers out of the path, as it suits them. Old Thorn was one of these. Every movement of his body was one of determined aggression. When he stepped ponderously forward, his shoulders seemed to say,

"I'm coming along this way, and nobody's not agoing to do nothin' to stop me." And when he looked round upon his audience after he had said anything, the lines about his mouth said, "And now anybody wots got anythin' to say to the contrary had better keep it to hisself, that's all."

The horses of his carrier's van seemed to know him. They would start, lifting their heads suddenly, to get beyond his reach. And as he dealt largely in extraordinarily bronchial expletives, he had not proved a very pleasant guide.

The Wheatsheaf was a different matter. Here all was cheerfulness and order. A great fire leaped and roared upon the hearth, piled bright with burning wood. A high-backed settle was turned towards the warmth, and the rosy light played

upon the red-brick floor, and the whitewash. Do you know certain rooms that express as you enter, "Come in, come in, and sit down and be comfortable." And every chair says "Welcome" to you as you arrive? Well, the kitchen of the Wheatsheaf was just such a room. And every one, from the raven who stole the bones, to the cat who frightened him away to eat them herself, knew it. Prue, the daughter of Master Larkynge, wore a white cap with a full frill to it, and an apron with astonishingly small pockets. And there was pewter to drink from, and there was a humorous Ostler, and a painted sign that creaked as it swung, showing the most prosperous sheaf of corn ever garnered. Certainly everything about it spelt hospitality.

In these snug and enviable surroundings, were Robin and Mousie put to bed, in a wide four-poster with dimity curtains, and rough white sheets, that smelt of hay and lavender.

And because they were excited, and not very tired, Prudence sang them to sleep. She was very pretty, and rather sentimental, so she chose a very sad song. But if you want children to go to sleep, you had best not choose a song with a story in it, because they keep awake to know what

happens. But Prue didn't know this, and being very fond of the tune, sang it to the very end. And the words of her song were these :—

"Cold blows the wind to-night, sweetheart ;
Cold are the drops of rain.
The very first love that ever I had
In greenwood he was slain.

I'll do as much for my true love
As ever a maiden may,
I'll sit and watch beside his grave
A twelvemonth and a day.

The twelvemonth and a day being up
The ghost began to speak :
'Why sit you here by my graveside
From dusk till morning break ?'

'Oh think upon the garden, love,
Where you and I did walk.
The fairest flower that blossomed there
Is wilted on its stalk.'

'Why sit you there by my graveside
And will not let me sleep ?
Your salten tears they trickle down
My winding sheet to steep.'

'Oh think upon the spoken troth
That once to me you gave.
A kiss from off your clay-cold lips
Is all that I shall crave.'

Then through the mould he heaved his head,
And from the herbage green
There fell a frosted bramble-leaf,
It came their lips between.

'Then well for you that bramble-leaf
Between our lips was flung.
The living to the living hold,
Dead to the dead belong.'"

This is certainly a sad song, but you should know the tune, to really feel its melancholy. It had far from a soporific effect on Mousie and Rob.

"Did he like being there?"

"Why did he stay?"

"What was his head like?"

"Who flung the leaf?"

But then Mistress Larkynge looked into the room with a flat candle in her hand, and a frilled cap like Migg's. And she said, "Mercy on us, tell me one thing, *is* it thieves?"

And she roundly rated Prudence for keeping the children awake, and disappeared again in a very

bad temper—her white bed-jacket was like the one Mrs. Squeers wears—and her mouth full of anything but thimbles.

Then at last the children, frightened lest Mrs. Larkynge should return, lay down and really went to sleep. And when they awoke, it was on the day on which their parents came to the Wheatsheaf, to fetch them.

That was a joyful day. They had had enough of escaping. And when at last they found themselves once more at Blenheim, it is wonderful how pleasant it was. Even Mrs. Goodenough's nose seemed the right shape, and their parent's love and protection things to be grateful for. They were both of them in many ways the better for their adventure; it had brought out sound qualities in each.

Years after, when Robin was a grown man and Mousie a pretty lady, they went to Mousehold Mill to revisit it. And the white donkey was still alive, only being so much older, he carried his head even more despondently than before. The door was opened by Jasper, the same kind Jasper, only a little greyer, but all the nicer for that. And beyond by the fire stood Freedom, her hair as black as ever it was in the earlier days.

With the money the children's father had given Jasper for his kindness, he had been able to set up for himself, and eventually he had married Freedom. Years afterwards, when the old proprietor of the mill had died, Jasper had bought it, and gone to dwell there; for although he came of gipsy stock, he had lost the love of wandering. And Freedom was a happy wife, as she deserved to be, and had many wonderfully brown babies.

Jasper would often stand at the open door in summer time, with his hands in his pockets and an eye on the cloud drift, and now and again as he worked, he would sing the song Rob heard him sing that night in the moonshine.

"For the miller's a man, who must work while he can,
With the rye and the barley growing,
While the slow wheels churn, and the great sails turn
To the fresh wind, blowing."

CHAPTER X

THE story finished, all the children bounded along the passage, laughing and leaping as they ran. They found the drawing-room lit, and a company assembled. It took Clare's breath away, and at first she felt excited. Then she espied Mrs. Inchbald at the end of the long room, and ran towards her.

Mrs. Inchbald saw her approaching, and "La, child, what are you doing?" she said, "remember your minuet. That is not the way to move in a drawing-room, my dear."

But Clare didn't know a minuet. She lives, it is to be deplored, in the day of barn-dances, kitchen lancers, and general slouchback deportment. When little boys walk with their hands in their pockets (a most ungentlemanly attitude), and little girls stand with their heads set on their shoulders as if they were Odol bottles, poor things, and made that way.

"How well Mrs. Jordan stands," said Mrs. Inchbald; "look at her, my dear, and learn to throw the small of your back in and to poise your head."

Clare was getting good at keeping silence when censured, so she stood still while Mrs. Inchbald spoke. She was, moreover, immensely interested in watching the animated groups around her; she saw Bim as pre-occupied as possible, admiring Lewis, the actor's, coat. Christopher was looking at a large russet-coloured leather book spread open before him, which Clare recognised as the portfolio belonging to the Misses Frankland; and as she looked round the room, in they came, those two pretty creatures, Amelia and Marianne. They sat down, with Christopher between them, and showed him their book. "Then they also live here? That accounts," thought Clare, "for that dog I heard barking and whining just before I woke up this morning."

But now the room was filling so quickly her eyes kept falling on new old friends. One group in particular attracted her attention; it was so very lively and vivid in effect. Yes, it was Barry, and Quin, and Miss Fenton—Miss Lavinia Fenton of the expressive hands. And towards this group

Gainsborough.

LEWIS, THE ACTOR.

Lewis, the actor, was striding, and Mrs. Jordan was among them too.

Clare was glad to see Kitty Fischer. You would hardly guess how pretty that grey dress of hers looked among all the brighter colours there.

Lady Crosbie was talking to Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Robert Mayne gave his arm to Miss Ridge. She looked prettier than ever, chief of the roguish school, and Robert Mayne looked amused and comfortable. Her face twinkled when she spoke.

Miss Woffington's manner was decidedly crisp. Something had gone wrong, or perhaps her bodice was too tight? It certainly appeared excruciating. However that may have been she made remarks with edges to them, and when she had spoken, her lips went together as if they closed on a little slice of lemon just inside.

Miss Hippesley dropped her blue scarf, and Clare had an opportunity of showing her good manners, returning it to her before any one had seen it fall. For a long minute the quiet, clinched eyes rested on hers, and Clare noticed the pretty hands, as in the picture.

"Where did you get your honeysuckle?" she asked; "I've never seen it sold in London."

"I got it from the old house in Kensington,"

said Miss Hippesley. "Come along, child, with me. I dislike these crowded evenings, when every one comes. I should not have accepted had I known it was going to be so—mixed."

"O, but," said Clare, who had heard many fragments of conversation, "Mrs. Inchbald says that every one comes when they know Doctor Johnson may be coming, no matter where the house, or what the company."

"Doctor Johnson?" repeated Miss Hippesley. "Ah, that is another matter; I did not know he was expected here to-night. Who brings him, child?"

"Mr. Robert Mayne knows him well, I heard Mrs. Inchbald saying, and every one seems so glad and happy. Do you really want to go away?"

Miss Hippesley smiled: "I shall not stay very long, I dare say, but, as I am here, I shall do my best to be agreeable."

Clare was afraid she had been forward, but she soon was reassured, for Miss Hippesley smiled on her, as she rose. Seeking out Lady Crosbie, the two withdrew, to a seat somewhat removed, from the company.

CHAPTER XI

The lyfe so short, the craft so long to lerne,
Th' assay so hard, so sharpe the conquering.

CHAUCER.

"WHETHER you like it or not, depends on what you require in a picture." Robert Mayne was speaking to a circle of friends. "If you like narrative in a picture, then you will like the pictures by David Wilkie, which tell a story, or rehearse a scene. They have life-like imagery, and humour, and a master's knowledge of composition, in the sense of grouping effects. But poetry? None. I ask for poetry in a picture, just as I require painting in a poem. But of narrative I desire none. Let narrative be for prose."

At this there was an outcry, for Wilkie was a great favourite with his contemporaries. And Robert Mayne was called on to cite instances that illustrated his contention, that poetry should be in picture, and painting be found in verse.

"I do not say there should be; this is what I ask."

"But you must define poetry, Sir," said Miss Ridge, "or, at least, what it means to you."

"Poetry, Madam, is the perception of what is beautiful, not the perception of what is humorous or sad. And I find this poetry in the pictures by Cotman, because he shows the wide sky, and the warm red earth, and poplars topping the horizon. The limbs of trees, and the flight of clouds, and quiet field labour. Such pictures give a 'temperate show of objects that endure.' And this must please those who seek the perception of the beautiful. Can you compare such a picture to one that shows a village tavern, a debtor's prison, or an errand-boy? Equally true, you may reason. It may be. But beautiful—no.

"Look at the pictures by Bonington; cannot you see the sands glisten, and hear the waves? And the fishwife who is walking there, do we not know that as she steps the sands press white beneath her, to darken as the moisture re-asserts itself beneath her footfall, by the margin of the sea? And the sea-piece by Turner. There is the sting of the brine in it, the very sound of the wind in the rigging. And the picture by Constable. Isn't Fuseli right when he exclaims, 'Come, let me fetch my umbrella; I'm

Turner.

APPROACH TO VENICE.

off to see the Constables,' for isn't the rain just about to be freed from that sagging cloud, that has those planes of blue behind it?

"And then the pictures by De Wint and Turner. So huge in design, so simple in mass, yet if one looks into them, one finds sheep, and cows, and tiny horses in the distance, towing barges along canals. And in some corner of foreground, deep woods, and white doves, simply swinging through the air. Or, perhaps, a man on a horse riding up a lawn, with greyhounds at his heels, or tall foxgloves in deep shadow. Then in Turner's pictures, his Venice scenes; small figures getting into barges—just a dab of the brush, and a dot of pink for the head—and all the vast canal with the sun dipping into it. And towering ships, away in the haze.

"Or, again, early morning, and a fisherman putting out on a lake to fish. The sun is just getting up over the hills, where you know the deer are feeding, and everything is grey, and drowsy with dew. The men are so quiet, you can hear the dip of an oar, a murmur of voices, perhaps the clank of a can at the bottom of the boat, or a chain running out. Only these men are about, and a coot or two. The cottages on the hill are still asleep; they have all the quietness of early morning. And these men,

they are two dots of black paint! These are the pictures with poetry in them. Yes, these—and one other."

"Which is that?" asked Miss Ridge, listening prettily, but with her charming eyes roving the room.

"It is a picture by a man named Watts, after our time, doubtless," said Robert Mayne; "it has its place here on these walls. It shows the descent of Diana to the sleeping Endymion. The lovely form conveys the arch of the crescent, the silver moon, and the brown earth."

It is true Miss Ridge was interested; she was a woman who might coo soft, understanding little noises about a picture, but all the time be arranging her hair by the reflection in its glass. So Robert Mayne's conversation was not altogether understood by her. Yet in herself, she was so entirely satisfactory, there was no immediate need for her to be anything else.

"It is for homely features to keep home;
They have their name thence, coarse complexions
And cheeks of sorry grain have leave to ply
The sampler, and to tease the housewife's wool.
What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, and tresses like the morn?"

Reynolds.

MISS RIDGE.

But now there was a stir and a re-grouping at the far end of the room, and Clare saw a remarkable figure enter. It was that of an elderly man of great bulk, but the character of whose head and countenance was such, as to make you oblivious of his corpulence. He wore a brown suit of clothes and black worsted stockings, ill drawn up, and an unpowdered wig, slightly too small for him. You must ask your Mother to take you to see his picture in the National Portrait Gallery; it gives the forceful expression so well. This person was none other than Doctor Johnson, who made the Dictionary, wrote the "Lives of the Poets," and "Rasselas," famous in his own day, and ours, for the extraordinary power and precision of his speech.

He was followed by a gentleman to whom we owe a great debt of gratitude, for he kept a faithful, and painstaking diary, in which he recorded the sayings of Doctor Johnson. And this is one of the books you will learn to treasure when you are older, nor find its six volumes a word too long. This man's name was James Boswell, of Auchinlech.

The entry of the distinguished guest caused a general rearrangement; the company fell into new groups and knots of talkers, just as the kaleidoscope will scatter its fragments, to re-form into

some fresh design. Mr. Mayne walked forward to receive him, for the Doctor was here at his invitation, and then Clare saw Sir Joshua Reynolds in his wake. The actors and actresses closed round Doctor Johnson, for he was a great favourite with them, often frequenting the Green Room, being very easy and facetious, in their company. So for a time the ungainly figure, moving with a constant roll of the head, was hid from Clare's view; but she heard his voice uttering characteristic phrases of astonishing finality. When he spoke, you wondered if there could be anything more to be said on that subject, ever again, by anybody. There dwelt the apotheosis of the *pûnkt finale* in his speech. Oliver Goldsmith said of him, "It is ill arguing with Doctor Johnson; though you may be in the right, he worsts you. If his pistol misses fire, he clubs his opponent over the head with the butt-end of it."

Here are only some of his many utterances recorded for us by Boswell. I will tell you a few.

His profound reverence for the hierarchy made him expect from Bishops the highest degree of decorum. He was offended even at their going to restaurants, or taverns, as they were then called.

"A Bishop, Sir, has nothing to do at a tippling-house. It is not, indeed, immoral in him to go to

Reynolds.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

a tavern, neither would it be immoral in him to whip a top in Grosvenor Square."

Mrs. Thrale, a friend of his, once gave high praise to an acquaintance.

"Nay, my dear lady, don't talk so. Mr. Long's character is very short. He is a man of genteel appearance. He fills a chair. That is all."

He was chilled by wordy enthusiasm. He knew it to be possible to blast by praise.

"Where there is exaggerated praise every one is set against the character."

This, I think, would fit some of the exponents of the gushing speech of our modern social day.

"Sir, these are enthusiasts, by rule."

Yet, very near the time of his decease, how humbly did this great man receive the diffident expression of regard from some person unknown to him, in which he found the sincerity he prized. "Sir, the applause of a single human being is of great consequence."

"Depend upon it," said he on one occasion, "if a man talks of his misfortunes, there is something in them that is not disagreeable to him. Where there is pure misery, there is no recourse to the mention of it."

He must have loved folk of simple bearing: "Sir, he has no grimace, no gesticulation, no burst of admiration on trivial occasions. He never embraces you with an over-acted cordiality."

Once, on hearing it observed of one of their friends that he was awkward at counting money, "Why, Sir," he said, "I am likewise awkward at counting money; but then, Sir, the reason is plain: I have had very little money to count."

Though he used to censure carelessness very strongly, he once owned to Boswell that, just to avoid the trouble of locking up five guineas, he had hid them so well that he had never found them since.

Talking of Gray's Odes, which he did not care for, he said, "They are forced plants, raised in a hot-bed; they are but cucumbers, after all." A gentleman present, unluckily for himself said, "Had they been literally cucumbers, they had been better things than odes."

"Yes, Sir," said Johnson, "for a hog."

Once Johnson was in company with several clergymen, who, starting a war of wits, carried the conversation to an excess of conviviality. Johnson, whom they thought to entertain, sat moodily silent. Then bending to a friend, he said, by no means

in a whisper: "This merriment of parsons is mighty offensive."

Talking of a point of delicate scrupulosity of moral conduct, he said: "Men of harder minds than ours will do many things from which you and I would shrink. Yet, Sir, they will perhaps do more good in life than we. But let us help one another."

Clare's eyes were now attracted to the animated group of players, at the far end of the room. Barry, the actor, was standing in a fine attitude, dressed in his brown velvet suit. The calves of his legs were resplendent in silk stockings, and he was repeating lines from the part of Romeo to his listening friends. Now and again a little ripple of applause rose and spread among the group, but the gentlemen did not seem so enthusiastic as the ladies. Old Quin was distinctly adverse, and sat, with quite three dissenting chins, rolling his eyes in a ferocious manner. There sat Fielding, the writer. Clare had often heard her Mother read his name aloud from the frame, and say how much she liked the shape of his nose. So she looked at this feature particularly. It was certainly a very long nose, and aquiline; what physiognomy books speak of as the "cogitative nose."

"Some day I shall read 'Tom Jones,'" said Clare to herself, "and I expect I shall like it as much as Mother does. But I shall read it in comfortable print, not in the edition that makes one say fowls for souls all through. O, there's Miss Ridge. *I* see her." She threaded her way in and out of the company till she came to that bird-like person, Miss Ridge. She had the pale ribbon in her fawn-coloured hair, and the little shadows round her nose and the corners of her mouth, were just as exquisite in real life, as in the picture.

