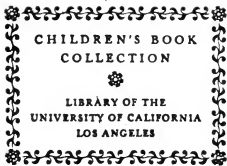


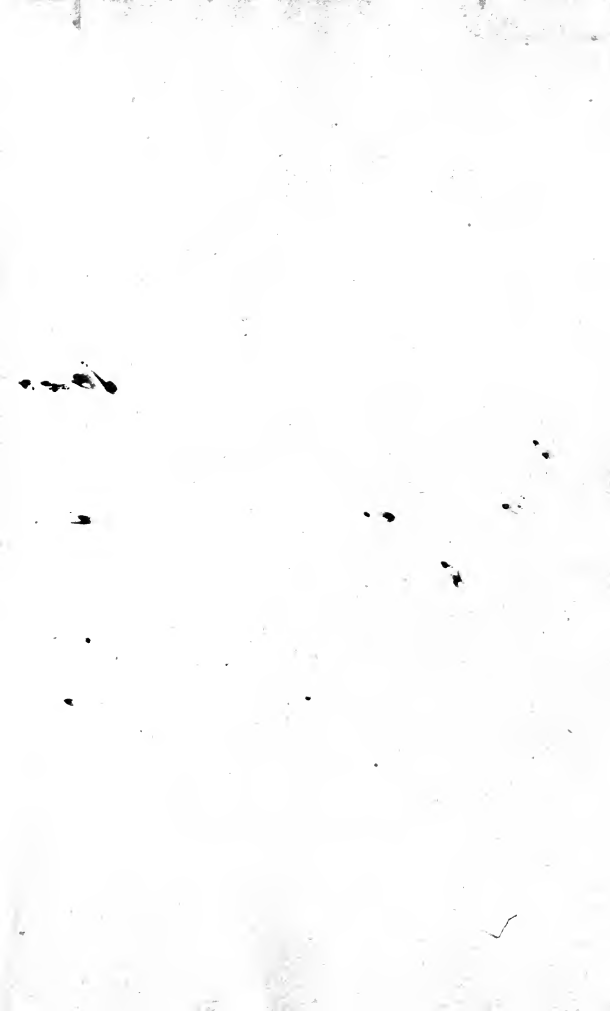
MAGNET STORIES

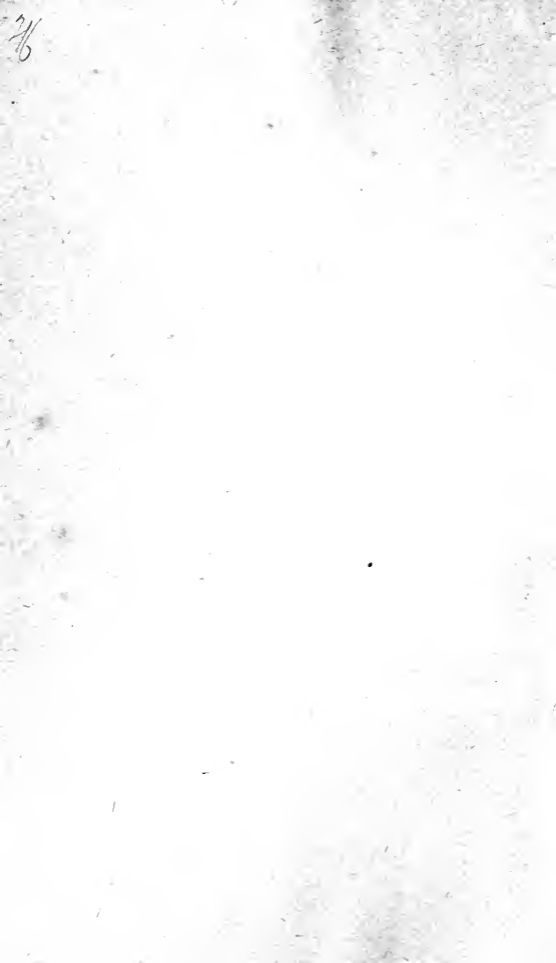




Tom Johnson
by the Managers of the
Wakefield Parish Ch. Schools
as a reward for regular
attendance during the
year 1879

James Repar
Head-Master









THE
MAGNET STORIES

FOR

SUMMER DAYS AND WINTER NIGHTS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "A TRAP
TO CATCH A SUNBEAM."
EMILY TAYLOR.
FRANCES BROWNE.

THOMAS MILLER.
MRS. RUSSELL GRAY.
F. M. PEARD.

FRANCES M. WILBRAHAM.



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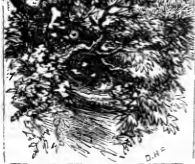






J. H. FRISTON De.

"GOOD DOG! GOOD BOY! HOME, BOB, HOME!"



GOLDEN AUTUMN.

BY THOMAS MILLER.

—♦—

GOLDEN autumn, with its broad dashes of orange and crimson, thrown in amid the fading green of the foliage, now painted the landscape; and all along our river-side shores, and far inland amongst our thorpes and granges there was a rustling of Harvest, and tawny reapers wielding their crooked sickles in the sun-browned corn-fields. Many a picturesque village stood with its thatched cottages empty and silent, for even the very poorest, who lacked employment at other seasons of the year, had now gone forth—like the Ruth of old—to glean, and taken their children with them to keep them out of harm's way, and help to gather up a few straggling ears of corn; for it was the harvest-time of the poor as well as the rich. Even the little tailor had

uncrossed his slender legs, thrown down his needle and thimble, and gone out to shear the corn; and the wax-smelling old cobbler had laid down his spectacles, last, and awl, and sallied forth to join the reapers; so that there was no getting a patch from the one, nor a stitch from the other, though you were out at the elbows and down at the heels. Excepting the grunting of the hungry pigs in their sties, the cackling and running of the poultry, and the humming of the bees round the hives, there was no stir of life about the little cottage gardens, which were so often filled with the noise of children; even the clean white cat was shut out, and sat washing her face in the sunshine, or peering about with half-shut eyes as if wondering why all around her was so still. The few human figures that you saw moving about the village streets were either going with heavy baskets and bottles, filled with provisions and drink, to the harvest fields, or returning with them empty, to ask for more; for the farmer neither stinted what was taken from his larder nor barrels at this busy season, when his men and maidens worked their hardest.

Into a large corn-field, dotted everywhere with the figures of reapers and gleaners, a surly-looking farmer guided his horse, and beckoning to his foreman, who came up with his sickle hanging on his arm, wiping the perspiration from his forehead on his shirt-sleeve, he said, "What are all those women and children doing here, John? Is this the way you obey my orders? Didn't I tell you I wouldn't have any gleaners in my fields excepting Alice and her old grandmother, until the corn was got in?"

"I told Alice so," replied the man, "but she said

they were all neighbours whom you knew, and that she was sure you would let them glean when you came. But here she comes to answer for herself."

The maiden who approached seemed in no great hurry, but stooped every here and there to pick up an ear of corn as she came up. When standing before the horseman, she raised her beautiful face, and said, "I hope, Mr. Fox, you won't be cross with me for telling our poor neighbours that I was sure you would allow them to glean, as well as me and grandmother, so long as they didn't meddle with the sheaves, nor go too close to the reapers."

"You and your grandmother I believe to be honest," answered the farmer, with somewhat of a stern look; "last year when I let these people in, before the corn was led, I found a sheaf hidden away under the brick arch, by the gate, in the ditch."

"I am sure it wasn't put there by any one now gleaning," replied Alice. "I would trust poor Widow Wetherby and her three children with uncounted gold, if I had it; and, as to old Peggy Dixon and her daughter, they are religious people; and all the rest I know to be honest: and when I saw them all hanging about the gate this morning as grandmother and I came in, I thought it was a sin to see the corn lying on the ground, and nobody to pick it up, and so many little mouths as some of those poor mothers have to fill."

"Well—well; they may stay since they are here," answered the farmer, surlily. "But remember, if they do anything wrong, I shall blame you," saying which he dismounted, thrust his hand in a sheaf of corn to see how it was drying, rubbed out an ear or two, then remounted, and rode off at a brisk trot to some other of

his corn-fields, to see how his reapers were getting on there.

All the gleaners had ceased from their labour, and stood watching the farmer and Alice, not certain whether they would be allowed to remain until he had gone ; and when she drew near, sending the silvery ring of her sweet voice before her, as she shouted out, " All right," the children replied with a loud " hurrah."

" Bless her sweet face, I thought he couldn't refuse her when she asked, though he is a hard man to deal with," said the grandmother to her old gossip, Peggy Dixon, who was gleaning beside her. " It's hard to deny her anything, and she is contented with so little."

" It would be a shame if he did," replied Peggy ; " for the whole of the land, I believe, belongs to her if she had her rights. What is the ten pounds a year he pays for it? Why, I have heard that Farmer Sooby would be glad to rent the estate at a hundred a year."

" Well, you know, Peggy, that was all he paid when Alice's father was alive," replied the grandmother ; " I have been by when Mr. Fox has paid it many a time. He put down a large sum for the lease ; some hundreds, I believe. But all my son-in-law's papers were burnt in the Reform riots, and when her father died there was nothing to show, either how much or how little Mr. Fox had paid, nor how long nor how short his lease was for. He says he has his lease all right and straight, and can produce it any day. I am no lawyer you know, Peggy, and shouldn't understand it if I saw it."

" Neither am I, so far as that goes," replied Peggy ; " but I know a B from a battledore, and were Alice my grandchild, I would see Mr. Fox's lease, and try my

hardest to understand all about it. I know what I've heard, and I haven't over much faith in a man who never gives a straightforward answer to a plain question. Did you never ask to see it?"

"I shouldn't like to give offence," said the grandmother; "for he has a short, sharp sort of a way with him, that isn't at all pleasant at times. And though two pounds ten shillings a quarter isn't very much for two of us to live upon, and pay our way, yet it's all we have, excepting the trifle we earn other ways; and, were we to lose that, things would go harder with us than they do, and want pinches us pretty hard at times; but nip as much as it may, Alice never complains. Bless her, she's my greatest comfort on earth, and will, I trust, be my companion in heaven, to which my daughter, her dear mother, has gone a little while before us."

"Alice is all that any right heart could wish her to be," replied Peggy; "I wish Mr. Fox was only half as good as she is. But when a man asked a plain question says, 'I've got a lease, and I've paid for it, and that's enough for me, how long, or how short, is my business and Alice's grandmother's, and nobody's else's that I know of, and she is quite wise enough and old enough to let well alone. As to what papers Alice's father lost in the fire, when his house and rickyards were burnt, that's nothing to me. Perhaps my lease is for ninety-nine years, happen not so long, those who have plenty of money to spend in law will find it out if they wish. It will be time enough for me to ~~proceed~~ ^{proceed} my lease when Alice wants it.' That's the way he talks, as I have heard. She is not more than fourteen, is she?"

"Fourteen last Valentine's day," answered the

grandmother, "and a prettier valentine no mother was ever presented with. I'm sure when she was a little baby I used to sit and look at her, until I sometimes fancied she had only just come, in all her innocence and beauty, fresh from the gates of heaven, where my dear daughter is now waiting for her to come back again."

Alice had by this time gleaned her way up to her grandmother, and throwing back her beautiful long brown hair, which had fallen down while she stooped to pick up the scattered ears of corn, she came with a sweet smile on her handsome, sun-tanned countenance, and said, "You must be tired, dear granny, go and sit down in the shade, and rest yourself for an hour. I covered the bottle of milk up in the cool grass under the hedge, and I am sure you will quite enjoy it, along with the cake I baked this morning; I will come and join you as soon as I have gleaned another good handful. I've made you a nice soft seat. Go with her, Peggy, and taste my cake. It was made with the new milk Farmer Ashcroft sent us this morning, along with the fresh butter, of which I put a pretty good lump in the flour."

"Ay, that accounts for the sugar-basin being so low as it is," said the grandmother, shaking her finger at Alice. "Come along, Peggy, and let's taste her seed-cake, and if you don't make haste, Alice, perhaps we shall eat it all," and the happy-minded old women went away laughing together to rest themselves beneath the broad-branched oak that grew near the hedgerow, where the standing corn for a few yards still remained green under its cooling shadow.

It was a pretty picture to see Alice standing in the

corn-field in her faded cotton dress, the autumn sunshine streaming full on her sweet gentle face, and giving a golden colour to her rich brown hair, and the ripe corn she held in her hand, as with a sweet smile, she saw the old women drawing nearer to their resting-place, and thought how much her grandmother would enjoy herself while she remained behind to glean. Then she bent her graceful figure, and began to work in earnest, picking up as many ears of corn in a few minutes as her aged grandmother would have been a long hour in gathering, nor ever once making a straight back until it fairly ached again through stooping so long. In vain did her grandmother call "Alice," to which she shouted back, "I'm coming soon;" she still kept on gleaning until she saw her grandmother arise from her seat; then she knew she was coming for her, so went to join her, knowing that by doing so she should prevail over her to rest a little longer.

Then what patience she displayed towards the dear little ragged dirty children, as they picked their way up to her from every corner of the field; the sharp stubble piercing their hard, rough, bare legs at every step they took. One asking her to tie up its glean as it held up the little handful of corn; another to clip off the straw, and put the ears of corn in the little poke that was tied round its tiny waist. She attended to all, kissed their dear dirty faces, when she had done what they wanted, and sent them away happy; meeting them with the same sweet smile when they again came to her for assistance.

Alice never made a trouble of duty, nor considered that time misspent which she bestowed on others to make them happy. For attending on her aged grandmother

had taught her the great lesson of patience. By a long course of kindness and attention she had learnt to know even the very wishes of her aged relative, and to supply her every want before a word was spoken. To see granny arise from her chair, when she was comfortably seated, only to reach anything she might want, seemed a silent rebuke to Alice, and by continued watching she was at last able to read her very looks, and could do what was required without grandmother opening her lips. Then what a rich reward was that fond kiss, that gently-spoken "Thank you, my sweet child," and that look of unutterable and affectionate tenderness which no language could ever convey. The greatest pleasure Alice could find was in endeavouring to make her grandmother happy, and the prayers of that old woman were ever ascending to heaven, entreating that her grandchild might ever remain as good and virtuous as she was then, and that no shadow of evil might ever darken the sunshine which lighted her innocent eyes. To see her stepping westward in the evening sunset, carrying the trailing corn they had gleaned, on her head, while the ears fell about her beautiful face as she was followed by her stooping grandmother, looked as if rosy Summer had alighted on the earth, and was leading home aged Winter.

From the time she was ten years of age, Alice had turned her attention seriously to the means of increasing her grandmother's income, so that she might procure for her a few additional comforts which her great age required. She had sharp ears, quick eyes, a willing mind, nimble fingers, and feet too stirring ever to let the grass grow under them while there was anything to do, and whatever she undertook to do she set about it

earnestly. Farmer Ashcroft, who was always giving her something or another, and as her grandmother said, "would, I believe, give her his head if it were loose, and she wanted it, and he could manage to do without it by any 'mander' of means," gave her a hen, then a nestful of eggs for it to hatch, and Alice had soon as fine a brood of chickens as were to be found in the whole village. By the time she was twelve, she had quite a large poultry-yard, and had such "luck" with them, as the neighbours called it, that she seldom lost a chicken; though all Alice's "luck" lay in good management, for like herself they had always a nice clean, fresh look. When she had no household work to do, she would take her sewing with her, and drive them out into the broad breezy common, which was close at hand, and there let them run about and pick up what they could find, while she kept her eye on them and her work at the same time; and that was what kept them so healthy—plenty of air and exercise, the same that caused such a rosy bloom to blush in her own soft cheeks. She could easier get half-a-crown apiece for her hens that were ready to lay than her neighbours could get a shilling each for their own draggled, dirty, and neglected poultry. Then the little market town was hardly two miles from the cottage, and she seldom went there to sell her eggs and poultry without bringing back a gill of raisin wine for her grandmother, especially in cold weather, because she always went to bed so warm and comfortable after taking a dessert-spoonful of it with a little hot water and sugar.

Nor was it in the corn-fields alone that Alice and her grandmother gathered in their harvest during the season of golden autumn; for elderberries and blackberries

abounded along all the miles of hedges that surrounded the neighbourhood; there were also plenty of nuts in the old woods, and here and there among the ancient hedgerows, great sloe and bullace bushes, that bore fruit as large as damsons, and with a bloom on them like black grapes when they were ripened and purpled by the gentle frosts of October. There were also old pastures that had never been anything but grazing land within the memory of man, and there mushrooms sprang up plentifully, with gills as crimson as those of newly-caught freshwater fish, and crowns as white as snow; and Alice often arose in the gray dawn, and returned with a large basketful of mushrooms before her grandmother was up, and a famous price did these things fetch at times in the little market-town. Then her grandmother went with her "elderberrying, blackberrying, nutting, and sloeing" as the plain country people called the gathering of these wild fruits, and they took a little basket of provision with them, and remained out the whole day, where only the wild, free workings of Nature were to be seen for miles together, and scarcely a vestige of the handicraft of man; nooks and corners where the flowers bloomed and died, unlooked upon saving by the birds, bees, and butterflies, and the wonderful insect inhabitants that revel and play amid their pollen and petals. They went together into the dim bowery hollows of the great woods in quest of nuts, where all was so still and silent, that when they stood at times to listen, their own breathing was the only sound that was audible. Even the tapping of the woodpecker seemed to make such solitudes "stiller by its sound." But most of all did Alice delight to sit and eat her dinner beside a large clear pool, that spread out in the centre of one of those ancient woods, showing

like another sky, and reflecting every tree that grew on its wild margin.

She loved to look at the great dashes of crimson thrown from the broad bunches of mountain-ash berries, and lying like fiery lamps as their shadows were mirrored in the water ; to see the woody nightshade, after it had shaken off the dark purple petals and golden anthers, hang out its berries of the richest scarlet, while looking as tempting as ripe red currants to the eye, though she well knew the danger there lay in tasting them. There too grew the gorgeous spindle-tree, which scarcely arrests our attention in summer, but now seemed as if covered with roses ; for so do the seed-vessels appear in autumn, when the capsules open like the petals of a beautiful flower. They gathered the fruit of the bird-cherry, which changes from green to red, and then into dark luscious purple, like the grape, and which they were wise enough to eat moderately, for well did granny know the consequences that had followed through indulging in the rich fruit immoderately, and she never failed in imparting her experience to Alice. But of all Alice's favourites, the dogwood, or wild cornel, was the greatest ; and the first time her grandmother pointed it out to her, she clapped her little hands, and began dancing around it to give expression to her feelings of delight, exclaiming over and over again, " Oh, how very beautiful ! " To her childish eye it seemed like one of the fairy trees, transplanted from the enchanted gardens she had read of in the wild stories her grandmother bought to amuse her ; for the good old woman believed that such imaginary tales exercised the fancy, and kept the mind at work better than dry details of facts, which Alice too often yawned over ; and well might she fancy that such a

GOLDEN AUTUMN.

beautiful shrub had grown in fairyland, for the wood produced nothing beside that resembled it in autumn, with its purple berries, red branches, and green and yellow foliage, which, all mingled together, presented such a blaze of crimson and gold, spotted with jet, and dashed with green, that it dazzled the sight like looking upon a gorgeous bed of variegated flowers. Then there was the "kindling" of autumn! that firing up of the tree into all kinds of rich colours, as if torches of many-hued flames were applied to the foliage to make a blaze of all the green and faded garments of departed summer. She noticed the oak tinged with as many various hues, as if the decaying foliage of half a dozen different trees were massed together, so many are the tints it wears, beside browns of every shade. She saw the beech rising like a gigantic gorse-bush, covered every way with golden-coloured flowers, for so appears the burning orange of its myriads of changing leaves. She saw the ash throw off its leafy garment early, and knew that the seed bunches which remained would blacken and rattle in the winter winds, when nearly all the other trees were naked. She delighted to hear the rattle of the yellowish-green acorns above her head, and laughed merrily as they fell on her old battered bonnet, bringing down with them the carved cups which she had often set out on her tiny tea-table when a very little child, calling the larger ones saucers, and placing the smaller ones inside for tea-cups, while she played at a "make-believe" tea-party, and granny thanked her every time she handed to her the little acorn cup and saucer, and troubled her for a little more imagined sugar and fancy-made cream. Then as they sat together in the fading woods, her grandmother would moralize on the falling leaves, and tell her how

another summer would see others waving on the branches which those had left naked, crowding in and filling up the vacant spaces, the same as another race would succeed her and Alice when they were gone. And Alice would think it were better so than to leave the beautiful green curtains which summer had hung up every way, when they were tattered and worn, and discoloured and torn in every direction, and that autumn made room for spring to come with her pale green arras, and give a new beauty and a fresh pattern to the foliage. And so her thoughts turned naturally in her fresh young life to the budding beauties of spring, while the mind of her grandmother wandered beyond the decay of autumn to the darkness of winter, and looked not again for the spring that lay buried among the hidden flowers. Many a moral lesson did that good old woman read to her grandchild when they wandered together through those old woods.

It was very strange, but Farmer Fox never looked pretty Alice straight in the face, but loured at her from under the deep pent-house of his brows, or if she did happen to catch his eye, it was when he glanced at her sideways, and then he looked another way the very instant he saw her eyes fixed upon him. She was too young to notice this, and too innocent to entertain an evil thought against any one; but this strange habit did not escape the keen glance of old Peggy Dixon, and in her plain-spoken way she said, "If he isn't a rogue he looks like one, and that's almost as bad. I feel certain in my own mind that he has wronged dear Alice in some way or another, for which his guilty conscience is ever accusing him, and that's why he can never look the child straight in the face."

"It's a very bad thing, Peggy," the grandmother would reply, "to think ill of anybody, unless you have just cause, for I believe there are as many evil minds under handsome faces as there are under ugly ones. Nobody can help their looks; what a body's like doesn't matter a pin, so long as the heart's in the right place."

"Ah, well, we shall see some day or another, if we are only spared long enough," Peggy would answer; "but I never knew any one yet whose heart was in the right place that couldn't look you straight in the face, unless they happened to squint. Fox by name, and fox by nature I say he is; he gives everybody a roundabout answer, and there's nothing either plain or straightforward in anything he does or says, that I can see. I would make him show that lease, if I had anything to do with it, or I would know why."

Although Alice's grandmother tried to think well of everybody, and if she heard anything bad against a person, sat down and endeavoured to recollect all the good he or she had done, yet she could not call to remembrance any generous or noble action that she had ever heard of Farmer Fox doing, beyond allowing a few of the poor villagers to glean before the corn was led out of the field, at the intercession of Alice. Before that time she had often heard of his driving the whole of the gleaners out of his fields, but even then she tried to believe some of them had done something wrong. The remarks of Peggy Dixon at length began to leave their impression on her mind, and she looked back into the past, and tried to recall events that had happened before Alice's father died.

She remembered well the Reform riots, and how the

corn-stacks in the neighbourhood were burnt, and flamed reddening on the dark winter midnight; and how her son-in-law's house and stacks were reduced to ashes, and also how he had neglected to pay up his fire-insurance—all this she remembered well. Also, how at that time he was laying out a deal of money on his farm, in draining, trenching, and planting, having as many as forty or fifty men at work, and how he had mortgaged that portion of the estate he was at work upon to carry out those improvements, which practical farmers said “they had no doubt it would pay well in the long run, though it would be some years before he saw a shilling of his money back again.” Nor had she forgotten what trouble her daughter had after his death, and when the mortgage was paid, what a few pounds were left after that part of the freehold was sold. That he had received a sum of money of Mr. Fox, and had granted him a lease of the remainder of the freehold, leaving him only to pay a rental of ten pounds a year, in consideration of the sum advanced at the time the lease was granted, she knew, not only from her daughter, but also through having been present when Mr. Fox paid the rent to Alice's father, and that was all she knew.

Now it was a custom in this part of the country to grant at times what is called in law a lease parol—that is, by promise only, or word of mouth—on payment of a certain rent. As for a written lease, it was often nothing more than a piece of paper, drawn up and signed by two homely farmers, the lessor and the lessee, the first of which is the person granting the lease, and the second the party to whom the lease is granted; and this was done commonly, without ever thinking of employing a lawyer, or having even witnesses, unless the lease was

for a long term of years; for among honest homely men the signature of each was held to be sufficient, and they were in the habit of talking openly of what they had done, so that all the neighbours knew everything relating to one another's transactions. The case between Alice's father and Farmer Fox was an exception, because the latter was not a social man, was neither neighbourly nor friendly with anybody, nor ever entrusted a living soul with any of his important business or secret transactions. So he held the large farm, as he had done, for thirteen years, and paid his rental quarterly to Alice's grandmother, but very rarely without giving her battered sixpences and shillings, worn so thin and smooth that it was difficult to tell one side from the other. At times Farmer Ashcroft used to laugh at his strange ways, take up the battered money, and give the old woman his newest coin in exchange, then pay it back again to Farmer Fox when he settled his malt bill, for Mr. Fox was both farmer and maltster.

Curly-headed Bob—everybody called him Bob, and he had a dog which was also named Bob, and when people called out "Bob" he ran, and the dog ran as if they both wished to see which of the two was wanted—never went to school of a morning without first calling at grandmother's cottage to see if she wanted anything bringing from the little market-town. Nearly two miles there, and the same distance back, did curly Bob trudge night and morning, rain or fair, with his dog for a companion, and his books fastened together by a leathern strap; now whistling, now singing, then picking up a stone to throw at a bird, or running a race with his dog—one of the happiest, willingest, merriest, sharpest lads to be found in the whole village.

“Ay! he is his father’s own son,” old Peggy Dixon used to say; “for I remember Farmer Ashcroft, when he was just like his boy Bob, and had the very same ways; but I was a young woman then.”

Having thrust his happy face, which it was a pleasure to look at, through the open doorway, and asked the usual question, he would then add, “Can I do anything for you this morning, Alice, before I go to school? if I can, I’ve got half an hour to spare.”

And so in time Bob came to do many things without asking, before he went or after he returned from school, and seemed to take as much pleasure in helping Alice as the pretty maiden did in attending on her grandmother. And sometimes his heart so overbrimmed with pleasure, when she had found him any extra work to do, and detained him longer than usual, that he could not help saying, “Oh, Alice! I do like to help you better than anybody in the whole wide world.” Bob almost run as if he would break his neck with haste to do what a lazy, selfish boy would have gone crawling half a mile out of his way to have avoided. He drew water enough to last all day, for he said, “It is too hard work for Alice to turn the spindle, and haul up that great bucket full;” dug the garden, and helped her to weed it; brought all the corn from his father’s granary for her poultry—what a many times Alice had asked Farmer Ashcroft how much she owed him for corn, and got no other answer than, “We will have a settling some day, and Bob shall make out the bill, and send it you along with his valentine, or I may want a chicken or two; we’ll see some time or another.” But he continued to pay for all the poultry he had, and never would find time to make out her bill.

What happy mornings those were, when Bob called and found Alice ready to go to the market-town with him! when he could help to carry the eggs, chickens, basket of mushrooms, blackberries, sloes, and bullaces, or, perhaps, some of the fruit out of her grandmother's garden. It was pleasant to watch that boy and girl, as they went together along the old footpaths through the sweet green fields, to hear her say, "I'm sure you must be tired now, Bob; do let me carry my basket a little way to rest you."

"Tired! I'm no more tired than Bob," he would reply, "and could run about after him with this little weight on my arm the same as I do when I have only my books to carry. You don't know how strong I am, Alice; why, I helped to stack the corn the other day, and used the longest fork, and that you know reaches quite as high as the top of the waggon when it's piled with a heavy load. Father said I pitched the sheaves up almost as well and as quick as our head man John. I never feel tired when I'm with you; and look how hard you work to what I do."

Didn't Bob make excuses to get out of the school and have a run into the market-place, to see how Alice was getting on! for the little maiden paid a penny for her stool, or trestle, to rest her basket on, to the tollman, the same as the rest of the market-women, and took her stand amongst them, and showed herself quite a little business body towards her customers. Then as Bob always took his dinner with him to school, he brought it out and ate it in the market-place, making Alice have some, by either threatening to give it all to his dog, or not to taste a mite himself unless she had some too. And by some kind of conjuring on the part of Bob's

mother, there was always some dainty or another added to Bob's dinner when it was known that Alice was attending market ; such as a delicious fruit pie, cheese-cake, custard, and sometimes a pigeon pie, cold fowl and some ham, for Mr. Ashcroft was a wealthy farmer, and lived like a king.

“It's rare being you, my pretty lass,” Peggy Dixon would say, if she happened to have gone to market, and to have come up when Alice and Bob were having their dinners ; “I'm sure Mrs. Ashcroft is doing all she can to spoil you both, and I'll tell her so the next time I clap eyes on her. Well, if I must have a taste with you, why, I must, I suppose, though I didn't come for that. Why, Bob, your mother puts you up dinner enough to supply a family, I never saw such a mother in my life as she is, surely.”

Mr. Ashcroft never failed calling on her, if he could steal a few minutes from his business in the corn or cattle market ; and Alice liked him to come to her with his cheery voice, and long spurs and top boots ; and very often, if she had sold out early, Bob coaxed his father to go with him to the school, which was close by, to ask for a half holiday, so that he might go look about the market with Alice, and then go home with her.

One day the carrier brought two great butter maunds and a basket of cream cheese, and set his load down under the trestle on which Alice rested her little basket of eggs. “Whatever have you brought those to me for ?” said Alice to the carrier.

“To sell, my pretty lass,” was the answer. “Mrs. Ashcroft's head dairymaid was too ill to come with me as usual, so she said I was to leave the baskets with you, and you were to do the best you could for her.”

So Alice got him to lift one of the heavy maunds on her trestle, undid the clean white cloth, and displayed the pounds of butter made up in the shape of Bath buns, with beautiful scrolls of flowers, made by the butter print, running down the middle and along the sides of each pound, that were separated from one another by fresh-gathered vine leaves. She then spread out her cream cheese on a napkin, white as new-fallen snow, each cheese resting on a stand of fresh leaves, and all so fresh, and sweet, and beautiful that her little stall made the mouths of the lookers-on water again. Mrs. Ashcroft had also sent a small, silver-bladed knife, for the use of the customers who tasted the butter. There was one old woman who carried a pocketful of bread, and went round tasting all the butter in the market, which she spread on her bread first, and then never bought any. Alice had heard of her doings, and handed her a very small portion indeed on the point of her clean silver knife. "There's no telling what the taste is with such a mite as that," said the old woman, turning away in great wrath.

It was a custom for the mistresses of many of the wealthiest families in the old-fashioned town to go out, followed by a servant, who carried the purchases in baskets, and buy what the family required for the week on a market-day. All of them had noticed Alice, and been customers at one time or another; often ordering both garden and wild fruit of her, to preserve, especially in autumn, when the blackberries, sloes, and bullaces were ripe. Her sweet face, genteel figure, neat, clean, and homely dress attracted their attention, and they never passed her without exchanging a few kind words, even when she had nothing on her tiny stall that suited them. The rich look and neat way her butter was made



"ALICE HAD HEARD OF HER DOINGS, AND HANDED HER A VERY SMALL PORTION
INDEED ON THE POINT OF HER CLEAN SILVER KNIFE."



at once attracted their attention, and she soon disposed of it, to the great disappointment of one or two ladies who had long been in the habit of purchasing Mrs. Ashcroft's butter, and who came too late on that day. But Alice, with ready tact, promised to bring them what they wanted on the following morning, and when that wouldn't do, Bob volunteered to set off at once for it, for he knew mother had plenty more made up; so both old and new customers were satisfied; and in future Alice sold all Mrs. Ashcroft's butter, and had a penny allowed profit on every pound weight she disposed of. The carrier had soon to bring double the quantity the dairymaid used to sell, and many a cross old butter-wife was compelled to sell her stock to the shops wholesale, so many fresh customers did Alice and her sweet butter attract. But there were few such rich-growing pastures in the neighbourhood as Farmer Ashcroft's, and people believed that it was through the quantity of cowslips that grew in his fields, which caused his cows to yield such delicious milk and butter. The various articles sold on commission for Mrs. Ashcroft made a great addition to Alice's earnings, and enabled her to procure her grandmother many additional comforts.

One evening, rather late for him to visit, Bob came running in, his face red as fire, through speed, with an "Oh, Alice! oh, grandmother!"—he always called the old woman grandmother because Alice did—"I've been with our John this afternoon to look after two young heifers that had strayed, and we went as far as Ackford Wilding. I never saw such a place in my life. There are clouds of blackberries, nuts, and such big crab-trees, and hundreds of sloe and bullace bushes. I never saw such sights in my life. And mother says I may have a

holiday all day to-morrow, and go with you, and show you where it is, and help you to gather the blackberries, such big ones, and so ripe. John says there are miles and miles of bramble bushes in the Wilding. Will you go?"

"I'm afraid it's too far for me to go, Bob," replied the grandmother; "it's a matter of four or five miles or more; I've heard of the place, though I never was there; and they do say it was never cultivated since the world stood. But Alice may go, if she pleases—her legs are younger than mine."

"I may as well go there as to Maythorn Stumps, and better," said Alice, "if the blackberries are so fine; for Dr. Powell called on me last market-day, and said his good lady wanted two or three gallons to preserve, if I could get them very fine indeed; and his lady always pays me a shilling a gallon for them; and they do but run smallish at Maythorn Stumps this year. It's a long way for granny, but I'll go with you, Bob, and am thankful to you for telling me where I can find such fine ones for the doctor."

"I never saw such whackers in my life," said Bob; "they are big as mulberries."

Bob little dreamed that he had been to a place which bore the same name as it did in the time of the Saxons—Ackford, or the Ford of Oaks—and was famous for its crab-trees beside, at that early period, which they called Wildings, meaning wild apples. But the ford had now dwindled to a narrow stream, though there were still traces of the embankments between which the river had flowed in ancient times, and the gnarled bolls of a few aged oaks, which had ceased from growing long centuries ago, excepting sending out, now and then, a few twigs

from their hoary heads, while out of some grew a wild bush from their gray and weather-beaten summits, the seeds of which had, no doubt, been dropped by the birds.

Alice had got all her work done next morning before breakfast—had blacklead the grate, washed the hearth and doorsteps, dusted every article in the room; the floor was only washed once a week, for there was but little dirt about grandmother's cottage; she had also made a nice rice-pudding, ready to put in the oven for grandmother's dinner, with two of her own new-laid eggs in it, from the nest of her speckled hen, the finest "layer" she had got, and some cream out of a large jugful Mrs. Ashcroft had sent the day before. As for her own dinner, Bob had said she wasn't to put anything at all up to take with her, as his mother would fill a little basket, with plenty in it for them both.

Bob came before the breakfast things were cleared away, basket in hand, with his head thrust through the handle of another large basket, that sat on him like a wicker helmet—that was to put the blackberries in. His presence was announced, as usual, by the dog, which came running into the cottage, then reared himself up on his hind-legs, with his fore-feet resting on Alice, and wagging his tail all the while she patted him, for that was the way he always introduced himself; though in dirty weather she let him rest his fore-paws on her hands, as they were sooner washed than her dress. If his young master said, "Down, Bob, look how dirty your feet are," Alice would say, "Let him alone, Bob; look how glad he is to see me; he would say so if he could speak, and his feet are only on my dirty apron." Then she would stoop down, and kiss his rough, hairy, honest forehead, for Alice had a great love for all dumb animals.

Then Bob placed the basket on the table he had carried carefully in both hands, and which was covered with a snow-white cloth, and looking at grandmother, said, "Please, mother has sent you a giblet-pie, for we killed two of our geese yesterday; and as she knew Alice would not be here to get dinner ready, she thought it would save you the trouble of cooking anything. And mother said, if your oven happened to be hot, it would be all the nicer if you popped it in for about half an hour before you had your dinner. And I was to tell you to be sure and boil a mealy potato or two to eat with it, as the gravy's rather richish."

The grandmother poured forth her thanks, while Alice put on her tight-fitting old pelisse and bonnet, and in another minute they were on their way to the Wilding, with Bob barking and bounding before them.

It was a wild landscape—there are very few such primitive spots remaining in England in the present day. It neither resembled park nor forest, heath nor wood. Whole acres of brambles and gorse-bushes, with patches of heather, fern, and broom, and grassy spaces at times between, formed a kind of border-land, that went in and out in jutting and receding masses, the bosky background to the open waste over which they had already passed. Through these entangled and winding openings they threaded their way to the wilder and more silent solitudes beyond, where oaks, and crab-trees, and aged thorns, and huge bushes were scattered here and there, like landmarks above the rank growth of under-wood, which formed an impassable barrier around many of them, so tall had grown the prickly gorse, so closely matted together were the hooked brambles. Then there were clumps of sloe and bullace bushes growing a score

or two together, just as they had sown themselves or sent out fresh shoots year after year ; and many of these, like the twisted and barkless thorns, were very aged. They passed so many islands of blackberries—for such they might be called—rising above the level and grassy openings, that they were at a loss which to halt before, as the farther they penetrated into the heart of the savage scenery, the bigger they fancied appeared the bramble-berries. At length they came to a broad belt of trees, through which meandered a wild sort of path, overhung every here and there with branches ; and when they had threaded their way through the entangled maze, they came into another broad sunny opening, wilder than the one they had left behind. There was no resisting the blackberries that grew here ; they hung on the brambles in myriads, some so black and ripe that they fell off with the slightest touch, others of a hard red, some green, and here and there a few of the satin-like flowers were still in blossom, where they were screened from the sun and rain, and hung low among the grass and purple heath-bells. Then the fern, oh ! what a blaze of gorgeous colour it threw out !—orange and crimson, yellow and green, with great patches of brown, that seemed to burn again in the autumn sunshine, as it shot its golden light through and over the broad acres of fan-like leaves. And every here and there shot up above this sea of richly variegated foliage some gnarled and knotted tree, on whose twisted stem and branches hung long flakes of moss and lichen, silver gray, and green, and golden ; while below, in many places, grew large fungi, some of them as big as the crown of a hat, and coloured as richly as the variegated branches with which they were overhung. In other

places thick bushes and the spiked gorse, stunted thorns and interlacing brambles, seemed to have struggled against one another for years to obtain the mastery, until at last, as if weary of the contest, they had twined their hooked arms lovingly together, and formed a dense underwood that was impenetrable to all excepting the smallest animals.

Bob fancied that there were larger blackberries in those inaccessible thickets than in the open spaces, where there was no difficulty in gathering them, and made two or three attempts to obtain those beyond his reach, tearing his hands and clothes, and very rarely succeeding beyond a branch or two, which he dragged out with much labour. While Alice kept on quietly filling her basket, Bob kept running hither and thither calling to her to "Come on, as they were much finer where he was;" then, when she moved, helping her to get a handful or two, and away again with Bob at his heels, on some new discovery, nor letting her have any rest until she once more joined him.

They had penetrated above a mile into the very heart of this primeval solitude, for neither scythe nor sickle, pruning-hook nor axe, had ever mown down a blade of grass, cut an ear of corn, pruned a branch, nor felled a tree in that uncultivated waste within the period of any recorded time, to be found in charter or ancient book, which only told of it as having been a hunting ground in the days of the old Saxon kings. Above a mile had they wandered, and filled more than one large basket with blackberries, before they sat down to eat their dinner beside a wild water-course.

What a paperful of ham-rind there was for Bob, and how he wagged his tail while devouring it, then

ran to the brook and lapped as if he meant bursting himself. Alice and her companion had slices of savoury veal and ham, with such stuffing as only Mrs. Ashcroft knew how to make; then there was an apple tart and a bottle of beer for Bob, and one of rich new milk for Alice, to say nothing of a cheese-cake, black on the top with currants; beside which he had filled his pockets with ribston pippins, one of the finest-flavoured apples ever grown in our green Old England.

Dinner over, they went on still further into the Wilding, looked at the crabs which hung in thousands on the old trees, golden in colour through very ripeness, and crimson as peaches on the sides that caught the sun, but making the teeth ache with their indescribable sourness if tasted, although they looked so tempting. Had grandmother been with them she would have moralized on those false-looking crabs, so sweet to appearance outside and inwardly so sour—like handsome faces beneath which very bad tempers are sometimes concealed. There were not so many nuts, only a few in sunny open places where the ranker underwood had not closed up and destroyed the hazels. As for sloes and bullaces, Bob showed her where bushels might be gathered in the course of a day; but they wanted the frosty nights which come at the close of autumn to ripen them, when they would hang and purple the branches, with not a faded leaf beside them, as all would then have fallen. So they passed away the hours, having filled their baskets with blackberries, eaten all their provisions, and emptied the bottles; and now they noticed that the sun was fast sinking, and that there was a noise of rooks among the trees, a sure sign of the fast-coming autumn evening when they return to the woods. The baskets were very

heavy. Bob insisted on carrying the two large ones, giving Alice the little one which had contained their provisions, and which was also full; but they soon tired him, and he was glad to rest.

“Are you sure we are going right, Bob?” asked Alice, looking round somewhat alarmed as the shadows of the trees began to deepen; “I’m sure we didn’t come this way. We never passed any trees so tall and thick as those.”

“That must be the west,” answered Bob, pointing to the setting sun; “and as the sun was at our backs when we set out this morning, and is again behind us now, we must be right, though we may not come out of the waste exactly where we came in. Trust to me, Alice, we shall be all right, never fear.”

They went on, and on, and the baskets of blackberries became heavier and heavier to carry, while every clump of trees they came near grew darker and darker, and even the noise of the rooks became less audible—only the caw of one or two being heard, as if they were turning, half-asleep, to find a softer spot on the hard branches.

Bob at last, in spite of his brave heart, became alarmed; and no sooner did Alice see this sign of fear in his face than she burst out crying, and exclaimed—

“Oh, Bob, we are lost! whatever will dear grandmother do? She’ll be setting out to seek us, old as she is, and catching her death of cold; for she’ll never rest at home without me. And your mother—oh dear! oh dear! I wish we’d never come so far.”

“Don’t cry, dear Alice,” said Bob, rubbing his dirty knuckles in his eyes; “we shall soon be out into the open waste, and then I can find my way easy enough.

Give me the big basket again ; I can carry two better than one, as they balance more easily. Look how the moon's rising over yonder trees ; it will be a deal lighter than it is now when she is a little higher."

The dog had sat on his haunches, looking first at one then the other, sometimes with his head aside, as if considering attentively all they said ; and no sooner did they rise from their seats, and pursue the same direction they had hitherto followed, than he commenced barking furiously and running a contrary way. In vain did his young master call to him ; though he came back, reared up and licked his hand, he refused to follow, but stood barking louder than ever.

"I am sure the dog 'knows we are going wrong,'" said Alice ; "let us turn back and follow him. I have such faith in his sagacity, that I feel sure he will lead us safe out of this wild place into the open waste, if we do but let him have his own way and follow him."

"You are right, Alice," answered Bob, "though I didn't think of it before. He has often gone on in that way, when I have lost myself in the woods. Good dog ! good boy ! Home, Bob, home."

The dog set off at a gallop, was back again in a moment, running round then, and jumping up as if trying to lick the tears off Alice's soft cheeks, and seemed almost ready to jump out of his skin with delight when he found they were following him in the direction of home. It was a long weary walk before they arrived at the spot where they had eaten their dinner beside the brook, and the dog began lapping as if he would never leave off again, so hot and thirsty was he through running and barking. Both Alice and Bob also said they had never

drank such sweet water before in their lives, for they were both parched with thirst, having emptied their bottles hours before, and there was not a drop of water in the spots they had since wandered over.

"I feel quite strong again now," said Alice, "after that sweet water. I do think in another hour, Bob, I should have dropped down for want of a drink. The blackberries I kept putting in my mouth only seemed to make me thirstier."

"I kept champing a new leather boot-lace I had in my pocket," answered Bob; "I should have offered you a bit to keep your mouth moist, only I kept on hoping we should soon come to water, and I didn't like to tell you how 'dry' I was."

"Isn't he a dear good dog?" said Alice; "look how he keeps running backward and forward, as if to hurry us on, and tell us how late it's getting. When we've passed through that woody part, let us leave the blackberries under the great oak, where we first rested, then come for them to-morrow, or it will be ever so late before we get home with such a load."

They passed through the broad belt of trees above which the large full moon now shone, throwing a chequered light on the winding path, which Bob seemed to smell out for them, shortening his runs to and fro as if afraid they might again go wrong, and then they came into the open space, where there were patches of grass winding and opening between the clumps of trees and the wild underwood. The dog seemed to know that all danger was passed, and now ran in circles round them, leaping up, and ending with a long triumphant bark. Bob would not leave the heavy baskets of blackberries behind until they got clear out of Ackford Wild-

ing ; he then promised to put them in a shed of wattled gorse-bushes, which he had noticed at a turning of the road, when he came with John to look after the stray heifers. The shed was nearly a mile off, still Bob toiled on right manfully with his heavy load, though his feet ached and his hands were blistered through the chafing of the basket handles ; as for the inside of his arms, at the bend of the elbow, they were raw through the weight he had carried so far. It was no use Alice offering to help him now, the dear girl could hardly draw one foot before the other ; and though the tears kept trickling down her cheeks through pain, weariness, and hunger, yet she always replied to Bob in a cheerful tone of voice whenever he spoke to her, and the shadow of her bonnet prevented him from seeing her fast-falling tears.

At length they reached the outside of the Wilding, and came upon the road which divided it from the waste, and there they again sat down to rest. It was still four long miles from home, and along a road but rarely traversed, as there were only a few outlying farms near the waste.

“ Why, it will be nearly midnight before we get home,” said Alice ; “ and oh what a way they will all be in at our being so late.”

“ It will be rather latish,” replied Bob ; “ but remember the sun sets about six, and the moon hasn’t been up much above an hour, and I told mother as it was a long way we shouldn’t be home before dark. I know you are very tired, Alice, and I am so sorry we lost our way. But after two more rests we shall be at the gorse-shed I told you off, and there I’ll leave the baskets : then we shall get on well enough. Won’t the doctor’s lady be pleased to get such fine blackberries ?”

While he was speaking he noticed the dog prick up his ears, then saw him running a little way along the road behind them, when he stopped and began to bark. His sharp ears had detected the sound of a horse's hoofs long before the tramp, tramp of the measured trot came within their hearing. They soon saw the horseman coming up in the moonlight, he also saw where they were sitting, and drawing rein, came up at a walking pace.

"What are you young people doing here so late as this?" he asked, in anything but a pleasant tone of voice. "It's time you were at home, I'm sure; that is, if you have got any home to go to."

"Oh, it's Mr. Fox," said Alice. "I'm so glad it's you. We have been blackberrying, and lost our way in the Wilding, and have got such a quantity, and are so tired that we shan't be able to carry them home to-night."

"Why, who ever thought of meeting with you, Alice, so far from your grandmother, and so late as it's getting?" he said, in a pleasanter manner. "And Bob's tired too, I'll be bound. What a way you have come to gather a parcel of rubbish. I should have thought you might have found blackberries enough nearer home. My hedges are covered with them. Well, I can't leave you here; as to the blackberries——"

"I can leave them in the gorse-shed until morning," said Bob; "that's what I was going to do before you came up."

"They'll never be there in the morning, Bob," answered the farmer. "I saw some gipsies encamped a little way down the road, and they hunt out every hole and corner in the neighbourhood, where they think there's anything to be found. They are too lazy

to even gather the blackberries, unless it be a few to eat on the spot. Let's see what can be done. Come here, Alice, now give a spring. There, you are right enough."

As he spoke he stooped from his saddle, and placing one hand under the pit of Alice's arm, lifted her as easily into his saddle, and seated her before him, as if she had



been a two-years-old child. Farmer Fox was a man of great strength. Bob then handed up the two large baskets of blackberries, one of which Alice rested on her knee, and the other, of which he said he could carry on his own arm.

“Now, Bob, lay hold of my leg, and climb up behind me, then off we go ; mind the spur.”

Bob was up in a moment, seated behind the farmer, and Alice on the saddle pommel before him, and he managed to hold both her and the basket with one arm, while the horse set off again at his old familiar trot, as if perfectly unconscious of any addition to his load, Bob running and barking beside them in the dusty and moon-lighted road.

When they had ridden about two miles they met a light cart containing Farmer Ashcroft and two of his men, on their way to Ackford Wilding, to look for Alice and Bob, for as it grew darker the good farmer and his wife began to be alarmed for the safety of the children, and grandmother had already sent twice for Alice, and they had promised her she should come home soon, fearful to send word she had not yet returned.

Great was the delight of Farmer Ashcroft and his men to meet the children, for they had set out, fully expecting a long and weary search in the Wilding before they were found.

Farmer Fox made no reply to Mr. Ashcroft's profuse thanks, beyond saying, “You may bundle Bob and the baskets into the cart ; I shall keep Alice where she is. We shall be home before you, and I'll put her down at your door.” Saying which, he put his horse into a canter, and found Alice asleep when he pulled up at the great porch which made a shadow before Mr. Ashcroft's farm-house door. The gentle motion of the horse, and the soft resting-place she had found by leaning all her weight on the great broad manly chest of Farmer Fox, added to the fatigue she had undergone, sent her to sleep within a minute after they started, and

as Mr. Fox said, when Mrs. Ashcroft lifted her down and kissed her, "I do believe, if my old horse could have kept on cantering until day dawned, and she had never been wakened, she would have slept as soundly as if she had been in bed, she seemed to lay so easy, and she's as light as a feather."

