

A STORY FROM OUR VILLAGE LIFE.

Many years ago it happened. We were children drifting along a happy tide of life, conscious of the surroundings which made our happiness; conscious but not fully realizing them,—how should we? We rose early and stood by the window, looking at the street, purified by dewy webs, spreading to our opposite garden wall. Up above on the hilltops the sun was shining, not yet on the orchard and street; and in slow procession some twenty cows walked past—sulky yet, and sleepy, stirring slowly, whisking their tails contemplatively, and nodding their heads up and down in decided discontent. We watched them pass. Behind them came a poor half-witted lad uttering curious cries, to bestir the cows; but they, phlegmatic creatures, were too accustomed to such sounds or too careless of them, to move faster than they chose, and so all passed slowly, and so went up the village street. After they had passed, it was a part of our usual life that we should see the two old carpenters who lived next to our garden on the opposite side of the way, come out and lazily begin to work. After that we saw the sun gleaming on to our gardens, on to the orchard of ruddy apple trees, on to the shattered old barns, and the fold belonging to the neighboring farmer. Then we dressed and went out. Boys and girls both, owned gardens of our own. In our zeal we hoed and raked, and then it was time that we should breakfast. After that we went to school. Strange now to think how every villager had a place in our lives, how natural the friendliness of all the sympathy we gave and received. The old people stood by their doors; the children, all known to us by name, played in the streets; the quaint old cross in what might have been a market place, was covered with children, some at play, some roosting

like so many crows. A little stream flowed through the village, and in it paddled innumerable ducks; some of these we got to know, and one old drake of splendid plumage, was our childish admiration. A quiet village, sleepy, and old-fashioned as possible. Events of importance were rare to such lives—we saw the spring come, and the summer and autumn followed by winter—this was all, as yet. Holidays again, and summer. Carts of yellow, scented hay, piled as high as our bedroom windows, passed down the street to the farm. Our boys were busy too; they had friends in the two boys at the farm, Joe and Sam. The weather was fine, and the hay wanted tossing. What more delicious to the boys—down in the lowlands, by the side of the Severn, sunshine on everything and a clear breeze from the river! But at tea time they returned, and parental authority bade them stop at home; a wasp's nest in the garden needed taking,—to-morrow they might again go to the river. At seven o'clock the gentle sound of the cows' feet passing, and again the little lad driving them, and they passed down to the cross, turned there to the fold, where they would be milked. Then it grew dusk, and we sauntered in the garden. The eve fell calm, and the jasmine flowers scented the air; we were not willing to go to bed. From the end of the garden came sounds of boy voices—the doctor's son had come in to help take the nest; it was done at length and a sudden call gathered us into the house. The doctor was there, pale in face and stammering; as we came in he was crying, "Good God! have you seen William?" Our father was holding brandy to his lips, and answering his question by an assurance that William was safe, was here. And after awhile the doctor spoke again,—