

Patience Stanhope's Confessions.

FROM MISS CLARA LANGMORE TO MISS JULIA GLEN.

MY DEAREST JULIA,—Yesterday morning the postman brought me a neat little parcel, which, on opening, I found to be "The Confessions of Patience Stanhope."

You can imagine my astonishment to think that our sweet Patience—our own little Patty—should be the first of us three girls to send that tell-tale packet. How little did we think it would come so soon, when hardly a year ago we left Miss Marshall's in tears and despair, promising to console each other with the longest and most minute accounts of our falling in love, engagement and marriage. I will not tell you a word about Patience's letter—open and read it for yourself. It is charming. But, perhaps, since I have seen the other members of her family, I had better give you a short sketch of them, in order that you may understand the "Confessions" better.

As you know, Mrs. Stanhope is a widow. She is extremely fashionable, and has two daughters, Mabel and Florence, who are older than Patience and also extremely fashionable.

I have always fancied that Patience is a little overshadowed by them and does not receive quite so much consideration. But I am not sure of that, and as Patience has never breathed a word of it to me, perhaps I am wrong in saying so.

There is only one son, who is considerably older than the girls. His name is John; he is a lawyer, and the dearest, quaintest creature imaginable. He is a little like Patience, but very old-fashioned. Patience herself will tell you all the rest.

Mamma and I have spent the most delightful summer up in the mountains—papa and the boys running up every now and then. I will write again in a few days and give you an account of my adventures and escapades, which latter, I am sorry to say, have not diminished in number. I have enjoyed your letters so much, my dear Julia, they are always so bright and interesting. But I positively must not keep you any longer from dear Patience's "Confessions."

Mamma sends her kind regards.

Ever your loving,

CLARE.

CONFESSIONS OF PATIENCE STANHOPE.

MY DEAR GIRLS,—How little I thought a year ago that I should be the first to write these dreadful "Confessions." I must be dreaming and shall wake soon to find myself a boarder at Miss Marshall's, seeing every day two dear girls whom I shall never forget. What fun we used to have! Do you remember that night before we left school forever, how we carried Miss Marshall by storm and got permission to sleep in that dear little room at the end of the hall overlooking the garden, and how we talked all night? I think of you both every day—you, Clare, the only daughter, the pride and delight of the whole house, clever and beautiful, snaring your unfortunate lovers with your golden locks, and slaying them with the bright glances of your blue eyes. Don't boast. Love will find you yet a-napping and steal your heart away under some unlikely disguise. And you, my dear Julia, at home with your father and mother in that dear brown house, the most wonderful girl in the world to your little brothers and sisters; and, indeed, though you were the youngest of us three girls, you were always far the cleverest. We expect great things of you some day, my dear. But you must not imagine that writing books will keep the naughty little god away. Be warned in time. You have already one sad example before you. But, oh! girls, it is of no use to go on this way. It will not help me with my confessions. I can see that you are both laughing at the way I try to put off the evil day. I had better begin at once.

Attention, young ladies! This summer, as you know, mamma, my two sisters and I went to a very gay Atlantic watering-place and spent a most enjoyable summer—at least mamma and my sisters did—and I did, too, of course, but it was so very gay and fashionable that I used to long now and then for a little quiet. My dear brother John came down once early in the summer, but went back to

the city very soon, saying that he could not stay away any longer and that business was so pressing that he could not possibly come down again. I am really afraid that John exaggerated a little; I fancy he did not like staying at our hotel. So he lived all summer in our house, with just a house-keeper. It must have been dreary for him.

The last of August came and mamma was not yet ready to go home. I was a little disappointed at first, but a good many people went away, and then I had the most delightful walks along the shore. Girls, I can't tell you how I got to love the sea, in its ever-changing beauty and ceaseless motion. At sunset, to walk on the firm sand, with the little whispering waves of the incoming tide rippling up on the beach at my feet. You are growing impatient again. Well, about the second week in September, John sent mamma word that some friends of ours were coming to stay with us during the exhibition, and that one of us girls must come home. Mamma called us up to her room and read the letter to us. Mabel and Florence were so disappointed that I offered to go, and, indeed, it was no sacrifice. I was only too happy to go home and see John again. Mamma was very much pleased, and said that as John must be lonely and the exhibition had already begun, I had better go that evening. It was then about noon, and as the train left at half-past nine, I had not much time.

I did my packing and then ran out to say goodbye to my friends, not all of whom stayed at the hotel. Some of the fisherfolk and I were great friends. Then I had my last sun-down walk on the beach. I felt a little sad at parting with it. The day had been dull and stormy, but the evening was calm and beautiful. It was flood-tide, and a long, rolling swell was roaring on the beach. I shall not soon forget it.

There were quite a number of our friends at the station to speed me away. Some of them had Chinese lanterns, which they waved as the train moved off; it looked very pretty.

