

make her claws and teeth felt in a way that I shall remember. At present I meekly obey, for peace sake, but I only hope that the time may never come when "Gloucester" will have to repent of her effrontery and find her liberty curtailed.

When an animal or bird has been reared from its early years with care and kindness it is remarkable how invariably all its faculties are developed and brought out. The native instincts remain, but being cultivated, they result in many curious traits showing unusual intelligence.

Gloucester having been petted from her babyhood is just an instance of educated ability. I must pay a tribute to her skill and perseverance by relating what I saw her achieve in my dining-room when she thought no one was observing her. The heavy oak door of the nut cupboard was closed but not latched; Gloucester wanted to get some nuts, and when she found that she could not get at them, she sprang up to the handle and sitting upon it, she pushed with all her might against the door-post and actually made the

door open sufficiently for her lithe, little body to squeeze through into the cupboard. It certainly showed a measure of reasoning power, thus to carry out several varied actions in order to attain a desired end.

I do forgive the terrible virago a good deal because of her cleverness, but when she sits loudly cracking nuts on the table-cloth within three inches of my plate at breakfast-time, and yet will not allow me to take up my fork or spoon without a growl or a snap, and when I know how severely she bit a gentle little girl who merely wished to "stroke the pretty squirrel," I think my readers will agree that Gloucester carries the emancipation of the female sex to a very serious length.

Squirrels vary a good deal in their appearance according to the season of the year. They are in their fullest beauty in April and May when the fur is thick and of a rich red brown, the ears are adorned with long additional hairs called pencils, and the tails are thick and bushy. Now, in the month of June, having worked industriously making their nests (dreys) and having families of

young squirrels to maintain, the little parents' furry coats show signs of wear and tear; the ear-pencils have fallen off, and all the tails have become cream colour which gives them rather a bizarre effect as they flit rapidly across the lawn.

We often see the squirrels busily stripping off the inner fibre of the lime-tree branches, of which soft material they form their dreys. The fibre is held together by small interlacing twigs of larch, and the nest is usually placed in the fork of a branch very high up in some fir-tree where the foliage is thick enough to afford perfect concealment. Sometimes a hole in a tree-stem is chosen, but wherever it is, the future home is carefully lined with moss, leaves and fibres, and is a cosy retreat for the baby squirrels.

I often wish we could see the little ones when quite small, but they never appear at the window until they are nearly as large as their parents. Nor do I quite look forward to the day when Gloucester will present to me a whole family of young persons as insolent and bullying as herself.

"IF LOVING HEARTS WERE NEVER LONELY—";

OR,

MADGE HARCOURT'S DESOLATION.

By GERTRUDE PAGE.

CHAPTER XX. A NEW FRIEND.



T was a dull, wet afternoon, two weeks later, when Elsie Merton hurried along the streets of Monte Carlo, and on reaching the

hotel in which Guy and

Madge were staying, entered and ran upstairs to her own apartments.

She was a young English professional singer, and was spending a few weeks in Monte Carlo with her mother for the latter's health.

"It is wretched out," she said, throwing off her hat and jacket and ensconcing herself in a low chair by the fire. "I am glad to see a bright fire. Have you been alone all the afternoon, little mother?" and as she spoke she took her mother's hand in hers and looked lovingly into her face.

"Yes, dear, but I was not at all lonely, I had a nice book. But I am glad you are back; I did not like you to be out in this miserable weather."

"It was not pleasant, certainly," replied her daughter, "but it is delightful to be in now; we will sit in the twilight a little while. I will make up the fire; I love to see it flicker on the walls."

Suiting the action to the word, she quickly succeeded in producing a bright blaze, and then, with a contented sigh, sank back into her chair.

It was a very sweet face, though not strictly a beautiful one, that the fire-light revealed; one of those pure, strong, thoroughly English faces that it rests one to look upon.

Her features were irregular and her complexion slightly sallow; but one forgot this when gazing into the beautiful grey eyes of the young singer. Those sweet eyes which are capable of lighting up with fun and merriment one moment, and becoming thoughtful and sympathetic the next. The kind of eyes that speak sympathy in silence and elicit confidence unasked.

For some minutes after making up the fire she remained watching it in silence; then, looking up suddenly, she said: "Mother, I saw the beautiful English girl again this afternoon. I wish you could see her; I wonder what you would think of her. I can't tell you how she interests me. When I first saw her I wanted to stand and gaze at her because she was so lovely, and yet at the same time I felt conscious of something that repelled me; something about the expression of her mouth and eyes. I never saw quite such a look on anyone so young; it was both half-calleous and half-defiant. But when I came to look again I felt a sudden sympathy for her. I am sure she isn't happy. I should say she has had some bitter disappointments."

"Perhaps she isn't happy with her husband."

"No, I don't think that, but I can't make them out. They very rarely go about together, but when they do he seems to show her every attention."

"I have seen him," said her mother.

"I met him on the stairs this morning; their rooms are on the floor above ours.

I thought he had a particularly nice face, but he looked ill and worried."

"They can hardly have money difficulties or they wouldn't live as they do. She dresses exceedingly well, and they certainly don't look like people who live on nothing a year. I should like to know her; I feel more drawn to her every time we meet. I don't think she can have many friends here, for she is always alone when her husband is not with her. Funnily enough, the parlour-maid only mentioned to me this morning that she considered them a most extraordinary couple. She says they very seldom talk, and whenever she goes in the room he is always reading the paper and she a book. She says they are 'true, cold English,' and added with delightful simplicity, 'and he be such an extinguished looking gentleman.' I felt obliged to stop her then, for I hate to hear servants discuss the visitors; but all the same, I was longing to know more about them."

"Perhaps she will unbend a little if you continue to meet her often, and help to open a way for your acquaintance," said her mother.

"I'm afraid not," was the thoughtful reply, "she looks too reserved. I shall have to manage it myself if I am to get to know her. As a matter-of-fact, I think she has probably not noticed me at all, for if she glances in my direction it is as if she did not see anything. But there, I mustn't sit idling here any longer," she continued, rising and giving herself a little shake; "I have three letters to write before post-time."

When she had finished she rose, remarking, "I will run down and put them in the hall at once, and then they cannot be forgotten."