At the pressing invitation of Mrs. Ashcroft, he drank a glass of her home-brewed ale without dismounting, and then rode up to the grandmother's, knocking with the heavy handle of his whip on the garden-gate, and saying when she came out, "Don't be alarmed about Alice, they're only keeping her to have a bit of supper. Mrs. Ashcroft said I was to tell you."

"I'm sure it's very kind of you to call, Mr. Fox, and I'm extremely obliged to you." Then entering her cottage, she said to herself, "If there wasn't a little of something good in that man, he wouldn't have ridden out of his way even to deliver a kind message from a neighbour. Well, the worst word I ever said against him was I never knew any harm of him, though he doesn't look you straight in the face, which I suppose is a way some people's got, and that they can no more help it than some can help stuttering."

Seldom were grandmother's lily-white window-blinds seen down so late as on the following morning; but the "early bird," as the good neighbours fondly called Alice, was more tired than usual, and remained longer in her warm little nest, and felt ashamed when she awoke to see the sunshine lying golden on the garden walk, instead of the gray light, which was hardly day, that she was accustomed to see on first rising in the mornings of autumn. As to Bob, he was so footsore, and his arms

so stiff and painful through carrying the heavy baskets of blackberries, that a note was sent by a neighbour who had business at the little market-town, to state that he wouldn't attend school again for a day or two. Even the dog didn't seem so eager to run out of doors as usual on the following morning, but curled himself up at his young master's feet, and had an extra nap while he sat reading.

When grandmother told Peggy Dixon all about Farmer Fox picking up the children by the roadside and mounting them on his horse, together with their load of blackberries, Peggy began to rub her hand to and fro across her sharp old projecting chin—a habit of hers when she was puzzled—and said, at last—

“Well, neighbour, I can only account for it in one way: he had had such a fright when he came up to the gipsy encampment—for he's been very hard on 'em, and they have threatened what they would do when they met him alone—that in return for such a narrow escape he felt bound to do some little good in some way or another. But I'll no more think him kind-hearted for that, than I'll believe old Scampton, the carpenter, will ever turn out a downright sober man, as he vows he will during his long fits of illness, brought on through drunkenness, when he breaks out again worse than ever, as soon as he's recovered. When he brings you his lease to look at, I may perhaps try to think a little better of him, but not before.”

“Well, I don't know what to say to it,” replied grandmother; “he has a many queer ways of his own, and so have other people, come to that. And I don't think Mr. Ashcroft would be so friendly with him as he is if he didn't find something good about him in some

way or another. I never heard that Mr. Fox wronged or injured anybody in his life; and one can't say that of every one we know, Peggy."

Events happened, as they do in everybody's life, important only to those who take a part in them, until Time—who rolls the Past down his misty steep into the Valley of Forgetfulness, where

"Memory, when she names that vale,
Speaketh quite low, and looketh pale;"—

brought round once more the eve of Alice's birthday, when she would have attained her fifteenth year. Ever since she was seven, her grandmother had made a little feast on Alice's birthday, when there was plenty of tea and plumcake, though the latter was often made from the corn they had picked up, ear by ear, in the brown and burning harvest-fields of Golden Autumn. Her juvenile guests came in their holiday attire, and there was as much rivalry among the little cottage maidens, in their glass-bead necklaces and bits of gaudy ribbon, as is displayed in the children of fashion at a Christmas party. This year all was altered; her birthday was to be kept in Mr. Ashcroft's large old-fashioned farmhouse, and Mrs. Ashcroft had set about making such preparation as only a wealthy farmer's wife can make, who has every luxury at her command, and has to purchase nothing beyond a few trifling articles at the grocer's.

The reason for this change was given in rather a mysterious manner by Mr. Ashcroft, who only said to grandmother—

"We shall have a visitor that you little expect meeting, and one I am sure both yourself and Alice will be glad to see. My wife has invited all the young people

in the village, and we are going to throw the house out of the windows, so that there may be plenty of room for them to have a dance. And she has sent this for Alice," and he laid down a parcel containing a beautiful new silk dress, also one of Alice's old ones which Mrs. Ashcroft had obtained by some excuse, to send to the dress-maker's so as to get a fit, unknown to Alice.

The tea prepared needs no description; there were cakes that melted in the mouth; as for the great hot supper, there was a smell of roast goose and sucking pig, fowls, a large ham, and you couldn't see what beside, for the steam that filled the parlour as soon as the covers were removed from the dishes. Peggy Dixon helped to wait at the table, and she said, "It was like one of the club-feast dinners given once a year at the "Ram Inn," where there was everything in season, and everything else beside, some with names she never heard in her life before."

The dancing had commenced, and Alice was sitting down resting herself beside her grandmother—having been led out by two or three partners—both of them looking anxiously every now and then towards the door, and wondering who the visitor could be Mr. and Mrs. Ashcroft had spoken of, when the honest farmer jumped up from his chair, exclaiming, "Here he is at last. I'm right glad to see you, Mr. Fox, take a glass of my missus's home-made wine," and as he spoke he shook Farmer Fox heartily by the hand, who preferred a glass of home-brewed ale as he said, "before all the wine in the world."

He then drew a chair between Alice and her grandmother—Mr. Ashcroft and his wife also joining them,—and wishing Alice "many happy returns of the day,

and plenty of them," he finished his glass of ale, and putting a paper in grandmother's hand, said, "You'll find Bank of England notes here, grandmother, which you'll take care of for pretty Alice, for four hundred and twenty pounds, beside five cent. interest for seven years, on the whole amount, which Mr. Ashcroft will show you is all right to the very shilling. I had a lease of Alice's father for seven years, for which I advanced him all the money excepting the ten pound a year I have since paid; it was also renewable for seven more years, if I liked, at seventy pounds a year, which I paid before I had any lease at all. That packet contains the last seven years' rent, for I have had the farm that time since the first lease expired. As Mr. Ashcroft was in some sort of way Alice's guardian, he knew all about it, and approved of what I have done; for he thought if Alice was brought up to know what it was to be poor, and had to work for her living, it would be better for her in the end than if she was trained up to idleness, and never taught to know the value of money through the want of it; I agreed with him. And now I shall be very glad to renew the lease at an advance of ten pounds a year, which will be eighty pounds, to be paid quarterly, or half yearly, just as you may agree amongst you. And now I wish you all a very good night."

And he arose from his chair, kissed Alice, and went out without uttering another word.

"Well, I shall never take anybody by their looks again," said Peggy Dixon, who had stood by all the time, and heard every word that was said. "But I must say it was very sly of you, Mr. Ashcroft, knowing all about it, to be laughing in your sleeve at me, when I was run-

ning him down because he wouldn't show his lease." And so Peggy managed to divide the blame.

Alice hangs on Bob's arm now when they go out for a walk or to church, and he wears his hat cocked on one side:

He has given her his dog, and on the collar there is engraved—"BOB TO ALICE."

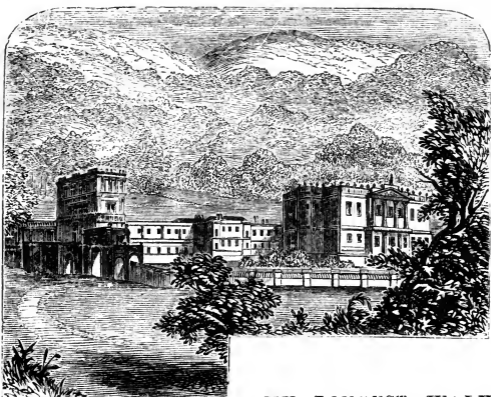
"It's the dog's name," said Bob, "and they may take it for somebody else's if they like."

It took Bob some time to make that puzzle as he called it.





CHESHIRE CHEESE MAKING.



MY LONGEST WALK.
AN OLD MAN'S STORY.
BY MRS. RUSSELL GRAY.

I ONCE spent a summer in Derbyshire; it was an arrangement made to fill up the interregnum between my leaving Eton and graduating at Oxford, and I have

always looked back to the time with pleasure. Two other lads, of about my own age, shared with me the instructions of the highly-talented and excellent tutor with whom we were placed. His abode stood in a retired village in one of the loveliest of valleys, through which the Wye wound its course, amid quickly-changing scenes of bold ruggedness and luxuriant woodlands.

We had many a pleasant day's fishing, many a delightful expedition to explore the numerous natural curiosities of the neighbourhood—the magnificent crags, the wondrous masses of rocks, the ranges of shadowy pointed eminences, the vast caves—the Peak Cavern in particular, the most remarkable of them all, with its mighty entrance arch of forty-two feet high and one hundred and twenty feet wide, designed by no human architect, but built by Nature's hand alone; the lead-mine, another attraction; while the greatest lion of all was the Blue John mine, whence the curiously beautiful spar called Blue John is obtained. We descended into it by a flight of uneven, winding steps, each carrying a piece of lighted candle, every now and then coming upon sharp turnings and jutting rocks covered with beautiful white stalactites, and looking down into black yawning chasms till we reached the bottom cave, an open, extensive space, the inside of which, lined with purple sparry incrustations, reflecting the lights of the candles, and the crimson and blue fires by which the cavern was illuminated by the guides, formed a most dazzling spectacle, conjuring up to the imagination quite a scene of underground fairyland.

Yes, I maintain that, with its fossils, spars, and caverns, its wooded vales and wild features of scenery, Derbyshire, on the whole, presents more variety and interest than any other English county, and would even rival Devon in beauty were it not for the azure sea that washes the roseate cliffs of the southern shore, and forms the principal charm of that fair region.

External circumstances certainly affect the inward feelings. The beautiful view appearing between the clumps of trees, beneath which, on bright balmy days, I

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used to lie full length, basking, with my books beside me, in the meadow in front of Ashfield Cottage, always seemed to give an impetus to my ideas, and zest to any particular study I was employed upon; whilst, with so many objects in view for walks, I was made to stretch my legs, to exert my physical powers more than I had ever done before, for I was naturally of a sedentary, or, to speak plainly, an indolent disposition—corporeally indolent. As to my mind, I was apt rather to overwork it. There was no merit in this, quite the contrary. It was no sacrifice to me to let the sunny hours go by, whilst I translated fine passages from Greek or Latin authors, or evening steal into night whilst I worked out a perplexing algebraical problem, for there was fascination to me in these pursuits. It often required much more resolution to throw aside my Homer or Euclid, and allow myself to be dragged forth by my more active-bodied, less erudite fellow-students to a game of fives, or to assist in preparing the tackle for the next fishing excursion.

Not that I despised active, manly sports; on the contrary, in my Eton days I felt greater admiration for the best cricketer than for the first classic scholar, proficiency in the one point appearing to me so far more unattainable than the other, and I would almost have relinquished the honours of *dux* to have been hailed Captain of the Eleven. No one now can be a greater advocate than myself for the athletic sports which have been introduced into many of our public schools; for, besides vigour of body naturally tending to strength and activity of mind, the self-control, perseverance, and endurance absolutely incumbent on those training for the contest of the course or leaping-bar, are most

effective and salutary counteractions to the system of self-indulgence, which is far too much the fashion of the present day.

But I was telling you that one of my faults was indolence; I must now plead guilty to a still more powerfully-prevailing weakness—shyness; and if any of you, my readers, are troubled with symptoms of this mental affliction, I entreat you to struggle bravely against them. Far be it from me to recommend boldness or presumption in young people, but, on the other hand, it is most important that the opposite extreme should be avoided, especially as in a measure it arises from too much thought of self, a species of pride and egotism which is condemnable, besides rendering its possessor very disagreeable to others, and most uncomfortable in himself. Nothing can be more discouraging than the manners of a very shy person. I verily believe that noisy, volatile, and foolish as they often were, Mr. Marshall found his other two pupils far more easy and agreeable to deal with than myself, who never gave him any trouble at studies; for whereas, open and free as day, they were continually consulting him, and confiding to him all their trifling wants and wishes—and confidence ever begets sympathy—my backwardness in speaking out, my constant shrinking as it were into myself, often conveyed the idea of ungraciousness or discontent little intended, but which annoyed my good tutor, and entailed vexation on myself. So it was, as you will hear, in the instance of my longest walk.

One morning the post brought Mr. Marshall a letter which caused him some perplexity. Urgent business required his presence in London for several days; but how could he leave his pupils or dispose of them in his

absence? West and Lacy, with their wonted readiness and self-possession, immediately took upon themselves to settle the matter as far as they were concerned. Their homes were near one another, only about twenty miles distant from Ashfield. Nothing could be easier or pleasanter than that the coach, which so conveniently passed Mr. Marshall's gates three days out of the week, should take them up there the following morning, and in due course of time drop them in their respective native villages. Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, all would be overjoyed to see them; and, in fact, Mr. Marshall knew this would be the best plan, and that he might venture to despatch the lads with merely a note of explanation, so it only remained to arrange for me.

Now, my home being in the far north county, and, moreover, my family being on a short foreign tour at the time, I could not be stowed away so conveniently; but anxious to relieve the worthy man from his dilemma, perhaps not with the promptness of the other boys, or in quite as clearly and courteously-worded sentences as might have been, I intimated to him that he need not trouble himself in the least about me, I could take very good care of myself, and should like nothing better than to left there *quite alone!*

Mr. Marshall, while unable to repress a smile at my bluntness, thanked me cordially for my proposal, took a little time to deliberate, then accepted my offer; and certainly it much gratified me to mark the confidence he placed in me, and to hear him say, when we happened to be left together, how impossible it would have been for him to have trusted either Lacy or West in the same way, but that he should feel perfectly comfortable about me; he only hoped I should not be dull.

Dull! what waste of sympathy! No fear on that score. I was already revelling in the anticipation of my solitude, and of accomplishing a scheme I had thirsted for, namely, of spending a long summer's day at Haddon Hall.

Mr. Marshall had often proposed an excursion to that famed place, but somehow I had disliked the idea of beholding it in company with West and Lacy, who had no more romance in their natures, or a greater taste for antiquities, than many of the hundreds of sightseers who now flock by holiday trains to picnic within the hallowed precincts of the old gray hall. Their ignorant, senseless remarks, their speedy weariness of what I knew would thrill my heart with rapture, I could not have stood with patience: but to explore the scene alone, to be able unmolested to trace out each spot of famed historic lore, to have time to muse on the celebrated personages of bygone days, who had trodden the same classic ground so long ago, there was ecstasy to me in the very idea.

And then the walk would be delightful, through cool hazel woods, with deep dells and bubbling streamlets, through little quaint gray stone villages, winding lanes, and verdant slopes and meadows. In fact, I considered this unexpected summons of Mr. Marshall's a perfect boon, and longed for the next day, when I should be left "monarch of all I surveyed."

I felt quite flattered by the thorough approval of this arrangement expressed by Mrs. Jellicoe, the house-keeper, a great authority in the establishment. I was an immense favourite with the old lady. Such a civil-spoken, quiet young gentleman had never before come into the house; indeed, barring that one fault of occa-

sionally letting my candles, in my deep absorption over a figure in algebra, gutter down with a sad waste into the brightly-polished candlesticks, she had not a word to say against me. So different from those harum-scarum lads, Masters West and Lacy, who made no end of work, scrambling head foremost up the staircase, leaving large clots of mud on each step, and filling their rooms with *reptiles*. (This was in reference to an unfortunate lob-worm, which, having wriggled itself out of Lacy's tin can, she once found curling itself into uncomfortable contortions on the floor of his dormitory.) And they had been the cause of the housemaid narrowly escaping a lock-jaw, a fly-hook having entered her knee while she was in the act of performing some scrubbing evolutions. Then, in the matter of clothes, after a gentle hint not to dot-down calculations in minute figures on my wristbands, almost invisible at the time, but which came forth plainly to view the following week in a cluster of little yellow iron-moulds, I was a perfect pattern, hardly ever requiring a stitch to be put in for me; whereas those *wild 'uns*—so she wrathfully designated my companions—let alone their crooked rents and tears, without scruple would wrench off button after button, and even sometimes cut slits in the button-holes, when they did not perform their office quickly enough to suit their impatient moods.

Her eyes beamed with animation, and a benign smile lit up her features, as, on being summoned into Mr. Marshall's presence, he informed her of the intended plans; and I believe the next moment her comprehensive, energetic mind was sketching the whole design, not only for turning Lacy and West's rooms completely inside out, but for lavishing every kind of

indulgence on me, quite rejoicing in this opportunity of testing her appreciation of my merits.

Alas! vain indeed is the purpose of mortals! Kind Mrs. Jellicoe's intentions and gratifying attentions were doomed to be frustrated, and though I did behold Haddon Hall the next day, it was not in the blessed solitude I had fondly dreamt of.

II.

MORNING came; Lacy and West at earliest daybreak commenced sundry fidgety, noisy preparations for their departure; and even when we imagined them fairly started, West re-appeared, crimson and breathless, to tear up-stairs to seize upon some pet fly he had forgotten. It was a relief to hear the coach whirl swiftly round the turning of the lane carrying them off at last. Mr. Marshall was to walk a mile to catch the London coach in a different direction, his portmanteau having already been sent on, and it only remained for him to give a few final directions, and he would depart also. In fact, he was on the point of bidding me adieu, when carriage-wheels were heard grinding over the gravel up to the front door; and as we were wondering who such early visitors could be, there were ushered into the dining-room, Mr. and Mrs. Harrowby, old friends of my family, but whom I had little expected to see in that part of the world.

They, however, explained that they were on a tour, that it was their intention to visit Chatsworth and Haddon Hall that day, sleep at Manchester, and proceed the following morning *en route* for the Cumberland

lakes. On Mr. Marshall's acquainting them with the state of affairs at the Cottage, Mr. Harrowby drew his wife aside, conferred with her in an under tone for a few moments, then came forward, and with the pleased air of one imagining he is about to bestow a great favour, invited me to join them on their expedition; and while I stood dumb with dismay at the bare idea of such a thing, he had arranged the whole affair with Mr. Marshall. In returning from the north they were to pay a visit which would cause them to diverge somewhat from the regular route; but that would only be the more convenient for me, since I could accompany them to E——, through which place the Chester coach passed, and from Chester I should be able to proceed direct back into Derbyshire.

Now, it might have been difficult, without appearing ungracious, to have immediately raised objections to this hearty and kindly-meant offer in Mr. Harrowby's presence; but why, when wishing not to delay Mr. Marshall's departure, he had gone with Mrs. Harrowby to explore the village and its environs, and I was left alone with my tutor, did I not confide in him, tell him how much I should prefer remaining, as had been first intended, at Ashfield? He could easily have made excuses for me; and when the good man casually remarked that I should have to return part of the way on my own responsibility, but that he supposed I had sufficient funds about me to meet the consequent expenses, why, oh! *why* was I silent, thereby allowing him to infer that the purse then resting in my fob was heavy and well lined, instead of containing merely a half-sovereign and eighteenpence?

I had no regular allowance; my father was liberal in

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the extreme, and placing perfect trust in my prudence and moderation, sanctioned my drawing upon Mr. Marshall for what sums I required. There were but few temptations or opportunities for spending money in that remote locality, and it was knowing this, coupled with the circumstance of my having obtained from him a remittance but a short time previously, which prompted Mr. Marshall's observation regarding the supposed favourable state of my finances. But besides having lately invested rather a large sum in a birthday present for one of my sisters, of Blue John spar ornaments, I had allowed Lacy and West to get into the habit of borrowing from me. They were restricted in their allowance, and possessed an amazing facility in getting rapidly rid of it; and when they used to come to me with the usual, "Do, Liddell, there's a good fellow, just lend me half-a-crown till Monday, for I am regularly done up," I used to think, what a very uncomfortable sensation it must be, that of finding oneself without money or the power of obtaining it, and I had not the heart to refuse them.

But when the next Monday came and went, ay, and many another Monday too, and these debts, instead of being discharged, were only added to, was I not highly blamable not to call them to account? I believe the lads to have been free from all dishonourable, dishonest intentions, but they presumed on my well-known indolence, on my carelessness in the matter, and on the conviction that I should rather lose the money than ask them point blank to return it. Often, when I think of the after life of one of these boys, the painful question *will* arise to my mind, whether the first seeds of his wild, reckless course of extravagance might not pos-

sibly have been sown at Ashfield Cottage, and through my instrumentality, my weakly shrinking from performing my bounden duty towards him? Ah! there is no self-reproach too great for one who has even unconsciously and indirectly caused a weaker brother to go out of the right way, for it is an offence which, however deeply deplored and repented of, can seldom if ever be repaired.

But I might have obtained a further supply of money, without in the least inculpating my friends, or saying a syllable about the heavy bill which, the evening before, to ease West's mind and send him home free from care, I had paid for him at the village shop; then what could have induced me to allow Mr. Marshall to depart, and leave me with only eleven and sixpence to carry me through all the chances and exigencies of the ensuing week? Nothing but my impenetrable reserve, my absurd sensitiveness regarding the bringing forward of any subject relating solely to myself, my individual feelings and wishes!

· To this day I remember the sickening feeling which came over me when, left alone, I thought of the conflict before me. Everything tended to make the idea of this expedition distasteful. Mr. Harrowby was what is called fond of drawing people out, of probing their thoughts and opinions by searching questions—rather a formidable character to a shy person; then his son was of the party, whom I recollected as a precocious, spoilt boy, with a peculiar knack of saying everything most *mal à propos*, and thereby making people feel uncomfortable; and then the climax of all—my pecuniary difficulties!

Mrs. Jellicoe, I think, remarked my discomfiture,

and she too looked a little vexed and disappointed, as she packed up for me a very limited supply of clothes in a small folding wallet, Mr. Harrowby having stipulated that I should add as little as possible to their luggage. Nothing could persuade her, however, to omit including an evening shirt, with a cambric front and plaited ruffles, an article of dress once in vogue, though quite out of fashion, I believe, now-a-days, but which she seemed to consider quite indispensable for the occasion.

Mr. Harrowby's carriage was a post-chariot, with a rumble behind. I at least hoped to share the outside place with the lady's-maid, where, out of sight of the occupants of the interior, I might have been exempt from conversing; but even this boon was denied me, Master Willie having appropriated that elevated position to himself; so I had to enact the part of "bodkin," to sit, or *pretend* to be sitting, between Mr. and Mrs. Harrowby, for the space afforded me was a mere mockery of a seat, and in reality I supported myself by resting my knees on a high, baize-covered desk at the bottom of the carriage, at the imminent risk of being pitched forward, with my face against the windows, at every jolt or swing of the vehicle; and I had to answer question after question, while my thoughts were constantly with the money, which was not merely burning in my pocket, but searing into my very heart, against which it rested. Under these circumstances it is not to be supposed that I was able to carry on a very animated conversation, and from some remarks Mr. Harrowby made, *sotto voce*, it was evident he considered that an over amount of study had depressed my spirits and dulled my intellect, and that it was high time I should have rest and relaxation.

It was a relief to leave my confined quarters to explore the magnificence of Chatsworth, to have my thoughts diverted for a time from its annoyances by the various attractions of that princely place—the sculpture gallery, fine paintings, the library with its choice collection of many generations, the gigantic conservatories, the arboretum, the fountains; but the grandeur of this celebrated modern residence, much as it astonished and pleased me, was almost forgotten on my beholding Haddon, that unique specimen of a noble country home of the olden times. With its Eagle Tower, which Willie and I ascended, its bridge, ancient gateway, and wide courtyard, its old chapel and hall, and the enchanting views from its lofty parapets, its garden, and yew-shaded terraces, it even exceeded in beauty and romantic charm all I had pictured it to my imagination. With what thrilling interest did I pace the long gallery ball-room, then pass through it into the ante-chamber, out of the doors of which, on the night of a grand ball, when the guests were dancing, sweet Dorothy Vernon, the heiress of Haddon, stole down the flight of now broken, moss-grown steps, and eloped with her true love, Sir John Manners, and thence became the ancestress of the illustrious house of Rutland. I should have liked to have explored every corner and crevice, to have lingered in the gallery looking down into the banqueting-hall, trying to imagine the scene it had once presented; but, besides our time being limited, Willie had been confided to my guardianship, and I had to keep a constant eye on him, lest he should get into mischief or danger. But I found him much more tractable and accommodating than I had expected; school had done wonders for him since we last had met, and he took to me so

warmly that, when we had to start again on our journey, he insisted on my making a third in the rumble, which, though still very close quarters, I infinitely preferred to the inside of the carriage.

I think I won his heart by explaining to him the different objects we saw ; by telling him stories of Haddon, of the knights and ladies who once dwelt there ; and as we stood together in the fine old kitchen, I had pointed out to him the old time-worn bench, still standing beside the huge fire-place, and had given him the account of the wonderful feat once performed by the running footman. Did you never hear it, Readers ?

It was the custom in former times for every family of consequence to keep youths, trained from their infancy to swift walking or running, to carry letters and messages to distant places, and it was astonishing how rapidly they sometimes accomplished their missions. One of these lads kept at Haddon Hall was one evening desired, by his master, to set off at daybreak to convey, with all possible speed, a letter to Bolsover Castle, in Nottinghamshire, and bring back the answer. The youth, having perfectly understood the order, his master was surprised and very angry when, the next morning, on descending into the kitchen, he found the messenger reclining on a wooden bench fast asleep. He began to beat the poor lad with a sharp riding-whip, with each lash showering abuse and reproaches on him ; and after all it turned out, that when he had received the letter the evening before, the youth had taken a few hours' repose, then set out about midnight, and returned some hours before noon, having performed the unprecedented feat, of walking not much less than a hundred miles in that short time.

Willie, who like most quick, forward children, had abundance of imagination and a strong love of the marvellous, was delighted with this anecdote; and as we drove along he continued to talk about it, and excited by the subject, to give sundry evidently highly embroidered accounts, of wonderful exploits he had himself achieved in the walking line, till we reached Manchester; and doubtless in consequence, all through that night I was myself personating the running footman, and performing prodigies of activity such as never before were equalled.

“It was a dream, and yet not all a dream.” “Coming events” were “casting their shadows before.”

III.

THE next evening we arrived in the Lake district, and the few succeeding days spent amidst its picturesque scenery—the delightful excursions by land and on water—the climbing of the majestic Skiddaw, distracted my thoughts from all disquietudes. Sir Bulwer Lytton, in one of his novels, describes very graphically the rapidity with which a sovereign melts away when once it is changed into silver, how quickly the five shilling pieces dwindle into half-crowns, the half-crowns into shillings, and so on; and if it be so with a whole, the case is of course doubly applicable with regard to a half-sovereign, and mine seemed peculiarly to possess the property of evanescence.

But the kindness and cordial manners of Mr. and Mrs. Harrowby had by degrees set me so much at my

ease, that I felt that it would not cost me a very great effort to confide in them, and borrow the sum requisite for my coach fare back to Ashford. But I put off doing so till the last moment, when at the small roadside posting-house of E——, where we had had an early dinner, and were about to part, I most unintentionally and unluckily overheard a conversation between the married pair.

Mrs. Harrowby was praising me, saying that I improved vastly on acquaintance, and had been the greatest acquisition to their party, especially to Willie, who did nothing but lament the coming separation; and then she consulted Mr. Harrowby as to whether they should offer to pay for my journey home.

“Not for the world!” was Mr. Harrowby’s decided reply. “If it were almost any other lad in the world of the same age, I should insist on doing so, but it would never answer in this instance. Neither he nor his father would like it—the Squire would, indeed, consider it an affront—one of those very proud old north-country families, you know! And depend upon it,” he added, as if to satisfy his wife’s mind, “*the lad’s purse is heavier than ours.*”

If these concluding words silenced Mrs. Harrowby, they completely tongue-tied me. The resolution I had formed, vanished away like morning dew, and it was in a kind of dizzy stupid bewilderment and with a languid smile I bade adieu to my friends, endeavouring to utter thanks and return Willie’s frantic signals of farewell from the rumble, then saw the carriage move off, leaving me standing on the door-step of the inn—left behind with literally only the paltry sum of two shillings to cover the expenses of a long coach journey.

I stood for some minutes gazing vacantly after the departing vehicle, only by degrees awakening to a sense of the necessity of rousing myself to action. Almost involuntarily I drew my purse from my pocket, opened it, and surveyed its contents. There was nothing new to be seen there, only the two little silver coins, which by no *hocus pocus* could I convert into golden pieces; and mathematically considered, to subtract therefrom would be easy enough, to add thereto—there was the rub! But I had brought myself into the scrape, and I determined to face the difficulty manfully.

The coach which was to have picked me up would soon be due at the inn, so to avoid humiliatingly encountering it under my abased circumstances, I strapped my light wallet across my shoulders, and told the landlord I would *walk on*. Yes, I thought, and so must I do even to the end. In these railway times, by a Government train, I might have managed the distance of sixteen miles to Chester, and still had a fourpenny piece remaining. Even that would not have helped me much; but as it was, my legs, I felt, must be my sole mode of conveyance from first to last, and my slender resources be kept to provide for the inner man, if I would not faint by the way.

It was certainly rather an uncomfortable predicament in which to find myself suddenly placed, and it was no consolation whatever to reflect that I had entirely brought myself into it. Indeed, when I thought of my folly, my weakness throughout, I could have gnashed my teeth with irritation against myself; and when, having plodded along the hard turnpike road for a mile or so, I heard the coach approaching, with the cheerful sound of the jingling harness, the reverberating tread

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of the four horses, fearing the coachman might stop to offer to take me up, I turned aside into a field, and concealed myself behind a hedge until it had passed, envying, as it flew by, its freight of happy-looking passengers.

But it was useless to waste time in fruitless regrets. The September afternoon was already somewhat advanced, and, unknowing and unknown, it was desirable to enter Chester by daylight. So I pressed steadily on, only pausing to read the directions on the finger-posts, and count the figures on the mile-stones.

I was within two miles of the town when I was overtaken by a light cart, whose driver, doubtless struck by my weary gait, stopped and offered me a lift, which I gladly accepted. From him I gained much useful information regarding my route for the next day. Evidently taking me for one of the numerous pedestrian travellers constantly met with in summer time returning from North Wales, he described to me the various cross roads and short cuts, by which certain distances might be lessened. He also dropped me at a small inn in the suburbs, where he said I might be accommodated for the night at a reasonable rate. But this did not prove a very satisfactory recommendation, for whatever might have been the merits of my landlady, assuredly the attribute of cleanliness could not be ranked amongst them, and I arose from the state bed in her best chamber rather the more exhausted than refreshed, in consequence of several fierce encounters with a herd of villainous lodgers which I found already in possession of the couch when I entered it. Then the bill, though no doubt a mere song compared with the charges at first-rate hotels, seemed to me considerable, taking into account all the attendant circumstances, and, to my

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consternation, exceeded the whole of my funds. I felt staggered for a moment, but there is no such sharpener of mother wit as necessity, and a bright idea struck me.



In some of the Arabian Nights' tales, of which I used to be so fond, I remembered having read of travellers (who, however magnificent they were always represented to be at home, appeared generally on the occasions

of journeys to be as deficient in hard cash as myself), in return for hospitality received from bounteous strangers, taking from their fingers or breast some sparkling gem of untold worth, and presenting it to their host. I had no trinkets about me—nothing of value, except my watch and chain, my father's gift some years before! I would have walked bare-footed from Chester to the Land's End rather than have parted with them. I have the watch now; its springs are worn out, its ticking has ceased, even as the pulses of the beloved donor have long since been motionless, but I keep it still, garnered up amongst my most cherished relics.

No! I could not offer "jewels rare" unto my "lady fair," but I rushed up-stairs, unclasped my wallet, took from it the shirt which Mrs. Jellicoe considered so valuable and so beautiful, carried it down to the parlour, and—bashfulness entirely giving way before the emergency of the case—gracefully proffered the garment in lieu of base coin.

My hostess demurred at first, seeming even somewhat offended at the proposition, and regarded me with looks of suspicious doubt and displeasure; but when, becoming impatient at her hesitation, I was about to withdraw my proposal and take it back, she clutched it with a tighter grasp, and said that though such a thing was *quite* out of her usual way of doing business, still she was willing to oblige, and so the affair was happily arranged. I parted with what I did not value, and she must have been well satisfied with her bargain, since she presented me on my departure, *gratis*, with what she called a "lunch," which though not choice in material or tempting in its arrangement, I deemed it would have been ungracious, if not unwise, to refuse.

I V.

NOTWITHSTANDING the exertion I was to undergo, I could not resist lingering to lionize the eccentric old city of Chester. The houses are so quaint and singular, with their white plaster walls, divided with cross-beams of painted black wood, some of them marked out in triangles and octagons, like Chinese puzzles; their high-pointed roofs and fantastically-shaped windows with small diamond panes, so very uncommon. Then, level with their second floors, high above the ground, are public footpaths along the principal streets, most of the shops being entered from these curious covered galleries, erected in olden times, when the town was invaded by an enemy, to enable the inhabitants to throw down stones and all kinds of missiles on the besiegers, whilst they themselves were safely defended from the weapons of their opponents. Chester, you know, was built by the Romans as their capital, and is fortified with a very strong stone wall, on the top of which is a walk leading all round the city; and though I knew the distance to be two miles, I could not resist undertaking it, that I might look down from that height, on the panoramic view of the houses, castle, cathedral, and the bridge with its grand wide arch, spanning the Dee, just in that part of the river, on which King Edgar is said to have arrived, in his barge rowed by seven kings. In fact, instead of getting as far on my way as I could in the coolest hours of the morning, the sun was almost in the meridian when I quitted the town, having improvidently wasted more strength and time than I could afford, in exploring it.

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My object was to reach a small market-town on the borders of Derbyshire, through which I had often passed in various journeys from the south, and from whence, being well known to the coachman there, I could get on to Ashfield without further trouble the next day, by the Buxton coach, which went through our village.

I scarcely knew how long a walk I had before me, but determined to follow as nearly as possible the directions of my guide of the previous day; and being endowed with the organ of locality, did not apprehend going much out of the proper course. I rejoiced at every opportunity of turning off the dusty road into pleasant shady lanes and fresh green meadows. I was travelling in the land of cheeses, and though I did not find it flowing with cream, like Baron Munchausen's cheese island, the richness of the pastures and herds of beautiful sleek cows feeding in them, frequently reminded me where I was.

For a few hours I trudged valiantly on, getting well over my ground, and rather enjoying the swiftly shifting scenes; but gradually my energy began to flag (you know I told you I was never considered a very good walker), each succeeding mile became more tedious and toilsome, till at length I was obliged to throw myself down on a bank to rest.

It was in a very quiet retired spot, beneath some spreading trees in a hedgerow, and as I lay there a feeling of loneliness and desertion stole over me. Solitude which I had once so desired had lost its charm. I was already longing for accustomed faces, familiar tones and voices. It seemed to me also a somewhat comical as well as an untoward fact, that I, the son of a man whose name and character were alone a passport in many places,

should be thus on the tramp, wandering about like a common vagrant. But who had I to blame for this but myself? I felt I had no right to complain, and once more determined to make the best of a bad matter.

Rousing myself with an effort, I sat up, and unbuckling my travelling-case, opened it, and brought forth the parting gift of my landlady; but the sight of the rancid cheese cut with a dirty knife, the scraps of fat meat hidden between bits of stale bread, and wrapped in a piece of well-thumbed newspaper, took from me all inclination to eat, though I had the prudence to return the distasteful-looking packet to my wallet, instead of chucking it over the hedge as I felt vastly inclined to do. However, nature must be supported, so, having roused myself to continue my route, at the next village I arrived at, I entered a small rural inn, and in its sanded bar-room obtained a rough but clean repast, which though I grudged even the small sum it cost me, renewed my strength for fresh exertions.

That afternoon! how often has it come back to me both in my dreams and waking hours; the scenes, the spots through which I threaded my way, the faces and figures I caught sight of but for a moment, then lost to view for ever; shaking old men and women, sunning themselves at their cottage-doors, whistling labourers trudging along, rosy noisy children, with begrimed faces and curly locks, playing merrily about; the curious kaleidoscope glimpses of fields, meadows, hills and streams, trees and people, that flitted before me as I tramped on, myself as transient an apparition, neither heeding nor speaking to any one. Yes, once I was overtaken by a man more tired and footsore than myself, a poor discharged soldier, walking from Plymouth to a

MY LONGEST WALK.

village beyond York, to rejoin his family, whom he had not beheld for twelve years. He was in bad health, and only the thoughts of this longed-for reunion could have enabled him to bear up against the fatigue he was undergoing. We went a mile or two on our way together, he beguiling the time by giving me accounts of the engagements he had been in, in the Peninsular War, under the great general—Lord Wellington. When we parted at a cross road, he willingly accepted the



packet of "lunch" from my wallet, and the few pence I had taken in exchange for the shilling I had put down at the village inn for my own refreshment. Gladly would I have given him more. Poor fellow, I have often wondered how he found his wife and children!

As I again went solitarily on, I frequently thought of the running footman of Haddon Hall, and while envying his amazing agility, it struck me that if I had accustomed myself more to active pursuits, been in

MY LONGEST WALK.

better training for walking, I might have got on far more comfortably. I was beginning to feel very weary and impatient when the shades of evening gathered round and found me still some miles from my appointed goal. Oh for the seven-leagued boots Hop-o'-my-Thumb abstracted from the Ogre's palace! I would even have accepted the spring leg of the flying German burgo-master, trusting to have been able to manage its mechanism more successfully than he did. Anything to have sent me skimming over the remaining intervening space.

I tried every style of walking—fast short steps, slow long steps, swinging my arms, balancing my body, once I even took off my shoes and stockings, Irish fashion; this last plan did not answer at all, and what relief indeed could be afforded to a tired-out frame but *rest*, which I could not then have? My spirits had been hitherto principally upheld by the bright cheery weather, and I had congratulated myself on the overcoat, which had defended me from many a sharp shower at the Lakes, having been accidentally carried off in Mr. Harrowby's carriage, thereby disembarassing me from its weight. But just after sunset the wind got up, lowering clouds floated across the sky, and when darkness was beginning to overspread the earth, there came a few preliminary drops pattering on my upraised face, followed by a hard pelting down-pour, which completely drenched me before I could reach any place of shelter.

I was then indeed in a miserable plight, wet to the skin, and my shoes filled with water. No wonder I felt no heart to proceed farther, but determined to seek a refuge for the night at the first decent cottage I should come to. There was apparently, however, no village near at hand, no human habitation of any kind, so on

and on I was forced to go, shivering and dripping, and was arriving at the comfortless conclusion that I must keep to my first intention of proceeding to D—— before I could hope for either rest or a dry skin, when suddenly a light glimmered on a height at some distance before me.

I welcomed the sight of the little pale twinkling flame, which seemed to have blazed forth on purpose to guide me on my desolate way, and which if it did not prove to be one of those castle palaces, in which benighted travellers, in fairy tales, were wont to be received and feasted in splendour, might at least bring me within cover of the storm and tempest. Therefore, following its tiny spark, I ascended the long hill on the top of which it gleamed, and at length found myself approaching close to it, and standing beside a white painted gate. I paused for a moment, then passing through it amidst the loud barking of dogs, proceeded about a hundred yards further, which brought me to a long low building with a projecting porch, on the door of which I knocked.

It was cautiously opened by some one, who, but imperfectly discerning me in the dim shadowy light, exclaimed in somewhat uncouth accents and true Cheshire dialect, "Is it a *he* or a *who*?" and on my attempting to state my circumstances, cut me short with, "Maybe I'll go call missus."

I was then standing within the porch, beyond which I could descry a stone passage, and facing where I stood a door, which the servant girl opened, displaying for a moment a room within. Presently she returned, carrying a candle and accompanied by her "missus," whose very appearance was sufficient to impart encouragement and comfort.

V.

SUCH a pleasant-looking face and comely deportment had Mrs. Plumbtree, the wife of the Cheshire farmer, to whose dwelling I had accidentally strayed, and to whom I attempted to offer explanations concerning my unlooked-for appearance.

My account must have been rather a halting one, for she scanned me very searchingly with her bright black eyes, and when I paused, said in a serious tone, "I hope it is the truth you are telling me, young man, but it seems a queer thing for a lad like you to be roving about the country so late instead of being safe *at woam*.* But," she continued, hospitality and kindness almost immediately overcoming her doubts and scruples, "no one in trouble has ever yet been turned from these doors; and you look terribly cold, and doubtless must be *wet chered*†; so come in, lad, come in," and she threw open again the door in the passage, admitting me into an atmosphere of light and warmth, and into a scene of cheerfulness and comfort such as I cannot do justice to by any description. It was a large farm-house kitchen, into which I found myself suddenly transported from the outer damp and darkness, but evidently never used for cooking purposes. The range of pewter utensils on the long oaken dresser shone like silver by the light of the logs of wood, blazing and crackling in the wide open fireplace. To the heavy oak beams traversing the ceiling, hung hams and bacon in sufficient quantity, one would have thought, to supply a whole generation; while in the centre of the room was a well-covered supper table

* At home

† Wet shod.

at which sat the portly farmer and a large party of young people, most of them the sons and daughters of the house, and as charming specimens of the rural class as could possibly be seen—the sons tall, strong, and broad set, the girls with their mother's sparkling dark eyes and glowing complexions, and all the very pictures of good humour. There were also some visitor cousins, but who did not take my fancy so much; two demure and somewhat affected damsels, and their brother, a very town-bred looking youth, who evidently did not think slightly of himself.

All glanced towards the door as Mrs. Plumbtree ushered in her dripping, half-drowned companion, and the farmer, I thought, did not look over-pleased at the intrusion; but his wife passed round to where he sat, and bending down, whispered a few words in his ear which seemed to satisfy him, for he nodded assentingly, and motioned to me to approach the fire.

But it was impossible to gain any warmth whilst remaining in such utterly soaked garments, and on Mrs. Plumbtree learning that my wallet contained under-clothing, she called a little chubby-faced boy out of the group, and bid him take me up-stairs, that I might make myself more comfortable.

It was indeed a relief to be disencumbered of the saturated cloth garments, to drag my feet out of shoes shrunken with moisture, to peel off the shirt that stuck to my body like a skin; and my little valet fetched me from down-stairs a beaker of hot water with which I performed most comfortable ablutions; so that when I returned to the kitchen, attired in an evening suit (the only other one I had with me), so great was the alteration in my appearance, that I heard smothered ex-

clamations of surprise, and felt convinced I was raised considerably in the estimation of the three cousins. Space was instantly made for me between the two young town damsels, but I preferred seating myself beside a little black-eyed maiden of about nine years old, the youngest and pet child of the family, who pressed my hand within her small plump sunburnt palm, and invited me to eat.

Most of the party had finished their repast by this time; the farmer was in a large arm-chair near the hearth, the girls were assisting the maid to clear away, whilst Mrs. Plumbtree was bustling about very actively. She, however, paused in her occupation to help me to the fare the table provided, saying, "You must indeed be *welly clemmed*,* so lose no time, for it is nigh bed-time."

The principal dish is still a favourite one in the north, I believe, and retains the name my hostess then gave it, "Beans and Chance." In poor and frugal houses it consists of a quantity of broad beans, the older and tougher the better it would almost seem, in which is smothered small lumps of bacon, the amount of beans preponderating so vastly, that it is a great "chance" when a bit of meat falls to the lot of the person served. But at such a liberal, well-ordered board as Mrs. Plumbtree's there was no "chance" in the matter, but the pleasant *certainty* of receiving with each portion of fresh tender vegetables a substantial slice of relishable broiled ham. Be assured I did ample justice to the repast. And then I found that during my absence up-stairs the perplexing subject as to how I was to be accommodated for the night, had been anxiously

* Half-starved.

discussed ; the only spare bed-room being occupied by the nieces, while the nephew shared the chamber of the two eldest sons. The farmer had suggested that I should repose by the fire in his capacious chair, in which he could take the snuggest naps after a long day's work ; but compassionate Mrs. Plumbtree had replied, that young people could not so easily sleep in a sedentary posture, they required to stretch their limbs full length in order to obtain refreshment from slumber, and she had hit upon another expedient. She had a clean little chaff bed which she could lay down on the floor of the cheese-room, on which she felt sure I could rest quite comfortably, with a good thick winter blanket to cover me. She was sorry she had nothing else to offer, but perhaps that would be better than turning out again that rainy night.

I gratefully accepted her proposal. All I wanted was some place to lie down in. I cared not where it was, and would infinitely prefer being alone ; and after supping, such an uncontrollable drowsiness stole over me, that I longed for the moment when I should be conducted to my novel bed-chamber.

One by one the young people dropped off, and at last Mrs. Plumbtree aroused her husband with a good shaking ; then approaching the clock, which in its solid oaken case stood in a corner of the kitchen, most deliberately advanced the minute hand. On observing me comparing my watch with its time, she said, " I always put on the clock half an hour when I want to be cheated into earlier rising than usual, and have never yet found the trick fail me. We must be all up by five o'clock, and ready to welcome the minister's daughters, who are coming to take a lesson in cheese-making."

I thought it strange that such a transparent act of self-deception should answer its purpose so well, but was too stupified by sleepiness, to be able to make any remark either about the clock or the expected visitors, and passively followed her from the room. We first ascended by a wide handsome staircase with polished carved oak balusters, till having arrived on the upper landing-place, Mrs. Plumbtree turned off into a narrow passage, and led the way up a steep spiral flight, immediately at the top of which was a door, which she threw open, introducing me into my dormitory—a long room in the roof, with low rafters, the floor of which, excepting just at one end, was covered with goodly samples of the chief productions of the country. At the other extremity was my “shake-down,” on which, after Mrs. Plumbtree’s departure, I immediately threw myself down, having merely removed my outer garments. The flickering flame of the bit of rushlight, by which my hostess had lighted me up-stairs, produced a curious effect glimmering feebly upon my quaint chamber and its contents; and falling asleep while endeavouring to count the rows of circling cheeses, and mentally bisecting them, no wonder that afterwards in my dreams, I was trying to perform a difficult calculation, I fancied to have found in Colenso, relative to the number of mites computed to be bred in a certain time, in so many Cheshire cheeses of various sizes and ages, or that when I suddenly started up, disturbed by the fizzing, spluttering noise of the expiring rushlight, and saw the full moon gleaming through a little hoop-hole of a window upon them, I exclaimed in the words of the poet, “Round as a Cheshire cheese!”

But excepting a slight smell of curds, I had nothing

to complain of in my quarters. My couch was easy, and the scrupulous cleanliness both of it and the boards on which it rested, was luxury to me after my lodging of the night before. After the rushlight went out, I must have slept long and soundly, for when next I awoke, sunbeams were peeping into the chamber, and various signs and sounds were telling that all nature was awake, again, and rejoicing in the brightness of the morning.

VI.

I HAD arisen, and was peering through the small diamond panes of the small window, when merry voices and ringing laughter greeted my ears, and presently I beheld approaching the house, two young ladies of about the same height, apparently thirteen or fourteen years old, very simply dressed, both alike, and with light hair, arranged in that prettiest of all fashions, not the wrinkly crinkly manes of the present day, but long glossy ringlets floating negligently over their necks and shoulders, beneath broad straw hats and blue ribbons. A staid middle-aged person accompanied them.

These, then, must be the visitors Mrs. Plumbtree had mentioned, and finding from my watch that it was just six, I knew that if the faithful clock had not at last played her false, my hostess and her family must already have been "a-gate"* a full hour and a half, and that I must make haste if I, too, wished to be initiated in the mysteries of cheese-making. Some one, probably my little valet, must have already been in my room, for the

* Busy at work.

clothes I had arrived in the day before, were lying on the foot of my bed, dried, and looking as well as could be expected after what they had undergone.

It is generally observed that there is an epoch in the life of almost every boy, when neatness and propriety of dress and person are but slightly regarded, when brushes and even soap are at a discount, and rough heads and dog-eared shirt collars are the order of the day; but, take comfort, ye parents and friends; in due season, as the grub changes into the butterfly, so the time comes, when—O mighty metamorphosis! the same boy takes such pride in his personal appearance, such an exquisite particularity comes over “the spirit of his dream,” that he devotes more time in one morning to his toilette, than he has formerly done to it in a whole week, comes down to breakfast redolent with scented soap and perfumed oils, and worries himself for the whole morning, if the set of his tie is wrong, or a lock of hair refuses to lie in proper form on his forehead. And this new phase continues, until tempered and modified by a further increase of sense and discretion.

I need not say that I was in the latter transition state, and you can therefore imagine my perplexity and vexation, when I discovered that my room contained no kind of furniture whatever, except the temporary bedding and the cheeses; not a chair, a looking-glass, or a washing-stand. It truly was the greatest punishment my folly had brought upon me, having to appear before those pretty little ladies as I was compelled to do; there was no help for it, and not liking to miss the cheese-making lesson, I at length descended the steep staircase which I found continued down to the bottom of the house, and at the base of which were the back premises,

in which I opportunely spied a convenient pump, at which I thoroughly washed my hands and face, to my great refreshment, but to the utter sacrifice of all the remaining starch in my shirt collar.

I found Mrs. Plumbtree, with her daughters and guests, assembled in a large back kitchen nearly surrounded by cheese presses made of huge blocks of stone. She was half jokingly scolding her visitors for being, what she called, so late in arriving.

“It does not so much matter now,” she argued; “but these hours would never do in May or June, when I have the milk of six-and-thirty cows standing waiting; as it is, there is no time to lose.”

Meanwhile, the young ladies having tucked up their sleeves to the elbows, were engaged in putting on wide, coarse checked aprons, belonging to the farmer's daughters, which, covering them from their chins to their feet, provoked the same merry laughter at each other's appearance which I had heard before, but which was instantly checked by their governess, who saw that Mrs. Plumbtree considered it no time for laughter, and was hastening to set every one to work, to cut up the curd, which stood ready in an enormous tub, the rennet or whey having been already added to it.