"Ring-a-ring a-roses
A pocket full of posies,"

she was saying, holding Christopher and Bim by the hands. But Bim thought this childish, and asked her if she couldn't sing "Bonnie Dundee." "Sing 'Bonnie Dundee'? I should think so; I can sing twenty 'Bonnie Dundees.' But what's this caravan expedition on which you say you are going with your Mother? I'll tell you! we'll go for a walk one morning. I'll take you to the Lock on the Stour, and we'll have a pocket-lunch on the bit of green field where the big burdock-leaves grow. We'll watch the boy

Hogarth.

MISS PRITCHARD. MRS. PRITCHARD. BARRY. FIELDING. QUIN. LAVINIA FENTON.

THE GREEN ROOM AT DRURY LANE.

opening the lock, and we'll go and see Dedham Church, and pay a visit at the cottage, for I know the people, and you'll be able to climb into the large pollards."

"O, that would be lovely," cried the children. They are not the sort of children who look you up and down, when you suggest a plan, but they are down your throat in a minute, so to say, and you are lucky if you can finish your sentence.

"Oh, yes." "When?" "Let's do it to-morrow!" "Can I take Pont?" "We'll bathe, won't we?" "Oh come and sit down." "What are the people called who live in the cottage?" and so on, and so on—you can imagine it.

But Miss Ridge reverted to the caravan.

"Well, we're going to start about the 15th of April," said Bim in reply, "and Mummie and Clare are going to cook, and Christopher and I shall be armed, of course—two petronels, a pocket-knife, a musket, and bows and arrows."

"I'll come too," said Miss Ridge. "I could sweep the van out. I shall be in nobody's way, and whenever your Mother comes round the corner, I'll jump into the nosebag."

But now there was a general movement towards

the door, and from among many people across the room, Mrs. Inchbald beckoned.

"You must go across to the schoolroom," she said, "the others have been in bed sometime now."

Just at that moment a vision of Lady Crosbie flitted across the open doorway, the very incarnation of flying movement, and grace.

But Mrs. Inchbald looked only one word, and that was "bed." It was written all over her face, and up and down it, and Clare knew quite well there was to be no story that night, and certainly no reprieve.

"You shall hear it to-morrow evening when we have a quiet time to ourselves," said Mrs. Inchbald. And she bundled them all three, through the swing-doors, and up the stairs, and into their rooms, in a moment.

Clare crept into her bed; she felt tired all over. Passing before her eyes in charm and beauty, she saw again in recollection, Miss Hippesley, Mrs. Billington, Lady Crosbie, and Miss Ridge. Barry strutted before her, chatting in brisk self-satisfaction, and once more Miss Lavinia Fenton raised her hands and eyes.

"I wonder why Peg Woffington said Doctor

Johnson had snuff on his shirt-front," she said to herself, sleepily, "and that his linen wasn't——" But she didn't finish the sentence even to herself. She knew it was but a poor mind that dwells upon the weaknesses of great men.

CHAPTER XII

I saw these glassy messengers of pain
Drench her cheeks damask in a watery rout,
Of salty rush and follow.
Till one,
A Laggard in its sorry chase
Gather'd more slowly on the chin's pale curve
Where it hung trembling, in a globy dance
Its little weight, its anchor.

DREAM LINES.

TWO or three days passed over without the children seeing anything more of the life of the pictures. They had gone to bed that night after the party, with the promise of a story held out to them, to soften the pang. Yet morning came after morning, and always found them with the usual everyday life. Lessons through the day, walks, and readings aloud in the evenings, and nothing more to reveal that hidden life. Now Clare could almost think it had been a dream. Yet the boys vowed it was real, and Bim had proof of it.

Raeburn.

THE LESLIE BOY.

"Don't you think there is a deepening of the shadow in the face in the Raeburn in the drawing-room?" said the children's Father one evening. "The Leslie boy, I mean."

"I think there is," said their Mother; "it has a glass. Can the dirt get in?"

Bimbo listened, and the recollection of a fight with Leslie, came vividly before him. Leslie had a black eye distinctly, and Bim's fist had blacked it. So how could there be the least doubt that the picture people were alive? They must just wait, they told each other; and so the days passed on.

One night Clare heard a sound in the passage. It was that of a silk skirt brushing past the doorway, whispering crisply to the stairs, as its folds swept by. She was out after it in a moment, and saw Miss Woffington pass through the swing-doors on her way to the hall.

"They're about again," said Clare to herself joyfully, and she flew to the boys' room. This was empty, and their voices were in the hall.

"I'm not going to racket with the children," she said, "they'll come directly they know Mrs. Inchbald promised stories; but I wonder where Miss Ross is all this time?" As she passed the drawing-room Clare looked in, and Miss Ross's frame was empty.

"Then I shall see her, and talk to her," said Clare; "when she speaks she may not look so sorrowful." She ran swiftly to the far end of the room, where already a small company had assembled.

There she found Mrs. Inchbald, Marianne and Amelia, Miss Ross and all the children, and Miss Ridge.

"Just the right people," she thought, as she sat down among them. "Lady Crosbie is too busy, and has too wide an acquaintance, and Mrs. Jordan is too airified, and Miss Fisher might have other things to do. These are the ones who are just right, and look as if they could tell stories if they chose."

But a good deal of time is lost in real life in unnecessary conversation; so we'll learn by that, and not lose any more here. I'll just go straight on to Mrs. Inchbald's story, as she told it that afternoon.

The Story of Mother Midnight, or the Witch of Wendlestone.

"The scene of my narrative," commenced Mrs. Inchbald, "lies before you, my dears. Which of you can find me a small forest cottage, a river, a white cow, a church, and an oak-tree?"

"I can."

"I can."

"I know."

"There it is."

"The picture by Nasmyth," cried ten voices all at once.

"Well, that small cottage once sheltered the unhappy head of the unfortunate subject of my tale. Unfortunate, yet not so at the last. Let us be happy in thinking, that after years of persecution and winters of privation, when the coldness of her fellow-creatures' hearts was only equalled by the rigour of the pitiless winter snow that threatened to cover her humble lodge, let us be happy to remember, I repeat, that this woman lived to know the protection of a friend."

Mrs. Inchbald paused. She was fond of telling stories. It was good practice for her art. She never gave up a life-long struggle with a stammer, that tripped her up constantly in short sentences, or conversational phrase. This stammer, however, was utterly routed by her fine-sounding and ornate sentences of narration, which she declaimed in a magnificent voice:—

There was an age of superstition which blackens history's page. During the period immediately

following the Reformation, fear of witchcraft in England was so great, that many innocent lives were sacrificed needlessly to assuage the malignant ignorance of the time. It is true that other countries were even more to blame than England, a greater number of innocent people being put to death in Germany, Italy, and France. Yet for all that, our crimes are sufficient to make us shudder in reading of them, and thankful that such things can never recur.

Let us imagine that there is a village called Wendlestone, and that it lies a distance of a mile and a half, from a large wood. There is a common on the confines of this wood, and here the dwellings of squatters, as they are called, may be seen. This means, that a man building his own hut, and driving some humble trade, such as knife-grinder or tin-waresman, might live here free of rent. One of these dwellings is the little house you see in the picture by Nasmyth, and here in the year 1545 an old woman lived. She had a tiny patch of garden, and a donkey which she drove to market with some small load of vegetables and eggs. Or more often some medicines that she compounded from herbs, with which she administered to the ailments of the country people. She was reticent,

Nasmyth

THE COTTAGE BY THE WOOD

quiet, and of a stern cast of countenance, and had lived here for many years. Her people had not belonged to Wendlestone, and no one knew her origin; perhaps this first led people to look on her with distrust.

She had herself put to rights the little tumble-down house, which let the weather in when first she appropriated it. And she had, by her industry and thrift, managed to make a comfortable living, cutting the rushes from the riverside, and thatching her own roof. Often you might see her, crouched low and bent by rheumatism, a straw hat tied beneath her nut-cracker chin, and her red cloak battling with the weather, while she gathered sticks from the woodlands, or took her donkey laden to the town.

"There com' Granny Gather-stick," the children would cry. "Some say as she d' fly by night." And they would scamper into their cottages, and peer back from their mothers' apron-folds.

You have only to live in a village for a year without going away from it, to understand how busy people can be manufacturing stories about each other. Given plenty of time, and every one knowing every one else, there is sufficient irresponsible mischief in the average human heart to bring about the same result as deliberate malice.

How many of our friends are there, I wonder, who have not at various times given utterance to some thorny thrust, or spiky supposition, at our expense, loving us, nevertheless, quite warmly all the while? It is a valuable training to be early taught the eleventh commandment: "Thy neighbour shalt thou not discuss." Detraction, defamation and dislike may be grouped under the comfortable word "Gossip." We often flatter ourselves it is the human interest that we feel.

And so it came about that on Granny Gatherstick centred the gossip of the village. She was first looked on with suspicion, because they did not understand her, and, with ordinary minds, to fail to understand generally means to dislike. Passive dislike grew to fear, and from fear of her grew lies and wicked charges, of which the unfortunate woman was wholly innocent.

"Whoi doan't her be satisfied wi' the ways of other folk? Whoi can't her be in her bed at night time, sem as other folk, 'sted o' flitting about a' gathering of them nesty pisonous stuffs? d' be only when the moon's full, that she d' stir. Noa, noa, say I, let folk keep to folk's ways, and then there won't be nothen' said about un. If a body come to get the name of Mother Midnight, it's not for

nothen', of that you may be sure; I don't hold wi' such ways."

This was what was felt generally among the village folk, and, if you come to think of it, it is not only among the uneducated that such feeling prevails. How seldom people are allowed in this life to take their own way unmolested. Even children playing together interfere, and scold, and bicker about trifles, and family life among grown-up people may be devastated by the same pest.

Let us early write on the tablets of our heart: "Let others lead their own life, in their own way." Then shall our ways be ways of pleasantness, and all our paths be peace.

One day a little boy and girl were playing in the woodlands, which you see painted in that picture before you now. They were friends, not brother and sister, and their names were Martin and Faith. They were wood-cutter's children, and often they played together, for their homes stood near each other in the wood.

There was no authorised village school. You must remember I am telling you of English village life, some three hundred years ago. Children of humble parents were brought up to learn to plough, and reap, and carpenter; they hardly ever were

taught to read, or write. Such as could do so in those days were called "clerkes," and some day, you will read a ballad that tells how Clark Saunders loved May Margaret, and you will find it one of the most sorrowful stories, ever written down.

So it came about that these children spent hours in the woodlands with the flowers, and animals, and insects for companions. And their books were the clouds and streams.

It was in the month of October when the acorns lie freshly fallen. There is something arresting about an acorn; the form is beautiful, the texture glossy, there is perfection in the cup, and completeness in the whole. Who could pass under an oak tree in autumn without picking up a fallen acorn, and turning it in the hand? Faith was threading these, and Martin wandered into the wood. He was away a long time, and Faith was telling herself stories, as she loved doing when she was alone.

"Now it happened the water was very crystal-clear at this part of the river," she was saying, "and flowed between tall sedges, and forget-me-nots, like angels' eyes. And the river was so clear because it was the home of a very beautiful Water Nixie who lived in it, and who sometimes could emerge from

her home, and sit in woman's form upon the bank. She had a dark green smock upon her, the colour of the water-weed that waves as the water wills it, deep, deep down. And in her long wet hair were the white flowers of the water-violet, and she held a reed mace in her hand. Her face was very sad, because she had lived a long life, and known so many adventures, ever since she was a baby, which was nearly a hundred years ago. For creatures of the streams, and trees, live a long, long time, and when they die they lose themselves in Nature. That means that they are for ever clouds, or trees, or rivers, and never have the form of men and women again.

"All water-creatures would live, if they might choose it, in the sea, where they are born. It is in the sea they float hand in hand upon the crested billows, and sink deep in the great troughs of the strong waves, that are green as jade. They follow the foam and lose themselves in the wide ocean—

'Where great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail with unshut eye,'

and they store in the Sea King's palace the golden phosphor of the sea.

"But this Water Nixie had lost her happiness through not being good. She had forgotten many things that had been told her, and she had done many things that grieved others; she had stolen somebody else's property—quite a large bundle of happiness—which belonged elsewhere and not to her. Happiness is generally made to fit the person who owns it, just as do your shoes, or clothes; so when you take some one else's it's very little good to you, for it fits badly, and you can never forget it isn't yours.

"So what with one thing and another, this Water Nixie had to be punished, and the Queen of the Sea had banished her from the waves.

"The punishment that can most affect Merfolk is to restrict their freedom. And this is how the Queen of the Sea punished the Nixie of our tale.

"'You shall dwell for a long time in little places, where you will weary of yourself. You will learn to know yourself so well, that everything you want will seem too good for you, and you will cease to claim it. And so, in time, you shall get free.'

"Then the Nixie had to rise up and go away, and be shut into the fastness of a very small

space, according to the words of the Queen. And this small space was, a tear.

"At first she could hardly express her misery, and by thinking so continually of the wideness and the savour of the sea, she brought a dash of the brine with her, that makes the saltness of our tears. She became many times smaller than her own stature, even then by standing upright and spreading wide her arms, she touched with her finger-tips, the walls of her tiny crystal home. How she longed that this tear might be wept, and the walls of her prison shattered. But the owner of this tear was of a very proud nature, and she was so sad that tears seemed to her, in nowise to express her grief.

"She was a Princess who lived in a country that was not her home. What were tears to her? If she could have stood on the very top of the highest hill and with both hands caught the great winds of heaven, strong as they, and striven with them, perhaps then she might have felt as if she expressed all she knew. Or, if she could have torn down the stars from the heavens, or cast her mantle over the sun; but tears! would they have helped to tell her sorrow? You cry if you soil your copy-book, don't you, or pinch

your hand? So you may imagine the Nixie's home was a safe one, and she turned round and round in the captivity of that tear.

"For twenty years she dwelt in that strong heart, till she grew to be accustomed to her cell. At last in this wise came her release.

"An old gipsy came one morning to the castle and begged to see the Princess. She must see her, she cried. And the Princess came down the steps to meet her, and the gipsy gave her a small roll of paper in her hand. And the roll of paper smelt like honey as she took it, and it adhered to her palm as she opened it. There was little sign of writing on the paper, but in the midst of the page was a picture, small as the picture reflected in the iris of an eye. The picture showed a hill, with one tree on the sky-line, and a long road wound round the hill.

"And suddenly in the Princess's memory a voice spoke to her. Many sounds she heard, gathered up into one great silence, like the quiet there is in forest spaces, when it is Summer, and the green is deep:—

'*Blessed are they that have the home longing,*
For they shall go home.'

Then the Princess gave the gipsy two golden pieces, and went up to her chamber, and long that night she sat, looking out upon the sky.

"She had no need to look at the honeyed scroll, though she held it closely. Clearly before her did she see that small picture; the hill, and the tree, and the winding road, imaged as if mirrored in the iris of an eye. And in her memory she was upon that road, and the hill rose beside her, and the little tree was outlined, every twig of it, against the sky. And as she saw all this, an overwhelming love of the place arose in her, a love of that certain bit of country that was so sharp and strong, that it stung and swayed her, as she leaned on the window-sill.

"And because the love of a country is one of the deepest loves you may feel, the band of her control was loosened, and the tears came welling to her eyes. Up they brimmed and over, in salty rush and follow, dimming her eyes, magnifying everything, speared for a moment on her eyelashes, then shimmering to their fall. And at last came the tear that held the disobedient Nixie.

"Splish! it fell. And she was free.

"If you could have seen how pretty she looked standing there about the height of a grass blade,

wringing out her long wet hair. Every bit of moisture she wrung out of it, she was so glad to be quit of that tear. Then she raised her two arms above her in one delicious stretch, and if you had been the size of a mustard-seed perhaps you might have heard her laughing; then she grew a little, and grew and grew, till she was about the height of a bluebell, and as slender to see.

"She stood looking at the splash on the window-sill that had been her prison so long, and then with three steps of her bare feet, she reached the jessamine that was growing by the window, and by this she swung herself to the ground.

"Away she sped over the dew-drenched meadows till she came to the running brook, and with all her longing in her outstretched hands, she kneeled down by the crooked willows among all the comfry, and the loosestrife, and the yellow irises, and the reeds.

" Then she slid in to the wide, cool stream."

CHAPTER XIII

But now her nose is thin,
And it resteth on her chin
Like a staff.
And a crook is in her back,
And a melancholy crack
In her laugh.

O. WENDEL HOLMES.

FAITH had finished her story, and looked up. It was surely some time since Martin had moved away? She looked round and found she did not recognise her surroundings: wandering along with Martin, she was accustomed to leave the leadership to him. Now that she was alone she had not the smallest idea which way led to her father's cottage; so she called Martin's name. Out it went upon the soft September air, the long-drawn "Martin" of her call. Then again, and again. And at the third or fourth time of hearing her own voice wandering far into

the deep, still woods, Faith began to fear. To fully realise your loneliness, if you are feeling lonely, you have only to call aloud some familiar name several times, and receive no reply. It is curious how uncomfortable the silence following may grow. Faith soon was looking over her shoulder, then hastening her steps, stopping altogether, only to break into a little run; and soon her thoughts were filled with stories of these very woods. Wasn't it here that Dan'l Widdon, and Harry Hawk, had been walking on their way home from the fair, when they heard the sound of skirling and groans? and surely it was by this dark stream that her old Grandmother had seen the wan face of a drowned babe, float up beneath her pitcher, like some pale lily, while she stooped to draw water from the stream? Oh, why had she let Martin wander away? surely it is in these thick woods that Mother Midnight has her dwelling, she who can change into a hare if she will, who flies out when the wind huffles, and flaps her cloak at your window pane? She keeps toads in her bosom—yes, the children say so, and she gathers sparks from her black cat to make charms. . . . Faith's heart was pounding in her ears, and she stood petrified, for now a figure flitted by among the trees. There

was not so much as the snap of a dry twig beneath the tread to reassure her, and it was a cloaked figure; yes, there it was again. A cloaked figure, deeply hooded, leaning on a stick; now Saints and Martyrs preserve us! it is the witch herself.

