

THE GENTLE LEADER.

BY THE REV. CANON WILTON, M.A.

LIKE Christiana with her little band
 Of gracious children round about her pressing—
 The model of a mother, blest and blessing,
 Amidst her little ones I see her stand,
 Onward she leads them with a gentle hand,
 Wisely commanding, tenderly caressing;
 Her life-long happiness in them possessing,
 She gives the life-long labour they demand.
 Thus as she moves about her path serenely,
 Training those fresh young hearts for God and Heaven,
 I hold her office to be more than queenly:
 For to the glorious angels who stand nighest
 The Almighty's throne, such "little ones" are given
 To tend on earth for service of the Highest.



THE SORROWS OF GIRLHOOD.

BY LILY WATSON.

PART I.

"THE Sorrows of Girlhood! What a sentimental title!" we may imagine some adult reader exclaiming.

Girls, in the heyday of youth, with life in its infinite possibilities stretching far before them, with all the beauty of the world of nature, of literature, of art, of love, waiting to reveal itself in the bright future—what business have they with sorrow?

The association of ideas does, in truth, seem an incongruous one. Charles Dickens, whom many superior people now are beginning to despise and declare they cannot read, has sketched a delightful picture of an afflicted maiden in Miss Julia Mills, the confidante of Dora in *David Copperfield*, and "comparatively stricken in years—about twenty, I should say." This young lady is "understood to have retired from the world on her awful stock of experience, but still to take a calm interest in the unblighted hopes and loves of youth." We smile at her repeated allusions to the Desert of Sahara, and her journal with its parentheses, kept to console David Copperfield in his separation from Dora. . . . "Quoted verses respecting self and young Gazelle, ineffectually. Also referred to Patience on monument. (Oy. Why on monument? J. M.) . . . Drew ideal picture of D. C. on verge of tomb . . . Fainting of D. and glass of water from public-house (Poetical affinity; chequered sign on doorpost; chequered human life. J. M.)."

All the story of this young lady is deliciously amusing, and it is so, of course, chiefly because of her youth. It would not be particularly funny for a woman of fifty to write in her diary about "chequered human life," but the incongruity of a girl of twenty doing so

strikes the reader at once, and the woes are seen to be of the sentimental kind. Sentimentality is the exaggeration or it may be, the feigning of emotion. It arises from a wish to indulge or display that feeling of which it is the abuse, merely for the sake of the idle luxury to be found in such indulgence.

There are not so many sentimental girls now as there were half a century ago. A healthier tone of feeling has come into vogue. Outdoor exercise and rational mental training have done much to banish melancholy and morbid imaginings from girlhood, and I may say at once that it is not of such fancied or petted sorrows that I wish to speak. Any girl who feels a tendency to sentimental griefs about nothing in particular had better try to brace herself by cold bathing, vigorous outdoor exercise, and sound mental work, and above all, not seek consolation in the indulgence of her emotions.

When all this has been said, the truth remains that there are sorrows and troubles peculiar to girlhood; all the more keen, perhaps, because they are not taken into much account by other people. There is nothing more trying than to suffer when you know you are expected to be very cheerful, and when no ground is supposed by others to exist for anything but happiness. And it is strange, perhaps, but true, that there are many troubles of which a girl does not care to talk even to her mother. There may be different reasons for this. It is not always easy to express one's inmost feelings to the nearest and dearest of the home circle, perhaps by very reason of the familiarity that exists; or an unselfish daughter knows that her mother has enough to worry about, without any additional distress on her account. So, dear readers, let the writer try to

"mother" you if you have any sorrow in which she can help you a little, and no one shall be the wiser for the comforting.

First, then, there are the sorrows which may have a physical basis, and of these let us take "plainness" first of all.

What a source of distress "appearance" is to many a girl who reads this page! And how keenly she is aware that to mention her grief would make her ridiculous! What sympathy does a girl receive who frets because she is plain? She would, if it were known, be rebuked for her vanity, and informed that "Beauty is only skin deep," and "Handsome is that handsome does." These two remarks have never seemed to me at all to the point. Beauty may only be "skin-deep," but what of that? It is a most desirable possession all the same; and right acting will not supply to a girl the coveted treasure she does not possess. It is a terrible trial to be passed over, to lose what makes life bright and happy, because of the turn of a feature, the trick of a glance; and if this be true in the case of ordinary plainness, what must it be when any actual deformity exists?

It is absurd to ignore the fact that it is important to be able to charm. Friendship, success in life, love, are all greatly dependent on the power of attracting others. We need not fall back here on the outworn theory that a girl's one business in life is to "get married;" for whether she wishes to marry, to be a hospital nurse, a High School teacher, a clerk, a private governess, a fixture in her father's home, it is of no slight consequence for her, and for those with whom she comes in contact, that she should not be repellent in aspect.

"This makes my case all the harder," the girl who is distressingly conscious of plainness may say.