This was first done with a gigantic-looking knife, but presently Mrs. Plumbtree asked for the “dairy-maid,” when, instead of the servant girl appearing, as I had expected, an instrument bearing that name was handed to her, with which she broke the curd into smaller pieces, thereby dividing it from the whey, which last was ladled out of the tub with bowls. Next the curd was cut into the shape of bricks, taken out of the tub, and placed in a wooden trough; then the curd,

now separated from the whey, was still further broken, mixed with salt, and weights were placed on it; and having been once more broken and salted, and the colouring added, it was taken out of the trough, put in a cloth, then into a vat, and behold the grand work was accomplished—the Cheshire cheese was made.

Before placing it finally under a heavy press, one of the young visitors made an impression on its ductile surface with a penny, to distinguish it from all other cheeses, and obtained Mrs. Plumbtree's promise that when it was fit for eating, a good large slice from it should be sent to the Rectory. It was to remain under the press for four days, and then be carried up-stairs, and placed on the floor of the cheese-loft, with my companions of the night before; and every day either the farmer's wife or her daughters would have to ascend the spiral staircase to turn it over with the rest—no slight effort of strength, I can tell you.

I stood watching the process, thinking what a pleasant scene was afforded by the cheerful, pretty young dairymaids, so intent on their occupation, and by my hostess, who presided over them with the dignified authority of a queen bee directing her busy hive. Their labour over, a plate of brown bread and butter was handed round, and on the sisters remarking on the richness of the butter, Mrs. Plumbtree jocosely accused her eldest daughter of having slyly robbed the cheese-tub, their butter being usually intended to be made only of the whey, all the cream being reserved for cheese-making,

“But you must know,” she said, “that Dolly is going soon to be married, and she, as my head dairy-maid, gets half the butter-money of this season to buy

her fine wedding togery ; so, of course, the cunning wench manages to turn it out as good as it well can be."

Dolly took the impeachment in perfectly good part, smiling and blushing, and then explained to the guests that the copper at one end of the kitchen was the vessel in which the whey was boiled, and that when it was scalding hot, sour butter-milk was poured in upon it, which caused the "fleetings"—as she called the scum—to rise to the top; adding that the children and farm servants had it for their supper, and found it very good. She fetched some of it for the visitors to taste; but it was evident from their countenances, as they cautiously tried a small portion, that they found it far less palatable than Dolly's excellent butter.

The clergyman's daughters did not observe my presence till just when they were about to quit the kitchen; then seeing I was a stranger, one of them turned to Mrs. Plumbtree, and with apparent curiosity inquired, in low-toned accents, who I was. It pained me to perceive, by my hostess's grave shake of her head when she answered them, that, in spite of her hospitality and kindness, she still regarded me somewhat doubtingly. Nevertheless, whatever she may have said, when they passed by me the little girls honoured me with the same polite, modest curtesy they had accorded to her, which quite soothed my ruffled feelings; such a potent charm is there in civility, which truly, as the old adage says, "costs nothing, and buys everything."

How I wish that curtsies were not gone out of fashion, that that graceful compliment, which was once an universal custom, was not now reserved only for queens, princes, and princesses!

VII.

I WAS standing outside the porch on the grass plat, which, having been newly mowed, gave forth a pleasant fragrance, when I was summoned by little Maggie to breakfast, and went hand in hand with my small conductress into the front kitchen. My shy disposition was then rather severely tried, the large party gathered round the table, appearing far more formidable in broad daylight, than it had done by the subdued candlelight the evening before; and I could not help fancying all the time, that the eyes of the town cousins were fixed on my drooping cravat and altogether badly "got up" appearance. I was thankful to be at last released from this thralldom, and to accompany the little boy, who had offered to show me about the place before my departure.

Maggie also insisted on being of the party; and following my young guides, I soon entered upon the animated scene presented by the amply-filled farmyard. Such a chorus of noises greeted us—the cackling of geese, gobbling of turkeys, crowing of cocks, barking of dogs, lowing of cows, and grunting of pigs—such a crowd of feathered creatures rushed to meet and welcome us. Maggie was quite in her element then, with pride and delight showing off all the wonders of the place; and after stroking the broad-backed cows, launching a brood of yellow goslings on a little green pool, and squeezing herself into sundry inconceivably small holes and crannies in quest of eggs—all for my edification—she ended by climbing over a low wall, and returning with a squeaking sucking-pig in her arms,

much to her brother Jack's shame and displeasure, who remarked, "Maggie, you shall go home if you are so lungeous;"* but Maggie only pressed the struggling, kicking, scratching little animal more fondly to her bosom, exclaiming, "Whist ye, my beauty!"

I was next taken into the well-stocked kitchen garden, redolent of sweet marjoram and thyme, and from its centre turfed walk, bordered with beds of the gayest autumn flowers, hollyhocks, sunflowers, China-asters, and Michaelmas-daisies, I took a survey of the exterior of the farm-house. It was a long, rambling building, standing on the topmost ridge of a gradually-rising eminence, overlooking a rich valley, and commanding a lovely and extensive view, evidently an erection of ancient date; its irregular additions, its gable ends and substantial red-brick coping—in short, the whole style of the habitation, as well as the fine pollard oaks near it, and the plainly marked out bowling-green, used by Mrs. Plumbtree for a drying-ground, denoting that it had formerly been a mansion of importance; and, in fact, Jack told me it went by the name of the Legh Farm, and pointed out the crest of that old Cheshire family on the entrance porch, and the letter "L" above it, formed by a band of iron, inserted in the wall.

Jack next drew my attention to a little copse beyond the garden, giving me a lively account of the wonderfully successful "*brids'-nasing*"—by which term I discovered that he meant "*birds'-nesting*"—he had had there the last spring; and when I ventured an opinion as to that pursuit being rather a barbarous one, his eyes twinkled vengefully as he spoke of the havoc the

* Unruly.



LITTLE MAGGIE'S PET.



"*brids*" had made amongst his mother's favourite white-heart cherries the preceding summer, and expressed his thorough satisfaction at the idea of the thievish chaffinches and tomtits being pretty well "*toiped off*"* this year.

But time was speeding on, and, much as I should have liked it, I could not linger any longer with my newly-made friends, so I re-entered the house and ascended to my bed-chamber to fetch my wallet. It was with additional interest I then inspected the loft and its contents; bright sun rays were streaming into it, quite gilding some of the circumfering cheeses, and already giving them the rich mellow look they were expected to attain when they should arrive at due maturity.

When I went down-stairs to bid adieu to the family, the farmer and his elder sons had gone about their daily avocations, the daughters were engaged in various household employments, the cousins seated, with the luxurious ease and indulgence of visitors, at their tambour frames in the bow window of the parlour; but I found Mrs. Plumbtree in her clean, cool larder putting in paper some newly-cut ham sandwiches and a small home-made cake. She accompanied me into the porch, and as she took leave of me, presenting me with the packet—truly a contrast to my luncheon of the day before—she added a few words of earnest exhortation, that I would go straight back to my friends, and not vex them again by straying from home.

It quite grieved me to leave this kind-hearted woman with such an unfavourable impression of my proceedings, but how could I explain to her the really ridiculous cause of all my difficulties? I could only cordially thank

* Killed or dead.

her, promising to follow her advice; and accepting the offer of her little son to show me my way across the fields into the high road, I soon lost sight of that pleasant rural home, which has often come back to my remembrance with a refreshing influence, in very different scenes, far away from dear old England. I knew it would have been an insult, as well as a mere mockery, to have offered a paltry shilling by way of any remuneration for my so freely-given lodging; but my young companion mentioning, as we were passing through the fields, what a capital place it was on that high ground for kite flying, and that a new kite was just then the greatest object of his wishes, I placed my last remaining coin in his hand, and when I parted from him, his eyes were sparkling with delight, his face radiant with gratitude.

I reached D——, sought out the coachman I have before mentioned, who perfectly remembered me, said what excellent customers my family had been to him for many generations past, that he should feel proud to drive the present Squire Liddell's son, and accordingly at the appointed hour, I mounted the box-seat of the "High-flyer," and in due course of time was set down in the quiet shady lane beside the gate of Ashfield Cottage. On my telling my Jehu that I would meet him at that spot at the same hour on the next day but one, and pay him then, as he touched his hat in respectful acquiescence, I was again humbled by seeing him give a knowing wink at the guard, and hearing him mutter, "Hallo, Jem, I smells a rat there; the young gem'man has been out on a bit of a lark; but he may trust to me—I'll keep it all snug and tight, and be sure you does the same."

As I walked up the approach, all around the cottage

looked so exactly as it had done on the morning I had left it, that I could scarcely fancy I had been eight days absent from it, had beheld so many new scenes, and undergone so much in mind and body.

Mrs. Jellicoe met me at the door, informed me that Mr. Marshall, West, and Lacy, would not be at home till the morrow, remarked that I looked "wearièd," and discovering at a glance that my clothes had had a soaking, insisted that I must have caught cold; and after giving me a sumptuous repast, ordered me a warm bath before going to bed, which was by no means unacceptable; and if ever I was ready to extol the excellent appointments of my good tutor's house, it was when I found myself comfortably tucked in for the night in my snug little room.

Mr. Marshall and the boys returned the following afternoon; the day after, I drew upon my tutor for a remittance, and felt quite a tide of enthusiastic loyalty rush into my heart as I gazed at the short, round, profiled face of good King George, with his neatly-tied pigtail, depicted on the bright golden coins handed over to me. My coach fare was duly paid, with a liberal gratuity to both coachman and guard, and as I kept the particulars of "my longest walk" a close secret, there was nothing to remind me of it, but dear, tiresome Mrs. Jellicoe, who would on every opportunity call me to account for my missing "dress shirt," as she called it.

At first I allowed her to suppose that it had been carried away in company with my great-coat, in Mr. Harrowby's carriage; but when the coat was sent back without the garment of fine linen, she gave me no peace, till at length one day in desperation, I said very solemnly, "Mrs. Jellicoe, you must make up your mind never to

behold it again; you, and I, and that shirt have parted company for ever."

And then I ran away laughing, whilst she stood shaking her head reproachfully, uttering the usual burden of her complaint, "Such lovely cambric frilling! dearie me, to think of the new half-dozen being broken into already!" and this time she sighed and added to her lament—"After all, I fear you are no better than the rest of 'em."

VIII.

My college career, I may say, was a successful one, and at the Commemoration, held with more than ordinary splendour in the year eighteen hundred and —, the prize for the English poem was awarded to me. The Sheldonian theatre was crowded from top to bottom, the area or pit with the graduates, while on a stage in the middle of the building, were the Chancellor, the proctors, the noblemen, and the most distinguished visitors, all in their gorgeous full dresses of state. I had mounted the rostrum, and was only waiting for the noisy burst of applause with which I was greeted, to cease, to recite my verses, when I accidentally glanced at the ladies' gallery, filled to overflowing with gay dresses and bonnets, and from amidst the sea of faces, my eyes immediately singled out two very fair ones, those of some girls, evidently sisters, seated beside a clerical-looking gentleman, and who in spite of time and place, and the difference of attire, I at once recognized as the *ci-devant* little cheese-makers—Mrs. Plumbtree's visitors.

Yes! I knew them directly, but I am afraid they had not the slightest recollection of me—never for a moment

dreamt of the triumphant orator, the honoured hero of that hour, who stood before them so prominently in the beautiful Oxford theatre, being the same as the poor, depressed, shabby-looking lad, they had, in the benevolence of their hearts, so courteously noticed on leaving the kitchen of the Legh Farm-house. I saw them quit the gallery amidst the throng, then lost sight of them for aye! It was but one of those strange chance meetings which sometimes happen on this world's stage.

Many years have passed away since the occurrences I have related to you—years spent by me, for the most part, in sultry Eastern climes, in which a whiff from an English hay-field, or a sprig plucked from the village May hawthorn, would be deemed ten thousand times more precious, than every Asiatic spice, or the most splendid, stately tropical plant, and where that pleasant scene, a farm, with all its genuine British associations, must be numbered amongst lost enjoyments. My kind, hospitable Mrs. Plumbtree and her husband, must be resting beneath the sod in the little church-yard with the long grass, hard by their once busy home; their blooming daughters, if living, are now old women with wrinkled brows and faded faces; the bright jet eyes of Jack and Maggie must be dimmed by time—and care, which more or less comes to all; while the pretty young ladies from the Rectory are perhaps grandmothers, their beautiful shining hair as liberally streaked with grey as my own; still I have always retained a vivid recollection of my night in the cheese-room of the Legh Farm.

And it is only right that so it should be. Time flies!—*fugit irrevocabile tempus!* as I used to write it at Ashfield Cottage; but though time, and change of scene, and the force of circumstances, may obliterate many events, the

MY LONGEST WALK.

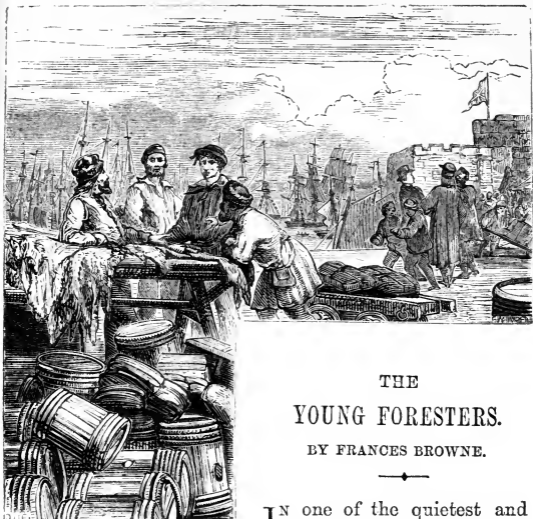
remembrance of kindnesses should live freshly in the heart for ever, and I have never forgotten the timely shelter given me in my need, on that rainy, far off, by-gone September evening.

And now, as every tale, however simple, should "point a moral," I hope, Readers, you may have gleaned from the story of "My Longest Walk" how much trouble and annoyance a person may bring upon himself, by not speaking out boldly and decidedly at the proper time, and in the proper place; and that resolution and moral courage are not alone to be reserved for great achievements and heroic deeds, but must be put into practice even in the minor transactions of every-day life.





THE WOLVES SURROUNDING THE HUT.



THE
YOUNG FORESTERS.

BY FRANCES BROWNE.

IN one of the quietest and most respectable outskirts of Hackney, where the ends of streets stretch out into the country, and one gets out of London noise and smoke, there stood in my youth a pretty cottage, with a small garden in front and a larger one in the rear, a grape-vine trained along its walls and almost up to its chimneys, a large sycamore tree sheltering it from the north-east winds, and green fields beyond its garden, from which it was called Meadow Cottage. The family who lived there were called the Foresters. There was a father, three boys, an honest, kindly old woman who did all the housekeeping, but no mother, for she had died four years before the time of my story, when her youngest boy was a baby. The Foresters were not rich,

but very comfortable. The father was manager in the warehouse of a wealthy firm of fur importers in the neighbourhood of the London Docks, and had a respectable income. His three boys, Joseph, Henry, and Herbert, were getting their education, the two eldest at Doctor Ashford's school, one of the best in the neighbourhood, and the youngest at Miss Green's seminary, for little girls and boys under seven. His housekeeper, commonly called Old Catherine, had come with him and his wife to Meadow Cottage, and continued in the service ever since. Nobody could exactly say how old she was; Catherine kept that a solemn secret, and was yet a stranger to all her neighbours. Her face, though brown and wrinkled, had a good-tempered, honest look; her tall figure, though stooping with years, was yet strong and active. The cloth cap trimmed with fur, and allowing no hair to be seen, and the numerous petticoats, all of bright colours, and one shorter than the other, which were her constant attire, made Catherine rather a curiosity to the people about. She had been born in Archangel, her father was an English sailor, her mother a Russian peasant, and Catherine had lived till middle age in her native northern town, being for many years a housekeeper in the English factory there, till she came over with one of its managers to hold the same office in his fur warehouse, which happened to be the very one where Mr. Forester was employed. Thus they got acquainted, and the old woman getting tired of keeping the great warehouse, which was left so lonely and locked up at night, took service with him when he got married, and continued to be his housekeeper when Mrs. Forester was gone. A faithful housekeeper Catherine was, and rather like a relative to the

family with whom she had lived so long. Sincerely attached to Mr. Forester, in whom she had found a kind and considerate master, and still more attached to his boys, who had grown up under her care, and seemed like her own children.

The young Foresters were good boys, though they had lost their mother so early. Their names were Joseph, Henry, and Herbert. There were four years between each of their ages, for two little sisters had gone to the churchyard before their mother; so Joseph was almost thirteen, Henry was almost nine, and Herbert—little Herby, as they called him—was almost five at the time of my story. They were all handsome, brown-haired boys, with fair open faces, strong frames, and active feet. It was their father's comfort that they would be able to take their own part in the world and willing to keep out of its evils. Of that he was sure, as regarded the three, but Joseph was his particular trust, being the steadiest and most sensible, as became an eldest brother; and Herbert and Henry trusted in him too, were guided by his advice, got out of scrapes by his wisdom, and comforted in all their troubles by his brotherly kindness.

Kind and loving were the motherless boys to one another, and happy was the little family as those that dwell together in unity. Every evening found them gathered in the cottage parlour, which Catherine kept so neat and comfortable. Mr. Forester came home from his warehouse, Joseph and Henry came home from Dr. Ashford's, stopping by the way to fetch little Herby home from Miss Green's. The father heard all his boys had to tell of news, adventures, or it might be troubles; gave them his advice or consolation, if that were needed; told them

THE YOUNG FORESTERS.

whatever he had seen or heard that might interest them; helped them with their lessons; played with them sometimes; heard them read by turns in some of his own books while he sat resting himself by the fire, and old Catherine worked at the other side and listened. She had never learned to read, yet Catherine spoke and understood English well, and having travelled so far, had a good deal of knowledge for her station. These were their winter ways, but in the fine evenings of spring and summer, they used to take hours of working in the garden, which their own hands kept the neatest and fullest of flowers in all the neighbourhood. When there was no garden work to do, they took long walks into the country, where Mr. Forester told them what he knew of the wild plants and flowers. Though a man of business, he studied many things besides, and had a particular fancy for botanizing; and in the long, warm twilights, they used to sit in the summer-house, have a deal of talk, and sometimes their supper there, and sing the Evening Hymn together before they went in to bed.

The Foresters had little company, because they did not feel the want of it. They had very few relations, and those they had were very distant, living in the North of England, and holding little correspondence with them. So their summers and winters passed, as I have said, till the time of my story, when as the spring was coming in and there was a deal to do in the garden, the boys could not help perceiving that, though Mr. Forester worked and talked with them as usual, there was some sad thought or trouble in his mind of which he did not care to speak.

Day after day it grew upon him; he took to looking sadly on them all, and asking them would they miss him

much if he went away. He said so one warm evening when they sat down in the summer-house for the first time in that year, and Joseph, after thinking a minute or two, said, "Father, dear, what makes you ask that? you know we would, and you know you are not going away."

"Indeed I am, my boy," said Mr. Forester, evidently taking courage to tell it. "I am going (and must go about Midsummer) far away to Archangel, to take charge of Mr. Benson's concerns in the English factory there. You see, Joseph," and he laid his hand on his thoughtful boy's shoulder, "Mr. Benson, in whose employment I have been these twenty years, is an old man now, too old to go abroad to such a climate, though he managed the firm's business in Archangel, I don't know how long, and brought Catherine with him to London, when he succeeded his uncle as chief of the house. The gentleman who was his agent in the factory, died about a month ago, and as soon as the intelligence reached him, Mr. Benson came to me, told me—it was very good of him—I was the only person he could think of trusting with such an important charge; he was pleased to say as a reward for my faithful services, because the agent has a right to trade in furs on his own account, and gets all the advantages of a partner in the firm. It would make me rich and able to provide well for my boys in some years, Joseph—that is a weighty consideration; besides, I cannot refuse Mr. Benson, as he knows of nobody else he would employ in my stead, so I must go, and send you all to a boarding-school, for it would not be safe to leave you here without me, and my relations in the north would not be fit guardians for you. I must send you to school, let the cottage, and find a place for Catherine."

“Father, dear, couldn’t you take us with you?” cried all the boys in a breath; the idea of parting from him and being sent to live among strangers was more than they could bear, and Herbert began to cry.

“My children, it is far away, and a terrible climate; the winters there are eight months in the year, no ships can come all that time over the frozen sea or up the frozen river.”

“But there are Englishmen there, and you are going,” interrupted Joseph.

“Yes, there are Englishmen everywhere,” said his father.

“And why should not English boys go? Henry and Herbert are not afraid of the cold.”

“No, that we are not,” cried the two.

“I would take care of them and help you; I am a great boy, nearly a man, now,” continued Joseph. “You won’t leave us behind, father, we couldn’t live without you. We’ll give you no trouble, we’ll learn just as well in Archangel; I’ll warrant there is some sort of a school there. Catherine says it is such a fine town, and we will see the world; you always said that made men of people. Oh, father, dear, let us go with you.” And Joseph clasped his hand, while the two younger boys clung about Mr. Forester, with the tears in Henry’s eyes, and little Herbert crying outright, as they all joined in the petition, “Father, dear, let us go with you.”

The father tried to reason them out of it, but he couldn’t manage that well, for his own mind was set against parting with his boys. He had lived so much with them, found such comfort in them, and had such a special trust in Joseph’s sense and courage, that when his eldest and much-valued son proved to him that

it was making milksops and girls of them not to take them to Archangel; that English boys ought to be able to face any climate, and get used to any strange ways; that they would, every one, learn his business and be great helps to him; that old Catherine would go with them and keep house for them in the factory, as she used to do in Mr. Benson's time; and that they would all be as well off as in Meadow Cottage, Mr. Forester gave his consent, after some hesitation about taking little Herbert, who could not, and would not, be left behind; and it was agreed that the whole family, Catherine included, should set out for Archangel, provided the old woman was ready to go. She came with the supper just as they had reached that conclusion, and Catherine's eyes positively sparkled under her furred cap, when the proposal was mentioned. She would go with all her heart, nothing would induce her to leave the master and the boys; and, as for going back to Archangel, hadn't she been born there? there was no place like it in the world. Many a time she had longed for the fine frost that made the ground so dry and the sky so clear—for the long winter nights and the long summer days; it was the only wish she had to see them once again, and be laid beside her mother in the burying ground of the monastery beside the forest, where they kept off the wolves with great fires in winter nights.

II.

THE WINTER LAND.

HAVING made up his mind, Mr. Forester lost no time in executing his plan. His employer, Mr. Benson, thought it a great venture to take his boys with him; but since their father was unwilling to leave them without a near relation in England, and they would go, he said it might be for the best. He would write to his people in the factory to pay the family every attention, and they should all have a passage out in the "Ice Queen," one of the Russian Company's ships, always freighted with his goods, and considered a safe and fast sailer.

Then there was a providing of warm clothes, socks, and flannels, enough to last them all their lives, the boys thought. But old Catherine could tell them how much of the kind they should want in Archangel, and Mr. Forester, though he had never been there himself, had so many acquaintances in the way of business—Russian merchants, and English agents who had resided in and knew all about the place—that he was not at a loss how to make his preparations.

They were all made at last. The warm clothes packed in great chests, with books, stationery, and all necessary things to be got cheap and easily in England, but scarcely to be had in Archangel at all. Then the cottage was given over to a house agent to be taken care of and let as well as he could, till Mr. Forester returned to his own country which would not be for many a year. Joseph and Henry took leave of Dr. Ashford and their schoolfellows, got some keepsakes and

all sorts of good wishes. Herbert bade farewell to Miss Green and the little girls with a considerable cry, and the present of a primer full of pictures. Old Catherine had nobody to take farewell of, but she put her cat in a basket, determined that it should go northward too. Every one cut a bunch of flowers from the little garden they were leaving in its summer bloom—their father told them none of all those flowers could grow where they were going—and early one morning in the beginning of July, the family that might well be called the exiles of commerce, drove down to the London Docks and got on board the “Ice Queen,” a large merchant ship fitted up for the northern trade, with all her cargo already stored away and just about to lift her anchor. Away the good ship steered down the Thames, and out at the Nore, far over the German Ocean day after day and night after night; holding due north past England, Scotland, and the Shetland Isles, past Norway, Iceland, and the Isles of Faroe, but keeping so far out to sea and out of sight of any of them, that scarcely a coast or headland was visible, till sailing past Lapland they saw the North Cape, a ridge of barren rock, running out into the Northern Ocean, and known to geographers as the uttermost point of Europe. When she had doubled that cape, as sailors say, otherwise, got fairly round it, the ship held on her course by the east coast of Lapland; for now she took an easterly as well a northerly direction, till she entered that gulf or inlet of the Northern Ocean which pierces deep into Russia, and is called the White Sea, from the ice with which it is often covered, and receives the great river Dwina, upon which, about thirty miles from its mouth, stands the town of Archangel. On that same track an English ship had steered

about the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's long reign, the first that ever reached the then desert shore, where nothing but a monastery belonging to the Greek church, dedicated, after its manner, to the archangel Michael, then stood; and the land had no inhabitants but the few solitary monks who lived there and the wild tribes of Samoiedes or Russian Lapps, who hunted the furry creatures with which its pine-forests and wintry wastes abounded, to live on their flesh and keep themselves warm with their skins. The ermine, the sable, the black and white fox—in short, all animals that yield the most valuable furs—were to be found there, and their skins could be bought from the wild hunters for glass beads, knives, and scissors. The English merchantman brought home such a cargo as made other ships venture on the same voyage. Their profits induced English merchants with their clerks and servants to go out and settle there for the purpose of buying up furs and sending them home to England; thus the English factory was founded, and the town of Archangel grew about it, taking its name from the old monastery, and gradually increasing by the influx of Russian traders and settlers till it became the first seaport of the Northern Empire, for till its foundation Russia had no trade by sea. What is called the Russian Company, that is to say, a number of English merchants engaged in the Russian trade, took its rise about the same time, and is now one of the richest companies in London. It still imports its furs from Archangel, keeps its factory and agents there for collecting them, and its ships go and come every summer, from July to September.

The Foresters' voyage was a prosperous one, they had fair winds and calm seas all the way, and it was

full of wonders for the boys. The wide waste of waters seen for the first time, and sailed over night and day, with the sun going down into their depths and the moon rising out of them; the flocks of northern sea-birds that passed over, with their strange cries and feathers; the shoals of great northern fishes that rose and showed themselves on the surface of the sea; the wild coast of Lapland made up of ridgy rocks and pine forests; the lonely North Cape, so often mentioned in their school geography; and, above all, the lengthening of the summer daylight as they sailed northward, was a new and marvellous sight for the young travellers. At length, they sailed up the White Sea and entered the Dwina, a mighty river, twice the breadth of the Thames at Gravesend, and cast anchor at Nowa, a Russian fortress built on an isle at its mouth, with a little town of merchants' storehouses built on its ramparts; for the river is so shallow, notwithstanding its mighty breadth, and so blocked up with sandbanks, that no large ship can come nearer to Archangel, which lies ten miles up. So all the heavily-laden merchantmen anchor there, and store up their goods till they are sold, and the officers of the Russian custom-house look sharply after their government dues. The anchor was cast, the gangway was lowered, the unloading began, and the Foresters stood in a safe corner of the deck; the elder boys holding little Herbert fast by the hands, while they all gazed on the strange scene around them, and their father stood hard by watching the unloading and answering their curious questions. As far as their eyes could reach up and down the river there was nothing but ships to be seen, some taking in, some getting out cargoes, with a Babel of all the tongues of the North,

and thousands of boats moving among them, of every size and shape, with men in all manner of strange dresses. Far off, on either side, lay the low flat lands, mostly rough pasture or wild moss, as their father told them, for no cornfields or orchards ripen there; the country lies too far north, and must get its bread from more southern quarters; but he pointed to a dim outline like a great shadow to the southward, and said it was the mighty forest of fir, larch, and pine, which covered most of the province, afforded timber for the ship and boat building, the chief manufacture in Archangel, and sent millions of deals to their own England.

While he was yet speaking one of the boats came close alongside the "Ice Queen," and out of it stepped first a tall man dressed in a long straight coat, or rather gown, of dark blue cloth ornamented with very large and bright brass buttons, fastened round his waist with a belt of polished black leather, from which a large pocket of the same material hung on either side, and there were no other garments to be seen, except a pair of rough boots and a cloth cap trimmed with fur, like old Catherine's. After him came another man still taller, but he had a more stooping gait, and his gown, though of the very same shape, was made of tanned sheepskin. Neither of them showed a morsel of linen, they had both bare necks, long, red hair, and longer beards of the same colour, covering the whole of their faces; yet the one reckoned himself of the merchant-class, for he had been clerk to Mr. Benson's agent who died at Archangel, would be clerk to Mr. Forester, and his name was Nicholas Grimzoff; while the other was Ivan Paulowitz, that is to say in English, John, the son of Paul, a serf or peasant in his employment, for doing

porter's work and the like, and also a nephew to old Catherine. Being so long in English service they could both speak the language, and made equally low bows to Mr. Forester, wishing him a very good day and thanking God for his safe arrival. Then the clerk entered into matters of business, while Ivan kissed his aunt, seemed right glad to see her, and fell to talk in Russiac, as the boys guessed about them. They had heard the language before from merchants and seamen who met their father in the streets of London, and Mr. Forester understood it well, as his business required. They also knew enough of Russian customs to perceive that the cloth gown denoted the man of trade and education, and the sheepskin coat the poor peasant, whom his lord sold with the estate and hired out as he thought proper or profitable. The red beard and the red hair, as well as that queer costume, made both men look very much the same; but Joseph thought, and Henry agreed with him, that Ivan had a remarkably stupid look, and Mr. Grimzoff uncommonly cunning eyes.

They all got into the boat with their household goods and chattels. Ivan and another sheepskin-clad man rowed them up through the forest of shipping to the town, and the boys saw that oldest port of the Russian empire, made up of narrow but straggling streets of wooden houses, painted all colours, but mostly red, blue, and yellow, with wooden churches equally painted, their spires topped with large copper balls, and their bells always ringing. They saw, too, the only stone building in the place, a sort of fortress with a deep ditch, and a wall surmounted by towers all round it, called in the Russian tongue, "The Court of Trading Strangers." The English factory was first built there

by early and adventurous merchants, and the principal firms of the Russian Company have still their warehouses and offices within the walls; but Germans and Dutch, Swedes and Danes, have built there also, and the court forms a little town of itself. Along the quays, covered with stalls of all northern merchandise, and crowded with people in all sorts of strange costumes, buying, selling, and making a tremendous noise, through the narrow streets and past the wooden churches, the Foresters went to their new home; followed by half a score of Russian porters, carrying their goods, and commanded by Grimzoff, they got over a kind of drawbridge thrown across the ditch, in at the principal gate, and found themselves in an open square, paved like the streets of the town with logs of wood, and surrounded by tall houses, solidly built, but rather dingy-looking, where the merchants kept their stores and offices, and the clerks and agents of the Russian Company lived. One of them belonged to Mr. Benson, a good but old-fashioned house of three stories; the lower one for his agent's residence, the two upper to serve as fur stores. It was comfortably furnished, partly in the English, partly in the Russian style. The boys were astonished at the great size of the stoves, which took up so much space in every room; but Mr. Forester told them they would find out their value before Christmas; and when they wondered at the small size of the windows, he said they would find out the reason of that about the same time. Old Catherine looked at the place as if she found herself at home again; the good woman had been in England nearly twenty years, but she remarked how badly the furniture had been polished since she left, that her grandmother's spinning-wheel, which she had stowed

away in the store-room, was rather dusty, and that there was a new cow in its appointed house, which opened conveniently from Catherine's kitchen. All the arrangements of that northern home were made for the long season of frost and snow, as little going out of doors as people could help; cellars, stores, outhouses, all opened from within, and were under the same roof. There was no yard, no garden; but the late agent had left a box of mould covered with glass, in which two or three dwarfed crocuses were blooming at a window which looked southward, and Ivan said, though he did not see the use of them, he had watered them as his English master used to do, just for his sake, because the agent had been kind to him.

It was a place built for the winter, and far unlike their Meadow Cottage; but the Foresters settled themselves there, unpacked their English necessaries, laid up their mighty stock of warm clothes against the cold that would come, and made themselves at home in the strange country. Mr. Forester had business to attend to, and his boys had wonders to see, for everything there was new, and every place full of busy life in the brief bright summer of the north. Traders from all the world's wildest corners were pouring into Archangel day and night, or rather the time which is night in England, for there is no such thing at that season on the shores of the White Sea. They saw the sun go round to the west, but instead of setting there he moved away lower and redder still to the extreme north, where they lost sight of him about eleven o'clock, when he seemed to sink into the frozen ocean. Those that happened to be awake saw him rise again out of the pine forest to the eastward a little after one, and the evening twilight

THE YOUNG FORESTERS.

never melted away from the sky, but brightened back into the dawn. Those long days brought ships from all quarters to the river, and traders from the most distant regions to the town. Caravans came from Siberia, with all manner of furs bought from the northern hunters, and Chinese goods purchased at the eastern fairs packed in rough heavy waggons, drawn by shaggy horses or wild-looking oxen, with Tartar drivers, in canvas coats and caps of lambskin. Corn-dealers came from the banks of the Wolga and the Don, who had traversed in their low flat-bottomed barges that long chain of canals, lakes, and rivers, which link the south of Russia to the north, a distance of more than a thousand miles. There were troops of tall fair Fins from the Swedish frontier, who brought their bundles of dried fish, bales of hides, and bags of salt, to sell on the crowded quays. There were seamen and merchants from all the ports of the Baltic, all the Dutch towns, and chiefly from England. There were multitudes of German traders and Polish Jews, who came overland from far-off cities with everything to sell, and it was said a good deal of cheating among them. But the strangest sight of all to the young Foresters, were those wild people whom the first English merchantman found hunting and fishing on that lonely shore, before a town was built or a ship cast anchor there. The dwarfish, swarthy, uncivilized Samoiedes, still clothed in the skins of wild animals, armed with the bow and quiver, living in tents of half-tanned leather, and owning no property but their herds of reindeer, and the furs they collect by hunting in the trackless wastes and forests which lie between Archangel and Siberia. With these spoils of the chase tied in bundles on their own backs, or packed in larger bales

on the reindeer, they came, men, women, and children, all dreadfully dirty, and with such flat faces, small eyes, and dark complexions, that one would scarcely think they belonged to the human family. They pitched their tents on a rising ground outside the town, for the Russians would not let them into it, set the reindeer to graze on the coarse mossy grass that grew there in summer-time, and made as stiff bargains as they could with the agents of the Russian Company; for wild and dirty as they were, the richest sable and the most beautiful ermine were to be had from the Samoiedes.

The Court of the Trading Strangers was as busy as the town. Mr. Forester and Grimzoff were overworked with inspecting furs which the traders brought, making English goods pass for money in buying them (the wild people had no use for gold or silver coin), and getting their purchases properly put away in the store. That was partly Ivan's work; he was a good honest fellow, as Catherine's nephew should have been; but Ivan had an unfortunate inclination, too common among Russian peasants—he was fond of corn brandy, the strong liquor of the north. His last coppic, a Russian coin something less than a halfpenny, went to procure it, and when Ivan had got sufficient of his favourite beverage he was fit for nothing but sleeping under the outside stair. Often had the unlucky man been admonished, often threatened with dismissal; but he was trusty, honest, and Catherine's nephew, always ready to promise reformation, and particularly grateful to Mr. Forester for saving him from Grimzoff's cane, a discipline to which Ivan had been pretty well accustomed before his coming, as everybody in Russia beats his inferior.

The boys helped to save him too. They and Ivan

grew great friends, they assisted him in putting away the furs after helping their father and the clerk to count and sort them. Every hand was wanted in that busy summer time, and it was their pride to show how useful they could be in the far north. When business permitted, they rambled about under Ivan's guidance through the strange and crowded town, saw all its wondrous sights of men and merchandise, picked up Russian and Tartar words, and looked particularly at the ships in the river that came from or sailed away to England. Sometimes they went far into the surrounding country, gathered juniper and cranberries in the wide rough pasture lands where the small black cows and hairy sheep of that northern land were grazing, and saw the peasant people with their ways of work and life; pitch-gatherers on the edge of the forest with their great fires to burn the fir trees, and pots to catch the pitch in; woodmen who lived and worked among the tall pines, cutting them down and hewing them into logs to warm the stoves in winter, or dragging them away to the saw mills, where they were sawn into deals which were shipped by thousands to England. It was a great temptation to go far into the forest in search of the bright coloured mushrooms and the Lapland rose abounding in the warm and sheltered hollows, not to speak of the wild birds with cries and plumage unknown to our English woods. But Ivan knew there were wolves and bears to be met with even in the long summer days, and Mr. Forester laid strict commands on them not to go out of sight and hearing of the woodmen. So the deep thickets and long mossy paths which stretched away through the pines and firs, had to be left unexplored. Ivan said there was no end to them.

The forest stretched all the way to Siberia, and their father promised that they should travel through part of it with him on a journey he intended taking to the town of Mezen early in the following year.

“We’ll see the forest, then,” Joseph would say when his brothers looked wistfully along the glades and dingles from which they had to turn back. “Papa says the way lies right through it, and no stopping place but the hunters’ house, where travellers never come. He will take us out of the way to see it because it is a curious place, and was built by a relative of Mr. Benson’s. We’ll see the forest, then,” and the boys would go home rejoicing over that expectation.

XXX.

THE WILD MERCHANT.

IN the meantime the busy summer was wearing away. Ships left the river, and did not come back again; the few that remained made great haste to get in their cargoes before the frost set in. The caravans, with the rough waggon and shaggy oxen, left the town on their way home to Siberia; the Tartar corn-dealers moved away up the river in their empty barges; the fur-traders became few, and business slackened in the Court. The days were shortening; they could see the sun setting in the west now. Cold winds began to blow from the north and east; floods of rain and sleet began to fall. The quays grew silent; in the houses and through all the streets where people had slept and traded in the

open air for the last three months, there were sounds of carpenters and hammers at work closing up crevices in the wooden roofs and walls, fitting the windows with double sashes, covering the doors with baize, and the floors with thick Dutch carpets.

The winter was coming ; half the merchants of the Court went home to their respective countries ; those that remained made preparations as actively as the townspeople. Mr. Forester was not behindhand ; he had been warned of the winters in Archangel ; his stoves, his double windows, and all the other requisites were got ready ; every chink in the house was closed ; a store of provender was laid in for the cow. Old Catherine got out her grandmother's spinning-wheel, prepared a stock of fine flax, and said she would now have a comfortable winter, like what she used to have in her young days with the old master.

About the middle of September there was not a ship in the river, scarcely a boat to be seen, and very few people in the streets ; the wind blew particularly cold one night about bed-time ; it rose to a storm before morning ; and when they looked out with the first daylight, which now came late and dim, all the town was white with snow. It continued falling the whole day, swept into high white drifts before the blasts till the streets were impassable, and nothing but the upper windows of many houses to be seen. The storm subsided ; they cleared the snow away from the roofs and windows, but it lay deep and solid in the open streets and over all the country round. Next night the frost set in ; the snow became firm and hard ; the river got a coat of ice which began upland, and gradually grew down to the sea, getting thicker and harder as the



(GRANDMOTHER'S SPINNING-WHEEL.



shortening days and lengthening nights went on, with long hours of heavy fogs and occasional snow-storms, the dreary beginning of the northern winter, which comes when the corn is yet in English fields, and the red apples on the boughs of English orchards. Mr. Forester and his boys, like all the Court and all the townspeople, were shut fast within doors, there was no going out in those thick fogs and fierce storms. There was no more business to be done, the fur stores were closed, the dealers and traders gone, and the few clerks and agents who remained in the place had nothing to do but amuse and keep themselves warm for eight or nine months at the least. That was the usual course of things, and the men of business had reason to be satisfied at the close of that summer, for a better market had not been known within the memory of man. The furs had been particularly cheap and abundant, and Mr. Forester, besides doing well for his employer, had made a profitable investment on his own account, which he hoped to ship for sale in England after his winter journey to Mezen, where he intended to make further purchases from the northern hunters, with whom the house had always been on such friendly terms, that they were in the habit of keeping the best of their furs for its agents.

Being kind and considerate to everybody, Mr. Forester had shown himself the same to their kindred tribe, the Samoiedes, with whom he had done a good deal of business, and concluded most of his bargains with additional presents of knives, scissors, and looking-glasses, greatly to the displeasure of Grimzoff, who warned him that there would be neither peace nor profit got out of those greedy heathens, if he did not give them less than they asked.

The small hardy people had not yet moved home ward; they were waiting till the frost made land and water hard enough for their laden sledges and reindeer. Their fires and tents could still be seen glimmering through the thick fogs and high snow-drifts. They strayed occasionally into the town to make their last purchases; but none of them had any more business in the Court, and the Foresters were rather astonished, as they sat at breakfast one morning, to hear something very like scolding below, and see old Catherine enter the room in a towering passion, with—

“For mercy’s sake, master, come down with your whip, and wallop this Samoiede from the door; he’ll break it in with his fist,” and her fears seemed confirmed by a continuous powerful knocking like muffled hammers at the outer door.

“No, no, Catherine,” said Mr. Forester, “nobody shall be walloped from my house. What does the Samoiede want?”

“He has broken the big looking-glass he got into the bargain for his marten-skins, and he is begging another one to take home to his mother-in-law that is to be. She is a great woman among them, it seems, and won’t let her daughter have him if she is not satisfied with the presents he brings back from Archangel. I told him you had not another glass in the house, but he won’t take ‘No’ for an answer. Do, master, let Grimzoff or Ivan wallop him away, since you won’t do it yourself.”

“They shall not do any such thing,” said Mr. Forester, getting up; “the man can speak Russiac, I suppose.”

“Oh, yes, and English too,” said Catherine. “He

is the man that made such a hard bargain about the marten-skins that day I was up in the store dusting out the chests. He calls himself the chief of the tribe; I don't know his heathenish name, but Master Joseph will remember him, I'll warrant, he had such a talk with him about bows and arrows."

"It is Sorinsk, father," said Joseph, recollecting the Samoiede chief, who had been in Mr. Forester's store at least twice a-week all the summer time. He was the man of business for his whole tribe, and spoke English tolerably well, having learned it in his frequent dealings with the agents of the Russian Company. He was also keener and more intelligent than the generality of Samoiedes, and though given to make hard bargains, and get the most he could, was known to be faithful to all his contracts, and honester than many a civilized trader.

"I will go down and speak to him," said Mr. Forester; and down he went, followed by all the boys, to get another look of their northern acquaintance, whose bow and arrows had special interest for them all. When the outer door was opened—for Catherine had talked and scolded from the window—the small, squat figure of the Samoiede chief looked very like a moving snow-ball; but snow was no trouble to Sorinsk, he dashed a peck of it off the front of his fur-cap with his hands, which never saw water except on like occasions, looked up with his small narrow eyes, and said in his best English, "My honourable master, and all my honourable young masters, how you do this very fine morning? Sorinsk has broken his glass, and will break his heart too, if he don't get one other all the same good, and big for Slamwa, hum wife's mother: she very proud, great chief's wife; proud and high as the Englishman's house," said Se-

rinsk, looking up at the fabric, which seemed so magnificent compared with his own leathern tent. Forthwith he entered on the woes which should come upon himself and his promised bride, who dwelt somewhere far north of Mezen, if her mother's goodwill were not secured by the presentation of a looking-glass good and big as the one he had broken. In vain Mr. Forester assured him he had no glass to give; there was no getting done with Soriusk and his tale. The Samoiede returned to it from every denial. Time was of no value with his people, and Catherine, Ivan, and Grimzoff, who had gathered to the spot, began to insist on walloping as the only means of getting rid of him, when Joseph recollected that there was a glass in his own and his brother's bedroom. "I am sure we could dress very well without it," he said; "and it is a pity of the chief. These wild people have their own ways and their own troubles; do let us give it to him."

"Well, if you can spare it," said Mr. Forester, "give it to him by all means."

"Oh, do, honourable master," cried Sorinsk, catching part of their whisper, "find me a glass, and Sorinsk will pay for it honourably in good skins when you come to Mezen; and if you don't come this winter, Sorinsk will drive to the hunter's house, and leave the skins safe and dry, and one fox-skin besides for the honourable young master—oh, do find me a glass;" and he began his tale of woe for the seventh time.

Joseph ran for the glass, to the utter disgust of Catherine, her nephew, and Grimzoff. The Samoiede received it, looked it all over, surveyed his own flat face in it, measured it with his dirty hand, said, "He is as good and big; I will bring the furs, honourable master;"

and without another acknowledgment, he thrust his prize under his arm, and ran away through the snow.

IV.

THE SEPARATION.

THE Foresters saw no more of Sorinsk or his tribe. The stormy weather continued for some weeks, shutting all civilized men within doors; but when the first heavy snow-fall of the northern winter was over, the wind fell to a dead calm; the hard stern frost set in, making the snowy ground like iron, and turning the rivers to stone. The sky was heavily laden with thick grey fogs all day, but they cleared away at nightfall, letting the bright moon and thousands of stars shine out on the white wintry landscape below. Then they saw the Samoiedes rise up one evening when the fogs were floating away, strike their tents, harness the reindeer to their sledges, pack in all their goods and purchases, and speed away over the frozen plain to their country in the north, a journey of fully seven hundred miles, which nobody would think of taking in that climate except in winter. Away they went, and all the town and all the country round came out too with sledges drawn by reindeer or hardy northern horses shod for ice travelling. Distant friends went to visit each other, men of business took journeys to remote towns, young men set out on hunting parties far into the forest, or down to the White Sea. It was curious to see the winter life of the town and country, everybody wrapped up, the rich in fine furs, the poor in warm sheep-skins, but all out in the broad moonlight,

or the short faint gleams of sunshine. Some in richly lined and decorated sledges, some in rough common ones, but all with jingling bells, merry talk and laughter; while thousands of young people, men and women, boys and girls, went skating along over street and river, as their business or pleasure took them. It was the lively, leisure, pleasant time of their northern year, making up to many for the hard work, the continued bustle, and overcrowding of summer. Mr. Forester and his boys enjoyed it as well as the rest; the warm clothes they had packed up in England under old Catherine's direction were of use to them now. The good woman gloried in the fact, "Didn't I tell you what Archangel was," she would say; "there is no winter in all Russia like ours. It is the healthiest climate on the face of the earth. I have heard that some learned men think the Garden of Eden was planted here." The short days and the long nights went quickly. December had come, and Mr. Forester was talking of keeping Christmas as they used to do in England, when all his plans were broken up by the arrival of a letter, which came up the Dwina by the Petersburg mail, a light sledge drawn by reindeer, and getting over four hundred miles, the distance between the two cities, in less than three days. The letter was from a partner of Mr. Benson's firm, which, being one of the oldest in the Russian Company, had a house in St. Petersburg too, ever since the great Czar Peter built his new capital on the banks of the Neva, and commanded all foreign merchants to set up factories there, on pain of being expelled from trade in his dominions. The house in Petersburg did the same sort of business as that at Archangel, but the agent there was not so high in the owner's confidence; he and his

clerk had got into a dispute with an officer of the Russian custom-house about some dues which they thought had been paid. As Mr. Forester was the nearest authority, they referred to him for advice, and he found the business of a kind which could be best settled in Petersburg. People thought nothing of travelling between it and Archangel, now that the winter had really set in and made all roads equally good for their warm and well-appointed sledges; merchants and men of business were going and coming every day, and experienced drivers were to be got at every post-house. "I would take you with me, boys," he said, "to let you see the city your geography speaks so much of, but I should not have time to let you see anything, because I want to come back and keep Christmas in our own house here, and I can't spare the expense till my next remittance comes from England. Besides, we are going to Mezen, you know, to meet your friend of the looking-glass, see the tribute paid, and buy up the last of my venture of furs. I hope it will pay me well, and help me to provide for my boys. Joseph, you'll take care of your brothers, especially little Herbert, for Henry can look after himself; and keep good friends with Catherine and Grimzoff. I can leave my goods and you to him safely, though he is a stranger."

So Mr. Forester thought, and so thought his boys. The clerk had always been very civil and accommodating to them; he had the best of characters from the former agent. Mr. Forester had kept none of his affairs from him; Grimzoff knew the amount of furs he had in store on his own account, knew what he had agreed to purchase from the northern tribes at Mezen, and if he happened to be detained in Petersburg beyond the appointed time,

the clerk was empowered to take his boys with him and make the purchase in his name.

Having settled that question, though determined to return in time to keep Christmas with his boys, if possible, Mr. Forester hired a warm travelling sledge, called a *katbitka*, in which one could sleep on the journey and carry one's provisions, for there are few inns in Russia; engaged a driver and post-boy experienced in travelling between Archangel and Petersburg; provided himself with a store of wrappers; advised everybody at home to behave well till he came back; and set forth one evening when the moon was rising and the fogs clearing away. Joseph, Henry, and little Herbert went with him as far as the outskirts of the town. It was the first time they had parted with papa for so long; they promised him not to run too many risks in learning to skate and sledge, not to venture into the woods without Ivan, and especially to be guided by Grimzoff, and do whatever the trusted clerk bade them till his return. So they parted in good spirits, the three stood watching the long, low, covered sledge, as it sped away over the icy plain, taking their father from them, and then walked back with a sad, lonely feeling at their hearts, to the Court of Trading Strangers.

