

of daffodil-yellow hair. Still it could hardly have been called an interesting companion, and by three o'clock in the afternoon I was seized with an overwhelming curiosity to find out its intellectual capacities, and tried to wake it up. In vain. Calmly and peacefully it slumbered there, and when at last even Melinda's anxiety about the color of its eyes induced her to give it a little shake when she thought I wasn't looking, it went on sleeping.

When its owner called for it again in the evening, she asked if it had behaved nicely. We said it had, and I asked her if it didn't sometimes wake up. We said we should have liked it to be a little more lively and conversational, and Melinda asked her anxiously, "Did she think it was quite well?"

"Lor' bless you, ma'am, the child's good 'elth itself. The fresh air must 'ave made Everleen a bit drowsy."

"A bit drowsy!" I looked at Melinda and laughed. I was in hopes that she might have had enough of orphans after this decidedly uninteresting specimen. But I might have known she hadn't.

"When may I have her to keep?" she said eagerly.

"I took it when its parents died—I was that sorry for the little dear! I couldn't bear to think of the lonely orphan begging its way from door to door."

"The feeling does you credit," I said. "It is rather young to beg. I don't think I need keep you any longer. You may bring the baby on Friday, and I will give you ten pounds."

The woman's face fell. "Ten pounds?"

"That's all," I said. "Not a penny more. You ought on the contrary to pay me for taking all the trouble and expense of the child off your hands."

She gave in—of course I knew she would—and when she was gone I told Melinda I didn't like the looks of her.

"Neither do I," said Melinda. "But then we aren't going to adopt her, are we? And you can't say you don't like the looks of the baby—besides, it's so nice and quiet! I shall call her Elaine, and I shall dress her in—"

And so on, and so on, and so on. For the next few days Melinda lived in a whirl of the shopping her soul loved, and our rooms were littered with piles of tiny garments of snowy silk and lace and muslin. We engaged



A MANITOBA ORCHARD.

"Wait a bit, Melinda," I said. "There are a few things to arrange before you take the orphan finally to your heart—a nurse, for instance."

"Yes, and clothes," said she, with a pleased air of anticipation.

"You had better not bring her till Friday," I said, after a moment's thought. "But before you go I should like to ask you a few questions."

Was it a fancy on my part that this lady looked alarmed? Melinda says I am suspicious by nature, so perhaps it was. There was no harm, however, in setting a mild trap.

"Where are the baby's parents?" I asked sternly and abruptly.

She looked at me in mild reproof, and I heard Melinda murmur in a shocked voice at my thoughtlessness.

"I 'ope they're in 'eaven," the woman said sadly; "but I don't know—I am not sure about Elizabeth, now I come to think of it."

"You don't know whether the mother is dead?" I asked.

"Yes, I know that—I laid 'er out wi' these very 'ands. An' I 'ope she's in 'eaven, I'm sure."

I went on with my questions.

"How do you come to be taking care of the child, if you are no relation of it?"

a nurse (to come on Saturday morning), and I never saw my wife look so happy before.

"It's a new toy," I said to myself. "I only hope the pleasure will last until the toy breaks."

I had put off my journey for another month at Melinda's express wish. We were to go down into the country for that time with the nurse and child—"to get used to things before the voyage," Melinda said, though it didn't seem to me to be at all necessary. Afterwards I was glad that I had consulted her wishes on this point. We took a delightful furnished cottage in Sussex, and were to start on the Saturday afternoon.

In due time the desirable orphan came, and was paid for. To my joy and relief it slept soundly all night. But the next morning, with the nurse, came the first blow. She was a sensible, middle-aged woman with a heavy hand, and no nonsense about her (Melinda said that); and the first thing she did to our adopted daughter was to take her up and shake her.

"This child has been dosed," she said, "with some of those nasty soothing syrups."

We had judged it wise, for the sake of the child's future, to tell this woman

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