

(ORIGINAL.)

AUNT MARY'S NOTE BOOK.

BY E. M. M.

AUNT MARY was one of those old maids so valuable in society, whose amiable, cheerful manner, proceeding from the kindest heart, led her to promote the happiness of all around her. Deeply pious, but without austerity, she was beloved and appreciated as she deserved, and her friendship considered one of the greatest privileges. She had been accustomed to move in the first circles, and her knowledge of the world, gleaned more from observation than from books, she turned to the best account. It was her habit, while visiting amongst her friends, to keep notes of all she saw or heard, for the amusement of her beloved nieces, who, with their mother, Mrs. Selwyn, resided in Devonshire, and to whom she paid an annual visit. It was during one of these, when the family party were sitting round the work table, while a cheerful fire blazed on the hearth, that, at the request of all, she produced her book and read aloud the following :

THE VICAR'S DAUGHTER.

You will be disappointed, I fear, if you expect, in each visit I have paid since I left you, twelve months ago, that I should be able to collect a connected story. My gleanings more frequently consist of remarks made on the dispositions, habits, and amusements of those with whom I associated—not, I trust, in a spirit of unchristian detraction, but with an earnest hope of being useful to my dear young people at home. When I have been successful in arranging these slight materials in the form of a story it was more with a view of affording amusement, and my first visit happily yielded me this pleasure—it was to the house of the Reverend Mr. Bertram, who had been married to one of my earliest and dearest friends. He was now left alone, with an only child, a daughter, just seventeen years, and one of the loveliest, sweetest creatures of heaven's creation was Annie Bertram. It was evening when I reached the parsonage, situated at the extremity of the village, and almost concealed from the view of the road by a plantation of rich elms. It stood in a beautiful garden, stored with every flower and shrub, but the most beautiful was Annie herself, who, as I drove up, was standing with her excellent father at the gate to welcome me.

I shall never forget her fairy figure, as I then beheld it, in pure white—her long fair ringlets shading her face, her blue eyes in which beamed the mildest expression, the neat straw bonnet, all so appropriate.

She sprang forward to meet me—"Dear Mrs. Mary Selwyn, how we have been longing for you," were the words uttered in a tone the most musical. "Annie, sweet Annie, thanks a thousand times," I exclaimed, clasping her in my arms. We entered the house, it was a perfect picture of peace, good order and contentment. The simple repast, spread for the expected guest, and prepared in such good taste, decorated as it was with fruit and flowers; "What a picture of happiness," I remarked, as I looked around me. "And I trust you may find it fully realised," replied Mr. Bertram, while a tear of proud affection glanced in his eye; "Annie has been very busy all day I assure you, and the visit of her god-mamma has been the subject of conversation for weeks." You may easily imagine how the days flew in this sweet retreat. We met in the morning to prayers—after breakfast Mr. Bertram either visited amongst his parishioners or retired to his study, while Annie arranged her little household affairs, attended her school for the poor children, and then would bring her work and sit with me in her own favourite room, where the honeysuckles and roses wreathing round the trellis, shed their fragrance, and the cooing of her favourite doves, gave a sound to me of peculiar delight. Her evenings she spent working in her flower garden, while Mr. Bertram, with his book, sat in an arbour, reared by her hand. How often have I noticed him laying this aside to gaze on his child, as her graceful figure floated before him, or when she broke in on his studies by bringing him a flower, or calling on him to assist her in tying those which were straying on the ground.

I had been, I think, a week at the parsonage, when one morning a little note was brought to Miss Bertram, with the neatest smallest seal, written in the prettiest hand; the contents were most important, and as follows: "Mrs. Fludyer requests the pleasure of Mr. and Miss Bertram's company on — evening, at a dance." Annie handed it to her