The time passed more slowly and heavily in their father's absence; they missed him morning, noon, and night; but Grimzoff was kind to them, Ivan had nothing to do but help in their amusements, when the corn brandy was not too convenient, and the winter sights and doings of the town were as many and lively as ever. Mr. Forester's first letter told them of his safe arrival within three days, of his regret at not being

able to bring them with him, Petersburg looked so grand and gay in its winter dress, and his fear that the business on which he had gone would detain him longer than he expected. His next letter said the dispute with the custom-house officer had gone so far, and there were so many matters to settle, that he could not return before the middle of January, but they were to keep Christmas in the English fashion without him, invite all their young acquaintances in the Court, and drink his health in the elder wine they had brought from England. He also reminded them that they were to go to Mezen with Grimzoff, from whom he got the most satisfactory accounts of them and everything at home.

The boys followed their father's counsel; they kept Christmas without him and found it a dull one, the half-Russian boys of the Court did not understand the business at all, old Catherine had the rheumatism, and Ivan was fit for nothing but sleeping on the stove. Grimzoff helped the fun with all his power, but being a Russian too, he was not up to the thing, and just then making his preparations for the journey to Mezen, which seemed to occupy the clerk's mind uncommonly. Every mail brought him letters from Petersburg, and the boys thought from Mr. Forester. He got one about the beginning of the new year which seemed to have a wonderful effect upon him. Joseph saw him take it out of his pocket, read it over to himself, and look keenly at them when he thought nobody observed him. Once or twice the boy was on the point of asking if all were well with his father; but Grimzoff looked so cheerful, and made such lively preparations for his journey, enlarging on the furs he should buy and the wonders they should

see, that Joseph thought things must be right, and prepared for the journey too, with good will and great expectations.

V.

THE BOYS IN PERIL.

THE town of Mezen stands on a river of the same name, about twenty-eight miles from the Icy Ocean, and consists of nearly a hundred huts and houses, a church, a market-place, and a government store. It is reckoned the chief town and grand metropolis of the Samoiede country, but only Russians live there; the northern tribes think it too far south for them. Their chief men in trade travel, and by authority come to Mezen once a year in midwinter, with the tribute which those primitive and peaceable people have paid time immemorial to the Russian government for leave to live and hunt in the frozen wilderness, where nobody else could exist; namely, three fox-skins for every hunter who carries bow and quiver. They generally bring a good deal of furs besides, to sell to the many traders and merchants who repair to the little town from all parts of Russia, especially Archangel, which is considered near in those extensive regions, being only a hundred and forty miles south-west of Mezen.

“A nice little journey,” said Grimzoff. “You will travel with me in the light sledge, my young masters. Ivan shall take charge of the goods I have to pay the Samoiedes with in the heavy one. We shall sleep and drive by turns; the horses are easily managed in frost-

time. You can do it as well as myself, I know. We shall only stop to change at the post-house, and my friend Nicholas Kloskow will take us in, and make us comfortable at Mezen."

The boys got ready in high spirits on the day he had appointed to set out. It was a week or so earlier than the time their father had talked of; but Grimzoff knew all about the business, and doubtless had reasons for being in a hurry.

About two o'clock p.m. on the twelfth of January, when the frost was at its hardest and keenest, the long night had fallen, and the moon and stars were shining as bright as day, the large heavy sledge stored with goods to pay the Samoiedes and provisions for their journey under Ivan's charge, and the light covered one for the boys and the clerk, were at the door. They had got on all the wraps, every one covered to the nose, as people must be who travel in the north; and old Catherine came to the door to see them off."

"Good-bye, good-bye!" said all the boys, rushing out and scrambling in, for Grimzoff was there cracking his whip, and away they went.

It was a glorious night; all round them the solitary plains lay like one wide extended mirror, reflecting moon and stars, till they plunged into the great forest. There was no underwood amongst those mighty trees, great pines that rose high enough for the clouds to rest on them, now all crusted and gemmed with frost, long icicles hanging from every bough, and glistening like diamonds in the moonlight. Every weaker plant had shrunk into the earth, or died away before the fierce winter, and there was clear room for horse and sledge to pass between their great trunks in any direction.

Regular road there was none that the boys could see; every path on the frozen ground and between the great trees looked the same to them. But Grimzoff and Ivan knew the way to Mezen by landmarks which their eyes could not discover, for many a time had they travelled it in the same fashion. Besides, the clerk kept them so amused with his lively chat and tales of former journeys, and what they might expect to see, that Joseph forgot to call his attention to what struck him as a rather unsafe arrangement. There was a large wooden bottle under Ivan's seat in the sledge, to which the man in charge of the goods and provisions had such frequent recourse, that he wondered Grimzoff did not perceive it, and expect the consequences. The first of them was that just as the party emerged on a wide clearing made by woodmen or by nature, in the heart of the great forest whose dark outline could be seen bounding it on all sides, Ivan's head began to droop considerably, the whip fell from his hand, the reins followed it, and the horses met with some rough ground which made them swerve away from the track.

Grimzoff at once awoke to the state of the case, and exclaiming, "That rascal has got drunk; here, Master Joseph, take you my whip and reins, these horses will go as quiet as cats with you," he jumped out of the sledge, and took possession of Ivan's seat, tumbling him unceremoniously down among the bales and bundles at the bottom, till nothing but his red head could be seen, and nothing of Ivan heard but a long resounding snore. The boys could not help laughing; Grimzoff himself seemed in better humour than usual, for he only gave the prostrate serf a sly kick or two, and they drove merrily on till once more at the entrance of the forest.

There two great paths led through the mighty pines, the one bearing to the east, the other due north; and where they branched off stood one of those great rocks or boulder-stones scattered over all the countries of the north, and used as sign-posts, as this evidently was, for there were Russian characters rudely cut upon it, and a Greek cross pointing to the different roads.

"It's only telling you the way to Mezen," said Grimzoff in reply to their questions. "There it is," and he pointed to the track that led eastward. At the same time something seemed to go wrong with his horses; one of them stumbled and plunged backward, as if suddenly pulled up; and Grimzoff cried in great vexation, "Here is a fine business, his hind shoes are coming off; drive you on that way, Master Joseph, there is a blacksmith a mile or two from this who will fasten them on. It's out of my way to go to his forge, but I can't help it."

"Let us go with you," cried all the boys in a breath; "we never saw a Russian blacksmith at work, and we don't know the way when you leave us."

"No, I can't take you," cried Grimzoff, "the blacksmith is a cross man, and does not like the English; in fact, it would not be safe for you, and you can't miss the way. There, it lies straight before you"—he pointed to the eastward track—"drive on as fast as you like, Master Joseph, I'll be sure to overtake you—drive on, I say; are English boys afraid to be left by themselves?"

"We are not afraid!" cried the whole three, and little Herbert was the loudest, "but hadn't we better wait for you?"

"No, no, drive on if you are not afraid;" and giving

his foremost horse the whip, Grimzoff scoured away along the northward road, while Joseph, to prove his own and his brothers' courage, drove on as he had been directed. He did not like the clerk leaving them in the midst of the wide forest, and long, lonely night; but their father had told them to be guided by Grimzoff, and no doubt he would overtake them.

They drove on in that hope for some time, first at a rapid, and then at a slower pace, as the clerk did not make his appearance, and the path became narrower and more winding among the trees. Joseph slacked the reins and they all looked back, straining their eyes as far as they could see, and holding their breath to catch the distant sound of the sledge bell. But no sight, no sound of life seemed in all the forest, no sign of Grimzoff's coming, and they were alone in the frozen wilderness, not knowing what turn of the intricate way was the right one for Mezen.

"I am afraid to go on lest we miss our way," said Joseph, "I hope Grimzoff will soon come." That was to keep his brothers' spirits up, for the boy's heart sunk with a strange dread that they had missed their way already, and the clerk might not find them.

"Is that him coming?" said little Herbert, bending forward to listen. His two brothers did the same, and they could all three catch a sound far off and strange, like mingled cries of some kind which seemed coming nearer. In another minute it was like a pack of hounds in full chase—perhaps some northern hunters had roused a wild boar and were coming that way. The sounds came nearer still, the horses gave a terrified neigh and plunged through the pines. It was beyond Joseph's power to check them, and he did not try it, for a fearful

conviction flashed on his mind at the same instant; it was no northern hunt, no pack of hounds they heard, but the hungry wolves howling for prey, and now catching scent of them. They could see them by this time scouring through the wood, a gaunt grey countless troop, increasing every moment, till they seemed hundreds strong, and filling the silent night with a chorus of the most horrible howls. There was no safety but in flight, and on the horses flew, dashing the sledge against the trees, and plunging through every turn and opening. The poor animals knew their danger as well as the poor boys; they wanted neither whip nor rein, but scoured away neighing in mortal terror, while the wolves came on howling behind, and his two younger brothers clung to Joseph, crying out, "What shall we do, they will eat us?"

"Pray to God," said Joseph, "He alone can save us." The boy spoke with a gasp of fear, for he saw no possibility of escape, and a thousand chances against them; the sledge might be broken against the pines, or they might be thrown out, the horses might break the harness and leave them to their fate; at any rate he knew that the Russian wolves could tire out the strongest horses, and already they were gaining fast upon them.

"Save us, Lord, save us!" cried the three forsaken children in one wild prayer, and it seemed to be answered at the moment, for as the sledge turned sharply round, Joseph caught sight of an opening among the thickest of the pines and a log-house standing in it. If they could get refuge there they might yet be saved; they had got a slight start of the wolves, the pack had lost sight of them by the sudden turn, and

were expressing their disappointment by louder howls. Joseph strained with all his strength to turn the horses that way, but his utmost efforts were in vain against their headlong speed. Yet as the terrified creatures dashed by, the sledge was suddenly caught by the projecting roots of a huge pine, half overturned in some fierce northern storm. The traces were fortunately strong, and there the horses stood, plunging, struggling, and making the forest ring with their terrified neighs. The wolves, in the meantime, had recovered the scent and were coming on. It was hard to leave the poor horses to them, but Joseph saw there was no other chance for life.

"Follow me," he cried to Henry, clutching little Herbert fast with one hand, while with the other he grasped the overhanging pine roots, cleared the tossing sledge with one jump, followed by his brother, rushed to the door of the log-house, drove it open with one vigorous push, there was no time for knocking, slammed it behind him, and the three set their backs to it by way of bar. They were saved, but their hearts beat hard and loud, and their breath came short and quick as they heard the poor horses wrench away the sledge at last, and dash on through the forest pursued by the howling pack, and the howls rose louder in a few minutes mingled with what the boys knew to be the dying shrieks of their poor horses.

"They will come back to us when they have finished them," said Henry, with chattering teeth.

"They can't get at us through this strong door," said Joseph; "stand fast against it till I strike a light and see if there be either bolt or lock. What a good thing it was I put a box of matches in my pocket, and two of Catherine's pitched spills.

The light was struck, and then they saw that the house had strong walls made of pine logs. It contained but one room, with only one window, not glazed but protected by a stout shutter, and the single door against which they stood was some three inches thick of solid timber, and had equally strong bars above and below, which the boys lost no time in making fast, and Henry said they would keep out all the wolves in Russia. There was no furniture but one large stove, with some straw on the top of it as if for a bed, for that is the favourite sleeping-place of the Russian peasant, two long rough stools, a table of the same make, and a small heap of firewood in the corner. Nobody had been there for some time. There were very old ashes in the stove, some wild bird's feathers, and the tracks of wild animals on the floor as if they had come there in search of food and shelter, and had no face of man to fear. Before they had well made these discoveries, the wolves came howling round the house for the prey that had escaped them.

"Oh for our father's gun," said Henry, "to let fly at them from the window."

"I wish we had it," said Joseph; "but I'll just light this wood and throw a few firebrands out among them. Nothing frightens wolves like that."

The wood was lighted and the firebrands thrown out with great caution, not to set the pine walls on fire or open the shutter too wide, lest the enemy might leap in. The wolves fled as the blazing chips hissed and flared among them, but came back in a few minutes closer than ever, and with louder howls. The boys could see them tearing at the walls with their fore-feet, and trying to thrust their noses under the door, till heavy clouds

began to come over the moon, and they knew that the fog which came with the winter day, was settling down on the forest. Then the wolves drew off, pausing on their homeward march to utter long melancholy howls that made the wide woods ring, but at length these fearful cries died away in the distance. A grey glimmer of daylight began to appear in the east, and Joseph and Henry found little Herbert fast asleep between them, with his head leant against the door, and the tears of silent terror still undried on his young face.

VI.

THE RESCUE.

THEY lifted the child up, laid him on the straw at the top of the stove, and covered him with Joseph's great-coat. He was worn out, and so were his brothers, and when they had kindled a little fire of the wood left in the corner and crouched close to it—for that deserted house in the forest was deadly cold—poor Henry's heart, which had held out so gallantly against the terrors of the wolves, fairly gave way, and he began to cry and wring his hands.

“What shall we do, Joseph? What will become of us in this fearful frozen place? We have nothing to eat, it is all gone with Grimzoff, and he will never find us here. The wolves have chased us miles out of the way, and if they don't eat us at last we must be starved. Oh! Joseph, what shall we do?”

“Put our trust in God,” said Joseph.

THE YOUNG FORESTERS.

The boy spoke bravely, though every word his brother said had gone to poor Joseph's heart like a knife. It was only the echo of his own thoughts. He knew it all better than Henry did ; and, what was worse, Joseph had now a strong suspicion that the clerk never intended to find them, that he had allowed Ivan free recourse to the wooden bottle, made out that the horse wanted shoeing, and left them on the forest road for some end of his own. But like a true elder brother Joseph kept that fearful suspicion to himself, and tried to cheer up Henry with the only cheer he could offer, reminding him of all their father had told them, and of all they had read about the wonderful works of Providence, preserving people in the midst of danger, and bringing them safe out of the very jaws of death. " Daniel was worse off than we are when he was cast into the lions' den, and Moses when he was left in the ark of bulrushes on the river ; yet they were both preserved, and so may we. The same Eye that watched over us in our home in England, on the wide sea and in the strange city, sees us here in the midst of these frozen woods, and the same hand can send us help. If Grimzoff don't find us, some hunter or traveller may come this way. It's a frequented place, you see ; houses and stoves are not put up in the forest for no use. There may be a road leading to some town which we may find when the day gets clearer. Let us not lose heart, Henry, but pray to God. You know He is the hearer of prayer, and a present help in times of trouble, as the Psalm says."

So Joseph and his brother knelt down beside the half-heated stove, where wild forest birds had dropped their feathers in that forsaken house, and prayed earnestly,

as people in fear and danger are apt to do; there was nowhere else they could look for help but that best and highest quarter, and dreadfully as they were situated the poor boys rose up with something like hope in their hearts. Old Catherine had put a parcel of pepper cakes, favourite tit-bits over all the north, into Joseph's pocket; he recollected them now, gave two to Henry, ate one himself, kept the rest for a reserve, and persuaded his younger brother at last to lie down under his great-coat beside little Herbert, and take a sleep till the fog cleared away, and they could see their whereabouts more clearly. He laid down beside them himself, but Joseph could not sleep. The thoughts of their situation pressed on him, his father far off in Petersburg, perhaps never to see them more, never to find out what had become of them. His two younger brothers, must they perish with cold and hunger before his eyes, and he had been partly the cause of bringing them to that frozen country? It was through his persuasion that their father brought them with him from England, and were they to be starved or eaten by the wolves? Joseph got up quietly, so as not to wake his brothers, but determined to see the place, and what chance of escape there might be, for the red sun was now looking out through the thick curtain of fog that hung above the pines. He unbarred the door with as little noise as possible, closed it carefully behind him, and scrambled up the half fallen trunk of an old and branchless tree. From that elevation Joseph could see far and wide, but all round lay the same hard white wilderness, tall trees fringed with icicles, and frozen ground—everywhere the same, without beaten path or sign of life. There was no sound to be heard in all the woods, the beasts of

prey had retired to their dens, and the smaller creatures and wild birds had left the land at the approach of winter. Joseph came down from the tree, and moved about here and there among the pines, gathering dry sticks to help their fire, and looking out for some track that might lead to human habitations, till he heard the voices of his two brothers wildly crying, "Joseph, Joseph, where are you? have you gone away and left us?"

"No; here I am," said Joseph, running with his bundle of sticks up to them, where they stood hand in hand shivering in the doorway. "Don't be afraid at every trifle; don't cry, Herbert, here is a pepper cake for you. I have such a lot in my pocket, and I'll give you another, but we can't eat them all, you know, till Grimzoff or somebody comes to us. Come in, we'll make a rousing fire—there are sticks to be got anyway; then we'll go out altogether, gather as many as we can, and call with all our might; some one in the wood might hear us, or we might find a way to some inhabited place."

They made up their fire, wrapped themselves up as well as they could, and went out, cold and hungry, but in good heart. Joseph's cheerful words and looks kept them from giving way. It was hard for him to keep that face of cheer with so little cause for it, and harder still to keep the boys, especially little Herbert, from eating all the pepper cakes.

Out they went, keeping close together, and always in sight of the log house, for Joseph had a dread of losing their way back to it in the trackless forest. They gathered sticks, they shouted with all their power, they searched for paths, and often thought they had found

them ; but one led them to the root of a hollow tree, from which they got the glimpse of a bristly head and white gleaming tusks, signs that a wild boar had fixed his head quarters there ; and in another their shouts were answered by a long growl, which sounded like hollow thunder, and they knew it was a great brown bear, waking up in some cavern of the forest. Those sights and sounds made them fly back to the log house, and bar the door with all speed. Then the twilight of the short day began to fall, the long night came down, and they heard the howl of the wolves gathering once more in search of prey. They did not come about the house that night, but went by in howling packs ; all night long the boys could hear them in different directions, and if ever they looked into the clear cold moonlight there was some gaunt grey back crouching at the root of the nearest pine, as if on the watch for the door to be opened, or some of them to come out.

The night passed, and another day came like the one before it, only the cakes in Joseph's pocket grew fewer, and the sticks were harder to get. They made the same endeavours to be heard or to find a path, but with no better success, and were frightened back by the glare of fiery eyes, and the crash of withered boughs where the pines grew thickest. Another night, with hopeless prayers and hearts sinking in despair, with heavy sleep and terrible dreams, broken by the long howls of the wolves—they came about the house now, and pushed and scratched at the door. Another morning, but no going out to gather sticks and call for help. A terrible snow-storm, one of those which often come at mid-winter in the north, as if to renew the white coat of nature, had set in ; the sky was one mass of leaden

grey, the wind came in hollow moaning gusts, so strong that they made the old pines bow and groan, driving before them clouds of hardened snow, or rather hail, which rattled against the door and window like a torrent of swan shot. By degrees the wind ceased, and then came the regular snowfall, one continuous shower of large heavy flakes, which covered the ground in a few hours deep enough to drown people in the hollow places, half darkened the window, and raised a high barrier at the door. Before night came their sticks were all burned, and their fire went out; they had eaten the last of the pepper cakes, they had exhausted every hope and every source of comfort. Poor little Herbert cried himself to sleep, and Joseph and Henry having once more said their prayers, and feeling fairly worn out, crept up on the straw, laid the child between them, covered themselves and him with all the clothes they had, stretched their arms over each other—their brotherly love helped to keep them warm to the last—and fell into half sleep, half stupor.

Joseph himself had lain down in despair that night, there seemed no chance of escape or relief. He had been sleeping and dreaming of the Meadow Cottage, and old happy days far away in England, when a scratching delving sound at the door made him start up and listen. Were the wolves actually getting in? Joseph scrambled down from the stove, the place was pitch dark, for the fierce cold made them glad to keep the window shut. But he could hear the sounds going on outside, there was something clearing and scraping its way through the snow. Joseph had heard of bears doing the like, and crept to the door to make sure that its bars were safe; but as he stretched to feel the upper one, his ear

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caught a sound that no bear could make; it was "humph" uttered by human organs. Joseph's heart bounded as if to a bugle blast. It bounded still higher when a low continuous knocking began outside; the bolts were withdrawn in an instant, and there, all one mass of snow, with a horn lantern suspended from his



THE SAMOIEDE DISCOVERS THE BOYS IN THE HUT.

neck, and shining like a star, but looking as undisturbed, and knocking away with his fist as hotly as he had done at Mr. Forester's door, stood Sorinsk, the Samoiede chief.

"Are you here, my young master?" said he, stepping calmly in, and shaking off the snow.

“Henry, Herbert, we are saved,” cried Joseph, running to his brothers and shaking them up.

“Sorinsk,” cried both boys, darting down from the store as if new life had got into their hearts.

“Yes, my young masters, it’s Sorinsk, come to leave the furs he promised to your honourable father for the looking-glass ; it was very good and big : Slamwa was satisfied, and Sorinsk got his wife. You’ll take the furs to your honourable father ;” and out of the capacious wallet which hung at his back, the Samoiede produced two marten, two ermine, and two sable skins, with the air of a man redeeming his pledged honour. “Here, my young master,” he said, presenting them to Joseph with the addition of a very handsome white fox-skin, “you will take them safe to him, and keep this, Sorinsk promised it yourself for finding the glass.”

“Is this the hunter’s house then ?” said all the boys in a breath, recollecting how much they had heard of the place as having been built years before by one of Mr. Benson’s relations, a young man who, as people say, would do no good in the business he was brought up to, and when his friends had settled him at Archangel as a clerk, got acquainted with northern hunters, took to their way of life, became a notable hunter himself, and chose to build his house in that desolate region. The man had been long ago lost in a snow-storm, which came upon him while tracking a bear in the forest, but his house remained in that solitary spot, some way off the great road to Mezen, held in high esteem by travellers and hunters as a place of refuge from sudden storms, and of rest when over-wearied, and kept safe and sound on account of common necessity. Had the boys known that they might have had better hopes ; at the same time,

but for the getting of the looking-glass, and the Samoiede not finding their father at Mezen, they might have perished there with cold and hunger before anybody came. The Providence which had guided them to the spot, and saved them from the wolves, was with them still. The poor children gave thanks with tears of joy, which even Joseph could not restrain.

“Have you no bread, young masters?” said Sorinsk. His flat face and narrow eyes did not look ugly then, for there was honest feeling and kindness in them, and out of his wallet he brought what looked very like a lump of black earth, another of a brownish colour, and a rough wooden bottle. The lump of black earth was a loaf of Samoiede bread; made of rye-meal, reindeer’s moss, and pounded roots, the brownish lump was hard salt cheese, made of reindeer’s milk, and the bottle contained a thick hot drink, which the northern tribes make of honey and fermented mushrooms. With his dirty hands, Sorinsk divided this fare among them. Nothing would have made the poorest in England stand the smell, much less the taste, of it; but the hungry boys thought it the best bread and cheese they had ever eaten, and a draught from his wooden bottle warmed their very hearts.

Then Sorinsk explained to them how he had missed their father, but saw Grimzoff and Ivan at Mezen; that Ivan had told him they were lost on the road, because Joseph would drive on, and had either lost himself and his brothers in some forest swamp or been devoured by the wolves. That story had been evidently told to Ivan when he woke out of his sleep at the bottom of the sledge. The clerk had repeated it to Sorinsk, but the shrewd Samoiede’s suspicions had been somehow aroused. He would not deal with Grimzoff, though the latter was

buying furs at an unusually liberal rate, and had offered to take charge of the promised skins for Mr. Forester. Without a word of what he thought or meant, Sorinsk harnessed his reindeer, mounted his sledge, and drove off to the hunter's house, there to deposit the promised skins, as few but Samoiedes came that way, and Sorinsk knew his tribe would not steal them. The snow-storm had overtaken him near the end of his journey, but he and his reindeer knew their way in light or darkness, and, with a sort of rude snow-plough, which always forms part of a Samoiede's travelling equipments, they got through the drifts and reached the barred-up door in time to save the starving children.

When Sorinsk had heard their story, he merely shook his head, as if nothing better was to be expected; then went out into the calm, starlight night which had succeeded the stormy day, unharnessed his reindeer, rubbed the snow off them, led them into a corner of the house, brought in his various goods, including a basket of moss for them, two bear-skin cloaks for himself, a leather bag full of charcoal and pine chips dipped in pitch and grease, and another wallet full of provisions like those he had shared with the boys. They gave him all the help they could in his settling arrangements. Lastly, Sorinsk brought in to another corner his own sledge, long, low, and light as a fishing-skiff, and as he laid it down said—

“It will keep warm there till to-morrow makes the snow hard; then Sorinsk will take you home to Archangel, among the great houses and the Englandmen, for Grimzoff is a very big rogue.”

The Foresters thanked him with all their hearts. He made a fire for them of his charcoal and pitched

chips ; they got well warmed, went to sleep on the top of the stove under one of his bear-skin cloaks, while he slept under the other ; and with the first glimmer of daylight the Samoiede woke them up, saying—

“Come, the snow is hard, the fog will be thin, and we will go to your honourable father’s house.”

Right gladly they helped to harness the reindeer, seated themselves in the sledge with all Sorinsk’s goods and chattels, and drove away over the now frozen surface of the new-fallen snow, out of the forest, by ways which they never could have found, across the plain, and into the woods once more. All the way Sorinsk entertained them with Slamwa’s admiration of the looking-glass, the beauty and accomplishments of his Samoiede bride ; she had the flattest face in the whole tribe, and could kill a wolf, it appeared ; with the grandeur and magnificence of his wedding-feast, the reindeer that had been slaughtered and the bears that had been killed for the occasion. At length they discerned, through the clear night which had come again with all its stars, the distant spires of the wooden churches, and the stone towers which arose round the court of the trading strangers. In less than half an hour the sledge was in the town, and at the Court gates ; the principal one stood open ; there was a sledge and horses at their own door, and out of it was stepping their father, just arrived from Petersburg. What joy there was in their hearts to see him ; what a telling of their adventures and escape ; what thanks and presents were bestowed on the honest Samoiede ; what a lifting up of old Catherine’s hands there was when she heard their story !

“And I knew the villain meant no good,” said the

old woman; "he stayed so long in the store, and kept such a counting up of something to himself."

"But what could make him do such a wicked thing as to send us astray in the forest? We might have been lost or eaten by the wolves," said Joseph.

"I'll tell you, my boy," said Mr. Forester, "it was that root of all evil, covetousness. Listen to me. The very week before I left Petersburg, there was an Englishman of the name of Forester, engaged in the fur trade like myself, but no relation of ours, drowned by the breaking of the ice on which he was skating somewhere up the Neva. One of Grimzoff's acquaintances in the town, believing it was I that had met with such a fate, sent him the intelligence, doubtless in the letter which you saw him reading so often. He knew what a valuable stock of furs I had in hand, how much I had agreed to buy from the Samoiedes at Mezen; and thinking to get the whole bought and sold for himself before news of the agent's death would reach England, he sent my poor children astray in the forest to perish with cold, or be devoured by wolves, that there might be no claimants to my property. I heard the whole story from a trader who travelled with me, for the very purpose of buying the furs from Grimzoff, though he did not know, nor did I at that time, what means the wretch was taking to secure them to himself. I guessed there was some foul play, and have sent to the governor to put the police on his track. And now, my children, there is something more that we have to be thankful for. Mr. Benson wishes me to come back to England as soon as the summer thaw opens the river, and a ship can come up to take us. He is pleased to say he cannot do without me in the warehouse, and the gentleman who got into

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the dispute with the Custom-house officers in Petersburg would do better here. So we will go back to our own mild winters and our Meadow Cottage. Catherine will go with us, she says. You will have seen the far north, and never forget it, I dare say. Neither will any of us forget this truly noble chief of his tribe, whose honour and honesty enabled him to save and bring you back to me; but for that looking-glass and his faithful keeping of his promise, I should have lost my three boys. Never forget that, my children, nor in all your after lives forget to acknowledge and trust in the Providence that was with you in the desert, when there was nothing around you but wolves and winter, and you were deserted and doomed children."





CHECK.



HELENA'S DUTIES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A TRAP
TO CATCH A SUNBEAM," ETC.

“LATE again, Helena;
really I wish you
would try to be a little more punctual.”

“I do not want any tea, thank you, mamma.”

“Oh! nonsense, child, have your tea now you are
come, but it is very provoking of you always to keep
us waiting.”

“Which old woman was it this evening, eh, Miss
Foster?” asked a young man, who, appearing to have
finished his tea, had chosen a luxurious arm-chair for his
comfort, and the newspaper for his amusement.

“No old woman at all, Walter; but a very pretty,
oh, a very pretty young one.”

“In your opinion.”

“In every one’s, she is beautiful.”

“Discuss that important subject presently, Helena,”

said her father, who had not yet spoken. "You have kept your mother long enough over the tea, take what you want and have the things cleared."

The young lady did as she was bidden, taking one cup of tea only, and rising from the table she rang to have the things cleared; and then drawing a chair near the window sat herself down with no employment, her hands folded listlessly on her lap, and her eyes fixed on the clear evening sky, which the setting sun had tinged with a golden hue. She was very pretty, Helena Foster, just seventeen, tall and slight, with brown hair, real brown hair, and eyes to match, and a complexion soft and fair, with not much colour. She was the last remaining daughter of the home. They had two boys, but of four fair girls she alone remained, and very dear and precious she was to them as you may suppose. She had much in her disposition to merit their love, for she was warm-hearted, affectionate, tender, generous, and truthful, full of good resolves, and high and noble ambitions. But she had one fault which I in the course of my story shall endeavour to show you, and which perhaps many of those who read her story will find they themselves possess. Possibly the fact that the poor parents had only her left to them now had occasioned them to grant her rather more licence than would otherwise have been accorded to a girl of her years. She did do a great deal as she liked, and was seldom rebuked by her doating father and mother for anything.

The young man whom she had addressed was a nephew of Dr. Foster's, who laboured under what his uncle considered the misfortune of having been left by his father independent of the world; for his naturally

indolent disposition rendered him unwilling to do anything, and as there was no necessity for him to work, he led an utterly idle, profitless life. Happily he had had excellent principles instilled into him by a judicious mother, so that he did not occupy himself in wrong doing beyond the fact that waste of time and talent must be necessarily wrong, as his uncle often endeavoured to show him. But as yet he could not be persuaded that there was any necessity for him to make work, and therefore Helena's energy, and enthusiasm, and self-constituted employment proved great amusement to him in his visits to his uncle, and a never-ending subject for a laugh against his cousin.

"About this beauty, Helena," said Leslie, after the servant had removed the tea, and Helena had during the time been gazing from the window.

"She is the lady about whom I have been interested so long, and whom I had persuaded to take Belle Vue Cottage. She arrived to-day, and I assure you she is lovely. Mamma, you will call on her, will you not?"

"I don't know, my dear; perhaps."

"Oh! mamma, *do*. I am sure she wants some kind, motherly person to comfort her. You don't know how much she has had to bear, such shameful ingratitude from every one."

"From every one?" asked Mr. Leslie.

"Yes, from every one; people for whom she has done the kindest acts have used her cruelly."

"I suppose she tells you all this herself, Helena," said her father.

"Yes, papa; but you know Lady Warrington told me all about her first; I met her there, you know."

"Ah! that visit had better never have been paid."

"Why, papa?"

"Never mind, it is useless talking now, but try and moderate your transport about this injured lady until you know a little more of her. I have very little faith in a 'victim,' my dear. Love begets love, and the instances are very rare in which a person who has served others well is not served well in return."

"Well, papa, you only talk to her, that is all; if you do not *then* believe me and her, I shall be astonished. Why do you sit there smiling so provokingly, Walter?"

"May I not smile?"

"You *may* of course, but I would rather you did not when I know you are smiling at me, or rather my words."

"You are not assured that I am doing so. I may have thoughts which excite my merriment."

"Ah! I know exactly what those thoughts are, because you do not believe in anything or anybody."

"Oh! Helena, what a sweeping accusation. Will you have a game at chess with me after that?"

"Yes, if you like; but you will beat me, for my head is full of thoughts and plans, and I shall not know a queen's move from a knight's."

"We will try at any rate," he said, rising and placing the table.

"Did you see Betty Hooker to-day, Helena?"

"No, mamma, I had not time. I meant to do so, coming home, but I was late, and came back without calling."

"Oh! I thought it was important that you should see her every day," said her mother, smiling.

Helena blushed as she answered.

"Yes, mamma, and I have seen her every day since

I told you so, and she is much happier and calmer ; Mr. Lee says so."

"Then you think she'll do, Helena, eh?" said her father.

"Check to your queen."

"Yes, of course," answered Helena, impatiently ; "if papa and mamma will persist in talking to me, how can I play?"

"Oh! we wont say another word, then. Why are you stitching so, my dear, must that work be done to-night?"

"Well, I must get on with it; for we are getting quite short of table linen really, and I want three new cloths made so much."

"Ah! if we had a daughter now who could work, she might help you."

"Helena is overpowered with work. She is clothing a whole family, I believe. Look at her work basket," and her mother pointed to a standard gilt basket in one corner of the room, which was filled with print, shirts, calico, etc.

"Oh, then mamma works for the house, and her daughter for the parish."

"Papa, you said you wouldn't."

"My dear girl, I was not speaking to you."

"No, but of me, and that is quite as bad; then checkmate of course, I knew I could not play," and rising from the chess-table Helena refused to touch another piece.

"Then sing to us, will you not?" asked Leslie.

"No, I cannot do that, I must try to work; as mamma says, I am overpowered with it."

"Leslie, let you and me issue a protest against work

in the evening, eh? I think the ladies are bound to amuse us then," said Mr. Foster.

"Unquestionably, sir," replied Leslie.

"Mamma, set the example; put away that odious toweling."

"Oh! dear George, do not ask me to-night," said his wife pleadingly; "I do so want to get on with this."

"Well then, the rule commences to-morrow night. And see, Helena," said her father with more rebuke in his manner than was usual to him, "you assist your mother to finish that work, as it seems it is wanted."

"Mamma could send it to the school and have it done there, papa; but she won't."

"Because, my love, they really don't work well enough; but, never mind, I shall get it done somehow."

"That flannel stuff too, Helena, is not drawing-room work. No more of that in the evening, remember, after this evening."

"Now, Leslie, suppose you and I try to amuse each other; come, what shall it be, a game at cribbage, or chess, or what?"

"As you please, sir, I am at your service."

"Well, then, suppose we try a game at cribbage."

Leslie rose and got the cards, and the gentlemen amused themselves in this manner until bedtime, whilst the ladies stitched in silence, each occupied with her own thoughts. On separating for the night, as Mr. Foster kissed Helena, he said in a low voice, "My child, do not let me have to remind you again, that you must assist your mother with that work she wishes to have finished. Do not let the loss of poor Maria be recalled so painfully to her recollection by the remembrance of how useful *she* used to be."

HELENA'S DUTIES.

Tears rose to Helena's eyes, but they were not of sorrow; she thought her father unjust, and without seeing Mr. Leslie's hand outstretched towards her, waiting to wish her good-night, she hurried out of the room to the refuge of her own. The next morning, immediately after breakfast, her mother met her on the stairs dressed to go out.

"Where are you going, Helena?" she asked.

"Down to Belle Vue, mamma, just to see how Mrs. Hamilton is getting on, and if I can do anything for her."

"Is that necessary?"

"I think it is kind to a stranger, mamma, whom I have induced to come here."

"Very well, only remember we lunch at one to-day, and the boys go back to school on Monday; and require all their things looked over. I think you ought to assist."

"Well of course, mamma, if you desire me, but really I do not know why Esther cannot do it. I can't think what she's kept for."

"My dear, Esther has plenty of house-work to do; and besides, I think so little as we see of the boys, the least we can do when they are at home is to see they are comfortable, and that all their clothes are in order, and they have all they want to take back with them. Esther would not know what they require, nor how to arrange it all without me, and it would be only hindering her for nothing."

"I should have thought she might have helped you as well as I."

"Oh! very well, my dear, so she shall if you would rather not;" and her eyes filling with tears, the mother

HELENA'S DUTIES.

passed on, on her way up-stairs, but Helena had no wish really to grieve her, she loved her too much for that; and, hastening after her, she threw her arms round her, and, kissing her warmly, said, "Dear, dear mamma, I won't be gone long, and then I'll come and work like a nigger."

"Very well, love, run away;" but the poor mother sighed as the recollection of a small pale face rose before her with her nimble fingers and useful, thoughtful head. Always at hand when she was wanted; always ready to give up her own wishes to others, sweet Maria, she was gone to reap the reward of her labours, of her love and unselfishness in a land where there was no sorrow nor care, only love in all its fulness to satisfy and make her happy. And Helena went on her way not quite so cheerfully as she had thought to do; that troublesome little monitor conscience kept whispering disagreeable things, and making itself a very unpleasant walking companion; so that she was glad when her walk ended, and she arrived at Bellevue Cottage.

The woman of the house who answered the door to her said Mrs. Hamilton had not left her room, but she would say Miss Foster had called if she would step in.

Helena remained a long time in the little sitting-room alone, and at length Mrs. Hamilton's own maid, a very elegant young lady, came to say that if Miss Foster would not object, Mrs. Hamilton would like to see her up-stairs. Accordingly she followed the aforesaid elegant young lady to her mistress's room.

"Ah! my darling girl, how good of you to come to me," was the salutation of the extremely beautiful woman who, in a very becoming white muslin wrapper, richly trimmed with Valenciennes lace, was lying on a

"AH! MY DARLING GIRL, HOW GOOD OF YOU TO COME TO ME."





couch by the open window, with a small round table beside her, on which was a little breakfast service of Sèvres china, for one person, called a *solitaire*, and a vase filled with flowers. Her beautiful hair, of a rich auburn brown, was plainly braided and rolled up in a massive coil behind, and a small *fichu* of point-lace was over her head fastened under the chin with a brooch formed of a leaf of green enamel, on which rested a diamond fly.

“Put a chair for Miss Foster, Rawlings, and I will ring when I want you,” she said; and with a smile of ineffable sweetness she took Helena’s hand between her own delicate white ones. “I have had such a night, love; scarcely closed my eyes, and, when I did, only to dream of horrors; and I fear this house is damp, for I have had neuralgia in my face so fearfully; about two I dropped asleep, and was woke with the excruciating pain. I have had the old lady up this morning—Mrs. What’s-her-name, Cramp—and she assures me as ‘ow no one as never complained of the ’ouse being damp; and has for the beds, she may say she’s more than particular.’ So I suppose I must try and imagine it is all right.”

“Oh! I do hope it is not damp, dear Mrs. Hamilton; and I think it cannot be, it is in such a dry situation. It has not been very long unlet, and they were a large family who had it last, filling every room in it.”

“Do you know, love, I thought there had been a large family in it, it smelt so stuffy when I first came into it; and the papers are so dirty. I must talk to the old dame, if I stay, about papering the rooms I use. I have such a horror of dirty paper.”

“Then you don’t like it, I fear,” said Helena, in a disappointed voice.

“Oh! yes, I do, dear, very well indeed. You know I am an awful fidget; but when one has lived in the height of luxury for years, one feels so painfully all that jars on feelings which have grown over-refined. But I must get used to it, and I shall in time. This, you see,” she continued, pointing to the little breakfast-service, “is a remnant of old times. I carry this with me wherever I go.”

“It is very lovely,” said Helena.

“Yes, I bought it myself, in my brief reign of happiness, when I thought men and women were what they seemed, and life one bright, long holiday; but I have learnt a different lesson now—how false are all human beings, and what a weary, disappointing thing life is. A letter has followed me here already, to worry me, and prevent my spending in peace even the first day in my new home. There, read it. It is from a woman to whom, when trouble and sorrow surrounded her, I gave the shelter of a home. You will scarcely credit it.”

Helena took the proffered letter, and read as follows:—

“MADAM,—I regret the necessity which compels me to say, that unless your small account is paid by the 18th inst., I must put the matter out of my hands. Payment by return will avoid all disagreeables.

“M. MANNERS.”

“What do you think of that? That woman, my dear child, is a milliner in London, who was at one time in the most abject distress. I paid her half-year's rent in advance, besides the balance she owed, for which they were threatening to turn her out of house and

home, and took her little sickly child, dying almost for want of good food and care, into my house, where I kept her till she was strong and rosy, got several of the most fashionable women in town to employ the mother, for she was very clever, till finally her business so increased as to enable her to take a house in the best part of London. And this is the way she repays me, harassing me for her paltry bill. But I will pay it, and, of course, never enter her doors again."

"It does seem very ungrateful," said Helena, scarcely knowing what to say, for she was a little disturbed at the idea of her new friend having debts, so strictly had she been brought up herself in that particular; and though always well supplied with money by her indulgent father, never permitted to incur a debt, or buy anything she could not afford to pay for.

"Ah! my dear," replied Mrs. Hamilton, "I am used to it; but to think that I, who once had thousands at my command, should now be harassed and worried by having to pay a paltry bill of a few pounds. Oh! my child, never marry, or, if you do, beware that your husband is not an extravagant spendthrift, who, squandering all your money, will laugh in your face, and tell you it became his when he married you." A knock at the door interrupted her conversation.

"Come in," she said; and the woman of the house, Mrs. Cramp, entered.

"Oh! if you please, ma'am, and begging your pardon, but has you hany horders for the butcher." Mrs. Cramp, whenever she addressed ladies, was most particular in aspirating every word that she possibly could; for it appeared to her to have a more genteel sound.

"The butcher! Oh! no, Mrs. Cramp; I cannot eat meat. I suppose poultry is to be had here?"

"Yes, ma'am, hof course, but just now main dear; they was hasking six shillings a couple for chicken yesterday, which his dearer than I have hever remarked it since I have been in this place."

"I don't mind if they are good; I shall only trouble the butcher for some meat for soup, that is, if you are a good hand at soup, Mrs. Cramp; but I am very particular."

"Well, ma'am, I don't know has I ham much of what you call a hexperienced hand."

"That is awkward; but is there no pastry-cook near the place?"

"In the next town, ma'am, a hexcellent one."

"Then I can send for soup, Mrs. Cramp, and save you the trouble; dismiss the butcher." And, as Mrs. Cramp left the room, deeply impressed with the grandeur of the lodger, who thought nothing of giving six shillings a couple for chickens, and would send four miles for her soup, Mrs. Hamilton turned with her sweet smile to Helena, and said, "I have a painfully fastidious appetite, and cannot eat anything badly cooked."

Helena found it difficult to answer just then, for the thought would obtrude itself that, if Mrs. Hamilton found so much difficulty in paying a milliner's bill, there was some inconsistency in ordering such an expensive dinner. Helena fancied she should, if placed in the same circumstances, have tried to content herself with a mutton chop.

"You will dine with me to-day, there's a nice child, won't you?" continued her friend, without remarking Helena's silence.

"I do not think I can to-day, thank you; mamma rather wants me."

"Oh! ask her to spare you to me this one day; she has a husband, and boys, and all home ties; I have nothing. I shall dine at six, so you can run home, and come back again to me."

"Then I had better go at once, and make myself useful while I can."

"Oh, no! not just this moment—you are only just come; you do not know how sweet it is to look at a dear young face; I can fancy that like you would have been my Emmeline, if she had been spared me, but even Heaven seems to have been hard to *me*. When my cruel husband, having ill-used me and spent my money, departed, and I was left with my pretty little girl, I thought I had expiated my sin in marrying such a man by all the sufferings I had borne, and that my life was to be at last a peaceful one. In bringing up and educating my darling I hoped quietly to pass my life, away from the world and its vain follies and pleasures; but only a few bright months elapsed, and she, my darling, was taken from me; the sweet eyes, that were the only ones which ever looked lovingly at me were closed for ever, and I was alone in the world—oh! how alone none can tell but those who have lost their all, as I have;" and, as she spoke the last words, tears streamed from her lovely eyes, and sobs seemed to choke her utterance. Helena rose from her seat, and knelt down beside her, kissing tenderly the white hands which were clasped together in anguish; mentally determining that nothing should or could make her doubt, or cease to live and be the slave, if she wished it, of this beautiful and persecuted being. It wanted but a

quarter to one when Helena at length left the cottage. Just as she shut the gate she was met by old Mr. Lee, the vicar of the parish.

“Good morning, Miss Foster, have you been to see my new parishioner?—I am on the same errand.”

“I am so glad, Mr. Lee; I am sure she wants friends to comfort her, and I know she will be pleased to see you.”

“I will go and see what I can do then; and how is Betty Hooker? I have not seen her the last day or two.”

“Nor I,” answered Helena, blushing deeply as she spoke; “I have been so much occupied.”

“All right,” interrupted Mr. Lee, kindly noticing her confusion; “your first duty is at home. If you can, like a good little girl, give any spare time to be my curate,” he said, smiling, “I am very glad, but you must not be distressed when you cannot. Good day, I shall look in on Betty myself presently;” and, before Helena had time to say more, he was gone; but his words somehow rang in her ears, “Your first duty is at home.” The church clock struck one as she passed it; she hurried on—her mother had warned her that luncheon would be at one. She should be late again, and then she remembered it was Wednesday—the day in the week when she always took a class in the school. Well, it was too late now; she must get home, and take her class in the afternoon.

Just before reaching her own house, she was saluted with a wonderful “bob” from a girl about fifteen, in the dirtiest and raggedest of gowns, and a dirty straw bonnet to match, in which were some faded flowers.

She felt compelled to stop and address her.

HELENA'S DUTIES.

"Amelia, is that the new dress I gave you such a little while ago?"

Something like a blush covered the girl's dirty face, as she answered—

"Oh, if you please, miss, I couldn't stay in that place you got me; it was so 'ard, it hurted my back, and so I



comed home, and I've been a working for mother, and mucking about since."

"That you have been making yourself filthily dirty there is no question, Amelia, and I shall do nothing more for you, nor recommend you to any other place. I be-

lieve, if the truth was told, you have been sent away for being dirty."

The girl made no answer; and as Helena was in a hurry, she only said, "I shall call and see your mother about you," and hurried on her way, but it was twenty minutes past one before she reached home.

She opened the door, and flew up-stairs to take her things off. As she passed the dining-room, the door of which was open, she saw there was no one there, and so hoped that in spite of all, she should be nearly as soon as the rest. The next room to hers was occupied by her brothers, and she thought she heard some talking there, and opening the door to ask if they were ready for luncheon, an exclamation of terror and distress escaped from her as she saw her brother Arthur extended on the bed, deathly white, and apparently lifeless, with his mother and father beside him, and her younger brother standing at the foot of the bed.

"Oh, here is Helena," said her mother; and at the sound the boy opened his eyes, and smiled faintly, relieving Helena's mind with the knowledge that he was still living, and that the ghastly hue of his face was faintness, and not death.

"What is the matter, dear mamma?" asked Helena, eagerly.

"Your brother has had a fall from a tree, and broken his arm, love, but papa has set it, and I hope he will do very well presently; he is faint now, but he will be better soon, won't you, my boy?" and the mother stooped down, and kissed the boy's white cheek.

"Yes," said his father, who had been feeling his pulse, and looked agitated and upset himself, "he will

do presently. Give him half a glass of wine, and let him be quite quiet with only one person."

"I will stay with him," said his mother. "Yes, I would rather, dear," she persisted; "you can send me some luncheon up here."

"Well, you shall stay for the present, but you are not to remain here all day; Helena must relieve guard," said Dr. Foster.

"Oh, yes, of course. Poor Arthur!" and Helena went up and kissed her brother gently.

"I will stay now, if mamma will let me."

"No; in an hour's time we shall see how he is," said her father. "Let mamma stay."

"Quiet is indispensable. Leave me alone with him now, dear, and I will be sure to ring if I want anything;" and so they left the mother in that post which, alas! was a natural one to her, watching by a child's sick bed.

Oh! how can children sufficiently love and repay their parents for their love and devotion to them; and yet, how often are the little acts of self-denial, the little giving up of their own whims and fancies, which are not in accordance with their father's and mother's, subjects for gloomy looks and discontented murmurs; how little remembered the long years of self-devotion which the mother has gone through for them, the setting aside her own ease and comfort, and amusement, to minister to their wants, to multiply their enjoyments. Surely, it is but small payment to give up cheerfully some matter which can be of no real moment, especially as it is very rare but that the opposition is given for an excellent reason, and because in some way or other it will militate against the good or happiness of the child himself. As Helena went to her own room to prepare

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for luncheon, some thought of this kind crossed her mind. Could she ask leave to dine at Mrs. Hamilton's, now, with this trouble in the house? and yet, how dreadfully disappointed her friend would be. What was to be done? She certainly must send her a note, and say she could not possibly come, and send her some books to read, to amuse her long evening. Accordingly, immediately after luncheon, she despatched Esther with her little note, and a bundle of books, and went up to take her turn by her brother. He was asleep, so Mrs. Foster, who had of course been much alarmed at the accident, and being anything but strong, thought it better to allow Helena to take her place, while she went to lie down in the quiet of her own room, particularly as she intended to sit up with the boy in case of fever coming on. As Helena sat there, her class at school suddenly occurred to her; they would be all waiting, doing nothing, for she had told the mistress that if she did not come in the morning she should be sure to be there in the afternoon, and the children were not to be employed on anything else. She must send, but whom? Esther was gone to Mrs. Hamilton's; could her brother George go? and dare she leave Arthur whilst she went to ask? She would not be gone a moment; if she could not find him, she would return, and the children must take their chance. It was the first time she had failed since she had undertaken it, surely no one could blame her; so opening the door very softly, she crept gently, but quickly down stairs, and looked into a small room, given up for the boys to amuse themselves in when they were at home, with turning lathe, etc.; but no George was there. Quickly she hurried through the glass doors which led into the garden to the stable-yard, he might be there

feeding his dog; but no, he was not there. The boy employed in the garden was weeding a path close by the yard, she would send him. Running quickly to him, she said, "John, go instantly to the school, and tell Mrs. Martyn Master Arthur has met with an accident, and I can't come to-day. She must give the girls in my class something to do."