As I was tired and the berths were made up, I went to bed at once. I had never travelled far alone before, and for a few moments I felt strange and lonely. I laughed at myself when I thought how well off I was. Just a night and a day on the train! I would get into the city at six o'clock the next evening, and John would be waiting for me. Mamma said that she would telegraph to him in the morning. We had to change cars at 5.30 in the morning, and I was afraid that I might oversleep myself, but instead of that I woke at three, and as I felt rested and wakeful, I raised the window curtain and lay watching the country glide past me, like a dream, in the faint light. It became more distinct as the dawn grew brighter, and soon the land lay fair and smiling in the bright sunshine of a September morning.

We reached the junction on time. There was a great crowd everywhere—on the train where we were and on the platform of the station. Of course there were a great many on board who needed assistance, especially one poor woman, who had a little baby and three small children, so seeing no chance of the porter's coming to me, I took my travelling-bag and left the car. The instant I stepped on the platform, however, I repented it, for there were so many people rushing hither and thither that I became bewildered. There were two trains besides the one I had come on, and unfortunately I did not know which one to take. I saw a good-natured looking official at a little distance and I was making my way slowly towards him, when he suddenly disappeared round the station. I stopped in dismay, but in a few moments some one behind me said: "You seem to be in trouble; may I have the pleasure of assisting you?" I turned and saw a gentleman looking at me kindly, so I told him where I wanted to go. Taking my bag and my rug—mamma had insisted on my taking one, and, indeed, I needed it—he led the way to the train. I had time to see what he was like, as we had to move slowly because of the crowd. He was tall and strongly-built, with broad shoulders; his hair and close-cut beard were of a golden-brown colour, and he had very keen brown eyes, which looked as if they might laugh at you if occasion offered. His hands and face were deeply

browned, and after a good deal of hesitation I set him down as an Englishman, but whether travelling for business or pleasure, I could not say. He put my things in a seat, and, hoping that I would have a pleasant journey, lifted his hat and left the car.

I sat watching the moving throng of people until the train started. As it moved off I noticed that the English gentleman, whom, for convenience sake, I shall call Mr. King, jumped on the train, and, after a few moments, passed down our car, taking a seat somewhere behind me. The next thing that occupied my attention was the fact that I had no breakfast, and I was woefully hungry. My seat was near the centre of the car, which, although it is the best place for travelling, entails waiting a good while for refreshments. I resigned myself to the sad fate of seeing half a car full of people supplied before me, when, to my astonishment, the white-aproned waiter entered the car and came straight to your humble servant. If it had been Clare, I would have laid his attentions to her well-known power of fascination. But me!—However, that did not alter the fact that he was there, and very thankful I was for it. After having enjoyed my breakfast, I looked curiously at my fellow-travellers. There was a young curate and his wife—newly married—that would furnish amusement for the rest of the day, I thought. But it did not. It got very wearisome and strangely exasperating to see them gazing fondly in each other's eyes, and when, later in the day, the curate fell to kissing his wife's hand, which she had just touched with the window, I felt an insane desire to rise and sink them both. He wore a smoking cap, evidently embroidered by the same fair fingers, with impossible silk rosebuds on a green velvet ground. There were several families returning from the seaside, two or three old gentlemen, travelling, I suppose, and that was as far as I could see without turning round. I did not wish to encounter those brown eyes. So I took out "The Silence of Dean Maitland," but the motion of the train made the words dance before my eyes, and before long I closed my eyes to rest them, and, leaning my head back on the rug, I found it very soft and comfortable. Then you know what happened—I fell fast asleep.

I woke with a start and regained my senses just in time to check the cry that rose to my lips. The train was going very slow, with a strange staggering motion. Then there came a sudden shock and we stopped altogether. Everyone started to their feet and made an instinctive rush for the door, I among the rest, but before I could move a step a hand on my shoulder pressed me down into my seat again, and Mr. King said: "Stay where you are; you are quite safe. I will go and see what the difficulty is." So saying, he hurried past me.

The scene in the car was dreadful. Every one seemed in a panic, although no one was hurt. The children cried, the ladies either screamed or sat with white faces and clasped hands. Not a gentleman was left in the car but the curate, who had his poor young bride fainting in his arms. One lady caught me by the arm with such a tight grasp that you can see the mark of the bruise yet, and implored me to say that we would not be thrown off the track and dashed down a precipice. I comforted her as well as I could, telling her that as the train had stopped we were in no danger. In a few moments more Mr. King came in, looking rather grave at first, I thought, but he smiled when he saw me, and told us that a freight train had been wrecked in front of us. Our engine had just touched the last car before it stopped, and that was what caused the shock. We were some distance from any station, and it would be at least three hours before we could proceed. He then left the car immediately, and after that most of the other gentlemen came in. As it was past noon, dinner was served, the waiter coming to me first again. After that I took up my book and read on to the end. I was very much interested. The car began to be most uncomfortable, the air was hot and close, the children, poor things, were very restless, and some small boys "played train," with ear-piercing shrieks. Those who could slept, and one old gentleman really snored so loud that it was almost unbearable.

On both sides of the track were thick woods, and