

would excuse her everyday one. Then she went quietly and gravely downstairs, and set out to pay her call, far too much in earnest to remember that the drive was well commanded by Aunt Norreys' favorite window of the white panelled drawing-room.

Miss Nancy's heart beat fast as she opened the rectory gate, for she was by no means a fearless child ; but courage is a higher quality than fearlessness, and she inherited from the squire a kind of silent endurance which could be made to serve as courage. A straight walk ran up to the house between wide flower-borders, with a hedge on either hand. There were daffodils nodding all the way up the borders, and in the orchard hedge was an almond-tree in bloom, pink against the blue sky. There in the walk stood the rector himself, with one hand under his coat-tails, and the other waving gently in the air. He was speaking aloud, and Miss Nancy thought at first that he must be talking to some one over the hedge ; but as she came up the walk, she found that he was looking up at the almond-tree, and reciting with much earnest declamation of a quaint, deliberate, gone-by style—

“ Plant, Lorde, in me, the tree of godly lyfe,  
Hedge me about with Thy strong fence of faith ;  
If Thee it please, use eke Thy pruning-knife,  
Lest that, O Lorde ! as a good gardiner saith—  
If suckers draw the sappe from bowes on hie,  
Perhaps in tyme the top of tree may die.  
Let, Lorde ! this tree be set within Thy garden-wall  
Of Paradise, where grows no one ill sprig at all.”

Miss Nancy had been taught that it was rude to interrupt her elders, and she believed it would probably be also wicked to interrupt what sounded like a hymn, so she stood and waited until the rector had come to an end, and then advanced another shy step. The rector turned round and saw her.

“ Dear me,” he said, putting on his spectacles, “ is this little Miss Nancy ? ”

“ Yes, thank you,” said Miss Nancy ; “ and I have come to call on you now.” Miss Nancy, though a very simple child, was not a dull one, and there would have