"Master said as I was to bide here, Miss, as mayhap he should want me by and by, and I wasn't to be out of call."

"But somebody must go, John, and I have no one else to send; if you can find Master George it will do as well, but one of you must go. I cannot stay a minute, I am watching Master Arthur. Oh! there is George, I will send him myself, never mind John," and flying up the garden path, she called her brother eagerly; he turned as he heard his name, and came back to meet her. She told him what she wanted.

"I do not know if I can go, really," he said. "Papa has just said he has important business at Westrop, and as he does not want to be gone long he shall drive, and I am to go with him to see to the pony, while he is engaged. I don't like to be out of the way when he wants me."

"Papa seems to have employed everybody," said Helena impatiently; "John says he cannot go, because his master said he might want him. He can't want you both."

"I don't know anything about that, but I certainly should not like him to be calling me about the place, just as he is ready to start, and I not to be found."

"It wouldn't take you five minutes; you might run, George."

“Well, look here,” said George, calling after her as she was turning disappointedly away, “I’ll find pa, and ask him how long he’ll be before he’s ready, and then, if there’s time, I’ll go, or get his leave to send John.”

Compelled to be content with her brother’s suggestion, Helena returned to the house, and just as she entered it she met Esther, bearing in her hand a strongly-perfumed note from Mrs. Hamilton.

“Oh, you need not have waited for an answer, Esther. Did you see her?”

“No, miss; you did not say I was not to wait; but I thought I had better, and Mrs. Hamilton sent down word if I would sit down she would write.”

Slowly ascending the stairs, reading her letter as she went, Helena returned to her brother’s room. It ran as follows:—

“MY PRETTY ONE,—I am so sorry not to see you, and grieved for the cause. I trust the poor boy will go on well, that I may not long be deprived of the sunshine of your presence. Remember, I have *nothing else in the world* to love or value. You must try and come to me to-morrow, if only for ten minutes; even with his broken arm I envy your brother. He has a loving father and mother to watch beside him, to cheer him with loving words and looks; with me the weary days go on, and greedy hirelings, serving me for what they can get out of me, are all I see. Your innocent love is the first gleam of sunshine which has shone on my path for years; the clouds must not long hide it; but I am sure you will come as soon as you can to your most affectionate
“A. H.”

As she raised her head from the letter to open softly the door of her brother’s room, she saw it was open

and her father was standing there with a grave and serious face."

"Really, Helena, I could scarcely have expected this of you, that you could not even stay a little while with your brother."

"Papa, I have not been gone ten minutes, and he was asleep when I went down."

"Yes, and woke of course meanwhile, and could not get the drink he wanted for his poor parched mouth, because his nurse was absent. You might have had the thought, at least, to ring for a servant to remain with him till your return."

"Never mind, father dear," said the poor boy kindly, seeing his sister's look of distress, "I am all right now; and I do not at all mind being alone, if Helena will put the things in my reach that I want."

"I do not wish to leave you any more, Arthur dear; I only went to send a message up the street."

"Then now oblige me, Helena, by not leaving him any more till his mother returns to him," said her father. "I suppose some parish business called you away. I must have a stop put to this nonsense."

And so saying, Dr. Foster walked out of the room, and Helena sat down where her brother could not see her face, and indulged herself with what is commonly called "a good cry," she felt so hardly used. She who was always trying to be useful, was always getting scolded and rebuked for what she was sure most persons would consider quite exemplary. Instead of leading a life of young lady idleness, she was always employed in works of charity—teaching in the schools, working for the poor, reading to the old women, and getting places for the young. But "never mind," she thought,

as the tears, in spite of her efforts now to stop them, coursed each other down her cheeks. Everything good in this world met with opposition, and the more merit it was in her to persevere. The right road was always a difficult one, and so she would go on, hoping that at last her reward would come.

"Helena, are you crying?" at length her brother asked, for he fancied that he heard a low sob. "What is the matter?"

Drying her eyes, Helena rose, and went to him.

"Nothing much; I only thought papa unjust. Don't mind me; go to sleep again, Arthur dear. Shall I read to you?"

"Thank you, I think I should like that. I had just begun 'Mary of Burgundy;' it seems such a jolly book. It's on there," he said, pointing to the chest of drawers. "But don't be unhappy, papa often speaks sharply; but he doesn't mean anything, and he was worried about me."

"Oh, it's all over now; it was only for the moment." And Helena got the book, and sat down by her brother to read.

She had not read many pages before he was again asleep, and putting down her book, Helena stole softly to the window, and put her head out to breathe the soft, pleasant summer air.

This room looked out on the pretty garden, over the lawn bright with clumps of flowers arranged in rustic baskets, divided by a "ha-ha" from the green meadow beyond, across which a path lay to the village, the old ivied tower of the church soaring above the trees, showing in which direction the village lay. Beyond were ranges of hills, nestled by the sides of which

were other snug villages and homesteads; and on clear evenings the towers of the grand old cathedral could be seen, telling of the far-off town, with all its hurry, and business, and excitement, so contrasted with the quiet monotony of the neighbouring villages.

Helena leaned out, looking at all this, hearing the pleasant sound of children's voices in the distant village street, and the lowing of cattle, and loud cackling of poultry from a neighbouring farm; but her thoughts were not with these peaceful sights and sounds. She had not got over her grievance—the feeling that her father had wronged her, and been unjust to her. Her name called softly below the window first aroused her; she looked down; it was Walter.

“How is Arthur? Is he asleep?” he asked.

“Yes he is,” she answered, in the same low tone. “You have heard of his accident.”

“I have; I am very sorry, but boys must go through this sort of thing. I believe it is part of their education. I have seen your idol; that is what I wanted to tell you.”

“My idol! who do you mean?” said Helena, blushing.

“Why, the beauty. I met a good-looking stranger, most extensively got up, followed by a little white fluffy dog, and she went into Bellevue Cottage, so it must have been your friend.”

“Oh yes, I daresay it was; but I do not own to an ‘idol,’ Walter.”

“Don't you? very well. Are you going to remain up there?”

“Yes, till mamma comes. Hush! he's waking:” and, leaving the window, she went to her brother's bed-

side. He had again awoke, for his arm was too painful to allow of more than an uneasy doze.

Helena asked if she should read again, and her brother saying he should much like it, she had just recommenced, when a knock at the door interrupted her. It was Esther, to say that a woman of the name of Bradley wanted to see her, and would not send up her message.

"Then you must stay, please, Esther, with Master Arthur whilst I go down."

"Yes, Miss, certainly."

"I will be as quick as I can, Arthur, darling," and Helena ran rapidly down-stairs to the hall, where a slovenly woman stood waiting to see her.

"What can I do for you, Mrs. Bradley?" asked Helena.

"Why, Miss, Melia says as you met her down street this morning, and went on at her sheamful about her frock being wor out, and that you'd never do no more for her, and a lot; so I thought I'd come down and hear the rights on't. My girl isn't no worse than others, as I know, and sure it ain't no blame to her to help her own mother. And for working about, and having only one frock to her back, I don't see as how, considering the time she's had it, you could expect it to look any better."

"Mrs. Bradley, I gave Amelia that frock to go to service with—for a Sunday one, she said she had one for every day, and I am sure had she taken proper care of it, it would have been quite decent still; if the place was too hard for her, she might have come and told me so, and laid by her frock until she got a new situation. Now, if she had a place to-morrow, she isn't fit to go."

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“ But her other frocks, which was very ornary when she took 'em, is wore completely out, she'd such a deal of hard, dirty work to do, and so she's been obliged to take this for week-a-days and Sundays. That's just how such as we gets used. The ladies give one frock or one pair of shoes to them as had none before, and then wonder, two months after, they ain't as good as new, when all along they've had nought else to wear.”

“ A little management, Mrs. Bradley, might make them wear better, that's all we say, but it's no use your losing your temper,” said Helena, fast incurring the same loss herself; “ for I persist in what I say, that Amelia has used her frock very badly; that she ought to have stayed in her place, and that I will have nothing more to do with her. Good day, I can hear no more.” And she hurried away, waiting for no reply, for the sound of wheels in the drive warned her of her father's approach, and she dreaded his finding her engaged again in “ parish business,” and away from the sick-room, although this time she had left some one in charge.

Poor Helena! her troubles increased, for this woman she had taken up against the advice of many, who had told her she was hopelessly thriftless and dirty, and one of those persons whom no one could help, and as she went up to her brother's room, she could not avoid thinking of her father's words, “ he had no faith in a victim.” She had befriended her because the woman had told her every one was against her, and now it was dawning on her that “ the world's verdict ” was not so unjust a one as she had deemed it.

She had scarcely resumed her place by her brother,

when Esther came up again, and said the Miss Mantles wanted to know if she was going to the Dorcas meeting that evening, and if she would call for them as she went along.

"Oh, Esther, I can't possibly go, I forgot all about it; but you must tell them about Master Arthur, and say I cannot leave."

"Don't mind me, if you want to go, Helena," said Arthur; "dear mamma will be at home."

"No, I should not think of being out to-night, Arthur dear, thank you. No, give them that message, Esther." And as the servant went to do her bidding, Helena felt so thankful that she had refused to dine with Mrs. Hamilton, and had such a much more laudable excuse for not attending the meeting than that she had forgotten it. Still she could not help acknowledging to herself that had she not refused the dinner invitation she should have liked to have gone to the meeting, and was extremely annoyed that she could not. She had first proposed that a number of young ladies should meet at each others' houses once a week to work for the poor, and was therefore looked upon as manager and directress, a post the little lady greatly admired, and it was very vexatious to feel that some one else would this evening be taking the lead. Engrossed in these thoughts, she did not hear her brother call her in a low voice, and to her alarm, as a low moan struck at last on her inattentive ear, she saw that he had fainted, and she flew to her mother's room, and called her hurriedly, but it was some time before their united exertions could restore animation.

"What caused him to faint?" asked her mother; "was he trying to move himself?"

"I don't know, mamma, I think not."

"Did he complain of faintness, or go off suddenly?"

"Quite suddenly," said Helena.

"No, I felt faint a long time first, and called you several times," said poor Arthur.

"Oh, Arthur, dearest, did you really? I am sorry indeed I never heard you."

"Well, never mind, love," said her mother, kissing him gently, "I am come now, and shall leave you no more till you are much better. I shall hear you."

Tears of vexation filled Helena's eyes, and she turned away to conceal them.

"You can go down now, if you wish, Helena," said her mother, as she established herself in the arm-chair near her son's bedside.

"I do not wish to go, mamma," said Helena, in a sad voice.

"Oh, yes, my dear," said her mother kindly, "sick-rooms are not pleasant for young people. Go, dear, to Walter and George; I dare say they feel quite lonely without you."

Helena rose, and without another word quietly left the room, but the feeling of being aggrieved was stronger than ever, and her heart turned with more love and gratitude to that sweet, affectionate Mrs. Hamilton, who thought everything she did right.

She sauntered with a listless air into the drawing-room, hardly knowing in what way to employ herself. All seemed distasteful to her that she was accustomed to do. Her basket full of work, what was the use of finishing it? It was no use, no one would thank her when it was done. Look at Mrs. Bradley, how she had behaved to her; and she remembered how she had toiled

at that frock, putting away her drawing and all that amused her to get it finished. A low voice seemed at this moment to whisper in her ear, "and all that amused others was put aside too. The drawing which was to be a present to mamma, and the singing in the evening which so amused papa, the games with Mr. Leslie and her brothers, all were abandoned to make that frock;" and strangely mingled with this whisper were the words of Mr. Lee, "Your first duty is at home."

"A penny for your thoughts" were the words which startled her from her reverie.

"Mine are never worth purchase, Mr. Leslie; and at that moment they were of no use to any one but the owner, and not much perhaps to her."

"Thinking is a mistake, depend on it. What use is it? If we think of the past, we cannot recall it if we would."

"No, but it may teach us better for the future."

"Well, there is something in that certainly; but query, does it ever? If we now were to take a great fancy to any one, and find out that they were everything that was bad, would the remembrance of that prevent our taking a fancy to any one again, or rather, make us more cautious as to whom we did make our bosom friends?"

Helena looked up with a quick glance at Leslie.

"What do you mean?"

"What I say," he answered, smiling, "as I always do."

"I don't quite understand you, but I think you had some meaning for your last speech."

"Well, I hope I always have."

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"Now, don't be provoking, Walter. I mean I think you were alluding to my interest in Mrs. Hamilton, but I can assure you it would take a great deal to persuade me that she could have the least shadow of bad about her; and if I was once convinced she had, I would never love any one again. It would effectually break me of the folly, if it is one, of believing in any human being."

"How old are you?" said Leslie, smiling; "a whole seventeen, are you not?"

"I do not see that that has anything to do with what we are saying, unless you mean that I am too young to know my own mind, but I am not."

"And you have made up that said mind to believe implicitly in the perfect goodness of Mrs. Hamilton?"

"Yes, as far as human beings can be perfect. Have papa and George come in?"

"I think not."

"I fancied I heard them long ago."

"It was a carriage," answered Leslie, "with some one to inquire after Arthur, I think. Oh! dear me, I think living's a very stupid affair," he continued, flinging himself on the couch. "There's nothing on earth to do."

"Oh! Walter, what a speech. There is plenty to do when one has the heart to do it, and men have always occupation, or can have."

"Well, I don't know; I have'nt the slightest idea how to employ myself; suggest something."

"For the present, or for a permanency?"

"Either, or both."

"Then if I were you I should make up my mind to a profession, and commence now to study for it."

“ Helena, do you call that helping a fellow out? If I could choose a profession, I should be all right. The law is abominable, physic I detest, for divinity I am not good enough. I have no wish to slaughter my fellow-creatures and become a soldier, or pass my life tossing about on the seas as a sailor; and so, as I said before, I think living a stupid affair.”

“ Oh! you will not always think so, I hope. What does Longfellow say?”

“ ‘ Lives of great men all remind us
We may make our lives sublime.’ ”

Men have many a glorious opportunity of doing so. It is only we poor women folk who can do nothing that is grand or heroic.”

“ What a mistake!” said a voice behind her; and starting round, Helena saw Mr. Lee, who had entered unobserved, and overheard her last speech.

Helena, blushing and smiling, said—

“ Oh! Mr. Lee, how you startled me!”

“ You startled me with your assertion,” he answered, smiling, and laying his hand kindly on her shining hair. “ I think I could tell you many a tale of woman’s heroism that would astonish you.”

“ Could you, Mr. Lee? A woman seems to have no opportunity of being heroic.”

“ It depends greatly on what you call heroic. There is to me a greater and a truer heroism in the silent, patient, cheerful endurance of daily cares and trials, than in some fine act of bravery undertaken in a moment of great excitement. But all this time I am not asking after poor Arthur, which was my object in calling.”

"He seems in very much pain, thank you, and very faint."

"Poor boy! But he'll be all right again, I hope, soon."

"Oh! yes, sir," said Leslie. "I tell my cousin that such accidents are part of a boy's education, and fit him, no doubt, for that hero he is some day to be. Eh, Helena?"

"Doubtless, Mr. Leslie," said Mr. Lee; "and now I must tell you," he continued, turning to Helena, "that I paid my visit to your new friend, and found her a most elegant, agreeable person."

"Yes, isn't she, sir? and so lovely."

"Yes, very handsome is more the word, I think."

"Did she tell you of her troubles?"

"Oh! yes; she has been much ill-used, it seems, poor lady, and full of misfortunes; but I trust they will all be for her good eventually; trouble is intended so to be."

Mr. Lee talked on for some time on this and other subjects, and then took his leave. He had not been gone long when a note was brought to Helena. The strong perfume told her in an instant that it was from Mrs. Hamilton.

She opened it with a glance at her father, who had come in, and was seated in the arm-chair, reading the newspaper. It was only three lines:—

"Come to me directly. I *must* see you for a few moments."

She looked up at the timepiece on the mantelshelf; it was just five. They dined at six, and she had to dress; but still she thought she could get as far as that and back in time.

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"Who is your note from, Helena?" asked her father.

"Mrs. Hamilton, papa. She wants to speak to me for a moment. I shall have time just to run, I think."

"I don't know, I'm sure. I can only say I expect you to be in time for dinner."

"Oh! yes, papa, of course. I'll dress first, and then I shall be sure to be right."

Dressing hurriedly, and throwing on a large cloak and hat, she flew up the little village street, and soon reached Bellevue Cottage. The door was open, so she entered, and passed quickly up the stairs to her friend's apartments, but paused suddenly, as a loud and angry voice met her ear, using violent invectives against some person or persons. Could that be the voice of her gentle, lovely, and persecuted friend? Was it possible! Another person was in conversation with her, for Helena could hear the much lower tones answering the excited ones. She knocked at the sitting-room door, but was obliged to repeat the knock twice before it was heard, and the answer given to "come in."

Pacing up and down the small room, her face flushed and stained with tears, Helena saw her friend, and seated on the couch a woman plainly and neatly dressed, like a respectable servant; but to Helena's fancy, even in that momentary glance, the expression of her face was an evil one.

Both stopped speaking as Helena entered; and Mrs. Hamilton, holding out her hand, said—

"Good child to come. I knew you would. I am full of trouble, and you must help me, if you can and will."

"Most certainly I will, if I can."

"Sit down and hear me. This good body," she said, pointing to her visitor, "was a maid of mine

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years ago, and has been the only *true* friend I have ever known, though how long she will remain so there is no knowing."

"Oh, madam," interrupted the woman, "I am sur——"

"Well, never mind your protestations now; let me tell this dear child my new trouble. This woman, Mrs Bolton by name, Helena love, has come from London, most kindly, to put me on my guard against a threatened misfortune. The fact is, I may as well at once tell you, my husband is not dead, as I led you to believe; I wished it to be supposed so for many reasons not necessary to mention now. We agreed to separate—to lead lives apart, for our tempers and dispositions were too ill assorted ever to be happy together; but for the last two years he has taken it into his head that he would like me to return to him, but nothing will induce me to do so. I despise him beyond all created beings, and never will I live again under the same roof with him. Since I became aware of his wish I have changed my name, and kept my residence a secret from all but this faithful creature. Yesterday, by some means, he discovered her address, and sought to induce her to reveal mine. He had in some manner got information that I was in this county, but the name of the village he did not know, nor my assumed name; still the fact that he is as near the truth as the county, terrifies me, and I cannot remain here in peace another night. Now, my idea is to return to London; but if I do so, how are my apartments here to be paid for. The paltry sum which he allows me, after spending all my own money, is not due for another six weeks. Now, could you, dear child, help me to pay it? and I would sign a paper empowering

you to draw my quarter's money, pay yourself, and forward the balance to Mr. Bolton.

Overpoweringly astounded at this unexpected revelation, Helena could scarcely collect her senses to reply; to her innocent mind the whole thing seemed so terrible—parted from her husband, her husband still living, when she had affirmed him dead; speaking of him whom she had sworn before God to love, honour, and obey, as the person whom she despised beyond all others on earth; it seemed too dreadful, but at length she found words to say—

“I do not know if I have money enough of my own.”

“But your father, my dear child, when he knows the circumstances of the case, will, I am sure, assist me. Go home and ask him, like a dear love, and be here again by nine to-morrow. I shall leave by the ten o'clock train. Oh, was there ever on earth a being so wretched? Nowhere can I find peace;” and flinging herself into a chair, she sobbed passionately.

This was too much for Helena's kindly nature, and though the moment before she was going to say she dared not ask her father, she had not now the heart to do so, and going gently to her, she pressed her lips on her burning forehead, and said—

“Indeed, dear Mrs. Hamilton, I will do all I can for you; I must go now, or papa will be waiting dinner; I will be here in time to-morrow.”

“God bless and thank you, darling,” said Mrs. Hamilton, kissing her fondly, and then, more worried and disturbed than she had ever been in her young life before, Helena left the cottage.

She was only just in time for dinner; it was being

placed on the table as she entered ; still she was there, and took her mother's vacant place at the head of the table. Very silent she was too all dinner—her thoughts full of one unpleasant subject, the most harassing part being the dread of appealing to her father to lend the money, which, she felt almost sure, he would object to. As soon as dinner was ended, and she could get away from the room, she went to her own to see how large a sum she possessed. It was some time since she had looked into the little purse she kept for charitable purposes, and she hoped that with the money she had in hand she might manage to have enough to pay a week's lodging, if that was all. To her delight she found altogether she could collect three pounds ; so determining to take that with her in the morning when she went to her friend, she returned to the drawing-room, in much better spirits, though still afraid that her father would every minute ask her what Mrs. Hamilton wanted with her, and she felt most unwilling to mention the painful revelation she had heard ; but luckily her father seemed utterly to have forgotten the subject, and shortly left the room, to sit with Arthur and mamma, he said, and that she must entertain "the boys."

As soon as the door had closed on him, Leslie threw down the paper he was reading, and said—

"I have been thinking positively, although I only a few hours ago said it was a waste of time—thinking of what you said so much that I am actually going to-morrow to London to be useful to some one ; very useful, I hope, and I trust that the sensation of being so will be so agreeable to me, that I shall endeavour for the future to be an active member of society, and not like 'dumb driven cattle,' but a hero in the strife.

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Shall you be proud of having first raised me from my indolence?"

"Very proud, Walter. I think every one can, and ought to be, useful in some way or other."

"Exactly, and you would think it useful to open the eyes of a person to the demerits of another. I mean to prevent some one from being carried away by her warmth of feeling, to waste her affections on an undeserving object."

Helena looked up quickly at him.

"Yes, I should think it very useful, but what do you mean?"

"I mean that in that manner I am about to make myself useful; that I am going to spare no pains to prevent a warm-hearted, enthusiastic person involving herself in countless annoyances and difficulties through her misapprehension of the character of another."

Helena made no answer, for she felt that she was aware of his meaning, and she was not so thoroughly prepared to defend her friend as before her last interview. At that moment George's request for some kind of amusement enabled her to drop the subject, and going to the piano, she played and sang to them for the rest of the evening.

In the morning, when Esther came to call her, she told her that Arthur had passed a very bad night, and was very feverish, but that he was now dozing, and Mrs. Foster would rather she did not come in till she rang, for fear of waking him; so dressing quickly, she thought she would at once go down to Bellevue, and be back in time for prayers and breakfast.

Mrs. Hamilton was not up, Mrs. Cramp said, when Helena arrived, breathless with running, at the cottage:

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she would ask if she would see her, if Miss Leslie would walk in. Some time elapsed, and Helena sat on thorns, for no one knew at home where she was, and she dreaded being late. At length the maid came to request she would go up-stairs, where she found Mrs. Hamilton in bed, her beautiful hair tossed loosely on the pillow, her face flushed, and her eyes looking bright with fever.

“Oh! my dear child,” she exclaimed, “I am so ill; how I am to travel I know not. And yet I cannot rest here, go I must. Have you got the money?”

“I have some,” answered Helena; “how much do you want?”

“Well, not much. Now I think I ought to give this woman a fortnight's pay for the disappointment, that will be four guineas; and then the little house-keeping will amount to a trifle more. She will tell you how much, if like a dear child you will go down and settle with her.”

“But the rooms were only hired by the week. I think she will be satisfied with a week's pay,” said poor Helena; “for I really have only three pounds I can lend you.”

“Oh! my dear, I cannot be shabby to the woman. Have you asked your father to assist me?”

“No,” answered Helena, blushing. “I did not think he would like it, and I preferred doing all I could myself.”

“Surely he wouldn't have scrupled to lend me a paltry sovereign or two; but I can manage with what you can do, I daresay. You say you have three pounds. Then here,” she said, drawing a very handsome purse from under her pillow, “are three more. That will pay me out here, I hope, and leave me enough to get to

London; when there, that good Bolton will help me, until my grand quarter's allowance is due. Go down at once, and see the woman. I cannot go by the next train; I really am not well enough, but by the 12.20. Tell her I shall go. You must say, love, important business compels me to alter my mind, and return to London. Dear child, you are my guardian angel."

Helena, not particularly relishing her commission, went, however, at once. As she expected, Mrs. Cramp was much disappointed, but was satisfied with the payment, only she hoped the lady would pay for the papers she had ordered for the two rooms, having got them purposely for her, and she had requested they might be got at once, as she could not live in such rooms. She had asked to be allowed to choose the patterns, and had of course selected the most expensive, so that poor Helena found she had nothing remaining of the six pounds. Her only three were gone, all the money she had; but still that was a thousand times better than asking her father. It was only her own inconvenience, and the loss of any little thing she might want to purchase between this and her next quarter; and so she returned to her friend's room to wish her good-bye, and hurry home. She was just in time; the prayer-bell was ringing as she entered the house. She flew up-stairs, threw her hat and cloak and empty purse on the bed, and with a sigh of relief descended to the dining-room. As she did so the thought suddenly occurred to her that she had received no paper empowering her to receive Mrs. Hamilton's money, and so pay herself, as she had proposed; but still it was well she had not, for was it not like doubting her? Of course she would repay her when she could; so she was glad after all she had not

got it, and satisfied herself with the thought that if she were never paid she had at least been of use to one who so much needed kindness. During breakfast she managed to impart the news of Mrs. Hamilton's hasty resolve to leave for London, but she did not like to give the real reason, so evaded it by saying, "Family affairs obliged her." A strange smile passed over Mr. Leslie's face as she spoke, and she noticed that he and her father exchanged glances.

"I too, you know, am bound for London," he said. "Perhaps I may have the pleasure of travelling with your delightful friend."

"Very possibly, if you go by the same train. Have you finished breakfast, papa?" she continued, anxious to avoid any further conversation.

"Yes, quite; go and see how Arthur is now."

"Is he awake?"

"Yes, the prayer-bell woke him. I forgot to forbid their ringing, foolishly."

Helena left the room at once, glad to escape, and her father and Mr. Leslie remained in earnest conversation, until it was time for the latter to betake himself to the station.

All that day Helena found it difficult to employ herself. It was a great blank to her, the absence of the person in whom she had so warmly interested herself. Her mother preferred nursing Arthur herself, so she had nothing to do in the sick-room, and at length she determined to go to the school and see how the mistress had managed with her class the day she was absent.

On her way she met the Miss Mantles, who said they were just coming to see her; they had had a most successful meeting the other night, better than ever,

and they were now out collecting subscriptions for material; could she pay hers then, or should they call for it. Helena's colour mounted to her hair, she had utterly forgotten the subscription was due, and she had given her last penny to Mrs. Hamilton; however, she summoned courage to say it would be more convenient the following week, and that now she was in haste to get to school before it closed, and merely wished them good-bye.

Just as she reached the school door, she met her father and Mr. Lee, arm-in-arm, and apparently in earnest conversation, but she took no particular notice of the occurrence, as she knew her father frequently gave his advice to Mr. Lee when he asked him, on matters connected with the health of the parish, and concluded it was some subject of draining or ventilation which now occupied them; they nodded to her, and she passed on into the school. On her return home about an hour afterwards she again saw Mr. Lee, alone, about to enter their house. He stopped when he saw her, and said as she came up with him—

“I was coming to see you, are you going in?”

“Yes, I am,” answered Helena, wonderingly.

“I will follow you,” and opening the gate for her to pass through, he followed her up the little drive to the house.

She showed him into the dining-room, and handing her a chair he begged her to be seated, as he had a word or two to say to her.

“I am afraid,” he began, smiling kindly at her, “that I am going to make you think me very ungrateful. Since my ministration in this parish you have been most kind, and striven hard to assist me in my labours, which I have deemed highly praiseworthy in so young

a lady as yourself, and I am now about to ask you to discontinue them. Papa and I have been having a long talk, and he tells me that when I found a curate, he lost a daughter. Now, my dear child," continued the old man, "this must not be; the old saying of 'Charity begins at home,' has a deep and serious meaning: the love and forbearance of that truly Christian virtue is to be shown most fully in our own homes, and there it must lead us to be useful, cheerful, and obedient; 'believing all things, enduring all things, hoping all things.' When every duty has been there fulfilled, it is a good and Christian duty to help and assist your poorer neighbours, but never must the one act of duty be done at the sacrifice of the other. You are very young, and your judgment is not sufficiently matured, nor your capability of arranging a variety of business great enough to enable you to do anything of great importance in a parish, and all that is required of you at home as well. You must try, my child, to content yourself with the duties which God has distinctly placed before you, and not make them for yourself; as I said the other day, there are indeed quiet heroines in their peaceful homes, working for God and the cause of righteousness with more true zeal and devotion than those who busy themselves in the world, and whose good works are seen of man. The gratification of our own vanity too often leads us to occupy ourselves in matters which really do not need our assistance, to the neglect of those minor duties of which the world knows nothing, and which we should get no credit for fulfilling. If when all that is required of you at home is done, you can find time to make a frock for some poor little child, or give an hour or two in the week to read to some poor ignorant or

sightless old body, you will be doing real good, and as your amiable nature makes it a pleasant occupation to you, you will have the satisfaction of combining pleasure and duty; but indeed, my dear young lady, I would recommend your resolutely determining to fulfil all home duties first."

As he paused, Helena thought for a reply; she said in a low voice, "But I have no home duties: mamma does everything."

"Exactly, but ought mamma to do everything? Forgive my plain speaking: should not a willing, loving little daughter take from mamma the burden of household affairs, and, above all, home duties which lie so especially in a girl's province and which are so often neglected, helping to brighten the home and make it a happy one to all its members? How often have I seen in the home circle, parents and brothers asking their girls to play or sing, and meeting always the unkind denial, when, had strangers been there, they would have taken the utmost pains to display their talents for the amusement of their visitors. Surely those who have paid for their children's education should be those the most to profit by it."

"Do you think, then," said poor Helena, with difficulty restraining tears of vexation, "that I ought to give up my school class, and the Dorcas meeting, and the old women!"

"I would give up all, certainly, that interfered with home. You see you are not called to this work; you are not wife, daughter, or sister of a clergyman, and therefore it does not become part of your duty for which special time *must* be provided. If you have leisure, and it can be so profitably employed as in serving others, no one for one moment would forbid it;

only the higher claim of duty to your parents must first be attended to. I am always most unwilling to baulk good intentions, or throw cold water on any act of benevolence; but if each individual in a parish would take care of those persons they employ, they would find enough to do themselves, and save the necessity for a great deal of work for others, and by confiding to the clergyman's care such money as they can afford to give away in alms, much encouragement of undeserving persons would be spared, and the worthy obtain, in consequence, more support. To administer assistance judiciously is, I assure you, one of the most difficult things to do, and wonderfully little understood by those most anxious to do it. Now I know I have distressed and disappointed you, and it is among a clergyman's many trying duties, that of rebuking; but you know it is his duty, however unpleasant. I believe that you will, after I am gone, think kindly of what I have said, and perceive, however it may vex you now, with what affectionate interest in your well-being I have thus spoken to you. On considering the matter, I think you will find that you can manage still some of your self-imposed tasks, and not have to resign all which so interests you. Suppose you keep Betty Hooker, now," he said, smiling somewhat archly, as he knew the visitations to the said Betty had been discontinued rather lately — "a cheerful young face, with fresh, bright ideas, really is a benefit to her, with her gloomy, fretful disposition—and your school class twice a week. I think your leisure will then be quite filled up, and you will give yourself time to be the sunshine of a home which God has seen fit to visit with many clouds. Now, I will say no more. You will not quite hate me,

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will you? But, forgive me if I have fulfilled my mission clumsily."

Helena could not answer, but she shook the hand held out to her very heartily; and when the door closed on the good vicar, flew to her own room to weep out there her sorrow and vexation.

The following morning's post brought her a letter from Mrs. Hamilton, full of professions of affection, and how she missed her, etc. That good creature, Bolton, had procured charming apartments for her in the neighbourhood of the Regent's Park, and where she hoped Helena, as soon as her brother was well, would come and cheer her solitude; but not one word of the three pounds. And with a sigh, Helena laid the letter down, and her thoughts recurred to what Leslie had said, and to the purpose of his journey to London.

He returned by a late train that evening, but he made no mention of Mrs. Hamilton, neither did Helena. Her father had not alluded to Mr. Lee's visit, nor did she to him. She had, as he had said she would, thought over his conversation, and her conscience had borne such testimony to the truth of his words that she had resolved to take up a new course of action altogether, and during that day had busied herself about the house as she had never done before, and, moreover, taken up the table linen, which was laid aside when Arthur met with his accident, and worked at it so diligently as almost to finish it, besides sitting for two hours with Arthur whilst her mother lay down. The frocks and flannels she had been so busily engaged on for the poor she had packed up with a letter to Miss Mantle, offering them to her as her subscription to the Dorcas Society, and had requested her to undertake the management, as she

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could not herself be longer spared from home ; so that night Helena laid her head on her pillow in proud consciousness of having done her duty, and performed an act of self-sacrifice, which purchased for her that best of all rewards, a peaceful and satisfied conscience.

The next morning Arthur was pronounced so much better that he might be allowed to come down ; and



Helena worked with a good will, to have everything comfortable for his reception, fresh flowers cut, and everything looking a bright and cheerful welcome. His sweet smile of thanks she could not but acknowledge was cheaply purchased.

She had gone, after luncheon, on to the lawn with her work, for it was very warm and fine, and the shadow

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beneath the trees looked tempting ; but she had not been seated long when Mr. Leslie joined her.

“ It is very pleasant out here, is it not ? ” he said ; “ just the place and time for a story. May I tell you one whilst you work ? ”

“ Certainly ; I should like it of all things, ” answered Helena.

“ Well, we will begin in the good old style. Once upon a time there lived in an old country town a lady and gentleman, with one little girl. She was beautiful and intelligent, and an only child. The consequence which too often results from this combination was, that they spoilt her, and with all her fascination she grew up a selfish, headstrong, wilful girl, but beautiful beyond compare, so that she found it no difficulty to make slaves of all who came in her way. She was singularly clever, but would apply herself to no study, so that at seventeen she could neither read, write, nor spell properly. At that time she lost both her parents within a few months of each other, and was left to the care of her only remaining relative, an uncle, a fox-hunting squire, and a bachelor, her father's executor and trustee for her property. He, fascinated by her beauty, and charmed with her engaging manners, continued the system of unlimited indulgence, and a wild, happy life she led there, seldom seeing any female society, but thrown amongst a lot of hunting men, who found the house more than ever agreeable since it was tenanted by the young beauty. One amongst them, superior to the others in looks and acquirements, she especially favoured, but soon found how deficient she was in the intelligence which would render her a fit companion for him, and with the strong determination of her character

set to work to study, and before a twelvemonth was ended had mastered all difficulties, and was as fair a scholar as any young lady of her age. Sir Everard Crosby, the young man for whom she had thus exerted herself, soon perceived the impression he had made, and knowing she had money, which would, he thought, be useful to him, he proposed to her and married her, caring not nearly so much for her as his favourite hunter. The uncle remonstrated with her, and advised her warmly not to dream of marrying a man who was thoroughly unprincipled, and had nothing to recommend him but a good manner and a certain amount of learning, which he had the tact to make appear very profound; but it was too late in the day to attempt to control the headstrong imperious beauty. They were married, and the anticipated results followed; the reckless spending of all her money by her husband, and his consequent neglect and ill-usage: her temper, unaccustomed to be restrained, grew daily wilder and more ungovernable, till, ashamed of the scenes she would even make in public, he suggested a separate maintenance. This was agreed to, and she returned to her uncle; but disappointment and vexation had so soured her, that a wild ungovernable temper made the poor old man so wretched he was forced to request her to leave him. She had one little girl, a sweet, gentle, delicate child, whom she certainly idolized, but had no idea how to manage or care for it; and a kind, affectionate widow lady in the neighbourhood, living alone on a handsome property, offered her a home with her, out of compassion to the sad large eyes of the child, which had always seemed to look pleadingly up in her gentle face for refuge from her violent though adoring mother. Lady

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Crosby accepted the offer with professions of overpowering gratitude, and for a little while all went well; the gentle widow she spoke of as an angel, and with her she remained until death laid its hand on her poor child, who in her last illness was patiently and tenderly nursed by this good and Christian lady.

The little spirit had not long been gone to its rest when the unhappy temper of the mother, roused by a suggestion of her kind friend's that she should make peace with and return to her husband, broke out, and at once and indignantly she left the house, startling with violent invectives the gentle being who had so befriended her. From thence she went abroad for some years, taking with her an artful designing servant, whom the widow lady had discharged, leaving behind debts contracted through the whole town, which her true friend paid in the noblest way, that no stain might rest on the name of her in whom she had once been so interested, and who was the mother of the little angel whose tender eyes had left their light in her heart.

Recklessly generous, Lady Crosby took a fancy abroad to a poor French family, whom she loaded with benefits, till she became embarrassed herself, and was obliged to write to England to borrow money to pay her way home again. The money was lent to her by—by—I may as well say, Miss Foster, for your face tells me you know the heroine of my story—by Lady Warrington.

She has never repaid it, and since your visit there last autumn Lady Crosby has quarrelled with her for asking for it. Have I now your pardon for the sceptical smiles which have offended you, and have I by

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thus rudely tearing away the veil which shielded your friend's faults, made you lose your faith in human nature?"

"How did you know all this?" asked Helena, in a low voice.

"Why, a day or two before I came here, I went to call on Lady Warrington, and she was full of a long story, to which I paid but little attention at the time, about some lady to whom she had lent money, and who not only did not pay her, but had quarrelled with her for asking to be paid. When I heard you speaking of this beautiful, charming, and ill-used lady, whom you had met at Lady Warrington's, my suspicions were instantly aroused, and I spoke to my uncle, suggesting that I should go to town and ascertain for a fact whether this was the lady of whom she had spoken, considering that a 'dangerous and fascinating beauty,' as Lady Warrington denominated her, was not a person for one like my little enthusiastic cousin to be very intimate with; that she has had much sorrow, poor thing, there can be no question; but she has met with such unequalled kindness from so many persons, that she ought to speak well of her fellow-creatures, instead of bitterly and hardly, as I hear she always does. I know, dear Helena," he said kindly, laying aside all jest as he spoke, "that I have pained you very much; but I hope you will forgive me, for indeed it is to spare you more pain."

"I cannot but forgive," answered Helena, "what is so kindly meant; but I feel as though I should never love, that is, believe again."

"I have no fear of so sad a result, Helena; it will, I hope, only act as a warning to you to be more cautious in forming new friendships, or taking up people's causes.

I trust we shall both profit by the lessons we have taught each other."

"Taught each other!" said Helena, wonderingly.

"Yes, Helena, much as I laugh at you, you really have made me feel ashamed of myself as I have contrasted your desire for usefulness and your active life with my idle one; and I am positively, after this holiday, going to turn over a new leaf, and see if I can find the work that there is for me to do, for I suppose I've got some about the world somewhere."

"Yes," said Helena, sighing, "but it is difficult to find the right work."

"Because we are apt to look for it too far ahead," said another voice joining in the conversation.

It was her father. He put his hand gently on her shoulder, and looking kindly and tenderly in her sweet, young face, continued—

"A woman's duties are all very near her; they are in every part of her home, and there it is her holy province to be the better angel, the guide in all difficulties, the consoler in all sorrows, the light that gladdens all; that is your work, my little maiden, here, in your old father's home, and some day, perhaps, in a husband's."

Helena smiled through her tears, but said nothing; her heart was too full for words, but the lesson had sunk deep, and though at first the house-work seemed dull and irksome to her, and she missed the importance which her self-imposed tasks had she fancied given her, by degrees she learnt to rejoice in the tender smile of thanks which her mother gave her for some little attention, or for the forethought which had saved her some household care; and at length she found that it was quite possible to perform acts of kindness and deeds of Christian

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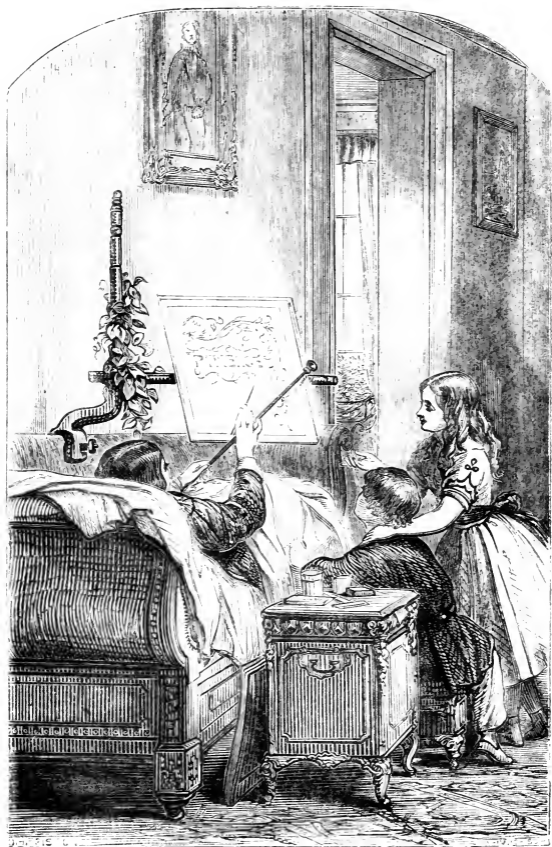
charity to her poorer neighbours, without neglecting what Mr. Lee had bid her remember was her first duty. As she learnt to keep her father's house, and went about with her keys, like a sober little matron, with a happy smile on her bright face, and a proud consciousness that store-room and linen-press were in perfect order, under her rule and management, she was able to send soup to the sick, and rolls of old linen, and many things, which, knowing as she did the wants of the poor, she could supply them with; so that many a heartier blessing was bestowed on her now than when she thought herself of more importance, and carried with her, though scarcely aware of it herself, a haughty manner, and a hard unloving mode of performing what she thought her duty, so often acquired by those who make what should be done in loving obedience, meekly and humbly for His sake, who bade us care for His poor, a hard task, a mere business, as they would buy or sell, or do any other worldly work.

Months rolled on, and she heard nothing of Mrs Hamilton, till one day a letter came from her with a foreign post-mark, saying that, having found out Bolton in an infamous attempt to defraud and deceive her, and being still annoyed by her husband, thoroughly disgusted with everything and everybody, she had left England for ever. Not one word did she say of the three pounds; but wound up with the assurance that the solitary pleasure and recollection of England to her would be the memory of her darling child, and of the young, fresh, warm-hearted girl who had once loved and befriended her. In after years, Helena frequently heard of the beautiful and clever woman, who kept winning friends by her fascination, and losing them by her

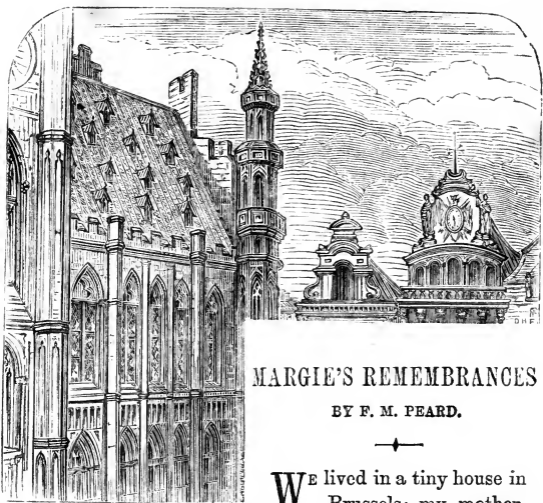
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violence; and though in her memory there lingered the sweet feeling of the old love—she was quite willing to agree with her father in his disbelief of “victims,” and his assurance that those who complain of having no friends have brought the fate upon themselves, and merit the desertion they so sadly deplore.





"FAINT, YET PURSUING."



MARGIE'S REMEMBRANCES

BY F. M. PEARD.



WE lived in a tiny house in Brussels; my mother, little Barbara, and I. What took us there was my father's wish, when he felt his own health failing fast, that my mother should be near some relations of his, who, he hoped, would be a comfort to her in the time of her lonely widowhood. He always said that his death was near, though the doctors spoke much more favourably, and his secret feeling was a true one, for a very short time after we had settled into our new home he died, and we were left alone as I said above. I have often wondered since then how my mother survived the shock; she had so clinging and affectionate a nature that, once deprived of her support, it seemed as if she must fall powerless to the earth: but the battle is not

always to the strong, and though for a time she was utterly prostrated, after a few months she recovered to be what she was before. I was ten years old at the time, and Barbara a baby of three. Probably we both inherited more of my father's than my mother's natural disposition, but well would it have been for me if I, who had the blessing of his example and teaching, had let them work in my heart, so that my character might have resembled that to which his had been trained. I can see now, and I have read it in the packet of letters treasured so long in my mother's desk, and now my precious inheritance, that he was by nature stern, unyielding, perhaps somewhat unsparing; but this was so softened by Christian charity that what rests most deeply in my remembrance is his tenderness, his patience, and his never-failing forbearance.

Our means were very small, and our abode very unpretending. It was a small house just outside the Port de Schaerbeck, chosen on account of the cheapness of living beyond the barriers; and, though my mother sometimes complained of the unfashionable situation, such of our friends as cared for us found no obstacle in its remoteness, and for others it did not matter. Besides, Brussels is such a compact little city, that from each part of it you are within an easy reach of everything. There are the Boulevards for those who like them, and the pretty park at the end of the Rue Royale, and the Allée Verte; and for longer rambles Laeken, with the king's country palace, and the gleaming white marble statue of Malibran in the cemetery, which they have been obliged to wall up because the peasantry paid their devotions to it, under the belief that it was a figure of the Virgin. These were our principal

walks, but Barbara and I often made expeditions with our friends beyond what my mother's strength could manage.

That quaint little house, how vividly it comes before me now!—so clean that TrINETTE, our one servant, would hardly even allow a speck of dust to rest upon the outside, and kept the pavement so spotless that we might have eaten our dinner there: so small that my mother used to say that when Barbara was grown up it could not hold us all. Downstairs besides the kitchen was the little *salle*, where our dinners were sent in daily from a neighbouring *café*, and, because it was rather a gloomy little apartment, we kept the windows filled, Brussels fashion, with the brightest flowers our garden could produce. Above this was a miniature double drawing-room, which it was my mother's delight should look as English as possible, and one great step in that direction was taken by having a real open fire-place instead of a suffocating stove: by its side was her bedroom, and above were our little dormitories.

We grew up wild and but half educated, doing our own wills, and finding our own pleasures: how bitterly now do I regret those days and their fruits! Had my father been alive it would have been different; but my dear mother was so gentle and yielding that our impetuous wills carried all before them, and it was enough for us to have set our hearts upon anything to ensure the accomplishment of even the wildest scheme. Of course, being the eldest, I had some power in my hands of controlling Barbara, but it was for little good that I exercised it; I loved her with a strong passionate love which would have given up everything for her sake, and, untutored as I was, all that I did was to watch

that she was never thwarted, and indulge all her whims. The real suffering which my mother endured when full of anxiety about our wild pranks, I believe I never in the least realized; though now I can remember her tears one evening when it was Carnival time, and we had taken it into our heads to remain at a house from which we expected to have a good view of a torch-light procession. She had no idea as to where we were, and, I believe, suffered agonies of terror lest we might have been trampled down among the crowd.

There could hardly have been a worse training than all this for two high-spirited girls like ourselves; and no good fruit could spring from such utter want of discipline, and selfish disregard for the wishes of others. Perhaps the evil was aggravated by our foreign home; I think we had a sort of impression that away from England and our relations we might do very much what we pleased. I ought not to say "we," because Barbara was too childish to be governed by such considerations at the time I am going to tell you about; but I have always been so accustomed to identify her with myself, that in looking back I lose sight of the difference in our ages. There is no space here for me to give an account of all the years of my life, and indeed I think my very best friends would weary over their monotony; but I should like to tell you of one of the chief events in these years, and I wish it because it seems to me that I was not very different from other girls, and my experiences may help them along the rough road which we all have to travel.

At the time, then, when my story begins, I was fourteen, and Barbara seven years old. She is very pretty still, and I know will always remain so to my

eyes, but I can never make you understand how beautiful she was as a child. Her forehead was not high, but broad; her eyes of the richest velvet brown, as dark as they could be without melting into black. Prettiest of all was the shape of her small head, and the golden hair which rippled over it; hair which, even when tossed and ruffled in the wildest disorder, could never look rough. I was as proud of her beauty as my mother was, and on this point I had the sense to keep my admiration to myself, for I had the greatest possible horror of my darling's growing up as vain and dress-loving as many of the Belgian girls about us.

Our education was as unregulated as the rest of our lives. Before my father died he had taught me as much as his failing health would allow; I had, therefore, in many things been well grounded, and my mind in some measure drawn out. I had also, I believe, very fair abilities, and when the fit was upon me, or I was pitted against others of my own age, I could work both hard and well; but I was guided by no rule except that of self-pleasing, and steadiness carried others to the front who at first were far behind me in talent and powers of comprehension.

