

"I don't know nothing about it, miss; it's Mr. Rayner's orders," said she, with another irrepressible snigger at my bewildered face.

I was turning to the door to wander forth when Sarah came in, her dark frowning face offering a strong contrast to that of the laughing Jane.

"Sarah, can you tell me what this means?" said I.

"Mr. Rayner has ordered the room in the turret to be prepared for you," said she shortly. Perhaps you will be kind enough to manage down here till after tea, as it's his orders that you shouldn't be shown up till the room is quite ready."

I answered that I could manage very well, and they left the room. I said nothing at tea about my adventure, reflecting that perhaps some surprise for me was intended, which would be sprung upon me at a fitting time. And so it proved. While I was quietly writing in the schoolroom, after tea, Mr. and Mrs. Rayner and Haidee, who had not yet gone to bed, came in and conducted me in a formal procession up-stairs, up the narrow winding turret-staircase that I had so often wanted to explore, and opening the door of the one room the turret contained. Mr. Rayner, in a short but elaborate speech, begged to install me without further ceremony as the "imprisoned princess of the enchanted tower."

I gave a cry of delight. It was an octagonal room, the four sides of which overlooked the marsh containing each a window, while in one of the other sides was a small fireplace with a bright fire burning. The carpet was new, the wall-paper was new; there were two easy-chairs, one on each side of the fire, a writing-table, and a Japanese screen, besides the furniture of my old room. It looked so bright and so pretty that my eyes danced with pleasure at the sight, and I could not speak while Mr. Rayner explained that I now should be high and dry out of the damp, and he expected me to become red-faced and healthy-looking immediately, and that I was to have a fire whenever I liked now, and one every day when it began to grow colder.

"I don't know what to say. I don't know how to thank you," said I, almost pained by the extent of the kindness showered upon me.

I tried to include Mrs. Rayner in my thanks; but she hung back almost ungraciously, and seemed to have been drawn into this demonstration against her will. She was the last of my three visitors to leave the room, and in the moment that we were alone together, before she followed her husband and child down-stairs, she said:

"Are you not afraid of sleeping so far from every one? Or do you prefer it?"

"No, I don't prefer it. But there is nothing to be afraid of, is there?"

She glanced toward the door, and, saying hurriedly, "Oh, no, of course not!" she left the room.

Afraid! No, of course I was not afraid; I never had minded sleeping away from everybody else; and if burglars were to break into the Alders, they certainly would not expect to find anything worth stealing in the turret. I wished Mrs. Rayner had not put the idea into my head, though. I was not so strong-minded as to be proof against fear even at second hand, and ever since the sensation caused by that great jewelry robbery in Derbyshire I had been very careful to hide away my watch, my one bracelet, and my two brooches under my pillow at night. I was gazing into the fire when I heard Sarah coming up the stairs. She brought me up some coals to replenish my fire, which was getting low; and, when I thanked her for her trouble, I said:

"I wonder this room has been neglected so long. Has no one ever used it, Sarah?"

"Mr. Rayner used to use it for a study," said she shortly.

"It is a long way from anybody else's room, Sarah, isn't it?"

"Mine is the nearest, and I have ears like needles; so you needn't be frightened," said she, in a tone which really sounded more menacing than consoling.

"It will be rather lonely on a stormy night; the wind will howl so up here," I said, my spirits beginning to sink under her sharp speeches.

"Oh, you won't want for company, I dare say!" she said, with a harsh grating laugh.

"Why, all the company I am likely to get up here is burglars," I answered lugubriously, with my chin between my hands.

The start she gave startled me in my turn.

"Burglars! What burglars! What are you talking about?"

I looked up amazed at the effect of my words on Sarah, whom, of all people in the world, I should have considered strong-minded.

"Why, I have more courage than you!" I said, laughing lightly. "I'm not afraid of them. If they came, they would soon go down again when they found there was nothing to take." Would you be afraid to sleep up here alone, Sarah?"

But she hardly took the trouble to answer me except by a nod; and, answering my good-night shortly, left me alone.

And after that I went to bed and dreamt, not of a burglar, but of quite a different person.

The next day was Sunday, and there were two strangers in church who attracted the attention of all the congregation.

They were two fair-complexioned, light-haired girls who sat in the Reade's pew, and who had evidently spared no expense on rather tasteless and unbecoming toilets.