"Who be you, my dear?"

It was said in a voice that had the sound of a wicket gate with a rusty hinge to it.

"I be main glad to see but a little maid before me—I, who have to live among the shadows, and to hide from the light. When I heard your foot-fall on the dead leaves I had to shrink away, for how should I know if it might not be the persecutors? but it's you that seem to be feared, my dear, it's you that seem to be feared."

Faith was reassured, although still frightened. "Arn't you Mother Midnight?" she asked.

"Well, by some called Mother Midnight, it be true. But only poor old Granny Gather-stick all the time."

Her nose and chin almost met, and her face was a network of tiny wrinkles. Her mouth was like the hole to a wren's nest, except when it was closed, and then it shut down into a straight, hard line. Her eyes were set deep under a furrowed brow, and her grey elf-locks blew about her.

Not a very pleasant appearance you will say; perhaps not, but then her voice was another matter.

> It sounded to me as though, cracked and rude,
> Years had but softened, nor made it shrill,
> As a time-worn flute makes the music crude,
> Yet the spirit of music haunt it still.

When Faith listened to her talking, her fear disappeared. And Granny Gather-stick liked to talk.

"Do'ee come up here, my dear, and tell me where ye d' live, and you can sit before my fire," she said.

"Is your cottage near here, then?"

"Only a step or two across the water, but not my own cottage, child, that you see from the road. No, this to which I be going is just one of my homes. For those who live in hiding must make a shelter where they can."

"Why do you live in hiding?" asked Faith.

"Because of the evil in men's hearts, my dear. Not content with killing each other, and quarrelling, and drinking, and all the many sports and wickednesses that inflame the hearts of men, they must even turn aside from their gay paths to hunt

a poor old woman, and to spin lies about her like a net."

As Granny Gather-stick said these words, Faith saw she had her hand against the bole of a tree that grew beside a thick tangle of underwood. And drawing a little bolt aside, a tiny door opened that appeared like a hurdle set thick with bramble and autumn leaves.

Faith stepped after Granny into the opening, and found herself in the dearest little room imaginable. It was about the size of a large cupboard, and the walls were hurdles with brambles and leaves outside, but hung with rough matting within. A hole in the roof let out the smoke of the log fire, burning low in a heap of grey ashes on the ground. The floor was swept clean and bare, showing the brown earth hard and trodden, and a log or two served for chairs; and in the middle was a little round table, holding a cup and a plate. A tripod held the kettle, and on the plate upon the table lay a great golden piece of honeycomb, its sweetness stealing slowly from its sides.

Faith exclaimed with pleasure and sat down upon a log. "Granny, what a lovely little house." As she spoke she heard Martin's voice calling her.

Nearer and nearer the sound travelled, till soon he was by the door.

"Now call to him, my dear, and let us see if the birds have given Granny a good hiding lesson."

"Here I am!" called Faith.

"Where?"

"Here!"

"Where?"

"Find me."

Martin's steps went hither and thither through the wood, till at last Faith opened the door, and soon they were all three in the tiny hut with very little room surrounding, but happy, listening to Granny's talk. She sat at her table sorting herbs. "Milkwort or Hedge-hyssop against the cough. Borage brings courage for purging melancholy, and to fortify the heart. The Plantain for its healing juices. St. John's Wort against lightning and evil charms. Colchicum for rheumatism, and the like. . . . Here are Black Archangel and Key-of-Spring, Love-in-a-tangle, and Witch's-tree; Grave-of-the-Sea and Golden Greeting, Lad's-love, and Rue.

"Here be Arum roots; I put these aside—they be for stiffening lawn with the starch I make from them—starch to stiffen the fine ruffs of the great

lords and ladies; and the Arums themselves we call Lords and Ladies hereabout, though some call them Wake Robin, too.

"Hedge Woundwort or Sickleweed, or Carpenter's Herb, that has 'All Heal' for a name. The Iris, called by the gipsies the Eye of Heaven, pleasant to the skin when made into a paste, as I know how. And here's Corn Fever-few to cool the blood, and Rest Harrow to restore reason."

The children watched her dividing and tying them into bunches with thread, then suspending the fragrant sprigs against the hurdled walls to dry. Her hands moved nimbly, and her voice sounded pleasantly, as she murmured the names of the flowers, while she worked.

And so it came to be a happy custom with the children to seek her out in her cottage, or in her wren-houses, as they came to call her little hidden huts. And she would have a story for them. Sometimes they were rhymed ballads, of the kind such as Tamlane, or the Merry Goshawk, sometimes they were the stories of her dreams.

She would say, "You midden believe all that old Granny tells, my dear, when she tells her dreams. Sometimes I d' think they may be what happened to me long ago, but what can I know about it?

Why, once I was given King Solomon's Seal for my wisdom, in a dream."

"When was that?" cried the children; "please tell us!"

And in the next chapter you may read the story in her dream.

CHAPTER XIV

And all my days are trances,
And all my nightly dreams
Are where thy dark eye glances,
Are where thy footstep gleams.
In what ethereal dances,
By what eternal streams.

E. A. POE.

I DREAMED I was in a great garden full of flowers, and beautiful trees. The lawns were smooth, with never a daisy to break the green of them, and the shadows in the moonlight lay dark upon the ground.

"For I was there at night, and there were many others with me, dream-people, who I couldn't see. But I knew we were all gathered together to be put to some great test. I can see the night sky now above me, as I saw it in my dream, with the moon like a shining shield, and never a star.

"And the test we were put to was to count the flowers of the Solomon's Seal.

"Do you know the plant, and the beauty of it? The flowers hang down in little bunches from a green stem that makes a rainbow span. I saw the white flowers as I bent down to seek them, and ten of them I counted as they hung there. And all the time that I was counting, there were small voices about me, like thin breaths of air.

"'Count us, count us,' they were saying; 'different and yet the same; count us.'

"It seemed to me there might be some more flowers hidden among the leaves. And I turned the leaves back with my hands, seeking. I can feel the coolness, and the firmness, of them now. But I could find no more flowers than those ten. Yet the thin voices were still whispering, 'Count us, count us.'

"Then in the great clearness of the moonlight I saw that everything in the garden had its shadow, every flower I had counted was shadowed black upon the ground; and together I made twenty, and the clamouring of the voices ceased. Then in my dream it seemed to me the time had come when we must answer. We must have been standing in a long line, for I heard the voices of the many who were there, coming nearer and nearer, like a soft wind blowing through a wood. 'Ten—

ten—ten—ten,' sounded the answers, and some one who seemed to be standing at my shoulder said 'Ten.' But when my turn came, I was filled with the strength of a great spirit, and cried out so that my voice filled all the hollow of the sky.

"'Twenty, I make it!' I called out—'Twenty! for substance is shadow, and shadow is substance, and what is—seems, and what seems—is.'

"I d' know, I'm sure, if that makes sense or not, my dears; but I was given Solomon's Seal for my wisdom."

The children sat quietly while she told her story. Even if they did not understand, they liked her voice. The logs glowed warmly beneath the hanging kettle, and the feather of steam would float out, and curl upwards from the kettle's spout. But best of all her stories they liked one that told of a strange adventure in her dream.

"That was when I was travelling in a distant land, my dears, when I was cast out for dead upon the desert. But the life in my spirit was hidden and secret, and the flame was not blown out. I was sent on a great mission away in a foreign land; I had papers with me, and I knew in my dream if I were discovered, it would be my life they would take. Then as my dream went on, I knew I was

betrayed into the hands of my enemies, and on the morrow I was to die.

"That was a great land I was in, a land of dead races; a land of desert sand, and ruined temples, and bright colours, and blue skies. I and many others were to come by our deaths in a strange fashion. It was this, look.

"We were all taken up to stand on the great head of a statue. Terrible it was in its sightless eyes, its heavy plaited hair, and its paws of a creature. But I had no time to feel afraid, or astonished. I was there to die. So large was this great statue that as many as thirty people, or more, could stand upon its head, and those who had to die were to leap from the head, down into the depths below. And as I stood there with the other prisoners, I looked, and saw the people walking about in their colours, far down, like spilt beads upon the earth. Every one that leaped from that statue had to cry aloud some great loud cry. And I saw them leap and fall, crushed upon the earth beneath us.

"Then it came to the turn of two before me, then one before me, then it was my turn to leap. And suddenly I felt the spirit surge within me, and I thought, 'They shall see that I, at least, know

how to die.' And I sent my voice out so that my throat almost burst with the strength of it, and I leaped.

"The air tore at my ears as I fell, and there was a rushing sound, and the sun reeled in the sky before me, with blood-red bars crossing the yellow of his light. Then the ground seemed to rise up and smite me, and I lay all bruised and broken from my fall. I felt the blood burst out in warm gouts in breathing, and I said, 'I am broken to pieces. I am dying. Soon I shall be dead.' And then I became aware of a voice speaking to me, as if through grey clouds that were around me. 'Lie still,' said the voice, 'and they will think us dead like the others, and by this we may escape; lie still.'

"I knew then I was not dead but broken, and I dreaded moving because of the sickening sense of the red stream that welled from my open lips.

"Only my spirit was kept from fainting by the sound of that voice. 'Life,' it whispered; 'we are not dead. Life.'

"And surely for hours the bodies fell from a height around us, and I lay listening to the sound. And when at last that sound was finished, they brought carts to take us away. I was thrown in

among the dead bodies—taken up and thrown in, like any refuse that must be carted away. My dears, this happened long ago; this happened—God knows it was no dream. And I lay in that earth with the dead around me, the dead already cold. Eyes glazed and open, lay near me, and hands with the fingers stiff upon them, thrust out against my face. Flung in they were, these dead bodies. Is there anything worse than to be alive among the dead?

"So I lay under this load of corpses, now straining my head to get a crevice to breathe through, now striving to rid myself of some cold body lying on my face.

"At last the carts started. Slowly they were driven from the town. Through a long night journey we travelled till we came to a stand. I heard the men come round, and release the pins that hold a cart steady, and when these were loosened, the heap of corpses was shot out upon the ground.

"Once more upon the earth I lay with the dead around me, and I saw the carts making their slow journey returning to the town. The wheels sounded more and more distantly, till at last all was still.

"And the sky changed from grey dusk to the flush of dawn, then a long streak of red, and I lay watching it. And in that dawn my companion and I, rose up from among the dead bodies, and took our way across the plain.

"We exchanged no words; we had but the one thought between us—to leave the dead, to get away.

"And directing our steps across the open desert, we walked silently, the sand muffling our footsteps as we went."

CHAPTER XV

But I hae dreamed a weary dream
Beyond the land of Skye ;
I saw a dead man win a fight,
And I think that man was I.

OLD BALLAD.

THE days passed happily for the children in their almost daily companionship of the old woman. They liked to work for her. They would clean the cottage, or wash the china, hanging all the cups again by their handles on the hooks of the dresser. And you may roam through pleasures and palaces and never, to my mind, happen upon a prettier decoration to the wall of a room, than cups thus suspended in a row.

When Granny Gather-stick returned from her expedition to the neighbouring market-town, she would find all comfortably prepared. Her tea in making, the table spread, a fire of logs, with the cat purring before them, and two children glad of her return.

After she had refreshed herself and was rested, she told them more stories of her dreams. One was called "The Story of the Greatest Sufferer," and in nearly all her dreams kings and queens figured—she could give no reason why.

"I thought I was reading once in a book the story of a king. The king worshipped many gods, but in his heart he longed to know who of all his gods was the greatest, and the worthiest of praise. Now it happened this king had a dream, and in his dream it was told him he should worship none but the highest, and that he who had suffered most was the highest, and the worthiest of praise. And it was further told him that on the morrow all those who had suffered would come before his throne, and when he who had suffered most should appear before the king, the stars would fall from heaven in a golden rain.

"Now, my dears, it seemed to me that I ceased reading and I lived in the story, and saw and felt the rest. I saw a crowd assembled around an empty space of great magnitude, and I saw the king and his courtiers round him, robed in purple with a golden crown. I knew we were all there to see the Sorrowful; and first I saw the figure of a man. Slowly he came, and he was clad in black velvet,

wearing his hair long, with a pointed beard. And all the people watched his sorrowful countenance. 'Deeply as you suffered,' my heart said within me, 'you cannot deem yourself to be the highest.' But no word was said. And while we all watched him, he passed out of sight waveringly, as if he were no real person in the flesh.

"Then I dreamed the heralds blew their trumpets, and the crowd moved across the scene. This time I saw the figure of a woman, and, dear heart, when I looked upon her my spirit was like to faint.

"'This is Sorrow herself,' I kept saying in my dream. 'Yes, this must be Sorrow.' And I saw others thought the same as I, for the crowd looked upward. But the stars were firm, and the king asked, 'Are there any more to appear?'

"'There are no more,' answered the courtiers; but I saw a woman approach the throne.

"'There is one more, and you must see him,' she cried; 'there is one more.'

"The courtiers would have thrust her aside, but the king said, 'Let all those appear, that have suffered.'

"Then it seemed to me that I was looking over a vast sight of country, a wide view, such as there is from the Windmill Hill, at home. And there in

the air I saw lying, and yet not falling, a naked child.

"I knew it was Christ I was seeing—I knew it was Christ. And while I was just standing looking, all the stars fell from heaven in a shower of golden rain."

There was silence, and the children watched a bevy of sparks race up the wide chimney, the laggards among them creeping glowingly, among the black soot at the chimney back.

Then the old woman said:—

"That was a good dream; but I have had others that were not so good."

"Tell us!" said the children, "tell us!"

And the old woman began the "Story of the Five Queens."

"There was once a king who had five queens, and he took to himself yet another queen, and this woman was proud and cruel. She would not brook rivals, wishing to reign alone. So she sought out the ancient laws of that country, among which she knew she would find something to fit her mind. For in these laws it had been written, that where the king ceased to love his queens, those queens must die.

"And now in my dream the story grew around me,

and I lived within it, as is the custom in my dreams. I heard and saw the people speaking and moving of whom I tell.

"I was in a darkened chamber, silver lamps hanging from a low ceiling, the air heavy with sweet essences, and I was one of the queens.

"We were gathered in this room to kill ourselves, but within my heart I knew I intended to do no such thing. For while they pricked themselves with a poisoned needle, I was going to pretend to do so, and when they had died I meant to make my escape. Determining thus, I had thrust my poisoned needle deeply out of sight into the earth, in the garden of the palace.

"Now in my dream I looked around me. There was no sound in the room but a soft moaning, and I saw shrouded forms lying on low couches, wrapped round with silk.

"I lay on a great bed, and close beside me lay the youngest queen, and I dreamed that her name was Ayilmah. Her voice was speaking to me very quietly, in the dusk of that darkened room.

"'Where hast thou pricked thyself?' she was saying.

"'In the slender part of my wrist,' I answered,

lyingly, and I dreamed she expressed great sorrow at my words.

"'Oh, why hast thou done it there?' she cried. 'Dost thou not know that the pain will grow and grow, till at last it will get past bearing. And death tarries while the pain grows. Why didst thou do it there? Dost thou not suffer exceedingly?'

"And I, in my dream, replied once more lyingly: 'My life is already so numb within me that I feel no pain.' Then I thought she put her hand into mine to comfort me, and even as her fingers closed round mine, I felt her hand's warmth, and the movement of it, cease. Hurriedly I slipped my hand higher, and I found her arm was chill, and now the rounded fingers in mine were cold like small columns of polished jade.

"Then I knew she lay dead beside me, and suddenly I was filled with a great awe. I started up and cried, 'Listen, I have done you a great wrong.' But everything was very quiet. There was no answer to my words.

"Then I knew that in that room I alone was living, and a great horror overwhelmed me, a great fear.

"I moved from the couch where I was lying, my feet caught and held, by the wrappings of the bed.

"Freeing them, I crept through the warm, scented darkness, between the couches of the queens. Very quietly they lay there in the stillness, and the light the silver lamps gave out through their fretted sides, was so dim that I could barely see the heavy curtains hiding the walls. I drew the curtains aside, seeking an outlet, but everywhere my hands fell on the smooth surface of the wall.

"Then I knew that what had been a chamber for the living had been sealed into a tomb, for it had been thought, that knowing the law, the five queens had dealt faithfully. And with this knowledge my life maddened within me, and I tore the curtains down. Stumbling over the heaps of fallen draperies I sped forward, seeking with frenzied hands. I laid both hands flat out against the wall, passionately seeking.

"But there was no opening, no door.

"Only the dead were free. And I, who had planned so cunningly.

"The silver lamps moved slightly as they hung."

CHAPTER XVI

Forsooth the present we must give
To that which cannot pass away,
All beauteous things for which we live
By laws of time and space, decay.
But oh, the very reason why
I clasp them, is because they die.