It may be supposed how Barbara's lessons fared when they were committed to my superintendence, because my mother did not feel herself strong enough to undertake them. We made a pretence of them every morning, the schoolroom being the little dining-room, and Barbara's seat the floor, on which she curled herself up, her elbows on her knees, her chin on her hands, and her bright eyes dancing with fun and mischief. She was exceedingly backward in her reading, and ought really to have worked away at such sentences as

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"A MAN WENT OUT FOR A WALK," but her fancies and my educational theories despised these ancient and well-beaten paths, and soared at once to higher flights of literature. Generally I picked out the most amusing portions of the Vicar of Wakefield, such as the ride to church, or the upset of the Miss Primrose's washes, and Barbara scrambled through the very smallest parts of



speech, and left long words to me; while I was called upon, in addition, to illustrate the comic parts with sketches in pen and ink. Sometimes, if I was in an inventive humour, and Barbara's doll made no pressing claims upon her mistress, these readings took up the whole of the time that was ostensibly allotted to lessons, at others the Primrose family were voted dull, and a

spelling-lesson began, commonly to terminate in three minutes with "You dear old tiresome Margie, what pudding are we going to have to-day?" or, "Oh, Margie, I *am* so tired, and I never get any holidays at all!" according as fun or pathos was the feature of the moment.

There was no great variety to be found in our days. My mother's delicate health prevented our breakfasting until late. In the middle of the day our tiny dinner was brought in from the *restaurant*, and in the evening Trinettes delicious coffee and light French rolls made a meal, to which we still by courtesy gave the name of tea. On Sunday mornings, at half-past eight, my aunt, Madame Bidaut, took Barbara and me through the long Rue Royale to the Place at the end, with the statue of Godfrey de Bouillon in the middle of it, and so down to the little English church. Before the afternoon service, if my mother felt pretty well, she used to go with us for one turn in the Park at the time when most of our acquaintances congregated there, and the alleys swarmed with gaily-dressed ladies. Since then, how have I learned to prize the quiet hours of an English Sunday!

Twice a week I went to a school for gymnastics, because it was thought that my long awkward figure wanted improvement; and I rather enjoyed the fun, as being bold and daring I could venture upon feats at which the Belgian girls stared aghast. The only other instruction I received was from Monsieur Larron, my French drawing master; and he was the one person who obliged me to mind what he said, and with whom I could never be idle. He had the power of enforcing attention, and I had fortunately so much love for draw-

ing, that I made considerable progress in the art. The remainder of our days we spent very much as we liked, sometimes going with my mother for a stroll along the Boulevard, but more often rambling away by ourselves in a way which my aunt, Madame Bidaut, called "inexpressibly reprehensible!"

I am sorry to say that I could not bear my aunt, and as I took no trouble to hide my dislike, it was not to be expected that she should have very kindly feelings towards me. She was my mother's half-sister, and had married a Belgian doctor, and it was with the idea that my mother would be happier at being near her almost only surviving relation, that my father had moved to Brussels. The young expect perfection, and are generally uncharitable; I could only see that side of Aunt Elizabeth's character which was the most unattractive, therefore, whenever we came into contact, we jarred. She loved patronising, and I was terribly independent. I hated her long talks with my mother because I thought she tyrannized over her, and I could not bear any one to do that but myself. Besides which, I knew that Barbara and I were usually the subjects of these conversations, and that our faults were held up to the light with a sternness that too often was very just, but was also very unmerciful. Suggestions, therefore, which my mother would doubtingly put before me, and which common sense alone would have induced me to acknowledge as right, I resented and opposed with all my might, just because they came from Aunt Elizabeth.

She had a daughter, my cousin Pauline, only a year older than myself; but this bond, which in our solitary position should naturally have been a very close and

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dear one, became unhappily only another cause for dislike. Pauline was the person who was constantly held up before me as both a pattern and a contrast. I was plain, she was pretty; I was untidy, she was neatness itself; I was heedless, Pauline's head was never in fault. My whole nature seemed full of uncomfortable bumps and angles, which never presented themselves to view in my steady cousin. I do not think that the knowledge of these advantages excited any jealousy in my mind. If I had been let alone to do so I should most likely have acknowledged and heartily admired them; but my aunt was injudicious in constantly irritating me with comparisons, and the natural consequence followed. I disliked Pauline as much as her mother, and when I heard the quick, hard step upon the stairs, or caught the first glimpse of the striped green silk in which I wickedly believed my aunt arrayed herself when she wished most completely to overwhelm my mother, I either fled or prepared myself for battle, and behaved very badly in the encounter.

Doctor Bidaut I liked when we saw him, but that was only occasionally of an evening, when he sat at a little table with his own lamp and books, removed from the rest of the party. I often found myself watching his face. Thin, sallow, and grave though it was, there was an expression of power about it which took my girlish fancy; and although he seldom spoke, and scarcely seemed one of us, I felt sure that Aunt Elizabeth was far less disagreeable in his presence. Furthermore, he won all my gratitude one evening when some comparison was made between me and Pauline—of course to my disadvantage—by looking up and saying quietly, "All have not the same qualities;

Margu rite is not orderly like Pauline, but her talents are far greater." I think this speech came upon his wife like a thunderbolt. My dear mother was afraid she was hurt and began disclaiming, but after that night I was spared any more comparisons before Doctor Bidaut.

I have now as well as I can explained our position in Brussels, and described the only relations with whom we were then acquainted. Very soon the circle was to become unexpectedly enlarged.

XX.

FOREIGN letters so rarely arrived at our house, that we were a good deal excited when one winter evening Trinette interrupted our tea with a letter for "Madame." The English post marks and the English direction to Mrs. Kelly raised our curiosity to its highest pitch; my mother was quite nervous, her cheeks flushed with the soft pink tint that came as readily as with a child, and her hands trembled so much that she could hardly break the seal. I never could understand this painful nervousness which any surprise was apt to cause, but put it down as only mamma's way, and now longed greatly to know what news the letter contained; while Barbara scrambled on her knee and made a pretence of reading its secrets and disclosing them to her doll in an audible whisper, with particular commands that she was on no account to tell.

"Oh, dear!" said my mother, looking up at last with a bewildered face, "this is very unexpected. I

don't quite know what we are to do, Margie, or how we can manage. Who would have thought of their coming?"

"What is it about? Who are coming, mamma?"

"Your uncle and aunt Henry. I can't quite make out about it, and there are so many figures which I don't understand, but it seems to me they may be here any day. Dear, dear, where are they to go?"

My mother disliked independent action so much, that in the absence of other counsellors she was accustomed to appeal to me as if I had been a much older person; so I took the letter, and made out that my uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Cliff, were indeed coming to Brussels.

"It is on their way to see Frank at Bonn, mamma. He has been ill, and they are not happy about him. Let me see. Tuesday—steamer—Antwerp, 10.30—that must be to-morrow. Oh, yes, they mean to spend all to-morrow at Antwerp, stop at Malines, and be here on Wednesday at five. Mamma, do you see? Robert and Hester are coming too."

"The children!" exclaimed my mother, faintly. "My dear love, where can they sleep? I must really go and speak to your Aunt Elizabeth."

"What for, mamma?" I said, jealously; "it is quite easy to settle. Of course they can't come here, because we have scarcely room for a fly; but we can get rooms for them at the Hotel de France."

"It seems so inhospitable," my mother hesitatingly murmured; "but I suppose it will be best, and perhaps Aunt Elizabeth will help you to choose nice rooms."

"Now, mamma, don't let us have her poking about and spoiling everything."

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“ Oh, Margie, Margie ! ”

But, as usual, I had my own way, and my mother knocked herself up the next morning with a tramp through the snowy streets, and up the never-ending stairs of the hotel, besides giving offence to Aunt Elizabeth, who came that afternoon, and found everything arranged without her. We chose rooms overlooking the Park, sent a letter to Antwerp to notify the fact, and then awaited Thursday morning as quietly as we could, which, with Barbara and me, was not quietly at all. My mother was even more shy and nervous than usual. She always dreaded strangers, but Mr. and Mrs. Cliff happened to be more formidable to her than any others. They were my father's sister and brother-in-law, and I believe his family showed such great displeasure at his marriage with my dear mother, that he had as much as possible shielded her from any contact with them. Since his death they had contented themselves with quarterly letters and general expressions of sympathy, which were intended to serve instead of more substantial help to the widow and children ; until now it was remembered that Margaret had a house in Brussels, and that she really might be of some use. My mother was so gentle and uncomplaining, that she had never hinted before us at any want of kindness from her husband's family. I sometimes wondered that we never saw any of the cousins of whom my father spoke ; but having never known another state of things, I supposed it to be natural, and thought it was only Aunt Elizabeth's general disagreeableness that made her sniff and snort, and wonder what *they* came for on the evening of Mr. and Mrs. Cliff's arrival.

After all our preparations, they took us by surprise

the next morning, when I was standing before my mother, urging her with all my might to start for the hotel, and she was hanging back from fear of being thought intrusive. Our difficulties were soon settled, for Barbara came flying in—

“Robert and Hester are come, Margie, and Uncle Henry is so fat.”

I hope Uncle Henry did not hear, for the next moment they were in the room: my aunt fair, substantial, and majestic; my uncle short and broad; and Hester and Robert light-haired, blue-eyed, thoroughly British-looking children, rather younger than myself. From what I can remember of the interview, Mr. and Mrs. Cliff were bent upon being gracious, and I fancy that my mother's gentle timidity pleased them exceedingly, for everything was charming—Brussels, the hotel, the snow, Barbara and I, our rooms, everything down to the faded old carpet with a patch in it, on which always stood my mother's footstool.

“So nice,” said my aunt, approvingly; and my poor mother looked round with a sigh at her shabby little belongings, and said, “Yes, it all did well enough.”

At last rose a discussion of the new-comers' plans and of Frank's illness, and it appeared that in consequence of letters received that morning, Mr. and Mrs. Cliff found it necessary to push on without delay. Then came a doubt about the dear children, and at last, after several unsuccessful hints, the open expression of a wish that dear Margaret would allow them to remain with her during their absence in Germany.

My mother coloured, and looked appealingly at me; then said something gently about liking it so much, only the house was very small.

"There is the little lumber-room," I suggested, because I was burning with impatience at the idea of any hindrances, and my aunt caught at the words. Anything would do, they might be stowed away anywhere; but it would be the greatest comfort, and such an advantage to the dear children, to know each other better. My mother very soon was led to agree to the proposition, partly because she had always a difficulty in saying no, partly because she saw my heart was set upon it, and partly because she really believed it might be advantageous to us. When Aunt Elizabeth came that evening to hear a report of the day's proceedings, she only remarked, in the tone which always set my teeth on edge—

"Exactly. I knew there was some object in their coming; this will be a very cheap way of letting their children learn French. Margaret, I am surprised at your want of spirit!"

Barbara and I went through plenty of sight-seeing that afternoon, and dined, to our great delight, at the table d'hôte; after which, Uncle Henry and Robert walked home with us. I did not fancy my uncle was very wise, and I suspected that he was a good deal under his wife's dominion; but he was exceedingly good-natured, and on the whole we enjoyed our day as much as we could wish.

How I worried poor Trinette the next morning! She and I varied much in our feelings towards one another; sometimes I racketed her out of her senses, when she revenged herself by pouring out a voluble list of grievances to "madame;" at others we lived in a sort of armed truce. But the sentiment of her life was love for the *petite*, and her round, flat face would abso-

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lutely beam with delight when Barbara came to coax for anything with the pretty beseeching ways, which she knew could not be resisted. She kept Trinette in good humour this busy morning, when so much had to be arranged. Barbara was to sleep with my mother and Hester with me, but it required some ingenuity to transmogrify the tiny lumber-room into a bed-room for Master Robert, and to manage that when he was in it he should not be quite suffocated. We had done our best by the time the brother and sister arrived in a state of awkward shyness, which my mother's gentle kindness soon dispelled; so that Robert, before going to bed that night, confided to me that staying behind was jolly.

I liked him the best although he was the youngest, because I thought Hester inclined to be fine. Everything was measured by the standard of her own belongings, and compared with "our house," "our garden," "our people." I really believe she thought grand old Sainte Gudule inferior in architecture to the village church at Hatherleigh. Into the bargain she admired herself, and Barbara used to bring Robert to laugh at her "doing the peacock" before some glass, where she fancied herself unperceived. I think we tormented poor Hester greatly, for her faults were just those with which I could not sympathize, and there was no deep feeling of affection between the brother and sister to lead them to spare or screen one another, or to check Robert when I encouraged him in his love of teasing.

Shyness! that had vanished to the winds in no time! I am thoroughly ashamed of the remembrance of those days when our house must indeed have been the bear-garden which Aunt Elizabeth called it. We

were tearing in and out all day long, and up to every wild prank which it was possible for us to play, Hester being dragged with us against her will, because she was afraid of being laughed at. Very often we got into sad scrapes, and then everything was laid upon my shoulders. There could be no doubt that I was in general the one most to blame; but it sometimes struck me as strange, whether it was so or not, the consequences were sure to fall upon me, while Robert slipped out of them scot free. However, I had a reckless spirit, and did not very much mind.

My mother's acute nerves suffered grievously during these boisterous days, and she suffered still more from pain at the frequent complaints of our conduct which were vented upon her. TrINETTE protested that she could not keep the house clean or tidy; the masters who were engaged for my cousins' lessons said their coming was useless, when nothing was prepared beforehand; and my Aunt Elizabeth's comparisons of me with her steady Pauline became more and more severe. The idea that Aunt Elizabeth's fidgets were at the root of all complaints, made me listen more impatiently to my mother's entreating expostulations than I might otherwise have done; but, indeed, I can in no way excuse myself, because it was downright thoughtlessness which prevented my realizing the pain I was inflicting.

One of our wild exploits took place on the occasion of a children's party given by one of the English residents at Brussels, and to which we were all invited. We went with Pauline under Aunt Elizabeth's guardianship, and the evening passed without our getting into disgrace; and, to the intense glorification of Hester,

who in a pink silk frock felt herself the most gorgeous of the company. On our return we were to share a carriage with the Sullivans, two Irish girls living near us; and accordingly before eleven o'clock my aunt saw that we were wrapped up and put into the vehicle. I don't think she felt quite easy in her mind, but there did not seem any possible mischief into which we could fall, and Mary Sullivan was fifteen, and presented every outward appearance of steadiness. It was she who just after we had started cried out in dismay—

“Oh, Bertha, the cards! we never left them!”

“What cards?” inquired Hester.

“Why, papa and mamma told us to leave cards for them at Baron d'Auribeau's on our way this afternoon, because they went to a ball there the other night, and it is so far from our house; and here are the cards in my pocket!”

“Let us go and leave them now,” I suggested.

“What, at this time of night?—oh, we can't!”

“Why not? Nonsense, Mary, they will only think it a new oddity of *ces Anglaises*.”

Mary hesitated, but the fun was too irresistible for her Irish blood; the driver was told, and away we went down a narrow street, to stop at a massive, sombre house, in which not a light or sign of inhabitant was to be seen. Our driver hammered away at the door, but it was long before any one appeared, and then out came the husband of the *concierge*, shading his eyes from the light which he held, and evidently just awakened from his first sleep. I shall never forget the poor man's bewildered stare as the card was put into his hands, or the laughing we had all the way home at the wonder

which would be created by the new English eccentricity.

"It will be all right, though," said Robert, rubbing his hands, "and your father and mother will never find it out."

Mary Sullivan opened her eyes in amazement "Why, you don't suppose we shall not tell them! I expect mamma will scold a little bit, but it would be too horrid to let them think we had done it as they told us."

It was Robert's turn to stare now. He and Hester had certainly no love for confessions.

III.

It was a fine bright morning, but excessively cold; the snow lay crisp and hard on the pavement, and our bed-room windows were thickly coated with frost that as yet gave no symptom of thawing. My cousins had been at Brussels for a month, and Mrs. Cliff wrote that in a few more days she hoped to be with us, and relieve dear Margaret of the charge she had so kindly undertaken: meanwhile she earnestly trusted her dear children had gained the approbation of their instructors. It did not sound very like a fulfilment of her hopes that morning, when the little French mistress' voice rang shrill and sharp through the house trying to enforce attention, and Barbara declared that she heard "poor Robert's" yawns through two walls and a baize door. When at last they escaped from their confinement they were in a frantic state to go somewhere or do some-

thing to get those horrid verbs out of their head. An objection was made to every proposed plan for this desirable object; Hester wanted to walk in the park, but her brother grimaced at the idea; they had seen all the lions of Brussels, the Botanic Gardens, and the Museum, and the market-place where Egmont and Horn ——”

“Bother old Egmont and Horn!” broke in Robert impatiently; “there’s no fun in *that*. Now at home there would be something for a fellow to do, shooting, or skating, or ——”

“Well,” I said, angry at his ingratitude, “there’s skating enough here.”

“Skating! oh, that’s awfully jolly! Come along, girls, let’s be off.”

“But I must get leave first,” I said, doubtfully, for I knew my mother trembled at the very name of ice.

“Well, get it; you can get anything you like, I know. I tell you what, Margie, you ought to have been a boy, because you’re such fun.”

I had never found my mother so difficult to persuade, for in general she yielded to me after a few remonstrances, but that day she tried every argument to turn us from our purpose. At the last I cannot say she quite consented, though she did not forbid it; she shook her head sadly when I had given her a parting hug, and assured her that no harm could possibly come to us, and said—

“You must do as you please, Margie; I cannot control you; but remember, if anything happens to Barbara I shall die.”

Her tone was so sad that I half repented, but Robert was impatiently drumming outside the door, and the impetuous self-will which my mother said she could not control, and which I had never myself learned to govern,

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carried me away in spite of the misgivings of my conscience. All the bread we could find we crammed into our pockets, meaning to be independent of dinner, and started. Trinette was cleaning the steps, and Robert's first exploit in rushing out was to tumble over her bucket, and carry it with him in a headlong descent. He looked very rueful as he picked himself up, and the astonished Trinette seized the opportunity to pour out voluble reproaches upon us all, me in particular.

"*Tenez*, Mam'selle Marg'rite, will there never be an end of your follies? Is it not enough for the poor Madame to have so much pain from your behaviour within, but you cannot even seek your distractions out of doors in a *comme il faut* manner! And the *petite*, do you take her also with you? Ah, my child, my jewel, my angel, take heed to thyself and be sage!"

Trinette cast withering glances upon us as she spoke but, though half affronted, I only laughed it off, and we turned towards the Boulevard; Hester daintily picking her way along the slippery road, lest a fall should damage her new frock. It was a very exhilarating day; below all was hard and crisp, and overhead was a clear sun and a cloudless blue sky, against which the snowy branches of the trees stood out in delicate tracery. The cheerful houses along the Boulevard had their lower windows filled with the most lovely flowers; tiny orange-trees laden with blossom, moss-roses breaking into bud, brilliant masses of hyacinths and tulips; here and there where the windows were opened a strange summer smell contrasted with the outer cold. Every one moved briskly, for it was too cold to dawdle; the drivers of the *fiacres* thumped their chests to warm their frozen fingers; peasant women, with bright hand-

kerchief shawls and tight caps clattered along in their great *sabots*; sleighs dashed by in numbers, gay with every imaginable quaint device, with tinkling bells and bear and tiger skins, and ladies seated in them like helpless masses of furs. There was quite enough to amuse us on the road, for numbers of people were bound for the same destination as ourselves. Turning out of the Boulevard by another Porte, we left the town behind, and half-an-hour's walking brought the gay skating scene in view. It was a large pond overhung with banks, and with a massive building which once had been a convent standing stern and gloomy at one end—a dismal spot enough when not enlivened by its present gaiety and excitement. But now all was animation; boys and men cut grotesque figures on the ice, or swept gracefully down from one end of the pond to the other; and the ladies, who feared to tempt such dangers, ensconced themselves in small wooden chairs or miniature sleighs which gentlemen pushed behind, and sent rapidly skimming over the ice.

Before we left home I had made up my mind that we would only be lookers-on, because my mother's words would ring in my ears, and perhaps it was the knowledge of this which made Robert talk so grandly as we came along about his skating powers. He could cut zigzags, circles, eights, any out-of-the-way figure; there was nothing which he had not done, or was not equal to doing; and he expressed the most unmitigated contempt at the idea of French fellows being able to skate. But these professions suddenly ceased when we reached the pond itself, and beyond a few innocent attempts at sliding on its outskirts, Robert did not attempt to dazzle us with his boasted exploits.

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Many of the skaters were acquaintances of ours, and among them a French family who entered with the greatest zest into the spirit of the amusement. Auguste Didier, a good-tempered lad, seeing us after a time standing rather disconsolately on the bank, skated forward with an empty chair, and requested the honour of taking one of the young ladies for a promenade upon the ice. My resolutions vanished to the winds. Hester, as the stranger, was first packed in, and away she went in a flutter of delight at the distinction. By turns we all shared the fun; Robert obtained leave from the good-natured Auguste to assist in pushing behind, and after a good many tumbles he scrambled along pretty well. I could not, however, resist whispering to him that, after all, he did not seem to be able to do much without the help of a "French fellow!" Little I thought what that speech would cost us!

Auguste took us for his last promenade, and with a sweeping bow went off to make himself agreeable to others among the crowd. I imagined our sleighing was at an end, and, leaving Hester and Barbara to watch the skaters, went over to talk to an old lady and gentleman who had recognized me, and were smiling and nodding from the other side of the water. They had a great many questions to ask on different subjects, and kept me standing by them longer than I had intended; presently old Madame Vanderlinden said—

"And the *petite*, I see, is enjoying herself among the others. Ah! how charming it is that our young ones should have so many diversions!"

She made a gesture with her hand towards the ice as she spoke, and, looking that way, I saw that she was actually pointing to Barbara, who was seated in a sleigh,

and pushed along by Robert alone. I was exceedingly frightened and angry; there was Robert dragging the child into danger by way of proving to me that he could do without the aid of a "French fellow," and I was perfectly helpless and unable to get at them. I beckoned and called in vain; Barbara laughed, kissed her hand, and was evidently in full enjoyment of the fun; and Robert only nodded with a provoking little air of triumph which annoyed me almost as much as anything else. After all, I began to think I might be over-fidgetty. Monsieur and Madame Vanderlinden were looking calmly on with evidently no idea of danger in their heads; it was true they did not know as I did Robert's utter unskilfulness, but then what could happen at the worst? If Robert fell a dozen times (and for his own sake I heartily wished that he might) no harm could come to Barbara. So I stood discontentedly watching them, only resolved to administer a good scolding when once they were off the ice, and in my power.

At last, after careering about in a blundering fashion to his heart's content, Robert seemed to get weary, and turned the little sleigh in the direction of the old convent, towards which I had strolled. I had just noticed that no skaters seemed to approach very near that spot, but without thinking of any reason for their keeping off, when I heard a cry from two or three of the nearest spectators—

"Back, back! it is dangerous; it is forbidden to go there!"

Oh, the agony of that moment! I knew directly what it meant. I cried out too, "Oh, go back! go back!" but Robert scared, and, only half understanding, lost all presence of mind: instead of turning round, he

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let go the chair, and, driven on by the impetus, it came straight towards me—towards the danger. It was but for an instant; I heard the ice crackling, I saw my darling standing up, her golden hair flying behind her; her arms stretched out, crying, "Margie! Margie!" and then came a sharper crack, and she went down in a gaping hole.

I do not think that I was frightened any more. I distinctly heard my mother's words, "Remember, if anything happens to Barbara, I shall die;" and I was quite collected when I ran down the bank before any one else was able to reach the spot. Then I believe they called out to me. I remember a confused medley of voices and shouts, but no one dared to follow me on the ice. One voice rang clearly out to my comprehension; I know now that it was Auguste Didier's: "Lie down flat, Mademoiselle, it is the only chance!" Every instinct in me was mercifully quickened, and I did it; I pushed myself along to the edge of the hole. The chair had not altogether fallen under water, a part of it still hung suspended, and perhaps had caught Barbara's dress, and prevented her from being sucked under the ice. She was not far from the surface, and I caught her frock, and, for a few moments, brought her head above water. But, still conscious, she clutched at the sides of the dreadful hole, and the already cracking ice broke away in her grasp, piece by piece, from under me. I could not drag her out. I knew that I was sinking myself; it was all the work of a few moments. I heard cries close to me. I even saw men pushing ladders and poles along the ice, and then came a rush, and darkness; and I remember no more.



"ON THE ICE."



XV.

I AWOKE with a sensation of warmth, and an indistinct consciousness that many people were moving about; and that some one whose voice sounded very far away, whispered, "Thank Heaven, this one is saved!" but it was a long time before I could collect my senses sufficiently to know where I was. It was a strange room, and strange people were in it, all looking as far off and unreal as if it was but the awakening from a vivid dream. But after I had looked for a long time at one of these figures, I made out that it was my Aunt Elizabeth, crying, and strangely moved. She brushed away her tears when she saw that I recognized her, and said quite gently, "My dear, you are better now; will you drink this?" and then I found that she was really standing quite close to my pillow, and holding some hot mixture to my lips.

I did as I was bid, and I believe I called my mother, for in a moment I remembered something of the past, and tried to start up in bed, but could not lift myself. Then I cried out in agony—

"Barbara! Barbara is in the water! Aunt Elizabeth, do you hear? she is under the ice!"

I think my aunt was terribly upset, but she answered me calmly—

"My dear, she is here; she is in this house."

"How came she here?" I asked, looking dreamily round, for my senses were only half roused; "I don't see her, is she safe?"

"We think she is asleep."

Was it Aunt Elizabeth. or was I still dreaming?

The voice was so unlike hers, so low, so subdued; the puzzle made me almost angry. Then my eye fell upon something which I held in my hand, a small piece of coloured stuff: I held it out to her.

“What is it?”

She took it from me, and for a moment did not answer; at last she said—

“It is a little bit of Barbara's frock; you held her so tight, my dear, they could not separate you. But you must not talk, only drink this and go to sleep, so as to be quite well by the time your mother comes.”

I pushed the glass away with my hand, “Is Doctor Bidaut here?” We never called him uncle.

“Yes, he has only just gone away; he wishes you to take this; you must do it, Margie.”

My aunt spoke with something of her old authoritative tone, and I no longer resisted; I drank it, but with an undefined misgiving I asked once more—

“And Barbara is safe? You are sure?”

“My dear, she is here—asleep.”

I know now that they thought it was the sleep of death.

When, after desperate efforts, in which Auguste Didier was the most unceasing, they had rescued us, we were both insensible; and as they could not loosen my grasp of Barbara's dress, they were obliged, in order to divide us, to cut it away, and to leave the piece in my hand. Old Monsieur Vanderlinden took the direction of affairs; thus by his orders we were carried to the nearest house, and a messenger was sent off to request Doctor Bidaut and my aunt to come instantly. Happily they met the former on the road, so that little time elapsed before all that medical skill could suggest

MARGIE'S REMEMBRANCES.

was being tried. From the first he had greater hope for me than for Barbara, because she had been longer in the water, and all endeavours to restore animation seemed to be perfectly useless. My aunt has told me that one by one they all completely gave up hope, but he never ceased to watch and use every imaginable means. She said to him once, "Louis, it is useless; hadst thou not better leave her?" and he answered, "Not yet, *mon amie*; it may be God will still give back the little ewe lamb to her mother." Ah! how happy he must have felt when his faith and patience were rewarded; and when at length we were both quietly sleeping, and the crowd at the door had dispersed at the intelligence, Madame Bidaut ventured, for the first time, to send tidings to our home.

It may seem strange that this had not been done before, but my aunt dreaded the effect of the news; if it had gone to my mother when we were at the worst, and brought her to find us unconscious, the results might have been grievous. As it was, they were obliged to use the greatest caution in the wording of the note, and Doctor Bidaut wrote a rough scrawl for my aunt to copy out. I once found this little note put carefully away among my mother's treasures, written on only a small scrap of paper, but in firm handwriting, in which all appearance of haste was studiously avoided:—

"DEAR MARGARET,—Margie, Barbara, and the others are with us, and perhaps we shall keep some of them all night, for the silly children got a wetting at the pond to-day; so we thought it better to give them dry clothes at once. I daresay you will hear all kinds of wonderful stories about their adventure, but there is

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nothing to be alarmed at ; and lest you should not be satisfied with my assurance, Louis will walk over for you in an hour's time, that you may see them with your own eyes.—Your affectionate sister,

“ELIZABETH BIDAUT.”

It was not very far to move, and Doctor Bidaut hoped to convey us, well wrapped in blankets, to his own house before my mother could arrive ; but as we both slept on, he left directions for future treatment, and started for our house. As he expected, he met my mother on the road, leaning on Trinettes, and hurrying along, pale and nervous, but by no means aware of the extent of the accident until he gradually told her of what our danger had been. She and he had never got on together particularly well, because he thought her fanciful, and she was afraid of him ; but in any case of real suffering his tenderness was infinite, and now he opened into all the kindness of which he was so largely capable. He brought her back, and she found us sleeping as he had said, and stole on tiptoe from one room to the other, quiet tears running down her face all the time, until my aunt persuaded her to rest calmly by Barbara's side, and watch for the child's awakening.

Aunt Elizabeth now went in search of Hester and Robert, who, frightened out of their wits at the share which the latter had in the accident, had crept into the house with the crowd, and were found by her huddled together in a corner behind the stove. She brought them out looking thoroughly scared and miserable ; but when they heard that we were not really drowned, their spirits and appetites revived, and they were glad

to be fed upon cakes and chocolate by the good-natured mistress of the house, who was very desirous to vent her hospitality upon some of the party.

Barbara awoke so much restored, that Doctor Bidaut consented to my mother's taking her home at once. I was not so well, for some pain in my back still prevented my rising: and, instead of going with the others, he wished me to be taken to his own house, and undertook that I should there be well watched and cared for. My mother was very averse to the separation, but she dreaded being thought ungrateful; and Aunt Elizabeth told her that her husband thought I had received some wrench or sprain in the endeavour to drag out Barbara, which would require his skill and attention for some time. For myself, I felt too stupified and weak to resist what at another time would have seemed to me too dreadful; I submitted without a word to my mother's tearful farewell, and after the painful remove was over—though Dr. Bidaut eased it as much as he could by carrying me himself to the *fiacre*—I became so uneasy and feverish as to care little where I was. For days I continued very ill, and haunted by terrible visions of Barbara's frightened face, as I saw her coming towards me over the treacherous ice, with outstretched arms which always eluded my grasp, and with her piteous cry ringing in my head, "Oh, Margie, Margie!"

When the fever went it left me very weak, only able to lie still and trace the lines on the paper of my room, and count how many times they were repeated in each pattern, and how many patterns there were between the floor and the ceiling. How those lines worried me!—They were all most kind. Pauline, quiet

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and affectionate, remembering every one of her father's directions, and moving about the room with a step that was really noiseless. Aunt Elizabeth never attained to this perfection of a nurse; she was more angular and abrupt, and when she tried hardest to go upon tiptoe there was an irritating rustle about her suggestive of the green silk; but she never once spoke sharply to me, and petted, even if she half scolded, my dear mother. I think I suffered the more as I became physically better, because my mind went to work, and the thoughts which had before floated by in an indistinct maze took shape and consistency, and would not be stilled. I thought how different my life was to what my father's lessons should have made it, and how, instead of being a comfort to my mother, I had been nothing but a care and burden. I thought how badly I was influencing Barbara, teaching her, like myself, to mind nothing but the self-pleasing of the moment; and I thought, with a shudder, to what that self-pleasing had all but led me! The last act had brought punishment, and had opened my eyes to my danger; but it was not really worse than a hundred other instances of self-will which rose up now from the recesses of my conscience, and upon which, because they carried with them no visible ill effects, I had never until now cast back a sorrowful thought.

I was very wretched. Sometimes I spent my time in making good resolutions; at others I tried hard to drive them out of my head, and begged Pauline to sit by me and read. Her voice, her quietness, her calm face, with the fair hair smoothly plaited away from it, all soothed and stilled me; she was not clever, but she was good; and she seemed to carry about with her an

atmosphere of serene peace, which was an infinite comfort to me at this time of miserable self-accusing.

The pain in my back continued, and prevented me from sitting up much, though it struck me occasionally that I had been ill for an unaccountable length of time. Barbara brought me early flowers and little branches of bushes and trees, that I might see for myself, first, how the brown buds had swollen, and then how the tender leaves were unfolding their vivid green. She kept me informed of every step which our garden made towards spring; and of the removal of the straw coverings from the statues in the park, which had always seemed to us like the ending of winter. I began to have a restless longing to get out, and to think that Doctor Bidaut with all his kindness was very cruel. Often my mother urged that I might return home with her, but he always had the same answer, "Let her rest where she is, the house is quieter." My cousins left Brussels a day or two after our accident, I could not hear much about them, but my mother said that Mrs. Cliff appeared satisfied, had no doubt the visit would prove of advantage to all, and hoped it might be repeated at some future time. She took no notice of Robert's share in the accident, but trusted it would be a lesson to me and to my sister, who, she had remarked, were somewhat wild. This was all; my mother repeated her sister-in-law's words simply, and without a shadow of annoyance in her tone.

"And not one word of thanks for all you did! O mamma, how could you stand it?"

"She was not unkind, Margie, my love," pleaded my mother anxiously; "I assure you we parted very good friends, and Hester and Robert sent their love."

MARGIE'S REMEMBRANCES.

I gave an impatient twist which hurt my back, and obliged me to be quiet.

Indeed I was terribly impatient at this time, and wretched at the knowledge that I was so. Sometimes I was even provoked with Pauline for her forbearance, and would have preferred a good scolding to the pitying looks and tones which I met with from everybody up to Aunt Elizabeth, even when I had been most provoking. It was not so much that I minded the attacks of pain; severe as they were, when they came I felt as if there was something definite to bear, and bear them I did grimly and uncomplainingly; but many a little child who had been early trained to self-control would have endured the confinement and tedium of a sick room better than I, whose fifteenth birthday passed during those weary months.

My mother's face, instead of brightening, became each day more sad during the hours which she daily spent by my side; often she broke down altogether, and went away in a flood of tears, which I fancied were caused by hasty words of mine, and which added not a little to my unhappiness. After a time people came to see me as I lay on a sofa in my bed-room. I thought they would be a relief, I had an intense longing to get away from myself, to be treated like the rest of the world, and to be looked at without the pitiful expression that seemed always to grow out of the faces that bent over me. But the visitors made matters worse, for they talked of the heroism I had shown. I, who had caused it all! They assured me that the whole town rang with praises of my courage and presence of mind; that it had been immortalized in the journals. "Ah, madame, and such a young girl!" exclaimed one enthu-

classic lady, turning to my mother, and clasping her hands, "What an honour to have her for your daughter!" I had a misanthropical pleasure in telling Pauline that I afterwards heard the same lady whisper to her companion, that really I was too ugly to be a heroine.

Aunt Elizabeth was sharp-sighted enough in general but, with one exception, I think no one in the house knew how much more of my dull wretchedness was owing to mental than to bodily sufferings. The exception was Doctor Bidaut. His patients occupied his time too fully for him to be able to give much of it to me, so that his daily visits were short, and often he was accompanied by strange doctors, who asked the same questions, and made the same comments before me. I must be patient a little longer. A little longer, when I was not patient at all! I never knew what I know now, that Doctor Bidaut with his large experience had guessed at a great many of the troubles which bewildered me. I believed him, though most kind, to be taken up only with his professional claims. But one April morning, when a consciousness of the outer stir and gaiety of a spring day had added to my discontent within, he came up to my room, and dismissing the patient Pauline, sat down by my sofa, and announced that he was come for a talk. I was so resolved to make the most of this unlooked-for opportunity, that in answer to his first question—

"Well, Marguerite" (though he spoke in English, he always gave the French pronunciation to my name), "how do you find yourself?" I replied with another.

"How much longer must I be here, Doctor Bidaut?"

"In your tower? Do you know, Marguerite, that

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up here you look very like an enchanted princess, waiting to be released from a spell!"

His tone was bantering, and it provoked me because I felt so dreadfully in earnest myself; he began again, however, in a moment.

"We will talk of that by and by. Are you tired of us all?"

"Not tired, only——"

"Only?"

"Everybody is very kind, but I want to get home. You see, Doctor Bidaut, I have been thinking since I lay here—and—and" I made a violent effort and proceeded. "I am fifteen, and Aunt Elizabeth used to say I had been nothing but a plague, and now I want to set to work and begin a new life." I felt this very hard to say, but I thought he would understand, and perhaps help me.

"Yes," he repeated slowly, "a new life. Have you ever thought, Marguerite, of what life is made up?"

"Days, and hours, and moments, I suppose."

"Well, child, and the moments are passing now, passing for ever, and life slips by us while we are plotting and planning for future hours; and one day we shall wake up and find it gone. The present is our life."

"No, no!" I cried out passionately, "not for me. This is existing, not living!"

"Hush!" he said gravely, "your Bible should teach you something different to that. Is not suffering one way of bearing the cross?"

He silenced me for a moment, then I went on more quietly: "I did not mean about the pain; I want to work, and what can one do here?"

MARGIE'S REMEMBRANCES.

“Ah!” he answered cheerfully, “we have come to the question now; but do you know, Marguerite, the hardest battles of life have been fought on a couch like yours.”

Something in his words struck me. “Doctor Bidaut, am I never to get better?”

“God knows!” he said, very gravely, “we do not think you will ever be able to get about much again.”

I turned my face away that he might not see the great tears which would come welling up. Could it be true? Was everything at an end for me? Four walls and a sofa. Oh, what a dreary, dreary, impossible life it seemed! I thought my burden was too heavy to bear. Doctor Bidaut went on again, and I knew by his tone how he felt for me.

“You have a brave spirit, Marguerite, I think it better you should know the worst and face it, than wear your life out with restless expectations, as you have been doing lately. Child, it is hard to bear, only it is His will; try and make it your own also. You will be a worker even here;” he put his hand on the sofa, “you have yourself to conquer, and patience for a prize to win.”

“Patience!” I said despairingly. It seemed such a miserable inducement, such a little gain, after all the bright visions that throng the mind when life is just beginning.

“Yes, patience. It stands high up in St. Peter’s list of virtues—does it not, Marguerite? Set to work cheerily—do not think that God has put you aside because He has taken you a little out of the world. ‘They also serve who only stand and wait;’ is not that what your grand poet says?”

His words inspired me with a better heart, but I wanted to know more.

MARGIE'S REMEMBRANCES.

"Why am I never to be any better?"

"I did not quite say that, but your back received an injury that day on the ice which it is scarcely possible can ever be cured entirely. You may be able to move a little more than at present, it is by no means unlikely; only—"

"I must make up my mind to be a helpless burden all my life," I said, bitterly, "and all through my own folly. What will mamma do?"

"Marguerite, my dear child, do not speak so," he said, kindly; "it would have been worse if you had gone on growing utterly careless and heedless. Look at it as a merciful check, and remember what is left to you—mind, eyesight, fingers——"

"Ah! I can draw," I interrupted; "perhaps I can do something yet. Doctor Bidaut, when may I go home?"

"Very soon," he said after a pause; "your mother wants to have you."

"Does she know?"

"Yes, all know."

"Ah! that accounts," and I fell into a deep fit of musing, in which he let me be uninterrupted. When I looked up I met his eye, clear, keen, and full of kindness. I put my hand in his.

"I expect it will be horribly hard, but I am going to try, Doctor Bidaut."

"That is well said, *mon amie*; we must be trying all our lives, only not in our own strength." He went on in French, and more to himself than to me. "The road is rough, but the end is glorious, and many before us have pressed on to the goal. Courage! their Help will be our Help too!"

V.

IN a little time I was taken home, as Doctor Bidaut had promised I should be, but before I left his house I had followed his advice, and tried to begin my "new life" without waiting for imaginary periods. Ah! I found my old self in my new life after all, my old hasty temper and imperious will which were to be tamed into the patience I once despised, and rebellious longings which often surged up and drove me to beat like a bird against the bars of my prison. But I did struggle now—I was not contented to give way; I learnt to think a little of the feelings of others, and to be grateful for kindness to myself. And so much was shown to me! Pauline, the most tender and unselfish of nurses, who had borne all my fretfulness with never-failing forbearance, I began day by day to find out what she was, and to read the true beauty of her character. We made arrangements for constant meetings, when she was to teach my long fingers some delicate embroidery, and I was to help her in German. She confided to me that, longing to be more of a companion to her father, she had always envied my attainments; and I acknowledged in return, how greatly I had disliked her because she was held up as a pattern of goodness.

"Poor mamma!" said Pauline, laughing, "she has always tried so hard to think me a genius, but papa knew better!"

"You have a genius for kindness, Pauline," I said, warmly.

"Do you think so? Well, who knows? nursing may be my vocation after all."

“And lying still, mine.”

“Yes,” she said, simply, “every one has something different; but that is no reason, Margie, why you should choose your pillows to be crooked and uncomfortable. Let me shake them up; my father says we can always make the best or the worst of things.”

And her practical matter-of-fact nature was a capital balance for mine, always too prone to run away with romantic and exaggerated ideas.

They made a little *fête* day of my return. Barbara dressed up the house with branches, and Trinette baked enough cakes to last for a week. There was no room for the bitterness which I made up my mind I should feel at coming home a helpless burden; indeed, after my mother had recovered from the first sad pang which it naturally caused her, I think we were rather merry than otherwise, Pauline exerting herself unusually, and Barbara bent on showing off various accomplishments which she had learnt in my absence.

“Isn't this a pretty mat, Margie? I did it, fringe and all, and it is to stand in your room always. I go to a day-school now you see, Margie, but I do wish they would have the Miss Primroses there for the reading; what we do isn't half such good fun.”

“Can't I save that, at all events?” I asked, looking at my mother.

She hesitated and seemed distressed.

“My dear, I don't quite know,—it might be too much for you, and, besides, your Aunt Elizabeth seems to think you scarcely know enough; Barbara wants regular training now, you see, my dear love.”

I had learnt to bear Aunt Elizabeth's name by this time, and I acknowledged to myself that she might be

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right. My own knowledge was too desultory and unshaped for me to be fit even to teach a child of eight years old. Well, I was resolved that this should be improved; I would work away with a good will until I had learnt enough to save the expense of Barbara's school.

Another check! I worked too hard, lost my appetite, grew weaker, and was ordered by Dr. Bidaut to lay aside books, and be idle. How I grumbled at this! but he only smiled his quaint smile, and said,—

“Lackily, Marguerite, you may still work for patience without its affecting your health.”

Ah! I had many a lesson to learn, and fits of sad depression, because it seemed to me that I was always failing where I had most tried; and I hated myself the more because so much thought and kindness was shown me, never varying, however ungratefully it was received.

I have very little more to say: the life upon which I look back, though it has its story to me, would seem dreary and uneventful to those who take active parts in the busy stir of the world. From my little niche I have looked on, and learnt something, but it has been by watching and waiting.

We lived on at Brussels for ten years, and then came the first break up of our little party, my pretty Barbara married. I can see now her sweet April face on the morning when she knelt down by my side, buried her head in my lap, and told me to guess what had happened. Ah! I was not long in doing that, I had felt sure from almost the first that Mr. Matson loved my darling, and had tried to keep back the selfish pang which came when I thought that our sunshine would be stolen away, and to love him for her dear sake. But when I smoothed

her bright hair, and whispered that I supposed she was to be turned into a little English parsoness, she started up eagerly, with her face all aglow—

“No, no, no, Margie, I have told him that I like him very much, and I couldn't help doing that, because, poor fellow, he seemed so dismal when he thought I didn't; but we are not to think about being married. Why, what do you suppose you could do without me, you poor dear old Mrs. Patience? Margie, Margie,” and the tears streamed down her sweet face, “do you think I would ever leave you, when it was all through me that your life was blighted!”

Well, before very long we had settled all that. Mr. Matson was not a person to be satisfied with half possessions, but as Barbara persisted in her resolution not to be separated, it followed that we went with her to her English home. Not to the same house, but to a cottage in the parish where her husband was perpetual curate, a tiny spot, which a great jessamine and a Virginian creeper have taken under their especial protection, and converted into a bower.

I would rather not say anything of our Brussels partings. Pauline is married to a Belgian, and is a pattern wife and mother. I should be only too glad if Aunt Elizabeth would come to Trenton, though it were in the identical green silk that I so detested in old days, and she and Dr. Bidaut really talk of coming one day to see me.

For I am alone now; my dear mother has gone to her rest in the quiet churchyard of which I can just see a corner from my favourite window. At first it was very bitter, but the sorrow was all for myself, and it is but something more given me for which to wait patiently. I am never lonely, and have much to occupy me. I have

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a faithful maid, and she and I have always one of Barbara's over-grown schoolgirls in hand, whom we teach to be a servant: we have quite a family of these girls out in the world, and I am very thankful to possess such an interest, and to feel that even the most helpless may do a little. Living is dearer in England than in Brussels, and when we first came over we found it hard work to get on; so I turned my old drawing-lessons to advantage, and I have generally quite as much as I can manage to do in the way of illustrating books, with all sorts of nice inventions at hand, to make it easy to me, as I lie on my sofa. Barbara and Barbara's children are here every day, and there is one little brown-eyed maiden, my godchild, whom I sometimes hope her mother will spare to me altogether.

Looking back, I can see the blessings of my life, how rich they have been, though often coming in sorrowful disguise. The years have been full of failures and shortcomings, but the Hand that upheld me was very pitiful, and the patience which once seemed so far off, I humbly hope has now come to be my friend. Struggles and suffering are not over; how should they be? but while He sees fit for them to last I can hold on my way with a cheerful spirit, "Faint, yet pursuing."

Note by another Hand.—I have been reading over Margie's remembrances, and I feel quite sure that those who do the same without knowing her as I do will have no idea of what she is, or of what she has suffered. The pain is sometimes terrible, but she bears it beautifully, and seems only intent upon hiding its sharpness from those she loves. She speaks of having been impatient

MARGIE'S REMEMBRANCES.

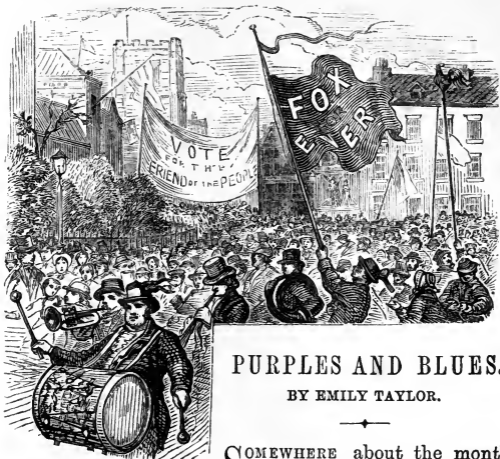
at first, I do not know, I can hardly remember her so; but if it was the case, I can only say that since then she has borne years of pain and confinement with the noblest heroism. She has so much energy and determination of spirit that one can hardly realize that her body is almost helpless, and she throws herself into our joys or troubles with the heartiest sympathy and forgetfulness of self. Many have told me what I feel myself, that the best lessons of their life have been taught them by Margie's sofa, and my husband, whose praise is worth having, says he thinks her character the most beautiful he knows. Her drawings are admirable; the children carry in to her great wreaths of creepers or flowers when they come back from their walks, and she illustrates books and poems with them in all manner of quaint, fanciful devices. She does not like us to speak of her lot as a hard one, my dear brave old Margie! and, indeed, I feel sure she must be happy, for her brown eyes, with all their brightness, have a look of peace down deep within them, which always seems to us like the light which "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

BARBARA.





LAWRENCE DRAWING HIS MOTHER TO THE GARDEN FOR THE LAST TIME.



PURPLES AND BLUES.

BY EMILY TAYLOR.

SOMEWHERE about the month of May, in the year 1860, sundry people who lived in the ancient city of Hulme, in one of the eastern counties of England, had their curiosity excited by the appearance of a respectable elderly gentleman, very trimly shaven, and neat in all respects; rather short and stout; his hair, what there was of it, perfectly white; his countenance kindly, but grave and sad; he was observed peeping into odd corners, as if with a certain familiarity, yet continually starting, as if he found something unexpected there.

A look of surprise sometimes crossed his countenance, as he looked up at some of the names over the large shops in the market-place. He seemed to be seeking for old acquaintances. Once or twice only, he made an exclamation, when he saw a name he knew. Some one said he entered a shop—it was that of a firm engaged in the druggist business, which used to

be old Drake's—and went eagerly up to the shopman to inquire for the principal. A smart, middle-aged man came forward—the stranger shook his head.

“Perhaps, sir, you would like to see my father. I am sorry to say, he is very infirm, and lives in the country.”

“Oh, indeed! and you are his son, then?”

“Yes, sir; can I have the pleasure of mentioning your name to my father?”

The stranger again shook his head.

“No, I don't think he knew *me*. I left Hulme full fifty years ago. But, pray, sir, can you tell me anything about the people I used to know best here?” And he named a string of names. Five or six physicians, as many surgeons, clergymen to no end, principal shopkeepers, manufacturers, editors of provincial papers; a shake of the head followed the mention of them all.

“What! all gone? impossible, surely! Why, some were younger than myself.” A thought struck him—the ladies! What pretty girls there were once in Hulme!

“Pray, what is become of Alderman Hughes' handsome daughter?”

“Sir, she is a blind old lady, living with a lame brother in the Close.”

“Did she never marry, then?”

“No, sir, she was blind before she was thirty.”

“And Miss Gates?”

“What! the daughters of the Rev. Jeremiah Gate? They went, one to America, and the other to New Zealand.”

“And that pretty, merry Miss Hopkins?”

“You can't mean the Quaker lady, Sarah Hopkins, who died last year?”

“A Quakeress! why, how came that about?”

“Well, sir, she was tired of a gay life, I suppose, and she liked the Friends. She was a right down good woman, and ‘thee’d’ and ‘thou’d’ quite nat’ral.”

“It’s a strange world,” muttered our traveller. “Change without and change within. *That* does not change, however,” continued he glancing toward the cathedral. “Nor those,” looking at another old church or two.