Mr. Rayner asked us at dinner, if we had noticed the two girls with the pretty hair in Mr. Reade's pew, and said that he had heard that the one with the blue eyes was the future Mrs. Laurence Reade, and that it would be an excellent match for both of them.

"I noticed that he paid her a great deal of attention at church, and afterward they paired off together quite naturally," said he.

The next day Haidee and I passed by Geldham Park in our walk, and saw over the fence Mr. Reade, his sisters, and the two strangers playing lawn-tennis. None of them noticed us that time; but as we were returning, I observed that Mr. Reade jumped up from the grass where he was lounging in the midst of the adoring girls, as I thought contemptuously, and shook out of his hat the leaves and grasses with which his companions had filled it; as for them, they were too much occupied with him to see anything outside the park.

Haidee and I had to go to the village shop with a list of articles which I felt sure we should not get there. I had been tapping vainly for some minutes on the little counter, when Mr. Reade dashed into the shop and greeted me with much surprise. When he had asked after Mr. and Mrs. Rayner, and heard that they were quite well, there was a pause.

"I came in only for some"—here he looked round the shop, and his eyes rested on a pile of dusty toys—"for some marbles. I thought they would do for the school-treat, you know."

I thought it was a pity he did not return to his lawn-tennis and his fiancée, if that was the errand he came on, and I was determined not to be drawn into another *tele-a-tele* with him, so I turned to leave the shop. But he stopped me.

"I wanted to ask you if you were any better. I thought last Sunday you were looking awfully ill."

"Last Sunday?" and I thought of those girls. "I was never better in my life, thank you. And I am quite well. Mr. and Mrs. Rayner have put me into the turret to keep me out of the damp. It was very, very kind of him to think about it. It is the best room in all the house."

"Best room in the house?" Then Mr. Rayner doesn't sleep in the house at all," said he, in a low voice, but with much decision.

I got up from the one chair and turned to my pupil, who was deep in an old story-book that she had found.

"Come, Haidee!"

"No, no; that is revenge—it is unworthy of you," said he in a lower voice still. "Then you are very happy at the Alders now?"

"Yes, thank you."

"And you have no great trouble?"

"Yes, I have—Sarah."

"Sarah? That is one of the servants, isn't it? And she is a trouble to you?"

"Yes; I'm afraid of her. She doesn't like me. And whenever I used to give her letters to post I never got any answers to them."

"Does Mr. Rayner like her?"

"Like her? I don't think any one could like Sarah, except, of course, her young man."

"You got my flowers?"

"Yes, thank you; it was very kind of you to send them!"

"Bringing them," corrected he. "What did you do with them?"

I remembered the fair-haired girl and my resolve to be discreet.

"I put them in water, and when they were dead I threw them away."

"Yes, of course; one doesn't keep dead flowers," said I calmly, but it hurt me to say it, for these words seemed to hurt him. It is very hard to be discreet.

He said no more, but took his parcel and left the shop, saluting me very coldly. I had taken up my parcel, and was going out, too, when Haidee's soft voice broke in.

"You've got Mr. Reade's marbles, and then I dreamt that I had mamma's wool and the curtain-hooks, Miss Christie!"

I had not noticed this.

"How stupid of him!" I exclaimed.

He had marched off so fast that I had to run down the lane after him before he heard me call "Mr. Reade!"

We laughed a little at the embarrassment he would have felt if he had produced a ball of wool and curtain-hooks as the result of his morning's shopping, and if I had gravely presented Mrs. Rayner with a bag of marbles. And then, remorseful and blushing, I said hurriedly—

"I did keep one of the roses, Mr. Reade—the one with the note on it; and then Haidee and I went home to dinner. I had met Mr. Reade quite by accident, and I had done nothing wrong, nothing but what civility demanded, in exchanging a few words with him; but I was glad Haidee was not one of those foolish prattling little girls who insist upon chattering at meal-times about all the small events of the morning's walk."

CHAPTER IX.

It often seems to me that, when I have been puzzling myself fruitlessly for a long time over any matter, I find out quite simply by accident what I want to know. Thus, only the day after my talk with Mr. Reade in the shop, I was nursing Haidee, who did not feel inclined to play after lesson-time, when she said—

"Do you ever have horrid dreams, Miss Christie, that frighten you, and then come true?"

"No, darling; dreams are only fancies, you know, and never come true, except by accident."