CORY JOHNSTONE.

THE children only half liked these stories of Granny's. They cared more for her flower-lore. For while she spoke of her more horrible dreams, she became possessed by their spirit, and they could then better understand her causing fear in the breasts of others, and therefore suspicion and dislike. Best of all, they liked to get her to sing to them. Her voice was like the fitful pipe of the keyhole when the wind blows through, yet all the words sounded clearly. And the words of one of her songs were these :—

"The holly and the ivy
Are both now fully grown,
Of all the trees in greenwood
The holly bears the crown.

O, the rising of the sun,
The running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the quoir.

The holly bears a blossom
As white as lily-flower ;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus
To be our Saviour.

O, the rising of the sun,
The running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the quoir.

The holly bears a berry,
As red as any blood ;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus
To do poor sinners good.

O, the rising of the sun,
The running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the quoir.

The holly bears a bark
As bitter as any gall ;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus
To redeem us all.

O, the rising of the sun,
The running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
Sweet singing in the quoir."

You may know the tune of these words, for it is to be found in the Carol Book. It is lovely, and when it comes to the lines—

"O, the rising of the sun,
The running of the deer,"

there is warmth in the music, and the notes give the sound of light feet pricking through dry leaves of the russet floor of woodlands.

And here is another of her songs. This one she would sing as she plied her spinning-wheel, and the last two lines, if you notice, have a pleasant recurrence in their sound. Something sustained and continuous, like the whirring of a wheel :—

"Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers?
O sweet content!
Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplex'd?
O punishment!
Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vex'd
To add to golden numbers, golden numbers?
O sweet content!
Work apace, apace, apace, apace;
Honest labour bears a lovely face.

Canst drink the waters of the crispèd spring?
O sweet content!
Swim'st thou in wealth, yet sink'st in thine own tears?
O punishment!
Then he that happily wants burden bears,
No burden bears, but is a king, a king.
O sweet content!
Work apace, apace, apace, apace;
Honest labour bears a lovely face."

Soon the children grew able to help in the preparation of the herbs. They learned to know their names and uses. After Granny had sorted the sweet-smelling sprigs Faith would tie them, and prepare them for drying or soaking in hot water, as it might be.

"This is good for burns," the old woman would say as she sorted them.

"And this for the palsy. But did you ever think what a precious herb that would be, could one but find it, that would save folk from growing old? There are pastes and ointments against wrinkles, there are soft washes for the skin, but there's nothing that grows that can save the hair turning grey at the end of a lifetime—no, nor a flower, or herb, that can give back the flower of youth. And that brings to memory a strange dream I had; but this time it was read to me from

a book. The words weren't mine, my dears; and the voice that read it to me was strange to me; and the book that held the story was bound in covers of horn. There's meaning here for those who can find it, for I've heard there are two gates that our dreams pass through. If they pass the Gate of Ivory, they are false dreams, but if they pass through the Gate of Horn, they are true.

"Now the voice that was telling me this story was gentle, and I seemed to have been listening to it for a long, long time.

"Once there reigned a king over a great country, it was saying, ruler over many tribes. He had wise councillors and many riches, but the chief of his treasure lay in a house apart from the palace, where he passed the choicest of his days. Here dwelt the nymph Ia, by whom he set great store. Deeply versed was she in the art of witchery, the sound of her voice was like bells harmoniously according, and when she danced her feet moved like white pigeons over the floor. In this house there was a great store of rubies, so that a man might take them up in both hands, yet was the casket filled. Gold was here, and ivory, chrysoprase, jasper and chalcedony, and curious images

from other lands. Robes of great price were here, robes that might have been woven of the sea in moonlight, or fashioned of the night sky, pointed with many stars.

"And all these things the king gave willingly, for he loved Ia as the light of his eyes.

"Now it chanced a great cloud hung over this country, a cloud of adversity and evil days. Sorrow was there in the land, for a war wasted it, moreover a famine wrought further misery in many homes. Only in the House of Dalliance might the king fly the evil hour, forgetting here the sorrow of his realm.

"One day his servants came into his presence saying one craved audience of the king.

"'An aged woman who promiseth a remedy is here.'

"'Then let her come before us,' the king made answer.

"And there entered an old woman, at his word. Heavily she leaned upon a stick in walking, and the wrinkles in her face were as the ripples in the sand, when the tide is far sped. Her eyes were dim with the years that bowed her, and her hair fell in meagre locks of grey.

"'Heaven save you, mother,' quoth the king,

as she entered. 'What words of wisdom find you in your heart to-day?'

"The old woman bent her head before him, signing to him to send the courtiers from the room. And when they were alone together, 'What is the need of your land, O king?' she asked. 'In what measure may you stay the evil?'

"And the king made answer: 'I had thought thou broughtest counsel, mother, and now thou openest thy lips but to question me. Many years has a war vexed this country, and a famine wasteth many homes. The treasures of State are empty, and now I know not where to turn for gold. Had I half the bulk of the country's customary treasure, peradventure I might stay the war; but seeing this is exhausted through years of adversity, we must bethink ourselves of other means.'

"'Yes, verily, other means,' replied the old woman; 'and the wisdom that lieth nearest is the wisdom that is overlooked. Yet do thou listen: I have knowledge of a means by which the evil may be stayed.'

"'Speak, and may God enlighten thee,' said the king.

"The old woman continued: 'Hast thou no store of treasure in the House of Dalliance? Shalt thou not give this utterly to thy country's needs?'

"The king held silence as she spake thus, marvelling that any one dared so venture. To live without days in the House of Dalliance would have been to him the wisdom of a fool, sacrificing the only means of comfort, he knew for his wearied mind.

"Well he knew the store of treasure in that house bound the nymph to him, for light was she as a weaver's shuttle, and her thoughts little longer in the same place. And as he thought thus, he became greatly wrath with the old woman, so that he cried out, 'Who art thou, who darest so to speak to me? Who art thou, I say?'

"And very quietly the words came in answer, 'It is the nymph Ia who speaks to thee—it is Ia who speaks.'

"Then the king would have laughed aloud at the old woman, but something in her countenance held him back. For as he gazed on her he saw, as a man may see the picture of the skies in summer, dimmed and wrinkled in the broken surface of a pool, even so in the countenance of the old woman did the king see Ia's youth.

"And as he gazed the truth came to him, and he shook, as one who after long watching, sees dawn break on a frozen sea. For he knew the day would come when the nymph Ia would look even as this old woman before him. When her eyes, deep and fringed as the forest pools, would be no longer bright with the splinters of stars in them, but sunken, aye, sunken and filled with rheum. And the sound of her voice would be scrannel, and the swiftness of her feet fail. And what would his treasure avail him, with the core of his treasure gone?

"And again he thought upon his country and the necessity that was knocking at his door. And he beheld with the eyes of his soul, this sacrifice, growing and shining, with the years. He saw it take radiant form unto itself, and rising above the fears of a little moment, he beheld it mount gloriously to the habitations of eternity, clapping its hands for joy.

"And as he beheld this, his heart cried out suddenly within him, for the good that is born in men's souls is born in pain.

"And with that cry the king stirred in his sleep uneasily. And lo, it had been a dream.

"He was alone in his chamber in the palace, his

great dog slumbering by the fire, nose couched up on slender paws.

"And the perched macaw at the king's elbow, bowed and scrambled at its chain.

"Only the remembrance of the king's dream stayed with him, till he loathed the tag of an old rhyme.

> "'If thou do ill, the joy fades, not the pains,
> If well, the pain doth fade, the joy remains.'

. . . . . .

"But the king, did he make common store of his treasure, and loose his soul for ever from the nymph?"

CHAPTER XVII

For mine enemies have constrained me, as a bird, without cause.

THE APOCRYPHA.

IT happened one day Granny had been longer than usual, and the children sat waiting her return. When she entered the cottage it was with a hurried step and her hood drawn over her countenance. She stood listening with a scared face by the closed door, and had no word for the children. But gradually as the afternoon wore on, and she sat at her herb-bundles, she became quieter, and more at rest.

"Folk'll come to me fast enough when they're ailing," she said to Martin. "'Have you got anything to cure the dizziness?' they'll say. 'So soon as ever I do go to stoop down to reach anything, I come up all over the hot blooms,' they'll say.

"And I always give them something to take for it, but they won't willingly come into my cottage for all that.

"'What do you fear?' I say to them. 'Come inside, now, and sit down.'

"But they're off. Though they stop till they get their medicine. Ah, I sometimes think if ever I were overtaken by the persecutors, how many of those I've doctored, would stand by me in my need?"

"Who do you mean by the persecutors?" asked the children.

"Why, the folk who hunt the witches, my dears, those who, having evil in their own hearts, see it in others. Folk who read the Scriptures only to chastise their fellows by the twisted Word."

She turned to stir the smouldering wood, and as she turned the children heard a distant sound. It was a sound that grew and gathered, and was composed of many cries. Granny Gather-Stick faced the children.

"They are here, even as we speak of them—Lord, Lord, be Thou my Friend."

A sense of fear seized the children as the confused sounds grew louder.

Have you ever heard an angry mob? It is a dreadful thing. There is malignant strength in the sound, confusion, and alarm.

Nearer and nearer it came, and the old Granny

turned to the children, her eyes like coals in her white face.

"They're upon me this time; they can't miss me, for the smoke is rising. I ventured it, and lit my fire, though I knew they had been seeking me. And now they are here."

She stood erect in her little hut, her hands clasped upon her bosom, the dark hood fallen from her grey hair.

"To the horse-pond with the hell-cat, to the horse-pond! Drown her! drown her! Out upon her for her sorcery! Sink or swim—sink or swim!"

The boughs cracked and rustled as the crowd pushed on, surrounding her hiding-place, and the wood was filled with cries. Suddenly, with a crash the little dwelling was shattered round her, and in an instant she was seized by rude hands. For a moment the children saw her borne high among the crowd, dragged, wrenched, torn, hustled, from one grasp to another, till they could no longer bear the sight.

"O Martin!" cried Faith, as the crowd that had at first swept them with it, passed beyond them and left them by themselves. "How can we save her?"

They stood staring at one another, their eyes wide with the anguish of their hearts.

"They mustn't kill her, we must save her. Quick, to the house of Master Coverdale."

No sooner said than done. They started running swiftly through the forest. The dry twigs snapped beneath them as they ran. They knew of Granny's danger, they also knew of the one man to whom they could go for help. If only they might not be too late—that was the fear that winged their footsteps.

Through the greener open spaces they went, now threading their way through the more closely growing trees, now creeping through the undergrowth and brushwood. Bending back the tough boughs that laced themselves before them, and skirting the impenetrable brakes. Sometimes the roots of ribbed oak trees would catch their steps, or the brambles take their garments, but they did not stop to disentangle, or to rub their bruises. On they ran, forcing their way impetuously, where in a cooler moment they might have hesitated to pass.

And at last they reached the open, and saw the gables of the Manor-house, where dwelt the man they sought.

It stood, away in the green fields by the river, the gables showing grey through the foliage of the trees.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE Manor-house was a small gabled building, set deep among orchards and lush grass. It was built of flint and stone in chequers, and was one of those buildings (you see them close to old mills and barns, in the southern counties) that have a face. Yes, a countenance bearing an expression of their character, whereas most houses have merely outsides.

This house, when the moon shone on it, looked mysterious and unreal. The windows gleamed silver green, like old armour, dinted, and the whole fabric appeared as though it had no true context with the earth.

But when the day bathed it in golden sunshine, laying the shadows of its gables sharply black against its roof, then it appeared positively to hold the ground it stood on, and would stand so square at you, as to almost dominate the bright garden that bunched it close. Its walls would give back

the sunshine in warm washes of colour, while the pigeons crooned and sidled on the roof. The house-martins built their mud nests against it, more wonderful than the nests of swallows, for they choose the sheer wall for nesting purposes, whereas the swallows must build upon a ledge. To and fro these house-martins would fly, weaving a black-and-white flicker of pointed wings, with sudden encounters, and sweet creedling beneath the eaves. And in front of the house on the lawn there grew a mulberry tree, with a great limb laid down upon the ground, so that it looked as if it felt how old it was, and liked leaning that way, to rest.

The cows wrenched the long grass in a meadow so close to the windows, that any one within doors could easily see them and be rested by their movements of reposeful content. Beyond this paddock again was a church, with a roof orange with lichen-growth, and grey walls, ivy-clad.

So now you may imagine this Manor-house and its surroundings, and call it by any well-loved name you like.

In this house dwelt the man the children were in search of, a man named Miles Coverdale. He was a doctor of learning, not of medicine, and lived a

quiet life among his books. He it was who translated the Bible, carrying out the work that William Tyndall began. The people loved him for his charity and neighbourliness, and would often bring their disputes to him, content to abide by his word.

Martin, arriving at the door, pulled with all his might at the bell. A little rusty, buried tinkle sounded grudgingly, far away in the old house. He pulled again—wasn't every moment of importance? But the bell only gave the same inarticulate reply as if it had just turned round to go to sleep again, and couldn't be troubled to sound.

There are moments in life when we put forth the strength of Thor to attain some object, and the giant of circumstance, just as did the giant in the Norse legend, merely says, "Was that an acorn brushed my brow?"

At last, however, the door opened, and a shrill voice began to scold.

"Now then, just you step away off this threshold, and don't come ringing off the roof of the house, enough to make the rafters fall to pieces! Any one would think the rats and mice were enough, let alone children to make a racket. Lord bless us and save us, and mud enough on the shoon to muck the whole place up, let alone the door-mat

and the stonen steps. Now, do'ee just go right away with ye, and doant let me so much as see the corner of your——"

"Now, now, now," said a quiet voice behind the shrillness of the other, "what is it, Keziah? Your kitchen's feeling lonely without you; I'll attend to this."

And the children saw the fine face, and kind smile of Miles Coverdale, as he stood behind his shrewish old serving-maid. Keziah turned, muttering some cross apologies, and disappeared down the stone passage, leaving, like the widening wake of a ship in quiet waters, a trail of grumbling talk.

But the children at once began to tell their story, and they had come to the right house. Soon all three were entering the village. Faith sickened as they neared the angry sound again, and saw a crowd by the edge of the horse-pond.

"Now we'll teach 'ee how to count the stars, Mother! They be all shown in the water come nightfall, and the toads, and the loach, and the newts can feed upon 'ee, and come by their own," said one voice.

"Sim as if the very water wouldn't look at her, she be that dead heavy to bear," said another.

"Who be it, then," cried a third, "as come over Double-Dyke Farm and witched the cows dead?"

"Who was it charmed my churn so the butter wouldn't come?" cried a shrill voice; "no, not if I turned me arms off! Ah, the nesty, spiteful crittur, she knowed as how my daughter wasn't near; she thought she'd make me lose my butter."

"Sink or swim, sink or swim," cried other voices; "to feed the evil sperrits and the mud-worms, we don't want no better than she."

There was a scramble, a clumsy rush forward, and Martin saw old Granny half lifted, half dragged, amid the tumult, her eyes closed, her mouth set. The blood was welling out upon her forehead, dyeing the whiteness of her hair. Never before had he felt such sudden strength of wrath within him. He leaped forward with a cry. But the doctor was already speaking to them, already the voices of the crowd were lessening; they were inclining to attend.

The children held their breath while they heard his voice raised in expostulation; and soon it was the only voice heard.

"You may not understand why I am here speaking to you, you may think me wrong. But I have lived among you now for thirty years;

and in all that time I have loved this village, and its folk, and there is not so much as a tree that I have not, at one time or another, blessed for the shade it has given, or a stream that I have not walked beside, and loved for its kindly uses and clear way. And all through these years there has come nothing before me of the cruelty of human nature. Its folly I have seen, and its sorrows, its failure to fulfil its own wayward desires, for even in the stress of vigorous life, man does not often rightly know what he would have. But I have one desire now before me, and these are the words of an old man—the words of one who says, how shall I go down to my grave comforted if I see this woman killed? This woman who has dwelt as my neighbour all these years, who has given to such as have asked, of her store of knowledge and wisdom. Are there not many here among you who have known her help? Has she not ministered to your children? Drown her, and you are allowing the very spirits you think her possessed by, to strive and gain an evil victory in your souls. Show mercy to her, and God Himself will be with you, and I shall not have asked a kindness of you now, in vain."

The village folk muttered among themselves,

some turning as if about to go. Others stood in knots, appearing dissatisfied, and repeating the charge that she was a witch. But a voice here and there asserted itself, chiefly the voices of women, and these spake good.

"She gave me good yerbs, when my little maid lay dying; ay, and I went to her—she didden come to me."

"She never put her hand to anybody else's business, as I know on, not unless they d' go and ask her to. It's all sorts that go to make a world, that's certain. She midden have our ways, and we midden have hers, but there! she be flesh and blood, and I d' know as how she'd have hurt a body, not if a body went to leave her to herself-like."

"Well, I know one thing," cried a shrill voice, "she washed my baby what died o' the plague-spots, yes, washed 'un and lay'd 'un out fine, when there wasn't so much as one of ye who'd come nigh me, and me like to die."

This woman thrust her way through the crowd; she was young, and her eyes were alight and eager. She went to the prostrate figure of the old woman lying upon the ground.

"Look up! look up! Granny—see the sky and the birds! Look up, poor soul, you midden die,

no, no, not to-day, nor yet to-morrow; we've got place for more o' the likes o' you. You come round again, poor soul, you open your eyes. Lord! Lord! you midden die."