Something about the old gentleman interested the chemist. “You must have known us, well, a while ago, sir,” said he.

“Why, yes—I was born here, certainly—something more than seventy years ago, and I had some fresh, long young years of life in your town, my friend. Is the free school going on well now?”

“Well, I don’t know much about it, there are new schools that cut it out; but there it is, kept in the same old room.”

“Ah! and the palace?”

“Well, you know we have had several bishops; within not many years the palace has been refitted and made newer.”

“I beg your pardon, I am keeping you a long time.”

“No inconvenience to speak of, sir. Can I tell you anything more?”

“No, thank you,” with a weary sigh. “Oh, yes! about your city elections: how do they go on?”

“Quite quiet, thank you, sir.”

“Quiet! a Hulme election quiet! How *can* that be?”

“Why, you know, sir, the reform bill changed all that; the votes are taken in half a dozen places; we don’t fight now, sir.”

“But you chair the members still, surely?”

“No, sir, haven’t this long time.”

“Bless me! how stupid it must be. Why, I remember when you could not hear St. Saviour’s bells, even, for the noise of the people.”

“All at an end, sir, however.”

“Well, at least, I hope you’re all better men. But, now, will you just direct me to the inn I wanted to find, the ‘Rose and Crown.’ It used to be one of the best.”

“You won’t be comfortable there, sir; it is nothing but a pothouse. If you take my advice, you’ll go to the ‘Star,’ or the ‘Royal Arms,’ or the ‘Victoria,’ or the ‘Copenhagen Hotel;’ any of them are good.”

“Thank you, let it be the oldest, if you please.”

“Well, sir, the ‘George,’ then, that’s very respectable, near the cathedral, sir.”

“Excellent—good-morning to you.” And the old gentleman went his way; and the landlady of the “George,” afterwards reported that he was quite moved in talking with her of old times, and that she had found out who he was; her grandfather used to know his father, and he had left her a sort of account of the family as they used to be; written, she said, in a small, neat upright hand, quite clerkly and particular. She wanted to show him some of the improvements in Hulme; but he shook his head, and said they were not improvements to him, he must get away as soon as he could, and so he went off, next morning, to Riversmouth, where he was to take steamer (so he said) to London, and she doesn’t believe anybody in Hulme will ever see that old gentleman again, and I do not myself believe that they will; but what he left behind, we may as well read.



THE ancient city of Hulme used to be a famous place —so some think it still ; I was born there, and I loved it, and always shall love it. It was one of those towns in which we are specially struck at every turn with the sense of great contrasts. A grand old cathedral, whose architectural details range over several centuries, and whose newest part is venerable ; a still older castle, walls broken down in many places, of very uncertain outline, yet picturesque in their ruins ; towers of many handsome churches ; massive gateways and arches. Take account of all these, and any city that possesses them possesses the elements of something great and noble ; but for all *that*, the city itself may be, on the whole, mean and vulgar. There were very few handsome dwelling-houses or good streets in Hulme. Nothing of the alliance one sees in some continental cities between commercial purposes and fine architecture.

I do not know why our English towns, which have taken rank very early in the commerce of Europe, should be so deficient in the outward signs of wealth and grandeur in their streets and civic buildings. But there is scarcely a city among us that has a really fine old town hall ; nothing, at least, to compare with the

Hotels de Ville at Ghent, or Louvain, or Rouen; nor, except very rarely, do you find a private house in such places with lofty gables and carved decorations, as abroad. Our largest old public halls are mostly cribbed out of monasteries, and have never acquired the *look* of appropriateness visible in the foreign buildings I have visited, because they were not built for the same purposes.

There are generally, I think, some one or two characteristics in a city population, caught from the more marked aspects of the place they grow up in. Thus I have always fancied that Hulme, with its few grand redeeming objects and its general look of mediocrity and shabbiness, must have done a good deal towards making its people what they have been during the greater portion of their more modern history. I remember it best in the early part of the present century. I was born ten years before it began, but have little trace in my mind of anything previous to 1798. The people were on the whole, I believe, vulgar. There was a twang on their tongues; not the full rich, round, and deep sound which prevails in some parts of England; but meagre and curtailed. Middle syllables in particular never had any chance of getting a hearing. You might stand in the market-place at Hulme for an hour, and not guess that the English language was formed of anything longer than two syllable words. The *h*, too, was very uncertain in its position, and the letter *r* was the worst treated in the alphabet, if it came at the end of a word, being invariably sounded as if the unhappy word ended in *aw*.

I should not be a true-born Hulme man if I did not believe from the bottom of my heart that there

never was a town like our own Hulme. I can't hear even now the sound of its name—I can't catch up a few words even of its vulgarest dialect, without a start, without a rush of warmth to my heart, and may be, now and then, a tear to my eye. I think there is something remarkable in this attachment, for I do not find it at all in the same degree in many other places, and it is nearly universal with regard to Hulme. My father used to say he thought it was because our town lay out of the way of the great thoroughfares of traffic, that we were not looked upon as merely meant to be passed by; but that those who came to us, came really for objects in which we ourselves were concerned. Our native manufactures, our antiquities, our local customs, were their objects; of course we also thought *ourselves* worth the trouble of a visit, so that we had something of the John Bull within the ordinary Bull-ism—a double portion of headiness and self-admiration.

My father's station in this world of Hulme was a middle one. There were many grades above, and several below him, and he had the good sense to know his place and keep it, though in his inmost mind he might sometimes hope that his children would rise, at any rate, a ring or two above him in the social ladder. He was the head warehouseman and manager of one of the best manufactories of Hulme goods (that of a Mr. Goodwin), worsted, fancy goods, etc.—and in that position he had a double part to play, having to give out materials to the workmen, to see to the measuring, the quality and quantity of the work—all done at home by the weavers; when it came back, to distribute the payments, which the masters awarded according to his report; thus to exercise no unimportant

influence over the comfort of many scores—sometimes many hundreds—of operatives and their families; while he was accountable to the heads of the house for all the valuable materials sent out and returned (worked up) through his hands. He had also to contract with the dyers, particularly the dyers in black, who all lived near the river. Also, and what we should first have mentioned, he had much to do with the woolcombers, who had their dealings with the spinners of the yarn, which was only then beginning to be done in any large quantity by machinery, a very great proportion being spun by women and children by hand in the country villages.

Thus, my father's department was one of great importance, and to have a trusty, skilful manager was the grand object of desire among the manufacturers.

There was only one partner in our firm. Mr. Goodwin chose to keep all in his own hands, with the exception of the share allotted to his partner Briggs, by no means an equal one. He preferred keeping the business at a manageable point, and, perhaps, my father was made the more of, and treated with the confidence almost of a friend. The junior partner, Mr. Briggs, had a great deal to do *out* of the town of Hulme. He bought the raw silks required, he had large dealings in Spitalfields, and he it was who travelled all over England and the Continent for us. He went (when Bonaparte allowed him) to Spain, sold large cargoes of black camlets made by us for the monastic orders, for we Hulme people half clothed the ecclesiastics. We also made delicately fine materials for mourning; and the mantillas of the Spanish ladies often came out of Hulme warehouses. But not then, nor for some years after, were our goods much noted for beauty and variety.

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Sober industry rather than taste was the quality which reigned at Hulme. Schools of design were not then thought of, and yet rich and costly shawls were early made here.

Many of the citizens of Hulme bore names which marked a foreign origin. Some had a DE prefixed to them—our own, for instance—which was De Carle. In fact, every one knows that the Flemish and Dutch Protestants had taken refuge from religious persecution in many of the eastern parts of England, and had been welcomed by our sovereigns. Queen Elizabeth had given them a Church in Hulme all to themselves, and there the Walloon ministers were partly pensioned by the Royal Dame, who, though she had no pity for any of her English-born subjects who evinced an attachment to the Puritan ritual, was very tender to foreign Dissenters.

These artizans did capital service to Hulme. They brought their own habits of patient industry, and I am persuaded also their sturdy independence. They were thought to have brought in a fondness too for gardens and flowers, always a conspicuous taste in Hulme.

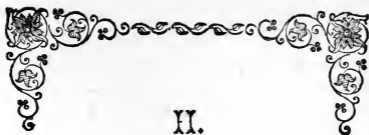
I remember a great many of these French or Flemish names among our people, some of them clipped and altered, Hulme fashion; but in my time none of the people who bore them cared to retain any other trace of their origin. They were all Hulme men and women, and when we were at war with France, I am sure they were not at all behindhand in rancour and bitterness. We had several imported *emigrès*, too, who by their dreadful stories of the French revolution atrocities, stimulated the young, and the less instructed especially, in their feelings of horror for the French, while there were not wanting some people even in Hulme

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who by no means condemned the Revolution as a whole, but only lamented its excesses.

I shall have to come back to some peculiarities of our city ere long, but our own household must now have its place.





II.

OURSELVES.

AND first for my parents. Besides that my father's long continuance in his position proved the esteem in which his character was held, my recollection brings him to me as a sensible, and, for his station, an instructed man. I think *that* which helped very much in raising him above almost all the men I remember in his line of business, was the friendship of Mr. and Mrs. Goodwin. They were really people of the highest character; they were not without prejudices, but their moral tone was so elevated, that these did not interfere, I suppose, very much with their line of conduct. Of course my father and mother, being much below them in birth and early advantages, and being in fact quite subordinates in business, consulted their employer with some deference, upon any point on which they needed advice; and it was seen at once that they asked it with a real wish to profit by it, and not for the sake of merely talking over their affairs. It was owing partly to these free consultations of my father and Mr. Goodwin, that we were brought up better than many of our neighbours. It was a great help to have our whole position overlooked by some one who, standing higher than ourselves, saw how the world was going on, and what would be best for us on the whole; what sort of education would

probably be most useful, and what we had better keep in view ; but I don't think either my father or mother would have been guided thus, had Mr. and Mrs. Goodwin been mere worldly people. It was because they honoured their motives, their characters, their whole career ; and my father was a religious man, though he and Mr. Goodwin did not take the same views on some points, for my father, perhaps inheriting something from his Walloon ancestors, liked the style of Dissenting worship ; though, led by my mother's steady attachment to the Church, and agreeing with her in love to its doctrines, he always attended her once a day to our parish church, and only occasionally worshipped with an independent congregation. The clergyman and the Dissenting minister were not unfriendly. They each visited us. We were, however, all of us baptized, and in due time confirmed, in the church. Mr. and Mrs. Goodwin were themselves steady church-goers, and stood sponsors to one or two of us.

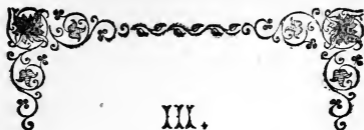
My dear mother was for all that time of her life which I remember best a sufferer from spinal disease. She was never able to go beyond the church, or to some near neighbour's ; or in summer, which was a great delight, to Mrs. Goodwin's beautiful garden.

She never gave up her place, however, as directress of the household. From the low couch, where mostly she lay, she issued her orders. Her faithful Molly, the young maid-of-all-work, the active, incessant woman of business, who was brought up by my mother, took these orders, and executed them ; but we knew from whence they came, and felt sure that my mother knew everything about us, nearly as well as if she had followed us from place to place ; and I do not think anybody

doubted that Mrs. De Carle's household was kept in as much order as any other in Hulme.

But you want to know something of our smaller selves. My two elder brothers were twins, as unlike as twins usually are. Lawrence tall and thin, Dick short and stout; Lawrence a very handsome boy, Dick plain; Lawrence somewhat flighty, Dick plodding, steady as time; Lawrence all on fire about whatever was going on in our outward world; Dick rather absorbed in matters of natural history; in chemistry, having his museum of quaint curiosities, in fossils and in antiquarian relics. A sister came next, Rachel by name. We had had a brother and sister, who had both died in infancy. Then I myself appeared—I was named Matthew—my birth placing me five years below my twin brothers. Lastly one little pet girl, Margaret. Here you have us all.





My recollection takes me back to a part only of Lawrence's and Dick's school-days, but that part stands out very clear. I never was with them at the Free School; but being ambitious, and anxious, above all things, to be somebody in our little world, I listened with open ears to all their stories of school doings, warmed up at the history of their battles, and devoutly shared all Lawry's strong likes and dislikes, and party notions. Blended with all these, was the impression I derived from my intercourse with the only *constant* companion of my early years, my sister Rachel. Neither she nor I had, in fact, anybody else to play with and talk with. She was older than myself, by more than three years; consequently her reading was of a more varied kind, and she made more of it than most girls could, because she had a thoughtful, poetical turn. She told stories capitally; she had grand notions, drawn from ancient history, of heroism and patriotism, and what men and even boys might be, and she lifted me up with her strong words, and made me feel something of a hero in spirit. She shared my admiration for Lawrence, but not to the same extent; he did not satisfy her;

his tone, she sometimes said, looking wise, was not high enough. I did not understand her, however, but I was made romantic to some extent by her.

Every now and then Lawrence brought home, on holiday afternoons, some of his friends among the boys. What glorious afternoons those were! Especially if the party of boys did not start off at once, to a great distance, for a country walk, as, in summer, they were apt to do, or take boat on the river, or go out to bathe; in which cases I was not allowed to accompany them, and had to stay with Rachel at home. But if the weather was bad, or it was winter time, we had capital doings on the premises; for the range of buildings attached to our house was long and large, and, if we did not intrude upon the counting-house or weighing-rooms, we had liberty to play, or read, or speechify in an unused room. It was there that Lawrence one day got up a grand mock trial of a recreant school-boy, one who should have been a "blue," and was suspected of turning "purple." This notable piece of poetical justice was executed just after one of our city elections, when the boys of the Free School were particularly stirred up, and were all, according to the part taken by their parents, either Whigs (Blues), or Tories (Purples).

I remember, as well as if it were yesterday, the scene. A great heavy, fat boy, Mott, was seated as judge; the jury was made up, as well as time and space allowed, of small and great; I myself being one, with Rachel and little Maggy. Lawrence was the lawyer for the prosecution, and Dick was ordered, against his will, to plead, which he did feebly enough, for the defendant, who was a man of straw, got up for the occasion, stuffed

into one of the oldest coats that was to be found, and turned in the most ignominious manner, hung round with bits of purple ribbon.

How Lawrence did rant and rave, and throw his arms about, and look virtuous and indignant, and hurl out the big words of patriotism, freedom, citizenship, and so on! How grand I thought him! I, one of the smallest of the impanelled jury, clapped with all my might, after a burst of eloquence, and thought it a shameful thing that the fat boy, who sat as judge, cried "silence!" and forbade "all expressions of applause," which virtuous and impartial conduct Rachel highly approved.

Then Dick got up to speak in defence, and but that he was my own dear brother Dick, could I not have hissed him! I thought it so downright mean in him to speak a word for a Purple, especially a Purple who *had been* a Blue; but it was a great comfort that he had very little to say, and that that little was dull and quiet; how unlike the burning eloquence of Lawrence!

Then the judge *charged*, delivering a striking oration in praise of consistency in political principles; and then, before he had done, the jury, all but Rachel, roared out "guilty," without waiting to be asked; and the judge, with great dignity and solemnity, put on the cap and delivered sentence, which we in great fury executed on the straw man; only we pulled him to pieces in our wrath, leaving absolutely nothing of him to be hung by the neck, till he was dead, dead, dead! according to the sentence.

So, you will see, I was not likely to go to the Free School without my prejudices, and so, in fact, all Hulme boys did. Just during the years of my brothers' and

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my education, I believe these things might be at the very worst. There were many excellent men in Hulme, steady and independent, who resisted the tendency to turn everything into party matters, who *would* be friends, if possible, with the good of all parties; at all events, were respected by all, whether they visited at each others' houses or no; but the prevailing idea among the politicians of our city, was that their own particular party must be upheld, and the other kept down, and they acted out this idea through all the connections of life. If a living was to be given away, if a small clerkship, if a poor man or woman wanted a place in an almshouse, if a boy was to be got into a charity or corporate school, if a broken-down tradesman was to be helped, then and there our worthy citizens were sure to make a battle about it. The Blues and the Purples rallied each around their respective standard. Livings, almshouses, pensions, schools, all were fought for, as if life and principle depended upon the contest. It mattered not much whether the people they took up or put down had any political opinions at all of their own, but it was a matter of connection. If the father's or uncle's vote was wanted by the Purples, he was promised by that party that his boy should have a place in the school, or that some relation should be put into an almshouse. Of course the Blues tried to outbid the Purples, and so the strife was brought down from high to low, from old to young. It would have often been ridiculous, if it had not been so sad. The head master of the Free School should of course have been chosen only for his learning and worth, but this was not the notion in Hulme, and there never was a sturdier fight than that between the two parties, not to get the *best* man, but *their own* man. As it hap-

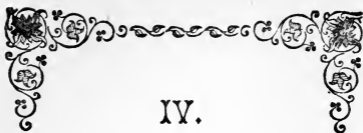
pened, both candidates were deserving, though my father, for one, considered we had not got the very best, and when the head master came to appoint his ushers, he, of course, preferred those who would please his party. So that the Purples in our school carried everything before them, and my father, a moderate Blue, not choosing to lose the benefit of a good and cheap education for his sons, could only hope there would be no partiality shown in the treatment of the scholars themselves.

And Lawrence and Dick always declared that there was not, at least not in school-hours. Blue boys and Purple boys learnt their lessons side by side. They were praised or punished according as they deserved, and as far as competition in learning was concerned, all was fair and generous. But when they turned out of school, then it was that the fights and chaffing began. Especially if there was any chance of a contested election, what a putting on and pulling off of cockades; what brave attempts to carry banners! It was really not always safe for quiet people to venture into the Close at those times when the Free School boys were let loose. My father and mother were anxious enough, not that they feared for my brothers' safety, but they did not like their being involved so young in party broils. Dick was steady and sensible; and generally worked through, but Lawrence's fights were no joke, and he got into no end of trouble, and kept my father always at work settling matters with aggrieved boys' parents; and he took Lawrence away sooner than Dick, partly on this account, partly because he wished to have him employed under his own eye. Mr. Goodwin, a kind considerate employer, himself a Purple, but allowing

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more than was usual in Hulme to the conscience of a respectable independent man like my father, consented to his entrance into a sort of nondescript place in the department filled by the warehousemen, of whom our father was head.





IV.

MY EDUCATION.

AS I have before said, I did not myself go to school till some little time after my brothers left. How well I knew its porch and door of entrance, however. Near it had I, a little fellow, very recently inducted into jackets and trowsers, come occasionally for a walk with the maid and baby, and she had pointed out the awful door, and I had heard distinctly the hum of boys within, and occasionally the whizzing and thwacking of a cane on some idle boy's shoulders. What a tremendous thing! what if that idle boy should be one of *my* brothers! but no, it could not be, they were far too good for that. Then, as times went on, and I grew older, and was sent to a preparatory school for little boys, I still, as my school quarters were not far from the Close, took a sly peep at the door before I returned home. It happened to me more than once to be knocked down by a bevy of rough day-boys, when I had ventured rather too far for the purpose of hailing my brothers. They picked me up and brushed the dirt off my clothes, but did not give me, not Lawrence at least, a very cordial reception. They seemed a little ashamed of me, very cool towards the small brother, especially if at a distance they caught a glimpse of the maid, who, with little Maggy, was to keep a look out for me on my homeward way, for then

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the big boys were sure to shout out that the three little Master De Carles were sent for by their mamma, and must walk home with the maid and baby.

I meanwhile was of course impatient of being put to school to a woman, and yet it was no bad lot to be under the excellent Miss Grey, and I certainly owed much to



her when, on my entrance at last into the Free School, I was found to have been thoroughly well grounded.

Quiet and competent, a well-instructed woman herself, conscientious, religious, wholly without cant, she plodded on, and made her scholars plod, not at all pro-

fessing to turn work into play, but yet infusing spirit into it. I suppose if any one had asked whether Miss Grey was an entertaining teacher, the answer would have been an immediate, rather decisive, "No," and a smile too. But see what it is to have an intimate sense in one's-self of the good of *work*. She did manage, most certainly, to give us all the cheerful pleasure which she herself felt in conquering difficulties. Comparing her with some modern teachers who profess to make learning very amusing, she might not satisfy many. She would laugh her good-humoured laugh, and say, "Well, you know, when you teach a child to read, there are different ways of doing it. Some will give the word 'B, a, t,' *bat*, accompanied by a pretty picture of a bat, and some very amusing stories. The same by 'd, o, g,' dog. Now, I own I think the fact of having got the knowledge of the word, and the letters composing it, is enough; and if you manage it rightly, it is a good and pleasant thing to get these little pieces of knowledge for their own sake only;" and so she went on to higher learning, giving a few absolute rules, not to be broken, and forming habits of order and arrangement in our minds. I made with her some good beginnings in grammar (Latin and English), in arithmetic, and geography, and she taught writing and reading well. We learnt our Catechism with her, too, and we always began the day by reading a short portion of Scripture; and I do think we all liked it; she was so well informed and so pleasant about it, and loved the Bible herself so very much, that we caught her tone unawares. In another way this sensible, good woman showed more firmness than the masters of the Free School. She absolutely put an end to our little demonstrations of partizanship,

not at any moment, nor under any pretence, not even during the fun and mischief of a busy election, would she suffer any of us to bring a fragment of party colours to her house. Be it Blue, or be it Purple, all was instantly destroyed. "What a pity!" she would say. "Don't think I do not love colours. It is partly because I like them so very much that I can't let you little fellows make them into things to quarrel ever."

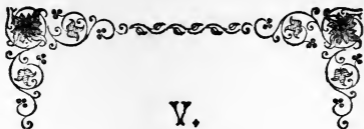
I, for one, as I grew older, especially, did not find in Miss Grey any match for my fiery Brother Lawrence, and of course I grew impatient of petticoat government, and glad enough was I when my father told us at dinner one day that I was to enter the Free School after Easter.

How my heart beat! Lawrence, I remember, predicted that I was not half plucky enough, and should come crying home every day for a week, which prediction I indignantly rejected. Rachel and I had many private conferences, and, as I remember, she said some clever and wise things, but, alack! they were much too grand and too general, and did not touch the point. Lawrence used to laugh very irreverently at Rachel's wise saws. I am afraid he was sadly low in his code of schoolboy morality. He said she was making a spooney of me, and was a great deal worse than Miss Grey—for Miss Grey had plain common sense, and was not foolish. *She* called a spade a spade, but Rachel was misty about it. My brother Dick, whom I was very fond of, though he did not *rule* me as Lawrence did, was for the present provided for. His scientific turn led him into intimacy with a good chemist of our old city, a Mr. Drake, who was taken with the boy, and advised his being apprenticed to his own business, offering advantageous terms, with which my father had no objection

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to comply ; so while Lawrence went on all sorts of business for Mr. Goodwin, visited the weavers, the wharves, and even was sent occasionally some miles into the country to see how the stuffs ordered were going on, picking up all the time odd stores of manners and customs, and growing familiar with the habits of both country and town people, Dick handled pestle and mortar gravely, weighed ingredients accurately, studied prescriptions with slow caution, and made up pills and draughts with admirable neatness.





V.

THE FREE SCHOOL.

I AM keeping you a long time from the Free School. At last, then, enter Matthew de Carle, age eleven, rather tall of his years, tolerably strong, light hair, sparkling bright eyes, a little hurried in his gait, turning into the room in a bustle, as if to get it over. One might have seen a lurking self-importance about his manner, and indeed it is true that he quite meant to be *somebody*. He meant, for instance, of course, to be a real staunch friend to every oppressed little Blue boy, to offer his services to the party heart and soul; to be a worthy brother and successor to Lawrence and Dick.

Now for the reality. As well as I remember, I was conscious chiefly of a broad stare from all the boys as a new comer; of being hustled into a bad, cold corner, quite good enough for a new boy; of being allowed very scant room to sit down: and of not knowing where to put my nice new cap, and my difficulty being obligingly helped out by a boy, who suggested, as the best place, the empty grate of the large fire-place, where no fire was now likely to be made for some time to come; to which I objected on account of the soot. In due time I was called up to be examined and placed according to proficiency; and here I came off very fairly, and was put at once higher than some much larger boys, on whom, un-

luckily, I cast a look of triumph, which they returned by making horrible faces at me. I was vexed, but took the place and learnt my lesson, which occupied no long time, for that first morning after the holidays was devoted to examinations.

At twelve o'clock we turned out, and *that* was my hour of happy anticipation. Alas! what a disappointment! I hastened to introduce myself. I, Matthew de Carle, a Blue among Blues. Would you believe it? the Blues would not have me! they sneered, and said I was a raw little conceited fellow, who must be well taken down and taught manners. I was not big enough to fight my own battles, and what good could I do *them*. I must keep myself to myself, and grow a little taller, and not look such a prig, and perhaps I might one day be worth something. I meekly named "Lawrence and Dick de Carle my brothers." "Oh, yes! they believed there had been such boys ONCE in the school. Was not Dick that old man who was bald, and wore a blue cotton handkerchief over his head to keep the cold off, as he sat pounding drugs at the corner of Drake's the chemist's shop? and very like *I* was to him, to be sure; and was not Lawrence the man who was taken up some time ago for sheep stealing?" Did ever mortal hear of such indignities? Of course I was in utter wrath and disdain, which made them chaff the more. It may be supposed that when Lawrence and Dick came home that evening, they eyed me with some curiosity. Truth is, I was much crest-fallen. To Rachel I was almost sulky; to my brothers I gave a passionate account of what had passed. Lawrence laughed with might and main. "I told you so," he said; "I was sure you had not got pluck enough; but never mind, it will come in time. Stick tight to

the Blues, civil or no." Dick showed greater sympathy, though he too was diverted at the caricature of himself; but privately he told me that he knew there were some very clever boys just now among the Purples, though Lawrence would not own it, and he added, "and *good* fellows, too, Matthew," which made me stare at Dick.

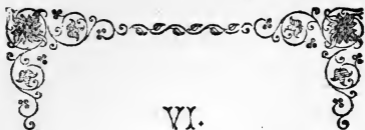
Next day, as I passed the back window where Dick (though without the blue handkerchief) sat pounding his drugs, I felt revived by his kindly nod, and went on my way in good heart. Certainly I did grow a little more hardy as time went on. I learnt not so much to mind it, when I was tenderly and confidentially asked whether I had heard lately from my brother Lawrence at Botany Bay, and listened quietly to some observations about the old man at Drake's having changed his blue cotton handkerchief for a purple one—but at this period of my experience I had come to have a mortal aversion to the whole generation of boys about me. I was foolish enough myself, no doubt, but in the way I had been brought up, with my mother, and Rachel, and Dick near at hand, and with Miss Grey's really refined sort of tone, *I could not* be vulgar and low, though I was but a warehouseman's son. Even Lawrence, who was far from *nice* in speech or manners, had the heart of a gentleman, and he was improving, because, in spite of the love of gossip and party spirit, he could not be contented without reading and picking up sound information, and he was noticed by clever men, who saw his intelligence, and wished to help him also; and this I am quite clear about, fair judges must have seen that he had a clear, honest mind, except when *mere* party obscured his vision. I was very sensitive on one point, and unluckily the boys found it out. Miss Grey had been par-

ticular about my dialect, and as I really knew the right from the wrong, I was disposed to set my schoolfellows right too often, and when they questioned me as to my authority, I gave Miss Grey as a matter of course. You can fancy what an unfortunate move it was for me. Every sort of ridicule was thrown on my instructress and on me. Now, I had been quite alive to the degradation of remaining too long under a woman's teaching, but when it came to the point, and my own scholarship was involved, I quite forgot all this, and hurried on, vehemently defensive of Miss Grey, and all her doings.

This made me more an outcast than before. In the bitterness of my soul I told Rachel that I hated school, and hated the boys, all of them. They were a set of vulgar, ill-behaved blackguards. This was strong; Rachel demurred. She was always slow in speech; she seemed to be reasoning out her words as they came. She gave forth a sentence at last to the effect that the fault was, perhaps, partly mine; that I had set myself up too much at first. It so happened that Lawry, coming into the room, heard her say this. "Well done, Rachel," said he; "I didn't think you had such sense. 'Tis the truth, depend upon it. Master Matthew has been giving himself grand airs, and the boys won't bear it: they'll give him a thrashing one day; serve him right, too." So I was to have no pity at home, and no comfort at school; but it was not a bad thing for me. I begun by degrees to think less of myself, and to pay more honest attention to those about me. An opportunity occurred of doing a civil thing for one of them, and having done it the best I could, I began to like him, and he took hugely to me. If we did not see what a wonderfully capricious thing popularity is everywhere,

we might marvel more at a set of boys turning round in a short space of time, and making almost a favourite of me, but it was so; and then followed, as an almost invariable sequence, the dangers of prosperity, and these were as great as those of unpopularity had been. It was so amazing to find myself made much of, I thought it a striking proof of my own merits. I was certainly a clever boy; the masters had said so, and my moves upward had been rapid.





VI.

THINGS MEND.

BUT, above all, it was in my favour that there was just then a greater lull in party politics than had been known for some years in Hulme. There had been no contested election lately, no grand opportunities for Purples and Blues to signalize themselves. It seemed even doubtful whether an opposition would be stirred up, if by any circumstance one or both members were to be removed, or Parliament were to be dissolved. A compromise was much advocated. Parties were so nearly balanced, that except by the old work of bribing, or treating, or frightening, it was very well known that the town would be fairly represented by having two members of opposite politics. The violent on both sides did not like this, of course; but as I have said, there was a lull, and all sensible, benevolent, quiet people wished the truce might last.

It certainly was a good time for the Free School. We well nigh forgot our animosities, and fought, when we fought, good round battles, not for little bits of coloured ribbons, but for matters about which we could judge better. We played at soldiers, and it was not a mere idle game, but a serious, weighty truth, affecting all England more or less, that we might be called on very soon to repel a French invasion, for there



DUFFEISON

"ENSIGN DE CARLE TOLD US ALL HIS ADVENTURES, ESPECIALLY ABOUT THE BLACK BRUNSWICKERS."

Ed. Whittier - 1848

PURPLES AND BLUES.

was Bonaparte's camp pitched near Boulogne, watching us greedily, and he was ready with his eagles to swoop down upon us; and how could we boys, countrymen of our own Nelson, help being warmed and excited by the thought? So we learnt our exercises, and were drilled in martial style, and our elder brothers took their turn, to march with their corps of volunteers, to guard the sea-coast, for two or three weeks at a time in succession.

Lawrence went with one division, Dick with another, to Riversmouth, where they were to be quartered; and how well I call to mind how handsome Lawrence looked in his regimentals—"Ensign De Carle" he was called—and how when he came back he told us all his adventures, especially about the Black Brunswickers, a band of brave men, who, under their chief, the Duke of Brunswick, had escaped through incredible hardships from the French, and had found a short resting-place on English shores. I sat by and heard Lawrence tell of their black uniforms, the white death's-head and cross-bones on their caps, and their remarkably youthful looks, which had struck him particularly; for he said many of them were mere boys, with fair long hair twisted round their heads; yet they were well-proved soldiers.

Lawrence told us, too, how he had seen them devouring barley-sugar, and all the sweet things they could get, just like children in the shops. I suppose it was a home indulgence, and these poor fellows, who had long been deprived of every luxury, found the confectioners' shops their greatest temptation.

Well, as I tell you, all this was a diversion and improvement on the mere *party* battles we had had before, and I went on growing and getting on in school;

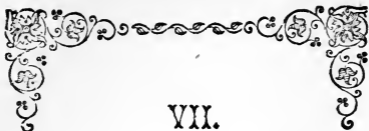
PURPLES AND BLUES.

but then came, at the last year of my school life, all at once a terrible outburst, the worst, every one said, that ever was known in Hulme. It was a furiously-contested city election. For weeks beforehand the old town seemed to have gone mad; from the bottom ring of the social ladder to the top it was a fearful fight, and of course we Free-School lads were in the thick of it. The masters checked us. Not only we were not allowed to show colours in the schools, but a rule was made and strongly enforced against carrying on our battles in the Close. We had plenty of other places of meeting, however, but we got into sad scrapes during those weeks. We took it into our wise heads to persecute two or three obnoxious persons whom we fancied had behaved ill to us. There was one old gentleman to whom the Purple boys bore a spite because he had informed against them for breaking his window—a mere accident—only as he was a Blue, his information was enough to anger the Purples; and it was not difficult to make the old gentleman's life a little uncomfortable by bribing organ-boys and serenaders of all kinds to keep up a constant series of noises under his windows. And then there was a certain rather great lady, the widow of a dean, whom the Blues specially disliked because she had complained of their rudeness and uproar as they came rushing out of the precincts, once all but knocking her, the Honourable Mrs. Plummer herself, down. Now, though a Blue, I did manage to keep clear of plots against Mrs. Plummer. My mother knew her, and she was a particular friend of Miss Grey; and, besides, I declared once for all, I would have nothing to say to any Blues who waged war against a woman. So I knew nothing about the matter, and hoped it was all at an end. It was not,

however, but it proved to be harmless spite enough, though it made her very angry.

The old lady gave nice, select supper parties, and our boys found out when the next was to be. Near her house (which was in an ill-lighted corner) a pile of bricks, and some mortar had been left by the workmen who were repairing a neighbouring dwelling. It was proposed to build Mrs. Plummer and her guests up as soon as they were assembled, and I believe the work was cleverly executed. The front doorway was filled up by roughly-executed masonry, and when the hour of dispersion came the guests found no means of exit except through the kitchen and scullery; where to the infinite diversion of some of the concealed culprits, the greatest of our city magnates, and certain Canons, with their ladies, were obliged to take their departure most ingloriously. The joke had of course a high savour; but the secret was well kept, and never, I fancy, divulged. The barricade was cleared away by workmen before the Honourable Mrs. Plummer's breakfast hour, and it was only whispered in Blue circles to what an indignity the Purples had been subjected. Mrs. Plummer herself looked more stately than usual, but preserved a dignified silence.





AN UNEXPECTED STROKE.

WELL, all this would not have mattered very much to me and my story; but Lawrence unfortunately at that time got into disgrace with Mr. Goodwin; worse still with his partner. Mr. Goodwin had up to this period been a very moderate Tory, but he had taken a turn; he believed the Whigs to be dangerous to Church and State, and thought every true Englishman should be a Tory. He was far too just to impress my father on his side. He knew that he should not conquer in argument, for my father was extremely rigid in his notions of political honesty, and had his own fixed sentiments. Mr. Briggs would have dismissed him I believe; but of course, as my father well knew, this idea was mere moonshine; so he went about his work steadily. He voted against his employer, but made no bustle.

It was otherwise with Lawrence. He signalized himself by taking part with two or three weavers, who were threatened by Briggs, their landlord, with being turned into the street if they voted for a Blue. Lawrence was known to have backed them up, and after they *were* turned out he helped to raise a subscription for them. This, in a young man employed as matter of favour to my father, could not be borne even by amiable Mr.

Goodwin. He told my father shortly, but decidedly, that Lawrence must leave, and advised his being sent out of Norwich. He added a few words of general regard for the youth's moral character, but said he was one of those who would stir up sedition wherever he could, and his best chance was to go somewhere, where he would be made to work hard, and have no time to meddle with politics.

That was a very important night in our family lives. We all assembled at supper as usual. Lawrence knew of his dismissal, and was rather silent and dull; no one else, save my father, was aware of it. My father, however, then and there told us exactly what had passed. He spoke very kindly. He would not allow us to complain of Mr. Goodwin. He said Lawrence was very young, little more than a boy: and that he had made himself too conspicuous, and Mr. Goodwin had a perfect right to dismiss him, and had given him sound advice on the whole.

Still we young ones were indignant, and protested that Lawry had done nothing but what was right. My father half smiled. "You don't understand the question, you young folks; it is whether violent young politicians like Lawrence are to be tolerated in running counter to their employers in *action*."

"Well, father," said Lawrence, at last, "I don't mean to dispute Mr. Goodwin's right, and I do wish you *would* send me away somewhere. I shall never be out of the mess here, I know."

It seemed very like truth; so on that night there came into our house, for the first time, the notion which comes to all homes sooner or later, of a break-up in the family circle; and my dear mother's eyes filled

with tears, as she looked up at Lawry's handsome face, while he turned his loving glance at her, and we all set up a small outcry of dismay; yet it was not very loud. We all thought it a right and plucky thing in Lawrence to wish to go; and were proud of his giving up all rather than his "principles." Even sober Dick, so pacific in general, blustered a little about liberty and independence.

We parted for the night and went to bed, we young ones atleast, with a dash of the spirit of self-gratulation, with a notion that we were a somewhat heroic virtuous family, ready to sacrifice our principal member to principle; that we were endeavouring to do our duty to the common weal as men and Englishmen should.

In the morning there was considerably less of excitement. We woke up to the reality of separation, and my mother's spirits were low, and my father was grave. He and Lawrence had some private talk, and the result of it was, indeed, an awful one to us all. It seemed that Lawrence's most intimate friend, a farmer's son in the country, had come into possession of a few hundreds, and felt strongly tempted to take this money and himself to Australia, there to buy sheep, and purchase a run of land, and settle himself for a few years there, if he could get a willing and active young man to take a small share with him, and partake his shepherd's lot. The prospect was reasonable and good. The young farmer's friends were well known and much respected, and when Lawry expressed his wish to go with him, my father and mother objected chiefly on the ground of the distance and separation. It took time to get over this, but Lawrence's mind was set upon it. He was adventurous and full of resource. He knew that

PURPLES AND BLUES.

at home he should be a source of anxiety and expense to my father, and deliberately thought that his friend's offer to take him was worth accepting. Mr. Goodwin not only approved, but most kindly offered to advance a moderate sum for equipments and passage, and the matter once decided, all arrangements were made with as little delay as possible.





VIII.

CHANGES.

YET it was a sad day to us when Lawrence drew my mother, for the last time, in her garden chair, to Mrs. Goodwin's beautiful garden, where she had liberty to sit undisturbed, under the shade of two noble elms; and where Lawrence, Rachel and Maggy, and I gathered round her.

It is well for us all that we can look so short a way onward in life; it comes next, perhaps, to the large and mighty blessing of looking on for ever and ever, which is permitted, nay inculcated, on us all. Had we known then that we four should meet no more on earth, how much more sad would that golden evening have been. I could well see that it was a pain and grief to Lawrence to leave us, as well as to us to lose him. I did not often go to that garden after he left us; neither did my mother, for in the following spring she had an illness, and before summer came she was no more. I always thought she pined after Lawrence. That evening, however, how charming it was! The short green turf of the lawn, with small beds of flowers upon it. The graceful spire of the cathedral rising close by us amid the trees, while the rooks and daws kept up there constant movement. The distant splashing of oars on the

river, and the hum of school-boy voices in the Close. The organ was, to be sure, mute then, or we should have heard its rich sounds. One of the greatest privileges of old Hulme was the possession of many large gardens. Even in what appeared the closer streets, if a side door of a house stood open and you looked through it, you would find that it admitted you into a pleasant background of turf and flowers; but few gardens were so beautiful as Mr. Goodwin's, and there was a picturesque character given to it by jutting out fragments of the old wall, covered with ivy and wallflowers.

Here, then, we sat, and talked out that last evening, and in the morning Lawrence, really subdued and sorrowful, took his leave, and my father and Dick went with him to the coach-office, where he was to take his place for London, from whence the emigrant ship started.

It was a dull time after that. Letters from Australia were long in coming, and I went and came to the free school, till my father thought I ought to be doing something in the way of learning a business. For myself, I never had a notion of anything but being a citizen of old Hulme, and my home had many attractions still. Then I could not look at my mother and not see that she was always thinking of Lawrence, and that I, and all of us, must do what we could to cheer her. Rachel and I did our best, and so did Dick, in his leisure hours; she was always gentle and kind, and ready to be pleased; always too, it was easy to see, her pious mind directed her to the true source of comfort. Still the months moved rather wearily on; Lawrence had left us in autumn, and towards March my mother caught one of her bad colds, and we all

PURPLES AND BLUES.

trembled for her, not without reason. She just lived long enough to hear the first letter from her son. It was something of a comfort, no doubt, to see the dear hand again, and he wrote cheerfully; but my mother could not like the sort of life that was in store for him. He had reached the run of land which he and his partner had taken, and had bought his sheep, but it was nothing like an English farm. There they were, two lonely shepherds, without servant, or neighbour, or sight of man's or woman's face, for many weeks probably, from morning to evening. To fancy our sprightly, sociable, merry Lawrence, the life of us all, in his hut, or sitting on the hill-side watching his sheep, feeling how slowly the sun marked out the progress of time, longing to hear the sound of a human voice, which never could be till night, when he and his partner met at their usual meal of tea and mutton, and damper, was very strange. He loved, dear fellow, to make a joke of something. He told my mother that Purples and Blues did not trouble him now, for he had only the distant purple hills to look at, and, farther still, the beautiful blue sky. My mother sighed at the picture, but she looked up silently herself, and I am sure there was a prayer sent from her heart for the lonely watcher. That night she had a paralytic stroke, which put an end to her blameless, useful life, and our first letter to Lawrence had to announce this event. He, meanwhile, kept on writing to her who was no more. The letters would have comforted her. He and his partner were prospering, were likely to be rich; and then of course they need not live their lonely lives much longer. Indeed, to make an end of Lawrence

here, I may add, that in about three years he married well, and settled near Melbourne; by that time quite renouncing all thought of coming back to old Hulme.

For my father too was gone. He was carried off by a prevalent and fatal fever, and I, who had been under him at Mr. Goodwin's the last year, had it too, while Rachel, who escaped, had, with our Molly and Maggy, a heavy work in nursing. Dick, it was thought, had a touch of it; but his illness, whatever it was, fell on the lungs, and the doctor said, if it were possible, he must move to a milder climate. Just then his master heard of a good assistant's situation in Devonport, and there Dick, with our sorrowful consent, went. Then the question was, where Rachel and Maggy should live. Rachel thought she could get some day teaching in Hulme, and wished to keep up a small home for Maggy and me, as long as possible. So it was settled, and I must say that those three or four years of our joint lives were, if not brilliant, very happy ones. Friends were all kind; Rachel was warmly taken up, and was liked in the families she assisted. Then our evenings were never idle. A ticket was given us for the capital old library of the city, and, if lectures worth hearing were advertised, people thought of us and our small means. My father's life had been insured, and Lawrence would take no part of the little income resulting from it; so we managed to live comfortably, loving Hulme better than ever.

But when I was just twenty-one, Mr. Goodwin, my kind and liberal friend, made me a proposal which changed all our plans.

PURPLES AND BLUES.

I had not thought much of the future, but he had thought for me ; and one day he called me into his private room, told me that it was time to consider what my look-out here was, and whether I could do nothing better for myself. He said he could not himself advance me much, but he had seen that I was industrious and rather above my position ; in particular he knew I had been studying German with Rachel, and had made myself a pretty good scholar. He thought if I could get into one of those German houses in Manchester or Liverpool, where a knowledge of this language would be important, it would promote my interest much above anything he could anticipate at home. He mentioned one house in particular, where they sent travellers to Germany and all parts of the Continent, and had agents in several places, and he offered to write, recommending me. Of course I was grateful, though startled at first ; but Rachel, sorry as she might be to break up our pleasant little home, saw at a glance that it was an important step for me. I had not made her anxious by my taste for politics as yet ; but still she knew what was to come, and while (for she was no coward) she did not want me to shirk my duty, she felt sorry to think I must probably by and by have to vex our good friend my employer, as my father (spite of his quietness) had done, by taking a different side to himself. By and by then we concluded we must accept a good offer, if it came, and it *did* come, and I took a sad leave of Rachel and Maggy, and went to my new employers at Manchester. I did not at all like the change at first. The house I lived in with other young men was disagreeable. I wanted a sister, or at least some nice, friendly woman to talk to

now and then ; but I came across no one, in the easy, quiet intercourse I liked. However, trying to make the best of it, I was noticed and taken out to country houses now and then by my town friends, and after a year or two of foreign counting-house life, Messrs. — sent me first to Hamburg and then to Frankfort, and then I had a long, long mission in Valparaiso.

Rachel, meantime, had seen reason to wish to join our brother Richard at Devonport ; for Maggy had thought proper to marry a London young man, and she did not wish to live alone.

Thus there really was no one left in old Hulme to make me wish to return there. I went and came ; saw much of the world : did not learn to love it perhaps the more, for I did not find a real home anywhere, and I did not marry, probably because I had so little time to think about it.

But for the last two years, though I have felt myself growing too old for *that* change, I have thought more than ever of Lawrence and his wife and children in Melbourne. I have been to see them once already, and they wanted me to stop with them there, but I had duties to do for my employers. Now I am past seventy, and am my own master. I see that Rachel and Dick do not want me. I shall leave them a share of my savings, and so also by Maggy, and when I have seen old Hulme again, and my father's and mother's, and Mr. and Mrs. Goodwin's graves, I shall most likely take passage for Australia at once.

I am going to-morrow to revisit the dear old place. No one will know me perhaps, but I shall know every court, and lane, and old garden ; and I *may*

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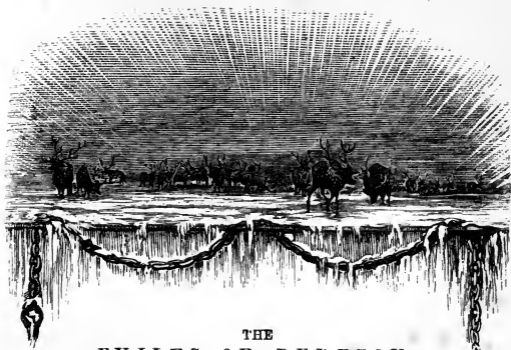
see a face or two that I remember, and when I have looked I shall say, "Good bye for ever, dear old city of Hulme."

Farewell, home of my fathers; and, reader, fare you well also.





THE LAND OF EXILE LEFT BEHIND.



THE
EXILES OF BEREZOV.

BY FRANCES M. WILBRAHAM.

“There is a Providence that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them as we will.”—SHAKSPEARE.

“HEAVEN be praised, the ice is breaking up!”
The speaker of these words, a slight youth, wrapt in furs, leaned over a low wall at the top of a steep cliff, overlooking the Siberian river Irtish. Behind him, on yet higher ground, stood what is called the “higher town” of Tobolsk, capital of Western Siberia. Beneath lay the “lower town,” a collection of quaint yellow houses, built of wood. Far away, in the hazy light of dawn, stretched a “steppe,” or wide waste of undulating ground, across which coursed many streams, swollen by the melted snows from distant hill-tops. These all ran into the already brimming Irtish; its waves rolled on, bearing on their bosoms huge masses of ice, that looked solemn and ghost-like in the faint morning light. Sometimes one ice-hill jostled another,

and then followed sounds like claps of thunder, far and near, and the harsh noise of sharp edges rasping one another. Many of the good people of Tobolsk hurried from their beds to watch this break-up of winter, and small craft began to ply close to the banks of the river, where its course was tolerably clear. As day broke, the scene grew more and more animated.

"Thank Heaven," repeated the youth, in Polish, "there is a chance at last of getting away! Four or five days will melt these icebergs, and then adieu, Tobolsk!"

He raised himself with a joyful gesture, and saw for the first time a face peering curiously into his. It was a broad face, of the coarsest Russian mould, tanned by many years of exposure to sun and frost, the eyes small and greenish grey, the lower features buried in a mass of grizzled, uncombed hair. "Wherein has Tobolsk displeased Monsieur, that he is so eager to turn his back upon it?" asked this new comer, jocosely.

The foreigner drew back, for he was not yet used to the Russian fashion of accosting travellers, and plying them with questions; moreover, he had strong reasons for shunning inquiry. After a little struggle with himself, however, his natural courtesy prevailed, and he answered, "Tobolsk is well enough, if one has leisure; but for a man who wishes to push on, it is trying to be detained three weeks by roads knee-deep in water, and river-ice too rotten for sledging."

"And whither is Monsieur desirous of going?" asked the Russian.

The Pole looked surprised at this further query, but noting a good-humoured twinkle in the green-grey eyes, answered, "I think of exploring up this

stream and the river Oby, into which, if I mistake not, it falls."

"Ah, the Oby!" said the little man. "Father Oby is an old acquaintance of mine; my best friend, I may say, as he yearly fills my nets with fish, and my pockets with silver. Perhaps your honour has business at my town of Berezov, the only habitable place up there?"

"Really, friend, you catechise one strictly," said the stranger, with a slight laugh. "Well, suppose I *had* a commission from a great house at Kief, to bring samples of Siberian furs; will that satisfy your curiosity?"

"Good, good," said the little man, "I thought as much; wags say there are but three things to be found at Berezov—sable-skins, mosquitoes, and Polish exiles; one of the three I thought you must be after! No offence, I hope?"

Our traveller winced, as though suddenly stung, and the quick colour glowed in his face, but he controlled his feelings, and replied sedately—

"Offence? none; so far from it, I should rather like to pick your brains as to that part of the world."

Here the little man cut him short by saying, "If Monsieur will make the trip to Berezov in my vessel (and a better does not ply on the Irtish), I will give him the best information as to the prices of marten, squirrel, mink, chinchilla, and reindeer-cub! I will show him how to deal with the wild Ostiak hunters that bring the skins for sale; nay, I can tell him of a dodge or two by which he may outwit the old Russian fur-traders, crafty knaves as they are! Will Monsieur look at my boat?"

The stranger agreed to do so, on condition they should start for Berezov as soon as possible after the melting of the ice.