"But mine do. I'll tell you about one I had two nights ago, if you'll bend your head and let me whisper. I mustn't tell mamma, because she always stops me and says I mustn't speak of what I see; but I can say it to you; you won't tell, will you?"

"No, darling, I won't tell," said I, thinking it kindest to tell the child speedily about her fanciful dream.

"You know that day when we took you up to your new room in the turret?"

"Yes, dear," said I.

"Hush! Whisper," cooed she. "Well, that night Jane put me to bed, just as she always does, in my little room; and then I went to sleep just like I always do. And then I dreamt that I heard mamma screaming and crying, and papa speaking—oh, so dreadfully loud, and in the way he generally does; it made me frightened in my dream! I thought it was all real, and I tried to get out of bed; but I was too much asleep, and then I woke up because mamma was crying, and I thought at first it was my dream again; but I knocked my head against the rail of my bed, and then I knew I must be awake. And I got out of bed, and I went quite softly to the door and looked through the keyhole. I saw a light in quite plainly through the keyhole, and I can see the bed and her lying in it. But she wasn't alone like she generally is—I could see papa's hand holding the candle, and he was talking to her in such a low voice; but she was crying and talking quite wildly and strangely, so that she frightened me. And then I saw papa put something on her face, and mamma said, 'Not that!' and then she only moaned, and mamma said, 'Be quite still, and I heard him go out of the room. And presently I called, 'Mamma, mamma!' but she didn't answer; and I was so frightened, I thought she was dead. But then I heard her sigh like she always does in her sleep, and I got into bed again."

"Were you afraid to go in, darling?"

"I couldn't go in, because the door was locked. It always is, you know, and I went into mamma's room; I did only once, and she said—she said—'and the child's soft whisper grew softer still, and she held her tiny lips closer to my ear—'she said I was never to say anything about it—and I promised; so I mustn't, even to you, Miss Christie dear. You don't mind, do you, because I promised?"

"No, darling, I don't. Of course you must not tell if you promised," said I.

But would have given the world to know what the child had seen in that mysterious room.

Haidee's strange story had roused again in me all the old feeling of a shadow of some kind hanging over the house on the marsh which had long since worn away in the quiet routine of my daily life there. The looking of the mother on her face, and her own child, her wild talk and crying, the "something on the face" that her husband had had to administer to calm her, and the discovery that he himself did not sleep in the same room, all united to call up in my mind the remembrance of that long talk I had had with Mr. Rayner in the schoolroom soon after my arrival, the story he had told me of her boy's death, and the change it had made in her, and his allusion to "those outbreaks which sometimes cause me the gravest—the very gravest—trouble."

I had understood then that he feared for his wife's reason, but never having witnessed any great change in her cold, listless manner myself, all fear of her possible insanity had faded from my mind. But now Haidee's story caused me to wonder whether there was not an undercurrent in the affairs of the household, of which I knew little or nothing. What if Mr. Rayner were really suffering under the burden of a wife whose sullen silence might at any moment break into wild insanity—if he had to wrestle in secret, with moods of wild walling and weeping which he at first tried to deal with by gentle remonstrance, and at last had to subdue by sedatives!

And then a suggestion occurred to me which would at least explain Sarah's important position in the household. Was she perhaps in truth a responsible guardian of Mrs. Rayner, such as, if the latter's reason were really feeble, it would be necessary for her to have in her husband's absence?

The immediate result of the child's confidences to me was a great increase of my love for and interest in herself. We became almost inseparable in and out of school-hours; I encouraged her to talk; and she soon fell into the habit of telling me whether I was listening or not, those long rambling stories which have no beginning, no sequence, and no end, which are the solace of children who have no companions of their own age.

And sometimes she would say, "Let us sing, Miss Christie;" and I would sing some ballad, while she would ooo an irregular but not inharmonious accompaniment! And we were occupied in this fashion, sitting by the open window one afternoon, when Mr. Rayner appeared in the garden.

"Go on, go on; I have been listening to the concert for ever so long. It is as pretty as birds."

But of course we could not go on in the face of such a critical auditor; so Mr. Rayner told me more seriously that I had a very pretty voice, and asked why I did not take pity on their dullness and come into the drawing-room after tea sometimes and sing to them.

"And you have never tried secular music with the violin, Miss Christie. I believe you're afraid. Sacred music is slow, and you can't read fast; is that it?"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

THE QUIET HOUR.