She said this in a kind, comfortable murmur, her hands laid on the old woman's brow. Now supporting her head, now chafing her listless hands, as she lay where they had left her, by the water. And the great tears of love and pity ran from her eyes, falling on her tattered garments.

Miles Coverdale waited till the last lingerer in that angry crowd had left the scene, and even after they had all dispersed, he stood lost in meditation.

"Why do the heathen so furiously rage together, and the people imagine a vain thing?" he murmured, as he turned his steps towards the Manor-house. Then the children heard the heavy oak door shut behind him, as he disappeared from their sight.

. . . . . .

Mrs. Inchbald ceased speaking, and there was silence for a space. Then someone asked—

"What became of the old woman?" and somebody else said,

"Did she die?"

Mrs. Inchbald replied—

"Look at the Nasmyth, and you will find the answer there, my dears."

The children rose, and crowded round the picture, looking at it with interested eyes. And what did they see?

They saw a figure in a red cloak and a yellow kerchief, on the river-path leading to the pointed house.

And they cried out severally—

"She's still there!"

"She didn't die!"

"I see her!"

And if you look you will see they are right.

CHAPTER XIX

Bobby Shafto's gone to sea,
Silver buckles at his knee,
When he comes home he'll marry me,
Pretty Bobby Shafto.

Bobby Shafto fat and fair,
Blessings on his yellow hair,
He's my lover ever dear,
Pretty Bobby Shafto.

OLD SONG.

ONE afternoon you might have seen Clare running downstairs swiftly, her legs twinkling, like the water-wagtail's as he spins over the lawn.

For news spreads quickly in a household of children, and rumour had it that Mrs. Inchbald was sitting in the drawing-room, and an idea of stories was about. Clare met Bimbo here, and Dolorès there, and a little farther on she gathered Leslie, Beppo, and Collina; finally she swept up Robin and Mousie and Christopher, who followed in her wake, and together they all poured into

the drawing-room helter-skelter, to see if this rumour were true.

Mrs. Inchbald sat by the fire with her knitting, and Miss Ross stood by her side. Her long black dress fell in soft folds, and the firelight touched and was reflected in the loose coils of her dark hair. She looked supremely sad, as in her picture, only the quiet movement of her eyes as she turned towards the children, lent a greater animation to her face.

Soon all the children were gathered round the hearthrug chattering like pies, and loudly choosing various stories.

"I think the Smugglers' Cave."

"No, I think Turn-Churn Willie."

"No, no, about highwaymen."

"Another witch story, please."

"No, smugglers, smugglers."

"And smugglers it shall be," interposed Mrs. Inchbald, in a voice that allowed no arguing.

And then and there she began the following tale:—

I must ask you, dear children, to wing your imagination and come with me to a tawny-cliffed village on the coast of Kent. When the tide is far out there are miles of sand, and here when the

sun sets in November, you may see a beautiful effect of colour. The flaming skies are duplicated in the moistened sands, so that the whole firmament is imaged in the earth around you.

Again, on summer evenings, these sands will reflect the long shafts of amber light, so that the failing day will take new life from them, seeming to recover once again its golden morning beams.

Look at the smaller picture by Bonington, and you will see what I mean. The sands stretch beyond you illimitably, steeped in the rosy and golden colours of the sky.

In the year 1819, the practice of smuggling had reached a point of such craft and effrontery, that only by special methods did the authorities hope to check its course. They realised that in having local spies, in getting help from the village people themselves, lay the best chance of permanently quelling it.

So it happened that as one Daniel Maidment was digging in his garden, situated in the village that I have described, a spruce and very dapper gentleman on horseback reined up beside his gate.

"Good-morning to you. Am I addressing Mr. Daniel Maidment of the village of Stowe-i'-the-Knowe?"

Bonington

ON THE SEA-SHORE

"That's my name, and that's my village," answered Daniel, and he stood leaning on his spade.

"I have a little matter of business with you, my man," continued the stranger in that particular voice in which some people talk to children, or use when they address such as they consider their inferiors.

"You may find it to your advantage to give me your attention for a little while. With your permission, I will walk into your house."

The rider dismounted, and tying his horse to the gate-post, went up the gravel path to the cottage door.

Daniel followed, and set a chair by the table, at which an old woman sat making lace. Her eyes were blind, as you might see by their wide dimness, and by the extreme serenity of her face. This is a quality that accompanies blindness. All signs of anxiety, of transient expression, are smoothed away, and all fretful activity; the features are set in the beauty of a great repose.

But her hands plied with swiftness the work on a lace pillow, with a pleasant recurrency of sound the wooden bobbins flew round, and about the shining pins.

"If your mother is deaf as well as blind," recommenced the stranger, in a tone fitted to reach the deafest ears, "there is no reason at all why we should disturb her, my good fellow; but my business is of a private nature, and it would perhaps be better if we were alone."

He stood with his hands under his coat-tails, and waved a high and foolish nose over the chimney ornaments as he investigated the spotted spaniels, the china paladins on white and gold chargers, and the pretty shell boxes that ornamented the mantelpiece. But when he turned he found the old woman had softly risen, and passed out.

"If you will kindly state your business with me, sir," said Daniel, "I shall be pleased to attend."

The stranger cleared his throat, and began importantly:—

"I am commissioned by the authorities serving under his most gracious Majesty the king, to investigate this district thoroughly with a view to checking the illicit trading that is carried on. Time and again the hand of the law has been held, and its object baffled by the collusion of the villagers with the smuggling trade. It is only possible for us to secure an advantage if we are helped by those on the spot.

"It is an open secret that the landlord of the 'Mariner's Rest' keeps a receiving house; but such is the organised system of signals and alarms that hitherto we have found it impossible to surprise their vigilance. Your character, Mr. Maidment, I find on inquiry is unblemished as regards this matter as yet. I repeat, as yet—I have no desire to go into the past. Your trade as a fisherman enables you to know this coast, and the people who live along it, more thoroughly than any one coming as a stranger upon the scene. Will you work with the law? May we look upon you for such service as will conform to a better governing of the country's trading? Will you help in abolishing an evil that is growing more and more flagrant and unbridled, every year?"

Daniel understood very well what was wanted of him. He had lived for years on the outskirts of smuggling, fully aware of his neighbours' activity in the trade. Was he to turn spy upon them? It is true he had no near friends concerned in it, but it was hardly the kind of part he would choose, to watch and tell.

He looked across at this gentleman with a level gaze. How cordially he disliked him. From the flat lock on his forehead, to the very points of his

smart, disagreeable boots. He felt this feeling of dislike grow within him, as if it literally spouted bitter juices up his veins. Then he said—

"What do you want with me? Do you want me to turn spy?"

He moved abruptly to the window, thinking, his hands deep into his pockets as he stood, and his hand rustled against a letter in his pocket that brought him suddenly to a standstill in thought. He drew it out and stood looking at it. Then he went out at the cottage door, and down the path.

The stranger never did a wiser thing than when he remained in the cottage. He stood looking into the fire waiting for Daniel to return, and out in the garden Daniel opened the folded sheet of paper, written closely in a neat hand.

"O, my dear," ran the words of the letter, "how well I love you, and how often I think of you, God alone knows, for I shall never find the poor words to tell you. Only I pray every night that I may soon see you, and that this long waiting may cease. But it isn't only right but what our love should be tested, I know that, and God doesn't send us trials for nothing.

"You know what I spoke to you about last time when we were walking on the Common. Do you

remember how the gorse was out, and how I begged you to get free from everything that wasn't honest—how it isn't like you to have dealings of that kind? I know it hasn't come very nigh you yet, Daniel; I know you won't let it part us. There's always plenty of things in this life ready to come in between goodness and turn lives crooked, if they can; but we won't let them hurt our happiness, will we?—not we two. Only the other day I was thinking about you, and I took the Book and let my hands wander among the pages for a sign. And I said, 'This'll be for Daniel,' as I was doing it, and I looked down and read. And the words were: 'Love the brotherhood, obey God, honour the king,' and that was a sign, Daniel, and it was for you."

The wind blew softly through the cottage garden, bending the bushes of chrysanthemums by the wall. It rustled among the nasturtiums, and away out into the field beyond. And the words of the letter kept repeating themselves in Daniel's brain, "Obey God, honour the king." And now they were not only written words, but they brought the tone of a voice with them.

He re-entered the cottage and faced the stranger once more.

"I can't do what you're asking of me," he said,

"but at least I shan't work agin you, I've made up my mind. You may depend upon me."

"That's well; then I'll say good-morning to you, Mr. Maidment. I will leave you this address if you should have any written communication you may want to send."

He unhitched his horse's reins from the gate-post, and mounting, went at a swinging trot down the road.

CHAPTER XX

Under the salt sea's foam it lay,
At the outermost point of a rocky bay,
A sandy, tide-pooly, cliff-bound cove
With a red-roofed fishing village above
Of irregular cottages perched up high
Amid pale yellow poppies next to the sky.
Shells, and pebbles, and wrack below,
And shrimpers shrimping all in a row,
Tawny sails and tarry boats,
Dark-brown nets and old cork floats,
Nasty smells at the nicest spots,
Blue-jersey'd sailors, and lobster pots.

J. H. EWING.

A LOG fire burnt clearly on the wide stone hearth of the "Mariner's Rest." Two men sat smoking. A narrow table held their pots of beer, and they had a dingy pack of cards between them. One of these men had lost the third finger of his right hand, and the sinews having contracted, the maimed hand had the rigidity of a claw. This man was

alert in expression, his eyes restless. The receding chin suggested the rodent type, and his ears set back on the narrow head completed it.

Opposite him sat Daniel Maidment, and his was an open face, with broad beard, honey-coloured. He wore a blue flannel shirt, falling open at the collar, and a red belt. His hands were brown as mahogany, and he wore gold rings in his ears.

Over these two men stood Master Crumblejohn, the landlord, and watched the game.

"Dan hasn't the luck to-night he had yesterday," said the rat-faced man, in the tone of voice that whines at you, "Dan hasn't the luck. Not but what you play very well, Dan, my boy—not but what you play re-markably."

Daniel rose from the table, pushing a small pile of silver and copper coins towards his companion in the game.

"You've got the luck, Rat. I believe it's that monkey's paw of yours that gets the cards witched the way you want them," and he raised his tankard.

Crumblejohn watched him as he stood draining it, and in the moment that Dan's face was covered, the landlord looked at the rat-faced man. Some intelligence passed between them. A message slid from the lowered lid of old Crumblejohn to the

shifty, watery eyes of the man called Rat. Daniel replaced the tankard, and saying good-night to his companions, left the room.

Crumblejohn rose and barred the shutters and locked the outer door, then closing the door of communication between the inner parlour and the kitchen, he sat down again to smoke.

"We've got a big job on hand, and it's likely to miscarry if we can't get a message over. How do you think Dan'l is working out in the matter?" he asked of his companion.

"He won't come in," Rat replied in his whingeing voice. "And if you think you'll get Dan'l into it you're much mistaken, my friend; what's more, we must keep an eye on Dan'l."

"Keep an eye on him?" said Crumblejohn, "a more guileless crittur you couldn't find, to my thinking. Keep our eye on Dan'l?" he repeated.

"What d'you think he's hanging about here for, living as he does two villages off?" said the other. "D'you think he comes here for the hair and hexercise? No, he's deeper than what you take him for, is Dan'l—you take my word for it. What news of the Lambkin, eh?"

"Nothing but this," answered Crumblejohn, stretching a bit of rag upon the table. Both

men leaned closely over it, deciphering with difficulty the ill-written message it contained :—

"*Fresh lot to be shipped* 18. *If change of place, send lad.*"

"When did you get this?" asked Rat.

"It came by pigeon late yesterday," answered the landlord; "and it must have been blown out of the track, for look at the date of it. The excisemen are looking about pretty closely, but there's nothing for their finding now. But here's to-day the 14th, and to-morrow the Captain's wedding, and the fresh stuff coming over, unless we stop it, and every hole and corner on the watch."

"It isn't cards that's Dan'l's only game, Crumblejohn," said the rat-faced man. "We must send the lad over—but what about the boat?"

"On the other side with Lambkin," said the landlord.

"Pigeons?"

"Not safe enough. I'll send a pigeon, but I must send the lad too, for they're on the track of this here business, and unless we can beach it by Knapper's Head, this matter must stand over for the time. Now, if we was going to get Dan'l into it, as I thought we should, we could have got his boat for the business. Lord, how handy now that

boat would ha' come in. But I gathered you hadn't seen your opportoonity this evening; he didn't give no manner o' sign?"

"Give no manner o' sign, do you put it? Why the man's working for the excisemen, and if you'd half an eye you'd have guessed it, but leastways you was mum. No, don't you put no trust in Dan'l for our little trade, master; and what's more, there mustn't be any stuff in the cave till he's off the track, for he knows this coast as he knows his own pocket, and if he's paid for it, he'll make it his business to find out even more than he knows."

"Then how's the boy to go?" mumbled old Crumblejohn. He disliked his friend's superior cunning, yet he was sufficiently harassed to be dependent on it now. "How's the boy to go, I ask yer? Captain Bluett don't want no cabin-boy, for I asked it ov' him; the places on the vessel is all filled."

"Oliver shall go all the same, captain or no captain," whined the rat-faced; "and you may be thankful as I've got my full wits if I haven't got my full fingers. The captain's lady goes with him?"

"So they say. Married here to-morrow, and no end of a business, and straight off to France with her husband in his ship."

"Where's she bound?"

"Boulogne." (Only the landlord called it Boo-lone.)

"Boo-lone?" repeated the rat-faced, "the very place where Lambkin's waiting for a word, and you stand there asking me how we're to get the lad over, with a vessel making for the very port? No, no," he murmured, looking into the fire, "you 'urt me, Crumblejohn, you 'urt me when you go on like that. You can be stoopid for a whin, and you can be stoopid for a wager, but it ain't natterel to be quite so stoopid as you are; it ain't natterel, and it ain't safe."

"Well, hang it all, a snivelling, whining rag-picker as may be thankful to be sitting by a fireside in a comferable house, comes and talks to me about stoopid"—Crumblejohn's wrath broke suddenly into an angry incoherency of words—"comes talking to me about stoopid, I say, well, sir, stoopid yerself, sir, if yer can't keep a civil tongue in yer head, talking a matter over comferably with a friend, stoopid yerself, Ratface, and be d—d to yer."

The man with the maimed hand sat smoking while Crumblejohn spluttered and swore.

He could afford to sit there till the anger passed over, for by reason of his superior cunning,

he held the landlord in the palm of his hand; and he knew Crumblejohn knew this. So he sat quietly waiting, his crafty eyes upon the fire while he smoked.

After a bit Crumblejohn became quieter, and asked sarcastically if Rat had got any suggestion since he was so thunderin' clever, and if so, would he mind spitting it out as time was getting on, and if there was going to be any getting the lad on to the captain's ship artful-like, they'd best be preparing the way.

"Now you show yourself to be the sensible man wot I've ever took you for," replied the rat-faced, "and here's my little plan according. To-morrow, being the wedding-day, you begs leave to have a word with the bride. You suggests a barrel of apples for her acceptance with your werry best compliments, and if you make so bold as to ask, does the lady stay at Boo-lone, or does she travel? Mistress Bluett, as is to be, answers according, and you congratulates her on her opportoonities of a seafaring life.

"You says you have a favour to ask her, and you knows of a poor sail-maker at Boo-lone; and might you make so bold as to beg Mrs. Bluett to let a sack of sail-yarn, odd pieces and leavings, in short, a package o' mixed goods, go on board the captain's

vessel, and be left at Boo-lone? You'd take it werry pleasant of her if she'd be agreeable, and you tip her a little tale of the hunchback and his mother, and the hard life they have of it, and how you knows of 'em through being so werry particular to recognise the King's laws in the matter of liquor, your sister's husband being in the trade. One thing and another, you'll have this bale o' goods all ready, and your speech about it said, just about the moment of starting, when folks' thoughts are swinging like bees in a wind, and they're already more in the place they're going to, than where they're standing at the time. And what with the good-byes and the God-bless-yous, and the village crowding down to see them off, and you or me carrying the package, and the lad all the time inside it, as tight as a cauliflower, and thanks to you and starvation weighing about half his size, and so on to the boat with a jack-knife in his pocket to cut his way out again, according to instructions and stripes."

The whining voice ceased, and the two men sat in silence. Then Crumblejohn moved uneasily in his chair.

"A power o' talking, Rat," he said, "you've allowed me, a power of talking."

"And it's talking you've got to do this time, Crumblejohn; don't you make any mistake. You've got this lot out of the cave all right, and you've got the vaults filled up in time before the company. But if we have another run of goods before we get this lot up-country, there'll be more trouble than you nor me can do away with. I haven't read Dan'l's letters in his coat pocket for nothing, when he was washing himself at the pump."

Crumblejohn enjoyed this immensely.

"Ye don't tell me he carries his orders about with him for all the world to see? A wal'able servant of the Crown, 'pon my honour. Rat, you're a wily one."

"And wily-er than you'd suppose, for Dan'l warn't such an innercent as you'd be ready to think. He didn't keep his letters so careless neither. But I've been watching him, and what I learned when he was at the pump 's only a trifle to what I've learned by signs and tokens."

The inn-keeper knocked the ashes from his pipe. Then he rose from his chair, ponderously.

"I wish you hadn't given me such a power o' talking, Rat; wish I mayn't break my neck over it, wish I mayn't break my neck."

He walked across the sanded floor and unlocked

the door cautiously, and the rat-faced man slipped past him into the night.

But how did he manage to muffle his footsteps, so that Crumblejohn heard no sound of him upon the road?