This, the little man replied, it was for his interest to do, as the fishing season in the Frozen Ocean would soon begin, and his boat had been one of the "Oby fleet" for more than twenty years; indeed, he might say, took the lead in the yearly fishing expeditions. He gave his address, "Peter Poushkin, owner and captain of the 'Czar Nicholas,'" then shuffled down the hill at a rapid pace, humming the Russian national air.

The stranger stood deep in thought, his gaze fixed on the grey northern sky-line. "Papa, mamma, Frida, my little sister," he murmured, stretching his arms towards the icy zone; "little bright-haired Frida, and Alfie too, whom I have never seen, but who lisps my name already, may I indeed hope to see you? Will your soft arms, my mother, be round my neck once more? Has Heaven such bliss in store for your Alarik?"

Just then the sun's glowing orb appeared over the shoulder of the cliff; in a moment the twilight scene became flooded with intense dazzling light; rivers, steppe, ice-masses, all glittered, and the crosses of several churches that crowned the steep rock, caught the ray, and twinkled like so many stars. Alarik accepted the sudden glory as a good omen.

An hour later, Alarik had secured his place on the "Czar Nicholas;" the little bark did not quite answer to its imperial name, its accommodation being small and of the roughest. Its one private cabin, half filled with casks of vodky (a kind of whisky), had been retained for the "custom-house officer's lady" of Berezov and her two daughters. Alarik preferred a shake-down on the deck, as far removed as possible from the mingled odours of fur, fish, spirits, and tar which came up from below. Here, with plenty of wraps, he hoped to be

tolerably comfortable. By Poushkin's advice, he laid in a supply of groceries, etc., for some weeks, there being neither market nor shops at Berezov. During the trip, which usually occupied about a fortnight, Poushkin undertook to feed the passengers. For this he asked from each an exorbitant sum beforehand, expecting as a matter of course to have his demands beaten down to half. Alarik alone paid the silver with dreamy indifference, the little man muttering as he half unwillingly pocketed it, "The youngster will never grow rich unless he deals with the fur-traders in quite another fashion. I must teach him to haggle for every paper rouble!" From that moment he took Alarik under his protection.

Several days passed. On the 14th of May all was ready for a start, and our traveller presented himself, not without trepidation, at the police-office, to have his passport examined. Luckily, Poushkin was on the spot, and appeared to be hand and glove with the officials. He looked familiarly over the shoulder of the man who inspected Alarik's papers, scanning our hero narrowly as he did so. "Name—Alarik Franz; age—twenty-two (you don't look nineteen, young man); business—travelling clerk for L.'s, fur traders at Kief (let us hope there is a grey head on those green shoulders); eyes—brown (good); hair—chestnut (good); complexion—fair? (ahem, I should say brown)."

"Brown from travelling," put in Poushkin; "nothing so tanning as March wind and sun. Go on, comrade."

"Height—5 feet 8," continued the officer ("5 feet 10, I should have said").

"Lads grow," suggested Poushkin, oracularly. "Go on, comrade."

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“Rather stout,” read on the officer; “nay, friend Poushkin, what say you to that? The lad is slim as a larch-tree.”

“Of course, of course,” returned Poushkin, unabashed, “what he has gained in height he has lost in breadth; ’tis as plain as the sun at midnight, as we say in my country! Now, despatch our business, I prithee, comrade, and I will bring a silver fox-skin for thy good lady when I come back in the autumn.”

Poushkin’s eloquence prevailed, and he and his companion were allowed to depart. By noon, captain, passengers, and crew were assembled on the little bark; the signal gun had been thrice fired, and the “Czar Nicholas” was gliding out of sight of Tobolsk. For the first few hours they proceeded cheerily along the brimming river, a line of low blue hills on either side of them, and rows of birches in budding leaf overhanging the water. The sun shed down a marvellous warmth and brightness, and the wild steppe answered to his smile by a flush of faint green over its barren surface. Snatches of song from the boatmen accompanying the dash of their oars sounded pleasantly in the fresh spring air. The passengers smoked, or chatted on deck, and one or two busied themselves already with their “Samovar” or tea-urn, the delight of every Russian traveller, and often resorted to six or eight times in the day. There were two or three respectable tradesmen’s wives on board, and they came on deck in holiday costume, wearing gold chains, and coloured silk kerchiefs twisted round their heads. Far less picturesque looked the daughters of the custom-house officer, who wore French bonnets and mantles, and gave themselves airs, on the strength of their father being a servant of the

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crown; they talked so much, and laughed so loud, as to drive our young Pole in disgust to the furthest end of the vessel; there he sat, alone and silent, "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies."

I suppose you need not to be told that he was no fur trader; that the passport which Poushkin had induced the Tobolsk official to wink at, had been made out for another person; that not minks nor martens, but his own flesh and blood, were the objects of his search at Berezov. Had he simply wished to visit his parents there such disguise would have been needless, for the Russian government not seldom allowed Polish exiles to receive their friends, on parole as it were; but a further design had taken possession of Alarik's brain, a design which would appear wild and impossible to older people, in fact to all who knew how safe a prison-house the vast realm of Siberia is. Alarik cherished a hope that he might one day enable his father to make his escape! this thought had haunted him day and night from early boyhood, had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength, and now quite absorbed him. So he sat brooding over it, tossed backwards and forwards like a weaver's shuttle between hope and despair. This strife might have endangered his reason, but for a deep groundwork of religious faith that lay at the bottom of his heart. It had been laid by his mother, long ago, and after she had voluntarily followed her husband into exile, it had been built up by a wise and reverend clergyman of the Greek church to whom his education had been entrusted. It had since borne the ordeal of a year and a half at a military college, and the still greater trial of coming into a large property early, by the death of an uncle and godfather, in

Galicia. Probably the thought of his parents' sufferings, and the ever-present longing to rescue them, had been his safeguard through many of the temptations incident to youth.

The result of Alarik's present musings was a firm resolve to be doubly cautious as he drew near his goal, and to let no one perceive that he took more than common interest in the exiles. He determined to be guarded in his intercourse with Poushkin, as he had no desire to make that good-natured, but coarse-minded individual his confidant. He acted at once on these resolves, by sauntering up to the idlers, and joining in the gossip of the hour. Even the fast young ladies acquired some interest in his eyes when he became aware from their talk that they came from Berezov. They had wintered in Tobolsk, they said, partly for the sake of better society, partly on account of their mother who was consulting the doctors for a sudden, and, as it proved, hopeless affection of the eyes, not uncommon in Siberia. The old lady herself had not yet appeared, being unable to bear the cloudless sunshine.

Within fifty miles of Tobolsk the country becomes perfectly flat and barren, with no sign of life save here and there a Tartar hamlet with its mosque and slender minaret; but as you proceed north the scenery grows bolder. The Irtish expands to more than a mile in width, its current is very rapid and muddy, its channel bounded on both sides by dense masses of willows, beyond which rise high cliffs clothed with aged pines and cedars. Here, in spring, the north wind often roars, as through a tunnel. It proved so now; our little vessel creaked and strained; the movement made most of the passengers ill; the two young ladies lay dumb and

helpless on deck; even the "Samovar" was neglected; Poushkin's jokes were unheeded; Alarik, chilly and miserable, fought against his feelings of discomfort, and tried to help those who were in worse plight than himself. An opportunity soon presented itself to him of being of service to the blind lady, whose nerves were upset at this juncture by an alarm of fire in her cabin; some careless loungeur had sauntered in and sat down on one of the spirit-casks to smoke at his ease; he had shaken the ashes out of his pipe as he departed, and a spark lighting on some dry wood, presently ignited. Happily Alarik's eye was caught by the blaze, he darted in, trampled out the fire, and good-naturedly soothed Madame Prassenko's terror. From this time a friendship sprang up between them; he found her a simple-hearted, "motherly body," as we say in England, evidently the drudge at home, toiling, poor thing, to procure for her girls the shallow but costly education which led them to look down upon her. They stood aloof, wondering and tittering at the intimacy between their mother and the handsome foreigner, and quite at a loss to imagine what he could find to interest him in her homely talk.

What, indeed? she, charmed to find a listener, and encouraged by his cordial kindness, told him the sad story of her blindness, how much the glare of three months' uninterrupted daylight at Berezov had affected her eyes, how she had not liked to complain, how the Tobolsk doctor had said there was no remedy now; six months earlier there might have been! Ah, it was hard to reconcile herself to the will of the Lord! But He knew best, yes, doubtless He did, and she meekly added, "Who knows but He has quenched my sight on

earth, that I may the more surely see Him in heaven! Yet, 'tis a hard trial, for I have the house and farm to manage; my husband is busy in his office, and the girls are good girls, but young and heedless—and cows need great care and experience: I have fifteen fine cows, sir, and supply several good families in Berezov from my dairy; one family especially, of distinguished exiles, I have served six years—the name is Templitz, Count Templitz, his lady and two children—did you ever hear the name?”

It was well the eyes turned upon Alarik were sightless, or they would have detected his changing colour, and quivering lips; after a pause he said, “Templitz—a Polish name, is it not?”

“Ay, Polish; the count's is a hard case, poor gentleman. He lived quietly on his property; never, they say, plotted against our good czar, but in evil hour, harboured some that did; so he suffered for it; it is the old story of the stork caught among the cranes.”

“How does he bear up?” asked Alarik, with a gasping sigh.

“Ah, but poorly,” she replied; “he is pious, and murmurs not; but one can see that the home-sickness is consuming him. He is ordered a milk diet for his chest, and often when their Cossack is busy, the little Baroness Frida comes herself for my cream. She loves me, that dear child, and often opens her heart to me. ‘Ah, Anna Timothevna,’ she says, ‘papa looks very ill to-day, and I dare not say so to mamma, for she watches him with such sad eyes, from behind the newspaper she is reading to him! Oh that I were old enough to go to Russia, like that other exile's daughter, and fling myself at your czar's feet, and beg papa's freedom! I would

walk barefooted to Petersburg to ask it, I would indeed; but don't tell mamma so, for she says the czar is not good, at least to us Poles, and that papa would rather die than ask a favour of him.' Then she hides her face on my breast, poor lamb, and sobs as if her heart would burst, and afterwards she seems comforted, and goes with me to see the cows, and feed the hens. I always send her back smiling, with a packet of dried fruits or almond cakes for little Alfie, her brother."

"Her brother?" repeated Alarik, in a low voice; "so the count has a son?"

"Two sons," replied Madame Prassenko; "one, the little angel Alfie, not three years old, and one in Europe, a fine young man, as I hear, and surely a good one, for never does a mail-boat or sledge arrive without bringing tokens of love to his parents, books, easy-chairs, and I know not what besides. Oh, the tears of joy that poor lady sheds over them, and over the letters she receives from her dear boy. She and little Frida live on the hope of a visit from him, when he becomes his own master; but ah, there will be little need for the young gentleman to come here, for his father's days are surely numbered, and should he die, his widow and children will soon get leave from the emperor to return to Europe."

The old lady's forebodings were interrupted by her companion's starting up, as though in pain. Without uttering a word, he rushed on deck, and there paced up and down for some time with disordered steps. By degrees his calmness returned, and urged alike by kind feeling and prudence, he hastened back to the blind lady.

"Ah," she said, "I feared an old woman's long-

winded stories had frightened your honour away; one forgets that what absorbs one's self may weary another; Berezov, my world, my home, can be nothing to you."

"Pardon me," murmured Alarik, "I did but seek a breath of air; this cabin is so hot, so stifling; as to Berezov, I begin to feel an interest in it, and desire to learn all you can tell me respecting its climate, its residents, its—its fur-trade."

It needed no more to re-assure Madame Prassenko, and during that and several following days, she retained Alarik as her devoted listener. He was rewarded by gleaning much information that might prove of use eventually, and now and then some sweet and touching detail respecting those most dear to his faithful heart.

On the eighth day they reached a village named Samarov, and there entered on the Oby, a splendid sheet of water in which the Irtysh is lost. Many islets, overgrown with weeping willows, dotted this river, and its hilly banks were crowned with pines. Here the wind grew so boisterous that they were obliged to lie at anchor till its fury was spent. Alarik accompanied Poushkin and some of the crew on shore, where they cut down a noble cedar for a mast. He was refreshed by this little trip, and brought back a bunch of wild currants, half ripe, and a crimson peony, as harbingers of summer. Further north, they espied a few "yourts," or settlements of Ostiaks, and from these wild people Poushkin obtained ducks, eggs, and fish, a welcome addition to the flour dumplings and barley-gruel to which they had been of late reduced. At every verst the country grew more rugged and dreary; the banks were crowned with jagged cliffs; huge masses of rock lay by the river-side or protruded their sharp peaks from under the water,

rendering the most cautious navigation necessary. Poushkin now showed himself quite equal to the occasion—cool, wary, and unflagging in his attention to the vessel. This peril past, they sped on through wintry scenes till on the fourteenth day they left the magnificent Oby, and entered on the Soswa, one of its feeders. There a storm of snow and sleet met them, but it quickly cleared off, and the evening sun shone out pale and watery. All eyes turned northward, all feet rushed on deck, all hands were joyfully clapped, with the ringing shout, “Berezov! Berezov!” A small cannon, “no bigger than a rat,” as some one observed, was dragged on deck and fired three times to announce their arrival. Alarik stood with a throbbing heart, looking towards the town; he could discern two churches on the top of a knoll, overhanging the river; one or two large houses painted yellow near them, and a dark solemn background of endless forest. The rest of the town lay on a lower level, and consisted of shabby, dingy houses, the largest but two stories high. The place altogether bore a melancholy aspect.

Poushkin and one or two more Berezovians kindly asked our young stranger to take up his abode with them, while looking out for a lodging. He had, however, been already retained by Madame Prassenko, and the more gladly accepted her hospitality, because he had gathered that her house and farm were within a stone’s throw of his parents’ abode. The “Czar Nicholas” now cast anchor, boats came alongside, and after some bustle and delay, our friends were landed on the quay. There a crowd of all classes stood waiting to receive them, the women in holiday garb and headgear of all the colours of the rainbow. Mr. Prassenko elbowed

his way through the throng, and there was an honest warmth in the greeting he gave his blind helpmate that struck and pleased Alarik. The girls even forgot their Tobolsk airs in the genuine joy of seeing their father; so they were a happy party as they trudged together through Berezov. There was no choice but to walk, for neither cart nor carriage existed in the whole town. Such walking as it was! The ground, frozen all the year round to a depth of full a hundred feet, had been thawed on the surface by gleams of hot sun during the last week; so the streets were so many canals of mud, with logs and planks forming a kind of "trottoir" upon them, a most unsafe one for all but practised feet. Happily Alarik was light and active, and so escaped both a plunge into the quagmire, and the merciless raillery of the young ladies, who would have been delighted to catch him tripping. When they reached the hill, and began to climb to the upper town, matters improved; the Prassenko dwelling was safely reached, and Alarik, anxious to be alone, and also to leave the family party to themselves, told his kind host he should stroll about for an hour and then join their evening meal.

He well knew in what direction to bend his steps. The Prassenko house stood on the edge of a cliff; and another cliff frowned opposite, divided from it by a narrow ravine, often flooded with water from the Soswa. A rude bridge spanned the ravine; Alarik crossed it, followed a narrow path through a belt of pine-trees, and found himself, not unexpectedly, in a wide grave-yard. It had no boundary except the cliff on one side, and the waving pine-forest on the other. At its furthest angle stood a church, which threw its hallowed shade far across the graves. A low house, surrounded with strong palings, peeped out from behind the church, and was

the only dwelling visible from that point of view. Alarik's heart leaped towards this unknown yet beloved spot, and he would have sought an entrance there at once, but for the fear of encountering a certain Cossack, attached by government to each household of exiles, as a guard and spy. Should he attract this man's notice and wake his suspicions, what might not the consequences to his father and mother be? No, cruel as this suspense was, he must make up his mind to bear it, he must bide his time, watch and wait and collect all his nerve and coolness, ready to spring on the first safe opportunity for making himself known. While he mused thus, two or three groups of people passed leisurely along the churchyard path and went their way. Another group lingered behind and sought out a distant grave, on which they laid a crown of everlastings. Alarik meanwhile withdrew to a quiet spot, where a sort of glade dotted with stone or iron crosses ran up into the forest. Here one or two costly marble monuments marked the resting-places of the more distinguished dead. A few yellow sunbeams strayed in, between the boles of the old cedars, and cast a rich gleam over those tombs. While he stood there, his eyes fixed with devouring eagerness on that gabled house, a door in its paling opened. Quietly, slowly, a little girl, perhaps nine years old, came forth, wrapped in cloak and hood. He could not doubt it was Frida, perhaps going to the Prassenko farm for cream; if so, he *must* accost her, but how should he do so? how make himself known to the little one without startling her? He must take a moment to decide this point, and waylay her on her return. In one respect, however, he was mistaken. She was not going to Prassenko's. No, she walked steadily along the path a little way, then turned to her right, and made

for a tiny green mound close to the cedar against which Alarik leaned. He remained spell-bound, his eyes fixed on a funeral wreath which she held in her little gloved hands. It was composed of pale green larch-twigs with their rose-coloured tassels, delicate and lovely as the infant on whose grave they were to rest. Alarik saw it all now, the cross-shaped headstone, the name "Alfred Templitz," the age three years! He saw at a glance that a fresh grief, keen and unlooked-for, had visited his exiled parents; that the babe whose sweet image lay "deep in the mother's inmost heart" had been snatched away, blighted most likely by the killing cold of that polar region. It was a severe blow; half-stunned, he watched Frida, saw her hang her wreath on the headstone, adjust and re-adjust it, bend the knee a moment, then turn away, as though not trusting herself to look again. But the childish resolution failed. She *did* look back, and then, unseen himself, he marked the colourless little face, the expression of woe in the round childish features, and large brown eyes. Softly she turned, and throwing herself down, allowed her choking sobs to have their way. Alarik was beside himself; he came to her side at once, kneeled down close to her, and taking one little hand in both his, hoarsely whispered, "Frida, Frida!"

"Who are you?" she asked, disturbed rather than frightened by the apparition, the thought of Alfie seeming to leave no room for other thoughts, still less for fears.

"I am your brother, Frida," he answered, tenderly.

"My brother lies here," she said in a dreamy tone, hugging the ground tight with both arms.

"Ay," he replied, "*our* brother lies here, but did you never hear him lisp the name of Alarik?"



“FRIDA, FRIDA!”

She raised her brimming eyes to his face, with a quick glance of sweet intelligence, which brightened it as sunshine does snow. "Often, often," she said; "and you are Alarik, mamma's own Alarik? and you are come to comfort her and poor papa? Ah me, ah me, what joy!"

The child's sobs redoubled, and shook to pieces her weak, slight frame, but Alarik took her in his arms, and clasped and rocked her there till she grew calm; the shiverings ceased, the tears were kissed away, a feeling of peace and protection stole over her; by degrees she became able to listen to and answer his questions; and, as she did so, he was surprised and charmed by the quickness with which she caught his meaning, saw the need of secrecy, and suggested the safest way of bringing him to his parents. There was no guile in that childish heart, all was clear and pure as crystal there; only early sorrows had added something of the needful wisdom of the serpent to the innocence of the dove.

They parted, but two hours later, at a concerted signal, Alarik joined Frida at the paling, and was led by her to the low chamber, where his parents sat awaiting him with breathless impatience. Never, surely, on earth, was there a more blissful meeting!



II.

“ Let not the water-flood drown me, neither let the deep swallow me up.”

A MONTH later all was excitement and bustle in Berezov. The Oby fleet was about to start on its hazardous voyage to the frozen ocean. A forest of masts curiously rigged, and bright with flags of all colours, crowded the river, and small boats plied between these larger vessels and the shore, bringing the provisions and other stores, needed for a three months' absence in that fearfully cold climate.

No one so busy or so important on this occasion as our friend Captain Poushkin. His natural shrewdness and courage, and his thorough knowledge of those waters, had given him the lead among his brother townsmen five and twenty years before, and his boundless self-confidence enabled him to keep it still, though his eyes were growing dim and his sturdy limbs growing stiff.

Alarik, who after enjoying the Prassenko hospitality for a week had engaged a lodging under Poushkin's roof, was a good deal interested with these practical preparations. Many were the weary hours when prudence forbade his hovering near his parent's dwelling, and these he whiled away as best he might on the river, watching and often helping Poushkin at his work.

The night before the fleet started, Alarik witnessed a new phase in Berezov life and in the character of his grizzly old host. The veteran's family, brothers, sisters, cousins, grandchildren, all trooped together to spend this evening at his house. A plentiful supper was laid

out for them, beginning with a "pirog" or raised cake, dried fruits and Siberian cedar-nuts, and ending with more solid fare, ducks, smoked and fresh, pickled geese and reindeer tongues. Vodky was handed round to the men, and light home-made wine, prepared from raspberries or currants, to the women.

Conversation and toasts had become loud and animated, when Poushkin suddenly raised his hand as a signal. A dead silence fell on all; the company rose and followed him two and two into an inner room, which was lighted with many tapers. Here, partly screened by curtains, was an image of the tutelary saint of the family, surrounded by other smaller images, black and timeworn, but gaudily decked in gold and silver apparel.

The master of the house advanced slowly towards this shrine and knelt down, touching the floor several times with his forehead, and repeating a short prayer, the purport of which Alarik was not sufficiently master of Russian fully to understand. From Poushkin's gestures, however, he gathered that the hoary seaman was committing himself and those he was leaving behind to the care of the Almighty. Tears ran down his weather-beaten cheeks as he did it, and the family responded with a chorus of sobbing and wailing which Alarik could not listen to unmoved.

As soon as Poushkin rose from his knees, the party fell again into a procession and escorted him to the quay. They picked their way along the miry streets by a strange mixture of moonlight and daylight, for at this season the sun never dipped far enough below the horizon to cause actual darkness.

Once on deck Poushkin was "himself again," loud,

jovial and bombastic, but shrewd and business-like. He took leave of Alarik with a hearty kiss on both cheeks, and a cordial wish that he might "prosper in his speculations, or whatever the object was that had brought him to Berezov." A knowing wink accompanied these words, and he added finally, "And remember, my youngster, if you need the services of a trusty man either for boating and hunting, or for trading purposes, there's not one to compare with David the Ostiak. I've named him to you before, a right-down honest fellow, though a born savage; a convert our missionaries may be proud of, and that's more than I can say for most of the Ostiaks, that hang copper crosses round their necks by day, and worship the larch-tree by night! I've told you before where David may always be heard of, at his 'Yourt' in the forest, half a mile or so beyond Prince Menzikoff's grave."

Well was it for Alarik and all he loved that this counsel of Poushkin's sank into his mind; it proved to be—but no, I am running on too fast, you shall hear by and by what it proved to be; we must return to Alarik's present moments.

As he walked back to his lodging with a group of Poushkin's grandchildren clinging about him, for he had speedily become a favourite with the young ones, he could not but own to himself that the old sailor's departure was, in one way, a relief to him. Those prying eyes, that inquisitive tongue, were a perpetual restraint on his movements, and would have been still more galling had any opening for his father's rescue presented itself to him. But, alas! none appeared; weeks passed on, and Alarik's darling scheme seemed as far from completion as ever. His heart sank as day by day

the impossibility of escape glared more and more upon him ; with a view to it, however, he still rigidly preserved his incognito, and visited his parents by stealth, and only at intervals of two or three days. On those happy meetings we need not dwell, for I trust none of my readers are so dull as to be unable to picture to themselves the bliss of such interviews, green spots, as it were, dotted over the weary wilderness of exile and separation.

I would rather take them into the depths of the cedar forest, whither, a few days after the sailing of the fleet, Alarik betook himself in quest of David the Ostiak. He set forth alone, for to say truth, the young men left in Berezov were not much to his taste. He thought them, with few exceptions, self-indulgent and unmannerly ; cards and smoking were their chief occupations, and when they did attempt field sports, nets and traps were their only implements, the use of fire-arms and cutlasses involving more risk than they chose to expose themselves to. Alarik looked on such "sport" as somewhat despicable, for his Polish bringing up had inured him to fatigue and to some amount of danger in hunting, so he felt more inclined when in the vast forest to fraternize with its wild children, the Ostiaks, than with the more civilized denizens of the town.

On the morning in question he had strolled some way, pausing awhile at the green mound where Menzi-koff, Peter the Great's spoiled and afterwards disgraced favourite, sleeps his last sleep. An "endless depth of solemn grove" stretched before him from this point, and beguiled by the calm solitude and the fragrant scent of those ancient trees he wandered on for two or three miles, taking no note of time, and trusting to his little

pocket compass for direction. At last he sat down on a fallen tree to rest himself; for awhile he thought himself alone, but as his eye grew more used to the dense shade, he saw, or fancied he saw, a shadowy form gliding amongst the boles of the trees, some way off. Seized with curiosity, Alarik rose and turned his steps in that direction; presently he saw that the mysterious intruder on his loneliness was a large dark brown she-bear, of a kind not uncommon in that region. He had never met with one before in his rambles, and felt some desire to obtain a nearer view of the ungainly animal. It was evident, however, that she was making for her lair, and before he could draw near, she had ensconced herself therein, between her two fine young cubs whom she had left at home.

Alarik was about to withdraw from the spot, a little disappointed, when he espied an Ostiak approaching the lair alone, and cutlass in hand. These wild foresters are absolutely reckless in their attacks on the bear, delighting to brave it in its den, and often bearing to their graves the scars of frightful wounds given by the maddened animal in self-defence. Alarik watched the contest that now began between man and bear with intense interest. For awhile the creature had hung back, as though peaceably inclined, and unwilling to leave her lair; but provoked at last by her assailant's hostile gestures, and startled by the blaze of a lucifer match, which he coolly ignited under her nose, she suddenly rose to her hind feet and rushed on the enemy. Now, a duel with a bear requires not only courage but great presence of mind. It often happens that with all these requisites the man gets the worst of it, and so it seemed likely to prove on this occasion. It became evident to

Alarik, as he stealthily drew near the scene of action, that a grip of the bear's paw had almost, at the outset, injured the Ostiak's right arm, so as to make it "forget its cunning," and that the poor fellow fought on gallantly, but at a terrible disadvantage. Alarik had a rifle with him ready loaded, and several times tried to take aim at the bear, but so interlaced were she and the Ostiak, so rapid and jerking were their movements, and so dim and chequered was the light in that sombre place, that it would have been the height of rashness to fire till he could do so with more precision. A fresh attack from the enraged animal now caused the Ostiak to drop his cutlass, and finding himself disarmed and crippled, he changed his tactics and tried to make his escape. But the blood was flowing from many deep wounds and gashes in his scantily-clothed body, and so weakened was he that his speed in flight would have been no match for that of the infuriated bear. Happily the antagonists were now half a yard apart, and before the bear could close upon her victim a bullet from Alarik's rifle was lodged in her brain.

The poor Ostiak looked round in amazement at his unexpected rescue, and seeing Alarik, thanked him in broken Russian for his timely help. The man was short of stature, and had the flat nose, sunken eyes, and yellow skin of his tribe; but his countenance was good and not wanting in intelligence, and his manner less abject than that of the half-Christianized savages Alarik had seen prowling about Berezov in quest of broken victuals, or discarded raiment. On Alarik's pointing to his wounds and disabled arm, he laughed and made light of them, then led the way to a streamlet which murmured hard by. Here he stooped, and after

lapping up long draughts of the cold flowing water, washed the blood from his wounds, and rose up refreshed. He then with native courtesy invited the young gentleman to rest in his "Yourt," which was but a hundred yards off. Alarik, however, having once before entered an Ostiak dwelling, retained too lively a recollection of its squalid appearance and unsavoury odours to wish to repeat the experiment. He therefore declined the invitation, and prepared to return to Berezov. On asking the name of his new acquaintance, Alarik was pleased but scarcely surprised to find that it was "David," the very individual whom Poushkin had so warmly recommended to his notice. From this time forward they frequently met, and David became enthusiastically attached to his young, kind-hearted deliverer. It was now high summer at Berezov, violent heat treading on the heels of winter frost; a scorching, glaring sun shone nearly the twenty-four hours round, merely dipping beneath the horizon at midnight. Its rays drew forth unwholesome odours from the deep slimy mud; if you sought a refuge from the heat in the vast forest, a host of stinging insects fastened upon you; if you sought for fresh air by the river brink, the mosquitos drove you away. It was only in early morning that these winged torments could be avoided, so the Berezov world generally went abroad before breakfast. The men, that is such as had not gone with the Oby fleet, usually bathed each morning in the Soswa; and amongst the most regular bathers were Count Templitz and his son. About seven o'clock one July day both were proceeding to the water's edge, and as usual had contrived a meeting under the cedars. They had fallen into earnest talk, which ended by the

count's laying his thin white hand on his son's shoulder, and saying, "The sight of you, dear boy, has put new life into your mother and Fridchen, and done much, very much, for me. God willing, we look to seeing you again in two or three years, should my life and their exile drag on so long; *now*, it is right you should leave us. Go back to Europe, my Alarik, and make our hearts glad by walking manfully in the paths of truth and honour. It is not fit you should linger longer here; next week a vessel leaves us for Tobolsk, and for reasons which, in former conversations, I have detailed to you, your mother and I are anxious you should take your passage in it; delay will only make the parting more bitter to us all."

Alarik silently acquiesced, having nothing to oppose to his parent's stringent reasons but a scheme, wilder, he began to fear, than any Don Quixote had ever indulged in. So the matter was settled, and they turned their steps to a secluded bend in the river, their usual resort. There had been several terrific storms of late, and much thunder-rain in the Oural mountains, where the Soswa rises, so the river was swollen and turbid. This was rather an attraction to the count, who was an excellent swimmer, and in spite of his diminished strength, liked breasting the rapid waters.

Meanwhile, Frida had coaxed her mother to accompany her to Prassenko's farm and see the cows milked. As they walked there, the morning air smelt fresh and sweet, and the sun's glowing orb seemed to Frida to be playing at hide and seek with her through the dark pine foliage. They found Anna Timothevna in her cow-house, bright and active, feeling her way with a stick, and recognizing each cow by some peculiarity in its shape or voice.

She stroked the little girl's fair hair, greeted the countess with a respect due as much to her misfortunes as to her rank, and begged her to rest on a bench, while a bowl of foaming new milk was brought to her. Then she did the honours of her garden, a small patch of ground planted with radishes, turnips, and cabbages; these last, owing to the shortness of the summer, growing only into leaves, and never attaining to a heart! While the gentle countess was trying to admire this meagre array of vegetables, the quick ear of Madame Prassenko was caught by distant shouts and cries. The noise increased, and presently hurried footsteps drew near, and the farmyard gate was flung open. "Oh, Anna Timothevna," cried a Cossack farm-boy, bursting in, "he is drowned! I saw him sink the third time! the current was too strong, and he is drowned!"

"Who? Prassenko?" shrieked the blind woman, flinging down her staff, and raising both hands to heaven; "Prassenko drowned, say you?"

"Prassenko is safe enough at his office," replied the lad, "he bathed an hour ago; 'tis the foreign gentleman, the exile, I speak of."

A stifled cry was heard from behind Anna Timothevna, and the countess, ashy pale, came forward, and begged, in her low sweet voice, to be told what had happened. The lad stood before her dumb and sheepish; but Kozlov, the Cossack who had charge of the exiles, had now come up and answered in great agitation, "'Tis true, your grace; the count, Heaven rest him, is drowned. It might be cramp, or it might be the strength of the current; I saw him carried down, heard him shout lustily for help; two or three bathers struck out after him, but were foiled; one, the fur-trader

Franz, swam boldly to the rescue, and all but caught him up. A reach of the river hid them out, and we thought there was a chance for the count, but some while after, Mr. Franz reappeared alone; he was quite done up, staggered, and would have dropped had we not held him. 'Tis a bad job," he added, looking round at the bystanders, "a very bad job for me! Government holds me answerable for the count!"

These last words did not reach the unhappy lady, for she had sunk down insensible, and been carried to Madame Prassenko's chamber, a number of wailing women following. Frida, too much awe-struck to weep, held her mother's hand fast in hers.

It was long, very long, before the countess could be roused from her deadly faintness; at last she raised herself on one arm, and looked round with a bewildered glance on the many faces bending over her. Then her eyes rested on Frida, and she murmured, but fortunately too low to be understood by the others, "My Alarik; where is my boy? bring him to me!"

"Presently, dear mamma," answered the trembling Frida; "but you must rest first, you are so tired. Dear Madame Prassenko, might not mamma perhaps fall asleep, if she were left alone with me?"

Kind Anna Timothevna took the hint, and cleared the room at once. Then she groped to the windows and drew the curtains close, as though she felt that "day's garish eye" ought not to look in on sorrow like theirs. When she left the room, Frida followed her on tiptoe. "Dear Anna Timothevna," said she, blushing crimson at her first approach to a ruse, "mamma wishes to see the—the—kind fur-trader, who tried so hard to save papa; may Kozlov go seek him, and bring him here?"

“Surely, my lamb,” was the prompt reply; and Kozlov was summoned, and told them he had just seen Mr. Franz hovering near the gate, and had answered his inquiries after the poor lady. So Mr. Franz was recalled, and ushered at once into the darkened room. He closed the door, shot the bolt noiselessly, and dropped on one knee by his mother’s side. Alarik’s face wore a strange look; troubled but not sad, the sunken eyes bright, the thin cheekbones flushed, as if he were feverish from over-fatigue. He said, after a pause, “Mamma, I have something to tell, something very unexpected, tidings of joy, great joy: can you bear it, darling mother?”

She gazed on him fearfully, as though he were raving, or she in a dream. “Mother,” he went on, “my father lives; he is very ill, exhausted, but not dead. No, thank God, I have saved him; some good angel strengthened me, and I drew him to shore; I cannot think how I did it! David, my trusty Ostiak, chanced to be fishing at that spot; to him I committed the almost senseless body, pointing out a little cave under the river bank, where he might conceal it. I durst not linger near the spot, no, not for an instant, for see, mother, here is our golden opportunity of escape, so long watched for, long prayed for! Quick as thought, a scheme flashed through my brain; spent as I was, I dashed into the water, and rejoined the bathers. Seeing me alone, they at once concluded all was lost. I let them think so; I gladly heard them express their belief that the body could not be recovered, that Soswa never gave up her dead! Thus all inquiry will be hushed up, and we may work out our plan of escape, unsuspected.”

"Now, Heaven be thanked!" murmured the countess, "and you too, our dear, dear boy; but say, my Alarik, is your father not wholly exhausted? Those icy waves, that fearful struggle, can he indeed survive them? Oh! would I were with him, to watch and tend him, and fan the spark of life into a flame."

"You soon will be, I trust," said Alarik. "I stole a glance at him on my way hither, and found that David had poured some drops of vodky down his throat, and that friction, and the warmth of David's reindeer mantle, had brought back some vital heat; I even fancied he returned the pressure of my hand." The astonishment, the rapture of mother and child over these tidings, can scarcely be imagined. Prudence obliged Alarik to cut the interview short, and as soon as they were calm, he said gravely, "Now, a word about the future, which looks dark and doubtful still; we must guard our secret jealously; you, mother, will of course go home at once, and you have now a pretext for strict privacy; I pray you seek out the safest hiding-place for my father, if possible, within your own chamber; Fridchen must set her wits to work, and rid us of Kozlov this evening. The nights are, happily, more dusky than they were, and by eleven o'clock all Berezov will be in bed. I will then bring my father to you, if he is well enough to be moved. Our further plans it will take time and thought to mature; and now, good night, my own mother, and may God and his holy ones keep you." So he left them.

All succeeded to a wish that night; and while Koslov was off guard, and the good Berezovians were wrapped in slumber, the count was installed in a low, dark lumber closet within his wife's room. A bed of soft warm furs

was arranged for him, and for many days he did not rise from it, so much had the chill and struggle weakened his frame. Madame de Templitz was his physician and nurse, and Frida his companion. The faithful Ostiak David was invaluable as a go-between Alarik and his family at this juncture, and proved worthy of the confidence which circumstances obliged them to repose in him. Once or twice a week, Alarik (who now ventured to call openly on the ladies) was smuggled into his father's presence, and he saw with joy that the hope of release already revived the exile's heart, and made life dear in his eyes.



III.

“Screw up your courage to the sticking-place.”

SHAKSPEARE.

By the end of August, the brief autumn of Berezov was over, and winter had set in. September opened with keen frosts; a fall of snow soon covered houses, churches, and streets, with a mantle of dazzling white, and roofed over the branching cedar forest. The Berezovians came out in Ostiak costume, that is, in complete suits of reindeer skins with the hair turned inside. Stoves were lighted in every house, glass-windows taken out, and replaced with fish-skins for the sake of warmth. The days shortened rapidly, and by the first week in October it was pitch-dark at five o'clock, unless moonlight, or the bright northern lights, lit up the sky. Herds of reindeer now wandered back from their summer pastures in the Oural, stalking with stately gait and branching antlers over the crisp snow. Pleasure parties in sledges traversed the plains, or ventured along the smaller rivers. The rapid Soswa was bound in icy chains, under which its pent-up flood moaned and gurgled mournfully. Keen winds blew, and woe to the rash wight who faced them unmuffled! Frostbitten chin or nose was the sure consequence of such imprudence.

To many at Berezov the period that elapsed before the freezing of the rivers seemed irksome, as all communication with the outer world was cut off for five or six weeks. The horn that heralded the first Tobolsk mail was joyfully hailed, and by none more joyfully than

by Alarik, to whose mother it brought the imperial "permit" to return to Europe as a widow. The "Naschalnik," or mayor of Berezov himself, brought this important paper to the gabled house, and read its contents to the veiled and silent countess. He then asked politely how soon her grace intended profiting by the czar's gracious permission? She replied that her movements depended on those of some Berezov merchants, whose company would be a welcome protection to herself and her child. The Naschalnik pondered a moment, then said, "It occurs to me, gracious lady, that the fur-trader, young Franz, whom painful circumstances have brought to your grace's notice, is on the point of returning to Europe. He is a well-disposed youth, a superior youth, I may say, considering his line of life; with your grace's leave, I will retain him as your escort. The cossack Kozlov shall also attend you to the Russian frontier."

This last announcement proved as annoying as the first had been welcome, for Kozlov was a low, prying fellow, with little of honesty or feeling in his composition, and his presence was very disagreeable to the countess; however, her attempts to shake him off were vain, so she submitted with a sigh. And now the business of packing up began; it was not heavy, as the countess gave almost all her books and furniture to her fellow exiles, and to such Berezovians as had shown her kindness. Many of these thronged her court-yard, bringing parting gifts, and smothering Frida with kisses and tears; Madame Prassenko, however, was the only person admitted to see the countess, who pleaded illness, and not untruly. Now the decisive hour was come, she felt sick at heart at the thought of her husband's danger,

the risks of the journey, the dreadful consequences to Alarik as well as to him, should he be found out. Her musings by day, her dreams by night, turned on this. Naturally timid, she could scarcely have faced the enterprise at all, but for Alarik's cheering presence, and the still more cheering resource of heartfelt prayer. Evening after evening she knelt for hours in the neighbouring church, and often Frida would join her, and stay till moonlight streamed in through the narrow windows of mica-slate high overhead, and rested on the old, old blackened images of saints that stared down upon her from their niches.

Alfie's snow-clad grave had been visited for the last time, for they were to set out that evening, the snow being crisper and firmer by night than by day. The "narta," or sledge, that was to convey the countess was at the door. As is usual when women or invalids travel, boards had been nailed round it, giving it the appearance of a chest; over this a strong cloth was stretched tent-wise, with openings on each side for getting in or out. Curtains might be drawn across these openings. The inside of such vehicles is always stuffed with featherbeds and soft warm wraps; so it excited no remark when Alarik and his trusty Ostiak came hastily forth from the house, bearing what looked like a collection of fur cloaks; this they laid carefully at the bottom of the narta; then Alarik offered his hand to the countess, and assisted her into the sledge. "Courage, madame," he said, "all promises well for our journey; relays of horses are provided along the road, and, with your leave, I will myself be your charioteer at least till we have passed over the rough ice of the Soswa." He now placed Frida by her mother; the child tore herself weeping from the arms of

Anna Timothevna, who hung round her neck a tarnished but precious cross of gold and enamel. Kozlov, rather sulkily, obeyed Alarik's orders, and mounted the box of one of the baggage-sledges; in this order they bade farewell to Berezov, the faithful David running by his young master's side, with wistful, affectionate eyes, until his breath was fairly exhausted. He then returned slowly and sadly to his "yourt," which the gratitude of the Templitz family had enabled him to stock with every article of furniture and dress most coveted amongst the Ostiaks. From this time he was looked up to as one of their most wealthy and influential chiefs. A glorious *aurora borealis* lighted the heavens as our travellers set out; over the black sky, where one or two stars faintly twinkled, stretched a luminous arch from east to west; lightning-like flames, blood-red, emerald green, or clear yellow, played up and down in it; sometimes they shot up to the centre of the sky, vanished, reappeared, and being joined by rays from the arch, formed a magnificent dome of light. This glorious illumination gilded the first stage of their journey, then faded away, leaving them to the soft guidance of the silver moon.

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That moon waxed and waned, and another succeeded her, and still our travellers fared forward in cold, weariness, and intense, never-resting anxiety. Thanks, under Providence, to Alarik's care, they had rolled safely over the frozen breast of the Irtysh, and eluded the police of Tobolsk. They had managed, without raising suspicions, to supply their beloved charge with daily food, and a tolerable amount of fresh air. Though weak and emaciated, he was not ill, nor was he always aware of

the hundred hair-breadth escapes that befell him. If he was made conscious of danger, it was by the curdling cheek and anxious eyes of his wife and child, never by rash word or exclamation from their sealed lips. Even Frida, young girl as she was, suppressed her feelings, taught by that rugged nurse Adversity.

Hope begins to thrill through their hearts as they leave the steppes of Siberia far behind, and fly over the Russian plains. At Ekaterinburg, Perm, Niznei Novgorod, and other towns which lie on their route, their sledge is subjected to no strict scrutiny. Alarik's vehicle and baggage are indeed carefully overhauled, but the pale widow and her helpless child are allowed to recline almost undisturbed in their "narta." Thus they reach Kief, where Alarik has a confidential friend, brother to the fur-trader Franz, whose passport he had borrowed. At this friend's hospitable house they spend the night, and for the first time since leaving Berezov enjoy the luxury of comfortable beds, and of feeling safe for the moment. "One struggle more and they are free;" that struggle is to take place when they reach the frontier of Polish Galicia, now not far distant. There is a Russian custom-house there, and its officers are strict, and how to escape their search Alarik finds not, though he thinks and thinks the matter over till his young brow is furrowed with care. Plans, which had seemed feasible a week before, look terribly impossible now, and an agonizing fear shoots through him, that his rashness may plunge father, mother, and Frida into deeper depths of woe than they have known yet; but he drives the thought away, and prays, and trusts, and will act too, at the right moment, boldly!

From Kief there was a change in the order of march.

The furs were left in the warehouse, and the sledges which held them dismissed. Louis Franz (who was devoted to the Templitz family) begged to accompany his beloved Count Alarik a few miles at least on his perilous journey. So he drove one sledge, keeping Kozlov as much as possible near him, while Count Alarik, as usual, drove the other. Somehow, these arrangements made Kozlov very restless and excited, and at the last post-house before the frontier, Franz was only just in time to stop a private conference between him and the people of the station. He ordered Kozlov to mount the box, which the fellow did sullenly, and muttering evil words under his breath. The mystery was soon explained. As they were about to start, a look from Frida brought her brother to her side. "Alarik," she whispered, white as death, "my folly has undone all! I heard papa gasp, so I looped the curtains close, and raised the furs to give him air. I heard a sound and looked up, and there, through a chink in the curtain, was Kozlov gazing in, with such a hard, cruel eye. Oh, brother, we are lost!"

"Not yet, Frida," said Alarik, setting his teeth fast, "not yet, God helping us; but I'm glad I know all; now, cheer mamma up, and be ready for anything." He glanced towards his mother, and saw with joy a quiet, trustful smile on her lips. Then he consulted for a few moments with Louis Franz, keeping his eye on Kozlov all the while, and ended by saying aloud, "Will you, friend, let me drive the second sledge this stage, and yourself take charge of the gracious lady's? I have had enough of that pulling horse for the present." So it was agreed; Alarik mounted the box, took the reins from Kozlov, and they set forward, in thickly falling snow.

The frontier is all but reached, by a road lying through a broken country, with deep vales and high sharp knolls. At first it is pretty open, then the road plunges into a thick grove of trees, none of them tall or large. Their leafless boughs are glittering with ice-crystals, and rainbow hues. The two vehicles keep together, and Kozlov's eyes roll uneasily about him, but he keeps silence. No sooner have they reached the heart of the wood than Count Alarik pulls the left rein, and dashes down a glade, heedless of the violent shaking of the sledge, which upsets in a minute or two. He and Kozlov flounder in the snow, and before the latter can rise, Alarik is upon him, ties his hands with a rope he holds in readiness, and gags him with a scarf. "I have no wish to hurt you, friend," he says in a low, determined tone, "for, after all, you are but doing your duty; but your clothes I must have instantly, and without a word. Here is a suit to replace them, now change them at once, or I can't answer for your safety." A loaded pistol, held at Kozlov's head, gave weight to the threat, and he saw he had no choice but to obey. Count Alarik's next move was to secure him to a tree, promising that if he remained still he should be released within a few hours. He then took one horse out of the sledge, led him back to the road, and with Louis Franz's help harnessed him abreast with the two that already drew the countess's narta. Count Templitz meanwhile came forth from his lair, and with his son's assistance (for his limbs were so cramped he could hardly stand) hastily put on the Cossack's dress and fur cap; his face had already been stained with walnut-juice, so as to hide the "pale cast of thought" and suffering which would have betrayed him. His

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emaciated figure was muffled, as much for concealment as for warmth, in a fur cloak. The supposed Cossack now mounted the box alongside of Alarik. It was thought more prudent that Louis Franz should accompany the party no further, so with great reluctance he



lingered behind, taking possession of the forsaken sledge, and its one horse.

Our travellers drew up at the Custom-house, a low, wooden building by the roadside, about two hundred yards from Austrian ground, and divided from it by a broad rivulet and stone bridge. Two or three officials

in uniform and helmet came out, and business began. One of them examined Alarik's borrowed pass; perhaps the last adventurous six months had aged and broadened him, for he certainly fitted better to the description it contained than he had done at Tobolsk. It was accepted without remark. Meanwhile the supposed Cossack tendered to a second officer the papers connected with Madame de Templitz; he acted his part coolly, and mustered Russian enough to answer the questions put to him, briefly, and in a hoarse, gruff voice. All went smoothly so far.

While the baggage was being searched, Frida and her mother were courteously pressed by the custom house officer to take shelter within doors. But their anxiety was too feverish to allow of this; they stood for ten minutes in the road, trembling more from fear than cold, and gladly acted on the permission given them to ensconce themselves in their sledge again. The supposed Kozlov now advanced, and, in pursuance of a scheme previously concerted between him and his son, muttered a request for permission to proceed to Empnitz, a village some miles off, in Galicia, whither, he said, family affairs urgently called him. For this purpose a written pass had to be made out; Count Alarik, who noticed that his father was becoming chilled and exhausted, now called to him from the office-door where he was standing, to mount and take the reins, as the horses were growing fidgetty. He himself almost stamped with impatience while the officer leisurely endorsed the remaining papers, handed them to him, took a hair out of his pen, and addressed himself to filling in a pass for the supposed Cossack. To hide his agitation, Alarik walked meanwhile to a

small window which looked back on the Kief road. What was it that caught his attention there, suspended his breathing, and made him strain eye and ear in speechless agony? It was the figure of a man, running this way, shouting, gesticulating, yelling, as he ran. Alarik's sight was very keen, and the snow no longer falling, so he could not be mistaken! It was Kozlov himself! some peasant must have struck upon him in the wood, and set him free, and now he was at hand, burning for vengeance, and the truth must instantly come out; and Alarik's father! what, what would be his fate?

Quick as light, Alarik snatched the still wet passport from the astonished officer, darted out of the office, sprang to his father's side on the box, seized the reins, and with whip and voice urged the three horses forward. They, full of fire, though small and rough, set out at a gallop, rather urged on than otherwise by the shouts and calls to stop vociferated from behind. A pistol was fired, possibly by Kozlov; the shot grazed Alarik's ear, and touched the middle horse, which, maddened with pain, rushed on like wildfire. The land of their exile and bitter bondage is left behind; the bridge is gained, crossed; they are on Austrian ground, safe under Austrian protection! their toils and perils, they fondly hope, are ended now; yes, ended; for somehow or other, either influenced by the persuasions of the Austrian officials, with whom they were on friendly terms, or highly bribed by a certain great mercantile house at Kief, the custom-house officers saw fit to let the matter drop. After the first burst of rage was over, even Kozlov was not sorry to have it hushed up, and to leave the Russian authorities in their belief that Count Templitz had been

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drowned at Berezov. So Alarik reached his beautiful Galician home in peace, and there with delight unspeakable, he installed his beloved father and mother. As time passed on he saw them recover health and cheerfulness, he saw his little Frida grow up to womanhood, lovely and loveable, and together they daily blessed the Author and Giver of all mercies, who had led them by thorny paths to such great happiness.*

* The writer is greatly indebted to Mrs. Atkinson's charming book, "Tartar Steppes;" also to "Revelations of Siberia, by a Polish exile."





