

with vigor, "nor have I the slightest intention of ever doing so. Pray, are you allowed, in consideration of your nationality, to whittle in Harrow School?"

This was said by way of a reproof for the state of the floor.

"Wall," began Crayshaw, to cover the almost audible titters of the girls; but, distracted by this from the matter in hand, he coughed, went on whittling and held his peace.

"I have often told Johnnie," said Miss Crampton with great dignity, at the same time darting a severe glance at Johnnie's back, that the delight he takes in talking the Devonshire dialect is likely to be very injurious to his English, and he will have it that this country accent is not permanently catching. "It may be hoped," she continued, looking round, "that other accents are not catching either."

Crayshaw, choosing to take this hint as a compliment, smiled sweetly. "I guess I'm speaking better than usual," he observed, "for my brother and his folks air newly come from the Ste-ates, and I've been with them. But," he continued, a sudden gleam of joy lighting up his eyes as something occurred to him that he thought suitable to "top up" with, "all the Mortimers talk with such a powerful English *ac-tion*, that when I come de-own to this *lo-cation*, my own seems to melt off my tongue. Neow, yeou'll skasely believe it," he continued, "but it's tre-u, that ef yeou were tew hea-ar me talk at the end of a week, yeou'd he-ardly realize that I was an Amurican at all."

"Cray, how can ye?" exclaimed Aunt Christie, "and so wan as ye look this morning too."

"Seen my brother?" enquired Crayshaw meekly.

"No, I have not," said Miss Crampton bridling.

"He's merried. We settle airly in my country; it's one of our insititootions." Another gleam of joy and impudence shot across the pallid face. "I'm thinking of settling shortly myself."

Then, as Aunt Christie was observed to be struggling with a laugh, Barbara led her to the top of the stairs, and loudly entreated her to mind she didn't stumble, and to mind she did not touch the stair-rods, for the machine, she observed, was just ready.

"The jarth are all charged now, Cray," said Johnnie, coming forward at last. "Mith Crampton, would you like to have the firth turn of going down with them?"

"No, thank you," said Miss Crampton almost suavely, and rising with something very like alacrity. Then, remembering that she had not even mentioned what she came for, "I wish to observe," she said, "that I much disapprove of the noise I hear up in Parliament. I desire that it may not occur again. If it does, I shall detain the girls in the school-room. I am very much disturbed by it."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Crayshaw with an air of indolent surprise; and Miss Crampton thereupon retreated down stairs,

taking great care not to touch any metallic substance.

#### A POSSIBLE STEPMOTHER.

The next morning Justina, having had time to consider that Emily must on no account be annoyed, came down all serenity and kindness. She was so attentive to the lame old aunt, and though the poor lady, being rather in pain, was decidedly snappish, she did not betray any feeling of disapproval.

"Ay," said Miss Christie to herself when the two ladies had set off on their short walk, "yon's not so straightforward and simple as I once thought her. Only give her a chance, and as sure as death she'll get hold of John, after all."

Emily and Justina went across the fields and came to John's garden, over the wooden bridge that spanned the brook.

The sunny sloping garden was full of spring flowers. Vines, not yet in leaf, were trained all over the back of the house; clematis and jasmine, climbing up them and over them, were pouring themselves down again in great twisted strands; windows peeped out of ivy, and the old red-tiled roof, warm and mossy, looked homely and comfortable. A certain air of old-fashioned, easy comfort pervaded the whole place; large bay windows, with little roofs of their own, came boldly forth, and commanded a good view of other windows—ivyed windows that retired unaccountably. There were no right lines. Casements at one end of the house showed in three tiers, at the other there were but two. The only thing that was perfectly at ease about itself, and quite clear that it ought to be seen, was the roof. You could not possibly make a "stuck-up" house, or a smart villa, or a modern family house of one that had a roof like that. The late Mrs. Mortimer had wished it could be taken away. She would have liked the house to be higher and the roof lower. John, on the other hand, delighted in his roof, and also in his stables, the other remarkable feature of the place. As the visitors advanced, children's voices greeted them; the little ones were running in and out; they presently met and seized Mrs. Walker, dancing round her, and leading her in triumph into the hall. Then Justina observed a good-sized doll, comfortably put to bed on one of the hall chairs, and tightly tucked up in some manifest pinafores; near it stood a child's wheelbarrow, half full of picture-books. "I shall not allow that sort of litter here when I come, as I hope and trust I soon shall do," thought Justina. "Children's toys are all very well in their proper places."

Then Justina, who had never been inside the house before, easily induced the children to take her from room to room, of those four which were thoroughfares to one another. Her attentive eyes left nothing unnoticed, the fine modern water-color landscapes on the walls of one, the delicate inlaid cabinets in another. Then a library, with a capital billiard-table, and lastly John's den. There was something about all these rooms