CHAPTER XXI

Five and twenty ponies
Trotting through the dark,
Brandy for the parson,
Baccy for the clerk,
Laces for a lady, letters for a spy,
And watch the wall, my darling,
While the gentlemen go by!

R. KIPLING.

ON the day on which the last run of goods had been cellared, Master Crumblejohn stood looking with pride, at the swift succession of casks that were being rolled briskly along his stone passage. He wore a leather apron, a good stock collar, and his hair tied in a queue, with a black ribbon in his neck. He had big buckles to his shoes and a canary waistcoat, and a brown coat upon his back.

Everybody knew the history of his liquor. In these days of a thriving back-hand trade with the wines, many houses that stood fairly with the

Justices, got their supply in a manner that would have brought humbler folk to punishment. But if inquiry was pushed in regard to the "Mariner's Rest," the landlord had a good book to show the authorities.

Everything in his cellar was duly entered and paid for; he would show the King himself round if his Majesty chose to call. This was a favourite jest of Master Crumblejohn's when in lighter mood, and it would be said with a nodding head to clinch matters, and between quiet puffs of a long clay-pipe.

It was hardly the fault of the excisemen if they didn't know of a certain trap-door in the cellar, a door sufficiently hidden to be unguessed, which led down to a vault below the basement. Now this was how the illicit trade was carried on. There had to be people party to it on each side of the water, and a fishing boat or lugger, for the transport of the goods. Most of the inn-keepers, and a great many others, were in sympathy with the smugglers, and the practice was spread in so fine a network of collusion all over the country, that it was a matter of great difficulty for the authorities to cope with it at all. When the liquor first came over, it was deposited

in some cave, or buried in some sandy cove along the coast. Here it was left till notice was sent by the various receiving-houses that they were ready for the housing of the kegs. Then, when the attention of the authorities had been drawn off to some other quarter, night parties would be set on foot; and where the countryside was sufficiently lonely, the kegs were carried upon men's shoulders and received by the landlord, and hidden in his vault. In some places these lawless gangs were both armed and mounted, and thus conveyed the goods far into the interior, distributing them among the various receiving-houses by the way. There was hardly a house that had not its place of concealment, which could accommodate either kegs, bales, or the smugglers themselves, as the case might be. Sometimes the kegs would be stuffed in hay trusses, and carried disguised as fodder along the road, to be lodged secretly by the light of a stable lanthorn again, in some straw ricks farther inland.

You probably know the story of the Wiltshire men who hid the kegs in the dew-pond? They were surprised one moonlight night, standing with rakes in their hands by the excisemen. Suspicion was at once aroused, and they were questioned.

"What are you doing there?"

"We be raaken the moon out of the water, Masters." And the excisemen rode on, thanking their stars they were not as these country loons.

But the answer showed that on occasion stupidity may be used as a cloak to cover guile.

Now, in the case of Crumblejohn's gang of smugglers, they stored their kegs, or ankers, in a cave. Here they left their liquor as short a time as possible, lest it should be discovered by those on the look-out. But this cave led up to the vaults of the inn-cellars, and very swiftly could these kegs be rolled along the tunnelled passage in the cliff.

A boy was working strenuously at the keg-rolling, Oliver Charlock by name. He was the odd boy and general servant of the establishment, and had more kicks and fewer crusts than were his share. Crumblejohn stood looking at him as he worked; if he stayed but a moment to stretch his back, or to rest his arms, he was reminded of his business.

"Do you think I keep servants, giving them board and bed, to see them a-lolling back agin' my walls and postës, a-playing the fine gentleman abroad? No, no, Oliver Charlock, you remember

what you're here for, and where you comes from; and let me see all them kegs in their places, or back you goes to your field, and finds another master."

Oliver was nobody's child, and had been picked up in a field of charlock. Just where the rough margin of the field joins the yellow flowers, he had been found by the old parson ten years before the time of which I speak. But when the Rectory changed hands, and the old housekeeper died, who had reared him, he was left friendless.

Then Crumblejohn had taken him as an extra lad at the Mariner's, and henceforth life opened for him at a different page. He slept in a rat-riddled garret on a worn-out wool-sack on the floor. He rose at dawn and worked till the bats were out, bearing hard words for his services. Repeatedly was he admonished by Mr. Crumble-john to recall where he came from, and other sour-faced remarks. As nobody knew his origin, least of all the boy himself, this might seem a useless question; but for Crumblejohn it held point in tending to depress any growth of self-esteem in Oliver, and was calculated to nip incipient ideas as to wages in the bud.

"Little warmint what had nobody to chuck a

crust to 'im, found in a furrer of a field. I gives 'im board, and I gives 'im bed, and I expects such-like to work for their wittels."

And work Oliver Charlock did, and not only at keg-rolling. When the vigilance of the authorities forbade the more usual signal of a fire being lit on some prominent point inland, he had been sent before now as emissary between the English smugglers, and Lambkin, in France. Lambkin was a man named Thurot. He was a Channel Islander, and you may read of him as rising to great prominence in the smuggling annals of his day. He was known also as O'Farrell, and was an Irish commodore in the French service for a time. He was but twenty-two when he met his death, yet he was a terror, we read, to the mercantile fleet of this kingdom. Whatever opinion we may hold as to his right or wrong doing, there is a light about his name, because he led a life of great romance, and daring.

Before leaving, Thurot had arranged with his confederates the place of the intended run of goods. Now, however, that Ratface suspected Daniel Maidment was spying on them, it became imperative to get the message over in some dependable manner, to intimate a change of place

for beaching this next run. So a rag message had been written, and Oliver had to bear it, and as Crumblejohn stood watching the keg-rolling, it was with the comfortable assurance of some anxiety having been removed. Very soon he would be standing there, watching yet another lot rolling into his capacious cellars. Already the gold chinked in his imagination, that was to fill his pockets so well; and the rings of smoke from his clay pipe rose, to float up and fade lingeringly, before his meditative eye.

But the "best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft agley," and there was something in store for Master Crumblejohn, the mere possibility of which, his slow wits had never dreamed.

CHAPTER XXII

TWO days later there were few people situated more uncomfortably than Oliver Charlock, of the "Mariner's Rest." For he was in a hamper, a variety of sail-cloth, and oddments of material packed on the top of him, and his knees into his chin. Scant air, no place for shifting, sometimes knocked this way, sometimes bundled that; shoved, huddled, bumped, and stowed, wherever man's hand chose to shove him, or in whatever direction the ship rolled.

The discomfort grew to such sickening pain that his senses almost left him, while his partial suffocation threatened momentarily to be complete.

But at last he was on the Boulogne Quay; he knew it, for the bale had been left quiet. He cut his way through the cords and fastenings; he loosed his sacking and finally threw open the hamper lid. The fresh sea-wind fanned his forehead; at first that seemed all he needed, or knew. To move was

such agony, it must be done only by degrees. And it was good to lie still with the air on his face, and to see the clouds float by.

It was about five or six o'clock in the morning. Looking towards the town he saw evidence of the fish-market of Boulogne. Women walked here and there with shrimp baskets on their shoulders, and some trawlers and fishing-smacks were coming in. The high French houses of the old town looked like ghosts of houses in the grey dawn, and the sands stretched away unbrokenly, in opalescent light.

Oliver stepped out freed from his prison, and walked lamely towards the town. He knew his work pretty well; he had no need to think about it. He had merely to walk about on the quay, or mingle among the people in the fish-market, and sooner or later the man he knew as Lambkin would come up and take from him the written rag. The message was written on a rag, because had he been searched, no letter would have been found upon him, and this rag was wrapped round his finger or his wrist as it might be, and generally had some stray drops of blood on it, as if it bound up a slight wound.

But on this occasion the hours passed, and there appeared no Lambkin; and now the Boulogne

fish-market was in full activity. Groups of peasants chattering, old women gesticulating, everybody talking, nobody listening, bargaining, chaffering, dealing, and vending, going on among a vivid crowd. Look at the picture, and you will see this busy scene. Oliver wandered among the throng for a little, buying some food at an old woman's gingerbread stall, for Crumblejohn had provided him with a few French coins. Now that his stiffness was lessened and his hunger appeased, he was enjoying himself. It was good not to be cleaning boots, and mopping the stone floors of the Mariner's Tavern; laying the fires, and opening the windows to let out the spent air of last night's company, the fumes of stale tobacco and spilt beer; now, all the scent of the morning was about him, and the tang of the sea breeze.

Soon his eyes were attracted by a small hunchbacked boy who was sitting at a little table. He had a pointed wicker cage with a pair of doves in it, and on his table were many simple contrivances of home-made nature. These were set out on a small square of red baize. The people smiled at the hunchback as they passed him, and soon Oliver saw that he was preparing to give a show. The fish-market was now over, and some people from

Bonington

THE FISH MARKET, BOULOGNE

the town were walking on the quay. For these the hunchback waited, and soon he had a small crescent-shaped crowd.

He took the doves out of their cage, and spoke lovingly to them, kissing their soft necks. They pattered with pink feet over the table cooing and bowing, and he put some peas before them, which they picked up eagerly with slender bills.

"These doves, ladies and gentlemen," the hunchback began in French, "are the celebrated Joli and Jou-Jou of Boulogne. Long have they been the delight of visitors to our pretty town. Once more they bow before you, and beg you, in all courtesy to watch their well-known performance in the chaise, in the ring, and on the pole."

With a bow he finished his speech to the onlookers, and commenced with deft fingers to arrange a small trapeze. He placed a dove on it, and then attaching the upright posts so that they could not turn over, he set the bird swinging on the bar. Nothing could have exceeded the innocence of the performance, for the birds did nothing at all wonderful, or in any sense trained, but the air of the showman and the simplicity of the performance must have endeared it to any one of feeling in the crowd.

"Joli, now wilt thou attend to thy master, and place thy pink feet firmly upon the ring? Thou knowest it is but a little time, my Joli, and thou shalt be, once more, pecking the peas."

He lifted the dove from the table, while it made every movement of revolt, but only foolish feathered revolt, swiftly quelled. Slowly round and round the bird revolved in the ring, staying there simply because it had not the wit or will to flutter out of it, and the hunchback swung the ring quicker and quicker so that the onlookers murmured applause.

Then it was Jou-Jou's turn to be harnessed to a tiny charette made from a wooden box, painted in red and blue. Joli sat within while Jou-Jou pattered round drawing it, guided by the hunchback's hand.

Soon Oliver heard an English voice among the spectators.

"Oh, look at those doves, Papa," it said. "I want to stop and look."

A very smartly dressed little girl pressed forward, brushing aside other people. She had an eager face, and looked discontented.

"What do you call the doves, boy?" she asked in French, in a sharp voice.

"Joli and Jou-Jou, mademoiselle."

"Who taught them to do their tricks, boy?"

"It is I who taught them, mademoiselle."

"I want to buy them; will you tell me how much money they would cost?"

"They are not for sale, mademoiselle."

"But if I want them?" said the little girl imperiously; "and if I give gold for them, of course they will be for sale. Here, Papa," she cried out suddenly,

"I want these doves, please; you know you said you would give me my birthday present in advance, and I don't want the goat-carriage now. I'm sure the little boy will be glad to get two gold pieces; we will give him one for each dove; look how ill and starved he appears! and his clothes, I never saw such tatters. You can send the doves round to the Hotel d'Angleterre, do you hear, boy? and we shall give you two, perhaps three, whole gold pieces."

She opened her eyes very wide, and nodded her head at him, so busy in her shrill speech that she was quite blind to the expression on the face before her. You have no doubt read the Fairchild Family? Well, when I tell you she was first cousin to Miss Augusta Noble, and very like her too, wearing the same kind of clothes in the same arrogant manner,

you will be able to conjure her before the mind's eye very accurately indeed.

"You will get perhaps three whole gold pieces!" she repeated, "but be sure to be there before to-morrow at noon, for we leave on the day following.

"Papa," she cried, springing towards her father, "I'm sure to get them, I know I shall: and they can go in my nice, new, great, big aviary."

In a turmoil of noisy, selfish conversation, she took her excited little person off the scene, bustling through the crowd, and taking her own world with her, in the manner of children who will sometimes burst into a room speaking, never thinking to see if people are talking, or reading aloud within.

And so she went away down the quay, leaving a sense of disturbance behind her. Evidently bound to grow up, poor thing, into one of those people who cause every one to live in a draught around them.

Oliver stood for some time listening. He had no further orders than to remain on the quay in such a manner as that he might readily be seen. He decided he would stay here at all events till sunset, should the French agent by some chance have been delayed. So he stood watching the little

hunchback's quick movements as he caged his doves, packed his tressle-table, and walked away towards the town.

And now Oliver was left to watch the clouds and sea-gulls, and to wonder what life would feel like, if it were happy and free.

The slow hours passed, and he grew hungrier and thirstier. He sought through his pockets and found a crust. And then because he had passed such an uncomfortable night, and he was tired, he lay down, with his head on a coil of rope, and looked drowsily at the wide and glimmering sea.

Here and there, hidden away in his memory, there lingered some stray phrases and couplets learnt long ago. These he treasured, though he hardly knew he did so, for the sense of comfort they bestowed—

"Thou whose nature cannot sleep
On my temples sentry keep.
While I rest my soul advance,
Make my sleep a holy trance.
These are my drowsy days, in vain,
I do but wake to sleep again.
O, come that hour when I shall never
Sleep again, but wake for ever."

The light faded. Grey clouds banked them-

selves where the sun was westering, prodigal of his gold.

Oliver slept.

He was woken by a hand laid upon his shoulder, and stumbling to his feet, he saw the man Thurot, standing beside him.

CHAPTER XXIII

Read rascal in the motions of his back,
And scoundrel in the supple-sliding knee.

TENNYSON.

WHEN Ratface left the "Mariner's Rest" that evening, he walked skirting the hedgerow, his thoughts busy with a new plan. For some time he had been suspicious of Daniel Maidment, but now, reading the evil of his own character into that of another, he suspected him of an intention to betray the smugglers to the excisemen.

He had read the letter from the sweetheart, and seen the pencilled address on the slip of paper in Daniel's pocket. It conveyed no meaning to him that this bit of paper was torn across, and all but in two. Like most of us he judged others by his own knowledge of himself; and so he decided to anticipate Daniel, and turn King's evidence himself. He saw many signs around him of an increase of vigilance on the part of

the authorities. Crumblejohn's muddle-headedness and Thurot's dare-devilry in conjunction, made him decide now was the time for him to leave the smuggling gang.

There would be a good reward, so he argued, and he'd risked his neck often enough with them, and now if somebody was to get the money, that somebody must be he. So he went straight away to the address given, a walk of some twelve miles through the night, and slept through the early hours of the morning, in a cart-shed in the farm steading.

About nine o'clock next day he was ringing the door-bell of the supervisor of Customs for the counties of Sussex and Kent.

Before the coastguards were organised, the inland branch of preventive service was carried on by the riding officers, one of whom we have seen speaking to Daniel Maidment, as he dug in his garden that day.

At this time, a stretch of some two hundred miles of coast-line would be given in charge of fifty riding officers, and utterly inadequate until reinforced by soldiers, this force proved to be. For by lighting false signals, nothing was easier than to draw the riding officers off on some wild-

goose chase, while the smugglers beached their cargo undisturbed.

It was not long before Ratface was shown into a room where the riding officer was seated, writing.

"Your business?"

"My business is to tell you what you and your men have been wanting some time to know, sir. And if you makes it worth my while, I'll give you information what'll help you to clap your hands upon as pretty a shipload of ankers and half-ankers, as you've ever heard on."

"Where do you come from?"

"Stowe i' the Knowe."

"Do you come from Daniel Maidment?"

"Ah, I thought I should hear that name now. No; Dan'l ain't a pertickler friend of mine."

"What is your information?"

"My information is accordin' to the information money."

"And that again, as you must know, depends on the value of goods seized, and not on this alone. A full seizure reward cannot be earned without a good proportion of smugglers being captured. Twenty pounds for every smuggler taken, and full seizure money if the boat, as well

as goods, be ours. Where is this intended run to be made?"

"On the night of the 18th, as soon after dusk as possible, at the Grey Rock, off Knapper's Head."

"And who are the chief smugglers concerned?"

"Obadiah Crumblejohn of the 'Mariner's Rest,' Thurot, known as Lambkin, freighter and owner of the smuggling galley *Lapwing*, to row sixteen oars. Cargo, brandy and silks."

The revenue officer made full notes, then he looked at Ratface as he stood blinking those restless eyes of his, scraping a lean cheek with his maimed hand.

The officer rang the bell, and the door was opened by a servant, who showed Ratface out.

"There is something in our appearance being an index to what we are," thought the officer, as his eyes followed Ratface. "Certainly, the other day, I went to the wrong house."

Then he turned to the notes that he had taken, and his glance lingered on the entry of Thurot's name.

CHAPTER XXIV

Where now are these? Beneath the cliff they stand
To show the freighted pinnace where to land;
To load the ready steed with guilty haste;
To fly in terror o'er the pathless waste;
Or, when detected in their straggling course,
To foil their foes by cunning, or by force,
Or yielding part which equal knaves demand
To gain a lawless passport through the land.

CRABBE.

IT is a soft moonless night in October. The darkness seems filled with that calmest and most sufficing of all sounds, the sea, breaking on a sandy shingle, with the long-drawn hush of the retreating wave. Yet if you listen you may hear another sound. A footfall on the sand occasionally, and the sound of men's voices, lowered.

