

ward,' and point out the joins as if it was a glove, that we cannot condescend to it."

"No," said John, setting off on the subject again as if he was most seriously considering it, Valentine meanwhile smiling significantly on the others. "It is a mistake to describe too much from within. The external life as we see it should rather be given, and about as much of the motives and springs of action as an intelligent man with good opportunity could discover. We don't want to be told all. We do not know all about those we live with, and always have lived with. If ever I took to writing fiction I should not pretend to know all about my characters. The author's world appears small if he makes it manifest that he reigns there. I don't understand myself thoroughly. How can I understand so many other people? I cannot fathom them. My own children often surprise me. If I believed thoroughly in the children of my pen, they would write themselves down sometimes in a fashion that I had not intended."

"John talks like a book," observed Valentine. "You propose a subject, and he lays forth his views as if he had considered it for a week. Drive on, Samivel."

"But I don't agree with him," said Miss Christie. "When I read a book I aye dislike to be left in any doubt what the man means or what the story means."

"I always think it a great proof of power in a writer," said Brandon, "when he consciously or unconsciously makes his reader feel that he knows a vast deal more about his characters than he has chosen to tell. And what a keen sense some have of the reality of their invented men and women! So much so that you may occasionally see evident tokens that they are jealous of them. They cannot bear to put all the witty and clever speeches into the mouths of these 'fetches' of their own imagination. Some must be saved up to edge in as a sly aside, a sage reflection of the author's own. There never should be any author's asides."

"I don't know about that," John answered, "but I often feel offended with authors who lack imagination to see that a group of their own creations would not look in one another's eyes just what they look in his own. The author's pretty woman is too often pretty to all; his wit is acknowledged as a wit by all. The difference of opinion comes from the readers. They differ certainly."

"Even I," observed Valentine, "if I were an author's wit, might be voted a bore, and how sad that would be, for in real life it is only right to testify that I find little or no difference of opinion."

He spoke in a melancholy tone, and heaved up a sigh.

"Is cousin Val a wit?" asked little Hugh.

"I am afraid I am," said Valentine; "they're always saying so, and it's very unkind of them to talk about it, because I couldn't help it, could I."

Here the little Anastasia, touched with pity by the heartfelt pathos of his tone, put her dimpled hand in his and said tenderly, "Never

mind, dear, it'll be better soon, p'raps, and you didn't do it on purpose."

"Does it hurt?" asked Hugh, also full of ruth.

"Be ashamed of yourself," whispered Miss Christie, "to work on the dear children's feelings so. No, my sweet mannie, it doesn't hurt a bit."

"I'm very much to be pitied," proceeded Valentine. "That isn't all"—he sighed again—"I was born with a bad French accent, and without a single tooth in my head or out of it, while such was my weakness, that it took two strong men, both masters of arts, to drag me through the rudiments of the Latin grammar."

Anastasia's eyes filled with tears. It seemed so sad; and the tender little heart had not gone yet into the question of *sewing*.

"They *taught* you the Latin grammar, did they," said Bertram, who had also been listening, and was relieved to hear of something in this list of miseries that he could understand, "that's what Miss Crampton teaches me. I don't like it, and you didn't either, then. I'm six and three quarters; how old were you?"

THE GOVERNESS IN THE PLAY-ROOM.

A great deal can be done in a week, particularly by those who give their minds to it because they know their time is short. That process called turning the house out of windows took place when John was away. Aunt Christie, who did not like boys, kept her distance, but Miss Crampton being very much scandalized by the unusual noise, declared, on the second morning of these holidays, that she should go up into Parliament, and see what they were all about. Miss Crampton was not supposed ever to go up into Parliament; it was a privileged place.

"Will the old girl really come, do you think?" exclaimed Crayshaw.

"She says she shall, as soon as she has done giving Janie her music lesson," replied Barbara, who had rushed up the steep stairs to give this message.

"Mon peruke!" exclaimed Johnnie, looking round; "you'd better look out, then, or vous l'attrapperais."

The walls were hung with pictures, maps, and caricatures; these last were what had attracted Johnnie's eyes, and the girls began hastily to cover them.

"It's very unkind of her," exclaimed Barbara. "Father never exactly said that we were to have our own playroom to ourselves, but we know and she knows that he meant it."

Then, after a good deal of whispering, giggling, and consulting among the elder ones, the little boys were dismissed; and in the meantime Mr. Nicholas Swan, who, standing on a ladder outside, was nailing the vines (quite aware that the governess was going to have a reception which might be called a warning never to come there any more), may or may not have intended to make his work last as long as possible. At any rate, he could with diffi-