"From Glory to Glory."

"From glory unto glory!" Be this our joyous song,
As on the King's own highway we bravely march along!
"From glory unto glory!" O word of stirring cheer,
As dawns the solemn brightness of another glad New Year.

Our own beloved Master "hath many things to say;"
Look forward to His teaching, unfolding day by day;
To whispers of His Spirit, while resting at His feet,
To glowing revelation, to insight clear and sweet.

"From glory unto glory!" Our faith hath seen the King,
We own His matchless beauty, as adoringly we sing:
But He hath more to show us! O thought of untold bliss!
And we press on exultingly in certain hope to this—

To marvelous outpourings of His "treasures new and old,"
To largess of His bounty, paid in the King's own gold;
To glorious expansion of His mysteries of grace,
To radiant unveilings of the brightness of His face.

"From glory unto glory!" What great things He hath done,
What wonders He hath shown us, what triumphs He hath won!
We marvel at the record of the blessings of the year!
But sweeter than the Christmas bells rings out His promise clear—

That "greater things," far greater, our longing eyes shall see!
We can but wait and wonder what "greater things" shall be!
But glorious fulfillments rejoicingly we claim,
While pleading in the power of the All-prevailing Name.

"From glory unto glory!" Without a shade of care,
Because the Lord who loves us will every burden bear;
Because we trust Him fully, and know that He will guide,
And know that He will keep us at His beloved side.

"From glory unto glory!" Our fellow-travelers still
Are gathering on the journey—the bright electric thrill
Of quick instinctive union, more frequent and more sweet,
Shall swiftly pass from heart to heart in true and tender beat.

And closer yet, and closer, the golden bonds shall be,
Enlinking all who love our Lord in pure sincerity;
And wider yet, and wider, shall the circling glory glow,
As more and more are taught of God that mighty love to know.

Oh let our adoration for all that He hath done
Peel out beyond the stars of God while voice and life are one!
And let our next year's service be real, deep, and true;
Oh, even now our hearts shall bow, and joyful vows renew!

"In full and glad surrender we give ourselves to Thee,
Thine utterly, and only, and we will be Thine alone,
O Son of God, who lovest us, we will be Thine alone,
And all we are, and all we have, shall henceforth be Thine own!"

Now onward, ever onward, from "strength to strength" we go,
While "grace for grace" abundantly hail from His fullness flow,
To glory's full fruition, from glory's forefront here,
Until His Very Presence crown our happiest New Year!

—F. R. H.

Life is Real.

From the cradle to the grave life is one long constant reality. It cannot be trifled with as a child plays with a toy, and throws aside when it no longer affords its possessor pleasure. It cannot be treated as a joke, or accepted as a mere fact. It bears upon its face the stamp of greatness and the seal of divinity. Chances and changes may affect its material growth and lessen its opportunities, but neither can destroy its reality. If it is wasted, even ever so little, it means just that much actual loss to its possessor. As it hurries along its allotted course there are no opportunities given for returning to gather up the lost moments, no time for retracing a single step, no hope of regaining the chances which were once offered but now lie buried in the past.

If life is then so stern a reality, should it not be spent in making every minute count for good. In taking advantage of every opportunity offered for its improvement, and in making some other life happier and better, so that at its close the beaten track it has pursued may not be strewn with the graves of lost possibilities, but marked all along its course by the mile-stones of good deeds, kind words, loving thoughts and bright hope.—*Parish Messenger.*

When I Have Time.

When I have time, so many things I'll do
To make life happier and more fair
For those whose lives are crowded now with care;
I'll help to lift them from their low despair—
When I have time!

When I have time, kind words and loving smiles
I'll give to those whose pathway runs through tears,
Who see no joy in all the coming years;
In many ways their weary lives I'll cheer—
When I have time.

When I have time, the friend I love so well
Shall know no more those weary, toiling days;
I'll lead her feet in pleasant paths always,
And cheer her heart with words of sweetest praise,
When I have time.

When you have time! The friend you hold so dear
May be beyond the reach of all your sweet intent;
May never know that you so kindly meant
To fill her life with sweet content—
When you had time.

Now is the time! Ah, friend no longer wait
To scatter loving smiles and words of cheer
To those around whose lives are now so dear—
They may not need you in the coming year—
Now is the time.

There never was a day that did not bring its opportunity for doing good that never could have been done before, and never can be again. It must be improved then or never.