For Crumblejohn and Ratface have sent round the message that tub-carriers, a full force of them, will be wanted on this night of the 18th, at Grey Rock, off Knapper's Head. And the tub-carriers

are already assembled, numbering about twenty-five villagers, and half as many boys.

A light flares up against the night-sky at some point along the coast, far away.

It stars the darkness, a crumb of light. Then it grows slenderly, and sinks once more to waver upward, and then the night engulphs it all but a creeping thread of light that holds it own.

"You can light that pipe o' yourn, master."

"Whoi doänt yon light bleäze then? Be 'ee sure they gave the right beacon word? Who done it? Whose work wer to see to yon?"

"It was Ratface that see'd to that. That's why he beänt here to-night. He'll see the light's all right."

Even as the words are spoken the spark broadens, and shoots up into a tongue of flame. And now the caution of the tub-carriers appears to lessen; pipes are lit, with a hand to shade the glow, and there is a restless movement of swingles changing hands, or being laid down upon the sand beside their owners.

These are the flail-like implements, that with the long ash bludgeons, are the weapons of the yokel's defence. Crumblejohn has a large retinue, a goodly force on which he may depend. Beside

the villagers, there is the riding force of smugglers, a company of some thirty or more; innkeepers, tradesmen, farmers, who band together to ride with the goods far inland. The villagers, he may call out with little or no trouble, and as porters of the kegs they are enough; but to-night the riding gang has been summoned, Ratface was to see to this, for this run of goods is exceptional, and only mounted men can manage the bales of silks and other goods.

A dark object looms near. There is the sound of muffled oars, a word is passed along to the carriers, and almost before the boat-keel grates the beach, she is surrounded. Each man seizes and slings a brace of kegs around him; there are words of command from the freighters, a sound of trampling feet, of shipping oars, and the hurried breathing of an eager crowd, working in the dark.

And then a lighter sound, the jingle of bridles, and horses hoofs upon the sand.

"The mounted gang," mutters Crumblejohn, as he stands upon the shingle, looking down upon the tangled crowd of jostling men.

Here and there he sees a lantern, and the light of one bald, flaring torch, held high in the prow of the boat by Thurot. The torch flares vividly,

the flame is taken sideways by the wind. It throws its jagged shadows; the sea crawls grey round the beached boat.

And then a pistol-shot cracks out upon the air, followed by another, and another, and the man who stands high in the boat with the torch uplifted, falls heavily among the crowd.

"God . . ."—it is Crumblejohn who stumbles forward; "God . . ."

The air rings now with the sound of fire-arms, there is a stampede among the villagers—they are caught and bound. One man in a mask runs here and there in the crowd, a demon of agility. He is followed by a man on horseback, and wherever he leads, the smugglers are thickest. He passes the villagers, he lets these go by; but of the sixteen men that were in the galley, he has crept, and run, and striven among them, and always at his heels the man on horseback, whose followers secure the chief men. They overpower them, three to one, wherever the man in the mask has given the signal. And the swingles, the ash bludgeons, these have been turned against the men who bore them, wrenched from their hands. And where a stand among the men has been attempted, the mounted officers have ridden them down.

The night, so dark and quiet, has been given over to confusion. Oliver Charlock crouches low in the smuggling boat.

And now the tumult lessens. Most of the villagers have fled, and ten men of those who had manned the *Lapwing* stand bound upon the beach. Crumblejohn has long since staggered off, and subsided, blue with fright, in a ditch, to be picked up by the Excise men some fifty yards or more from the scene of the encounter, to be marched more briskly than his failing senses would have thought possible, along the road, hands bound, to his own Inn.

And Thurot, the gallant Thurot, with arms flung wide on either side of him, lies dead, in his faded uniform, beside a blackened torch.

But there is another corpse. It lies distressfully. The form is contorted, so that you may barely see the masked face.

Yet it should not be difficult to identify this body.

There is a finger lacking to the right hand.

CHAPTER XXV

O day, pass gently that art here again,
Turn memory's spear, and may thy vespers close
Upon a twilight odorous of the rose,
Drooping her petals in the falling rain.

There is no virtue in remembered pain,
The past is sleeping. Watching its repose
I shudder, lest those weary lids unclose,
And I be folded in its coils again.

ONE evening the children were gathered in the drawing-room, and Miss Ross sat among them working at her tambour frame. She wore a slender gold thimble set with corals, and in a slanting, almost obliterated handwriting, the posie, "*Use me, nor lose me*," was writ around its base. This thimble had been her mother's, and when her work was done for the evening, she would shut it away in a narrow case that held her scissors, and needle-case, and bodkin; and this case was lined with

velvet that had faded to the colour of silver weed when the wind reverses it.

"We should feel indebted to Mrs. Inchbald," she was saying, "for telling us so spirited a tale. I found my share of entertainment in watching your faces the while. Bimbo, I take it, will do well in life to set himself a fine example, for his sympathies are sufficiently fluid to shape themselves according to their groove. Let him see that they flow in a fine mould. While Mrs. Inchbald spoke of Ratface, his chin receded, his eyes narrowed, and I momentarily expected his ears to change their position on his head. Later, when she sketched for us the brave Thurot, his very shoulders broadened, his eye lightened, and his jaw set square. None of you, I noticed, found it in your heart to compliment her on the picture of Miss Augusta Noble's cousin, the spoilt child."

"I wish I'd asked her, though," said Christopher, "what they did to smugglers when they were caught."

"I can tell you," said Miss Ross. "They were forced for five years into the service, as either soldiers or sailors; but as they nearly always deserted, this was changed, and smugglers were sent

to prison instead. As for the smuggling vessels, when these were taken, they were sawn through in three places."

Bimbo groaned aloud.

"Nothing nice happens nowadays," he said. "No smuggling, no highwaymen, no pirates; *nothing*. People go about in top hats."

"There are burglars still," said Clare.

"I was much afraid of robbers when I was a child," said Miss Ross. "When the nurses withdrew, and I was left alone to go to sleep, I became immediately so convinced of the presence of a robber close to me, that I invented a way of softening his heart. I took to saying my prayers aloud. 'O bless my mother and father,' I would say, 'and teach me to live dutifully towards them in word and deed; bless my brothers and sisters, my playmates and friends;' and then, slightly raising my voice, I would say, 'and O, bless the thief now in the room.' I used to think he could not possibly harm me if he heard himself prayed for, and I did not stop here. I would explain to God that I felt he only stole because he hadn't thought much about it, and that if God blessed him and made him happy, he would give it up. And so my thoughts being distracted by inventing excuses

MISS ROSS

for the robber, my fear would gradually decline, and I would fall asleep.

"But I have never found among grown people," she continued, "a just appreciation of this torture children may undergo in their fear of being alone in the dark. It is better in your days, my dears, I have noticed this. You may have night lights, and your doors are left wide; but in my generation these qualms were all brushed aside."

"Do go on telling us about when you were little," said Clare. "There's hardly any story I like better than when grown-up people will do that."

"I was not an amusing child," answered Miss Ross, "and nothing very much happened to me. But I suppose children are the same in all ages, as to what they like and what they think about, and in the manner to them in which life appears. Have you ever looked back at the house you live in from a distance, and caught yourself saying, 'I must just run back, and find the house without me.' The instant recognition of its being an impossibility is less real than the impulse itself.

"I used to think, too, if I only could see when my eyes were shut everything would appear different. So I would lie pretending to be asleep, and then

suddenly jerk my eyes open, thinking I should catch everything strangely changed. But there invariably was the cupboard and the dressing-table, and all the familiar objects just as they had been. I endowed them with a sense of mockery at my efforts, and of being immeasurably subtler than I. So I would lie quite still, and stealthily lift a lid. But no, they were always the same. This did not convince me they did not move. On the contrary, I would say to myself with a sense of vexed despair, 'I shall never, never know what things look like when I'm not seeing them.'"

Clare said, "Mummie believes, you know, that if you think about a thing a great deal—something, I mean, that isn't really alive, as we are—that you endow it with a sort of image of life, and that strange things can happen in this way. Gems that have been thought magical, and idols that have been worshipped for centuries, have their being. That is why she would never like to have a Buddha in her house; she would think it would feel neglected. It would suffer and be cold, and its suffering would stream from it, and affect others. Besides, the wrongfulness it would be, to treat something that a great many people think sacred, merely as an ornament, or a curiosity."

"I had a brooch once," said Miss Ross, "that had a life of its own. It had many other things to do beside being my brooch, that was quite certain. I first found out it was a person by its evidently hearing what I said. It was a gold brooch, fashioned like an instep, or a curved willow leaf, and the pin worked on a principle evolved ages ago by some primitive race. 'Never,' said I one morning, in a moment of impatience—'never will I again use such a clumsy pin as this. It tears lace, and once inserted in any material it is almost impossible to dislodge.' I was pricked to the bone.

"This brooch would go away for days to attend to its own business; and when I'd given up looking for it, there I would find it on my pincushion, looking me in the eye. Even my maid, a most unimaginative woman, appeared to be conscious of its ways.

"'I see your brooch has come back, Miss,' she would say. Finally it chose a worthier home.

"I was travelling with my parents in Italy, driving through Tuscany in our private coach. We stayed for some weeks in Florence, and during that time I used to attend Mass in one of the great churches there. I became acquainted with the old priest

who officiated. One day as I was leaving the church, he said to me, 'Signora, have you seen the gift that has been made? The blue robe that has been presented to the Madonna?'

"I re-entered the church with him, and he led me to the Lady Chapel, and my eyes rested on the carved figure representing the Virgin Mary. To celebrate the Easter festival, some one had presented new robes. I looked from the kindly face of the old priest, filled as it was with fond devotion, to the pensive face of the carved figure with the outstretched hands.

"And there, where the folds of the blue mantle were gathered full upon the breast, I saw my brooch.

"I stepped forward. 'Ah, you notice that,' said the Father. 'Yes, for three weeks now we await the owner to appear. We have had notices written, and placards put about, but no one has claimed it. And so, till the festival is over, I have placed it where you see it. It is a gold brooch, therefore worthy to clasp the new robe.'

"I kept silence. I would not have cared to take it from where it now was.

"I turned to go. A ray from one of the lighted candles glinted on the surface of the gold. Clearly,

thought I, a signal of recognition. I knew its ways.

"I let the old priest move a few paces in front of me, and quickly stepping back I touched it twice with my hand in token of farewell. I was filled with fear lest the priest should turn and see me, for however crazy one may be in these matters, one doesn't like others to think one so."

"No," said Clare. "I know that. If somebody comes in when I've been talking to myself, or saying lines out loud when I'm alone, I always quickly turn it into a cough of some description. It never sounds in the least like one, though."

"Have you always named things that belong to you?" asked Miss Ross. "Nothing can really live to you unless it has got a name."

"Yes," said the children, "Mummie has names for things. She used to think when she was little that her feet were boys, and that they were called Owen and Barber. And she had an umbrella called Harvey, for years."

"It's right to have fancies about things," said Miss Ross. "I will tell you one that I read once long ago.

"The writer said, 'When I have risen to walk abroad in the fresh new air of summer, in the

hour of dawn when mankind is still at rest, the face of Nature has taken to me a new aspect, the unity of all things in creation appears revealed. It has seemed to me that I have surprised a great secret.

"'I have seen Nature at such times depicted in the vast form of some great goddess, a woman of Titanic form. The races of mankind are her children, and according to the features of the land they live in, so are they placed upon her mother form. Those who live upon the plains dwell on the great palms of her hands; those whose dwellings are placed among the embosoming hills have her breast for their shelter. The lakes are her eyes and the great forests her hair, the rivers are her veins and the rain her tears, and she sighs in the sound of the Sea.

"'The rainbows are her thoughts, and the mists rising from the quiet meadows are her meditations and her prayers. Her laughter is in the sound of brooks, and she breathes in the warmth that exhales from the earth, after it is dusk in Summer. The lightning is her anger, and in the thunder she finds utterance, and the darkness of the night is her great mantle over the land.'" Miss Ross ceased speaking, and there was silence for a time. Then Christopher said:

"And what are the earthquakes?"

"Perhaps when she yawns," said Bim. Children often save people trouble by giving themselves a reply.

Miss Ross had a large white book on her lap, she was turning the pages.

"I like this book of your Mother's," she said; "these phrases are from the writings of an old herbalist, and he speaks of the lime-leaf that 'in Autumn becomes wan, and spotted as the doe.'

"'The wyche-elme whose gold is let loose on the wind after night frostes, and cold dawnes.

"'The delicate jargonell that keeps the sweets of France in old, warm, English gardens.'

"And further on he writes of 'the sloe whose excellent purple blood makes so fine a comfort.'

"He speaks of the 'green smockt filberte,' and finally talks in this pleasant manner of the nature of mushrooms.

"'Many do fear the goodly musherooms as poysonous damp weeds. But this doth in no ways abate the exceeding excellence of God's Providence, that out of the grass and dew where nothing was, and where only the little worm turned in his sporte, come, as at the shaking of bells, these delicate meates.'

"The older you grow, children," Miss Ross said, looking up from the book, "the more pleasure you

will find in comfortable words. In well-adjusted phrase, and in lines that have beauty in their sound as in their imagery. I have found nourishment for the soul in the positive satisfaction to be derived from words.

'With how slow steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies,
How silently, and with how wan a face,'

and—

'A world of leafage, murmurous and a-twinkle
The green, delicious, plentitude of June.'

And these lines seem to me full of music.

'O, Philomela fair, O, take some gladness,
That here is juster cause for plaintful sadness.
Thine earth now springs, mine fadeth.
Thy thorn without, my thorn my heart invadeth.'

"These are only a few of the many fragments I have in my memory."

"But poetry is nearly always so sad," said Bimbo. "I like things with jokes in them."

"I know you do," said Miss Ross, and her face was lovely when she smiled. "I know exactly what you feel like. When you get up in the morning you feel the whole day is not long enough for

all you mean to do in it, the whole world is your playground. And when you glow after the cold bath there is nothing you don't feel ready for, from wittling a stick, to building an empire. And you're downstairs and out early, and 'away to the meadows, the meadows again,' with your rod and your line, and your bait at your belt, and your family see no more of you till dinner-time."

The children gave a deep breath, for this made them think of water-meadows and minnow-fishing, marsh-marigolds in golden clumps, and deep, clear runlets.

"This is the fun of being young," said Miss Ross, "prize it."

"And what is the fun of being old?" asked Bimbo.

"Many people have asked that before you, but all those who see the right aspects of youth may be trusted, I think, to grow old properly. Good taste is the highest degree of sensibility. And nowhere so clearly as in growing old, is good taste more subtly evidenced.

"The great thing is to feel. Let every bit of you be alive, even though you may suffer. The only sin is indifference."

"Is it people's fault when they are indifferent, or can't they help it?" asked Clare.

"Oh, there are folk who will close their eyes and sit in the very market-place of the universe, with their fingers in their ears."

"Then a bullock runs into them, I suppose," said Bim; "and they pick themselves up from the dust, saying, 'What have I done to deserve it?'"

"Yes," added Clare, "or they will say, 'See, we were promised music to dance to, and where are the sweet strains?'"

All the older children would have shrunk from an allusion to the great grief of which the beautiful face before them bore so deep an impress, but one of the younger ones said:

"I'm so surprised that you, who are so sad to look at, should have such nice laughing eyes all the same when you speak, and seem so ready to be amused."

Miss Ross did not answer immediately, her lips framed some words. Only Clare who was nearest to her heard them, for she was speaking to herself:

"And even yet I dare not let it languish,
Dare not indulge in memory's rapturous pain,
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
How could I seek the empty world again?"

But aloud, she said to the little child who had

spoken: "Sorrow and gladness are close together, the more you have it in your nature to suffer, the more thoroughly you can enjoy. And these two things, suffering and gladness, mean a full comprehension of life. The psalmist says, '*Grant me understanding, and I shall live*,' and understanding means the spirit that makes us accept our joys, our duties, and our sorrows; deliberately adjusting ourselves to them, giving them their place.

"It is a good prayer, 'Help me better to bear my sorrows, and to more fully understand my joys.' For only when we understand our joys do we find contentment."

"There's a poem Mummie read to us once," said Bimbo, "in which a man tells how he had everything in life to make him happy. He had riches, he had houses, he had talents, he had friends, and lots of fun of every description, but he hadn't contentment, and wanting that, he wanted all. And so he set out to seek her, and he travelled far and wide, till at last he went home, because he was tired. And there, when he got home, he found her by his own doorstep, sitting spinning!"

"Yes," said Miss Ross; "I like that story. We have got to find her. And those who have grudges

against Fate, and grievances, are the people who expect her to find them.

"I assure you, my dear children, I've more sympathy with murderers than with grumblers; they at least have some compelling motive, are strongly exercised by hatred or revenge. (I rather like people who can hate, very few people can do it.) But grumblers—I place them in the same class as those who talk about being resigned. Let there be fortitude; indeed if we are to face life at all, we must have it. But resignation, I despise."

Miss Ross rose from her chair, and a piece of paper fell on the ground beside her. Clare picked it up to return it, but she had already passed down the room. And as Clare's glance fell on the paper she saw that it was poetry written there.

"No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere.
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And Faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts, unutterably vain,
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main.

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by Thine infinity.
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of immortality.

There is no room for Death,
No atom that his might could render void.
Thou, Thou art Being and Breath,
And what Thou art may never be destroyed."

CHAPTER XXVI

Light foot to press the stirrup,
In fearlessness and glee,
Or dance till finches chirrup,
And stars sink in the sea.

CORY JOHNSTONE.

ONE day you might have seen Clare sitting with Miss Hippesley in the drawing-room.

The dusk was falling, and the great limbs of the elms in St. James' Park stood leafless and black against the sombre twilight. Flocks of white seagulls circled among them. It was a world of black, and white, and grey.

Only within doors was comfort. The lamps had not yet been lit, but the fire, burning those rainbow logs of old ships' wood, filled the room with chequered light and dancing shadows.

"Will you tell me about Lady Crosbie?" said Clare. "I know she is a friend of yours."

"Then you must come with me to Drayton,"

said Miss Hippesley, "for that was her home. But were I able to transport you there in spirit, I would have to get Mrs. Gladwell to speak to you. She could tell you even more about Lady Crosbie than I."

"Who is Mrs. Gladwell?"

"She was the steward's wife, and knew the family since the children were quite small, for she had been second nurse there. She left as they grew up, and she married; but her husband proved an idle fellow, living on his wife's earnings; and gradually she came to be the hard-worked servant in a London lodging-house. Her health broke down, and being left a widow, she wrote to the eldest Miss Sackville, telling her case. And Miss Sackville, having kindly memories of her, got her placed in one of the lodges. And later she married Gladwell the steward, and became housekeeper at Drayton Hall."

Miss Hippesley narrowed her eyes in her characteristic manner which you may see delineated in her portrait. She sat quietly, looking steadfastly before her.

"I will see if I cannot paint a picture in words for you, Clare, that may bring Diana Crosbie before you."

Clare watched the firelight glimmering on the

gold of the picture-frames. She was unwilling to break the silence, for her companion was evidently deep in thought.

Presently, however, Miss Hippesley spoke.

"I see a room whose windows look out upon a lawn shaded by cedar-trees. A woman sits within in a white mob cap with a cherry ribbon on it, dressed in a mulberry-coloured gown. The room is the steward's room at Drayton, and though the chintz on the sofa is worn and the wall-paper here and there has faded, yet the ladder-backed chairs and the stout mahogany table give character and dignity to the room. There is an appearance of great comfort; a winged chair is drawn to the fire-place, and a kettle sings upon the hob. The woman is reading a letter.

"It is one written by Miss Sackville, the elder sister of Diana. The lines are penned in a tall, slender handwriting on thick paper, sealed. They had no envelopes in those days; a letter was written on a broad sheet, folded upon itself.

"There will be allusions, Clare, in this letter to names unknown to you. Yet this is not surprising when you remember that it is a letter two hundred years old.

LADY CROSBIE. *Reynolds.*

"'*To* Mrs. Gladwell,
At Lord Viscount Sackville,
Drayton,
Near Thrapston,
Northamptonshire.

"'Dear Mrs. Gladwell,—I had the pleasure of seeing Charles a little while ago, who told me that you were quite well and looked very happy, which I was exceedingly glad to hear. He says you are grown a prodigious buck in your dress, that you have got quite a youthful bloom on your cheeks, and are the picture of health and content. I am sure you deserve to be so to compensate for the many years of misery which you drudged on in those horrid rooms in Pall Mall; and if you feel like me, you will never wish to see them or anything else in that *cursed* town of London as long as you live. I heard from Di lately. She had been at Lady Grandison's and seen Nurse Porter, who, she says, has not a wish ungratified but of seeing Betty Love, whom she quite raves about.

"'Di is to return to Lord Grandison's at Christmas, where she is to meet all the best company from Dublin, and to live in a continual train of amusement. She is so popular in Kerry that when she goes to a play that is acted by strolling players at

Tralee, the whole house rings with applause at her entrance, and she is obliged to curtsey her thanks like a queen. Remember me to Molly Thomas, and believe me, your sincere friend,

"'C. SACKVILLE.'

"The woman in the mulberry-coloured dress closes the letter. It has set in movement before her inward eye a train of images, pictures of past years.

"She sees a child of four years old running to meet her. The hair curls abundantly, the cheeks are delicately pink, the curved lips smiling. In both hands she brings treasures—bright spindle berries heaped together, crimson and orange, in her little hands.

"And the woman hears her glad voice calling: 'Look, Ellen! corals like Di's necklace! corals growing on trees!'

. . . . . .

"The memory passes, and she sees another scene. The room is darkened; she is sitting by a bed. A child lies on it, tossing restlessly, and all the pretty hair has been cut off. She hears a fretful voice say repeatedly, 'Sing, Ellen; Ellen, sing.' And softly, over and over again until weary, she hears herself singing an old ballad to the child:—

"'London Bridge is broken down,
Dance over my lady lea;
London Bridge is broken down
With a gay lady.

How shall we build it up again?
Dance over my lady lea;
How shall we build it up again?
With a gay lady.

Wood and clay will wash away,
Dance over my lady lea;
Wood and clay will wash away
With a gay lady.

Silver and gold will be stolen away,
Dance over my lady lea;
Silver and gold will be stolen away
With a gay lady.

Build it up with stone so strong,
Dance over my lady lea;
And then it will last for ages long
With a gay lady.'

"Her voice, set low for the sick-room, repeats the familiar lines. She dare not cease, for immediately the eyes are wide upon her, and she hears, 'Sing, sing.' And so she sings on till the little form shifts less restlessly, and the breathing grows longer and more profound.

"The fire dies down and the clock ticks on in a comfortable monotony. Then she rises, and, writing on a piece of paper, she slips it under the door. And after a while there is a quiet footstep in the passage, and she knows the child's father is reading the message, '*Miss Diana sleeps.*'

. . . . . .

"Again the past is built before her. She sees the large house lighted for a ball. There are garlands over the doors, holly and ivy deck the pictures, and everywhere the soft candlelight is shed on the dark and polished floors. Music streams through the brightly-lit rooms, and a brilliant company pass to and fro in silks and jewels.

"Mrs. Gladwell stands in the gallery, looking down on the gay scene. She sees a laughing company, a knot of some seven or eight, pass into the hall. The men wear their hair long and are dressed in colours, and in their midst moves Diana Sackville. She wears her hair over cushions, and pearls are threaded through the soft mass. She paces through the gavotte with head held high, poised like a flower, with laughing lips and gleeful eyes, her step light as thistledown; and though the violins are sounding their slender music, through it all the onlooker hears another melody—

"'Silver and gold will be stolen away
Dance over my lady lea;
Silver and gold will be stolen away
With a gay lady.'"

. . . . . .

Miss Hippesley's voice ceased, and Clare sat thinking. Still was she seeing in imagination that bright throng.

"But Diana shall speak for herself; this is a letter written by her to her father." And Miss Hippesley opened as she spoke a broad paper. Though the ink was brown, you might readily see the tails of the *g*'s and *d*'s were all turned cheerfully, with a kink in them.

"'My dear Father,—I have spent a week with a friend of yours at Edmomsbury, and been very much entertained there. Lord and Lady Buckingham have been obliging enough to give a ball on purpose for me at St. Woolstans, where I danced in great spirits, being now mighty well and able to enjoy, as usual, all amusements.

"'We had a good deal of company at Edmomsbury, and dear whist finished every evening. I had the long-wished-for happiness of driving a little cabriolet myself every morning, and am grown an excellent coachman.

" 'I must inform you that your friend the Speaker, with all his outside gravity and demureness, is a jolly buck at bottom. He does not dislike the sight of a pretty woman, for such, *entre nous*, am I universally thought here, whatever I may be reckoned in England; but no prophet is a prophet in his own country.

" 'I was much surprised as I was quietly seated one evening to feel myself pulled back in the chair by the shoulders, and, looking up, perceived it was the frisky Speaker's doing, who vowed he had such an inclination to kiss me he could hardly withstand the longing he felt. Instead of looking grave, I burst out a-laughing, and indeed well I might when I saw that demure old face extended into a tender simper.

" 'He afterwards confessed he repented not having gratified his kissing inclination, and assured me if I gave him any encouragement, he should certainly do it in spite of me.

" 'Mrs. Perry was half inclined to look grave, and I to be much entertained.

" 'Poor Sir John Irwin's head is quite turned with his Mrs. Squib. He gets himself abused everywhere.

" 'We talk of returning to England in a very short time. I confess, if it were not for seeing you

all, I should feel sorry at leaving a place where I have been so well received, and am so well amused.

"'Adieu, my dear father. I shall direct this to Richmond, as my sisters do not mention your leaving that place yet.—Dutifully yours,

"'DIANA CROSBIE.'"

Clare took the letter from Miss Hippesley's hand. The notepaper, where it was not frayed, had a slender gold edging. Across the corner, written in the same round handwriting, were some lines added—

"The Duke of Leinster told somebody the other day that I was a dear, charming girl, and danced like an angel."

That night as Clare was going to bed, she stood before Lady Crosbie's picture. She noted the pearls in the hair, the laughing eyes, the flying grace of movement.

Had all this light-heartedness, all this beauty become (to borrow one of Mrs. Inchbald's crisp sayings) long since dust and daisies?

"Not while this picture lasts," thought Clare. "With this before us, Beauty, like stone-built London Bridge, may last for ages."

CHAPTER XXVII

One I have marked, the happiest guest
In all this covert of the best:
Hail to thee, far above the rest
In joy of voice and pinion!
Thou, Linnet! in thy green array,
Presiding spirit here to-day,
Dost lead the revels of the May,
And this is thy dominion.

W. WORDSWORTH.

DOLORÈS had a tame bird called 'Piripe,' you know," said Clare one day to the children.

"She brought him up by hand, and when he died she was miserable. She's got a long poem that a man called Skelton wrote long ago when English was spelt strangely. It is full of pretty phrases, and it has got a long list of birds' names; if you'll listen, she'll read it to you, she says."

Clare spoke eagerly. But she had no need to

Reynolds.

DOLORÈS.

call the children twice. They gather round any one willingly enough who will read to them.

Dolorès looked very small and sad as she sat on a low stool, about to commence reading. There is something you will see, in the manner her little bodice is crossed, that is curiously at one with that lift in her eyebrow.

"My bird was a green finch," she said, "and he had the crossest little eye I've ever seen; it was like a sour bead, full of greediness. But all the same I loved him, and I shall never have such another. I shall never, never, have such a dear again. This man Skelton who wrote this poem must have known some little girl who lost a bird she loved, for listen to what he writes about it. It is called

The Boke of Phyllyp Sparowe,

and these are only some of the lines:—

"'When I remember again
How my Phylyp was slain
Never half the payne
Was between you twain,
Pyramus and Thisbe,
As then befell to me.

I wept and I wayled,
The tears down hayled,
But nothing it availed
To call Philyp again,
Whom Gib, our cat, hath slain.
Gib, I say, our cat
Worried her on that
Which I loved best.
It cannot be expressed
By sorrowful heaviness.

It was so prety a fool
It wold sit on a stool;
It had a velvet cap,
And would sit upon my lap,
And seek after small wormes
And sometymes white bread crommes.
Sometimes he wold gasp
When he saw a wasp,
A fly, or a gnat,
He would fly at that;
And pretily he wold pant
When he saw an ant;
Lord, how he wold pry
After the butterfly!
Lord, how he wold hop
After the gressop!
And when I sayd, Phyp, Phyp!
Then he wold leap and skyp
And take me by the lyp.

Alas! it will me slo
That Phyllyp is gone me fro!
For it wold come and go
And fly so to and fro,
And on me it wold leap
When I was asleep,
And his fethers shake,
Wherewith he wold make
Me often for to wake.

He did nothing perdie
But sit upon my knee.
Phyllyp had leave to go
To pike my lytell toe;
Phyllip might be bold
And do what he wold.
Phyllyp wold seek and take
All the fleas blake
That he could there espy
With his wanton eye.

. . . . .

That vengeance I aske and cry
By way of exclamation
On the whole nation
Of cattes, wyld and tame.
God send them sorrowe and shame!
That cat specially
That slew so cruelly
My lytell prety sparowe
That I brought up at Carowe.

. . . . .

When I remember it,
How pretily it wold sit
Many times and oft
On my finger aloft!
His bill between my lippes—
It was my prety Phyppes!
He was wont to repayre
And go in at my spayre,
And creep in at my gore
Of my gown before,
Flyckering with his wings.
Alas! my heart it stings
Remembrynge prety things!

Of fortune this the chance
Standeth on variance
Oft time after pleasaunce,
Trouble and grievaunce
No man can be sure
All way to have pleasure.
As well perceive ye may
How my desport and play
From me was taken away
By Gyb, our cat, savage,
That in a furious rage
Caught Phyllyp by the head
And slew him there, starke dead.
Kyrie eleison,
Christe, eleison,
Kyrie eleison,

For Phyllyp Sparowe's soule
Set in our bead roll
Let us now whisper
A Pater noster.

All manner of birdes in your kind
So none be left behind,
Some to sing and some to say,
Some to weep and some to pray
Every birde in his laye.
The goldfink, the wagtayle,
The jangling pie to chatter
Of this dolorous matter ;
And robyn redbreast
He shall be the priest
The requiem mass to sing
Softly warbelynge.
With help of the red sparrow
And the chattringe swallow
This hearse for to hallow.

The larke, with his long toe,
The spynk and martinet, also
The shoveler with his brode bek ;
The dotterell, that folyshe pek
The partryche, the quayle,
The plover, with us to wayle,
The lusty chaunting nightingale ;
The popinjay to tell her tale

That looketh oft in the glasse,
Shall read the gospel at Masse.
The mavis with her whystle
Shall read the epistle,
But with a large and a longe
To keep just playne songe
Our chanters shall be the cuckoo,
The culver, the stockdoo,
With puwyt, the lapwyng,
The versicles shall syng.
The bittern with his bumpe,
The crane with his trumpe,
The swan of Menander,
The gose and the gander,
The duck and the drake,
Shall watch at this wake.
The owle, that is so fowle,
Must help us to howle ;
The barnacle, the bussarde,
With the wild mallarde ;
The puffin and teal
Money they shall dele ;
The seamewe, the tytmose,
The wodcocke, with the longe nose ;
The throstyll, with her warblyng,
The starling, with her brablyng ;
The roke and the osprey
That putteth fysshe to the fraye ;
And the dainty curlew,
With the turtyll most trew.

And it were a Jewe
It wold make one rewe
To see my sorrow newe!
These villainous false cattes
Were made for myse and rattes,
And not for birdes smale.
Alas! my face waxeth pale
Telling this piteous tale.
Alas! I say agayne,
Deth hath departed us twayne;
The false cat hath thee slayne.

Farewell, Phyllyp, adieu,
Our Lord thy soule reskew;
Farewell, without restore,
Farewell for evermore.'"

JOHN SKELTON, born 1460.

CONCLUSION

THE day came when the children were to leave London. The demon of packing was abroad. Open trunks in the passage, frothing over with paper, busy people, excited children, and bustle everywhere. This is the spirit of packing, much beloved of children, but only to be endured in varying degrees of patience by those more nearly concerned.

The children must see after their own toys, however. So Huckaback and Bombasine, the cloth monkeys, are placed with other things on the nursery table, where they lie grinning, with bead teeth. Here also is Natalie, who we read of in the first chapter, and Mrs. Apollo Johnson, a white material bear. Here are Molly Easter, the horse Anthony, and Ben and Greet.

Clare, having put these toys aside, left the nursery, where the sense of dislocation was almost too acute. Going to her own room, she stood looking out of the window. The scene before her brought to her mind the view she was so soon to see. She

thought of the green paddock to be full of daffodils in March, where the ashes stand with their grey stems, and the great yew tree. She saw the curve in the oak paling as it skirts the withebed, and the winding path that leads to Minnow Corner. She caught the scent of the old stone granary, that has just sufficient dash of mouse in it to make the hay and grain smell doubly sweet, and she remembered the thick yew hedges where linnets build, and the leaning boughs of the mulberry tree.

"And all this," thought she, "I shall soon see once more." And with this thought there flooded into her heart a wave of love for the country, bringing with it the remembrance of some lines.

> "'"'Tis she that to these gardens gave
> The wondrous beauty that they have.
> She straightness on the wood bestows,
> To her the meadow sweetness owes.
> Nothing could make the river be
> So crystal pure but only she.
> She, yet more pure, sweet, straight and fair
> Than gardens, woods, meads, rivers are.'"

And as Clare said these lines, with her mind dwelling on the country, suddenly it took a swallow's angle, and she thought of London again and

the life of the pictures that she had come to know. Swiftly she ran downstairs and stood in turn before each one of them. The morning light touched them unsympathetically. They seemed strangely aloof. Was it because her thoughts had been among the green living things of the country, her memory out in the fresh, sweet air of Nature, that these pictures seemed so dead?

She stood before Lewis the actor. He gripped his sword and looked away. Before Mrs. Inchbald. She leaned from her chair, gazing intently, but not at Clare. Miss Ridge smiled, but the smile was not for her. Clare knew if she turned away, Miss Ridge would still be smiling. She stood before Kitty Fischer; but nothing that Clare could do or say would make her look up.

"Miss Ross will say something," thought Clare. But no spoken word came from Miss Ross. Yet as Clare stood looking, she remembered two lines, she knew not whence they came—

> Endurance is the noblest quality,
> And Patience all the passion of great hearts.

Clare went out upon the landing. Here again there was no recognition. The Spencer children were painted children, and Lady Crosbie, though

she tripped forward with smiles for every one, was but a bright form on canvas.

The life of the pictures had been withdrawn.

Only Robert Mayne, Clare thought, looked back at her with any friendship.

Then she looked steadfastly at the wide country round Dedham Lock.

And as she looked, she saw the wind was in the sedges, bowing the great dock leaves as it passed.

THE END

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