

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

THE HOUSE-KEEPER

-AT-

LORME HALL.

By Ellen Vavasour Noel.

(Continued.)

"There was a veranda on that side of the house. I went out on it to take some plants that were there, out of the sun. The plants were near my mistress' windows, which also opened on the veranda. I heard Mr. Crossham exclaim passionately,

"You refuse, madam! it must be signed."

"I will not rob my children," was my mistress' answer in a cold determined tone.

"I left the plants and walked to the end of the gallery, for I would not listen to their conversation. Five minutes later, when I again passed through the boudoir, I saw that my mistress had joined Mrs. Woodford, but her flushed and agitated looks showed that something unpleasant had occurred. I went down to the dining-room. Mrs. Barton was there and Master Frank was playing in the room. Presently, Mr. Crossham with Captain Carter entered the apartment and approached the sideboard on which the decanters of wine stood. As soon as Mr. Crossham saw Master Frank he called to him in angry tones to stop his noise and clear out of the room. The boy delayed an instant to collect his playthings, whereupon Mr. Crossham rushed at him, and with one blow struck him to the ground, saying with a muttered curse, 'That will teach you, sir, to obey me!'"

"Mrs. Barton sprang to the poor child and lifted him in her arms.

"Come now, Crossham, upon my word that is too bad," exclaimed Captain Carter, who seemed ashamed of his friend's conduct. "I hope, ma'am," he continued, addressing Mrs. Barton, "that the boy is not much hurt."

"She did not answer him, but turning to Mr. Crossham with pale face and flashing eyes, said,

"Wretch, twenty years have not changed you, then; you broke your father's heart, now you would kill this child, because his mother is not weak enough to let you any longer squander his property."

"At these strange words of Mrs. Barton's, Mr. Crossham started, a change came over his countenance—a startled look of fear and astonishment—but with an effort he recovered his self-possession, saying to Captain Carter:

"The woman is either mad or drunk. Pack up your traps instantly," he exclaimed, turning to Mrs. Barton; "after such language you shall not remain an hour longer in my house."

"Your house!" replied Mrs. Barton scornfully; "your house, indeed! When my mistress tells me to leave her house I will do so, but not before."

"In his rage I think he would have struck her had not Captain Carter interposed. Casting a look on him of withering contempt and hatred, Mrs. Barton, closely followed by me, left the apartment. Giving Master Frank to me she went up to my mistress' room.

"Early in the afternoon Mr. Crossham and his friend returned to Montreal. The business which made Mr. Crossham pay such a hasty visit to the Hall was not satisfactorily arranged, for he left in a terrible temper, my mistress having shut herself in her room, refusing to see him again as he desired.

"Some days went by—dark rainy days—and within the Hall all seemed as gloomy as the weather without. My mistress, pale, sad and silent, spent the most of the time in her own apartment; while Mrs. Barton, restless, excited, and more mysterious than ever, wandered uneasily about the house. Mr. Crossham did not return to the Hall; he wished, I suppose, by staying away to alarm my mistress, to frighten her into giving him the money—a large amount which he required to pay some debts he had contracted—my mistress very justly refusing to deprive her children of so large a sum. I trembled with fear for my mistress on Mrs. Barton's account, as I thought of Mr. Crossham's anger on his return when he would find her still at the Hall, that in this instance, also, his hitherto submissive wife had dared to oppose him.

"One afternoon I was sitting at one of the front windows sewing. Hearing the noise of a carriage approaching the house I looked out and saw Mr. Lorme—a cousin of my mistress—accompanied by a respectable-looking man, driving up to the door.

"Here is Mr. Lorme," I exclaimed to Mrs. Barton, who was passing the room; "Mr. Lorme and some stranger with him."

"She came quickly to the window and looked out with an eager, inquiring gaze, and then clasping her hands, her face bright with happiness, her frame trembling with emotion, she said:

"Tis he! Merciful Heaven, I thank Thee!" as she hastily quitted the apartment, leaving me to imagine who the stranger could be whose arrival occasioned her such joy.

"I soon became aware that something unusual had happened, for Mr. Crossham was written to return at once to the Hall, and

Mrs. Barton sent for Mr. and Mrs. Woodford, who, with Mr. Lorme and Mrs. Barton, were closeted for a long time with my mistress. All the satisfaction I could get from Mrs. Barton was that the stranger was a relation of hers whom my mistress' cousin had brought to see her.

"That day passed and part of the following before Mr. Crossham made his appearance. Mrs. Barton, who was on the watch for his arrival, called me to come with her, and conducting me to a room near the library, said:

"You will soon now, Kate, hear a secret, the knowledge of which during the past year has nearly killed me."

"She was pale with excitement and trembled violently. I made her sit down while I went for a glass of water. In passing through the hall I saw Mr. Woodford, who, with his wife, had been nearly all the morning in the house, go into the library, followed by Mr. Lorme and Mr. Crossham.

"I waited for some minutes in silent wonder by Mrs. Barton, who with her eyes fixed on the opposite door seemed to have forgotten my presence. Sounds of voices followed, the tones waxed louder, I could distinguish Mr. Lorme's and Mr. Crossham's in angry altercation. Some of the servants passing through the hall attracted by the noise stopped in alarm to listen. Presently the library bell rang loudly. Mrs. Barton started up saying, 'Come now, Kate, you must hear all, come with me.' I followed her across the passage to the library door at which she knocked. Mr. Woodford opened it, and as we passed in closed it again.

"Mr. Lorme with flushed brow and flashing eyes stood at the table, near him, with a pale defiant expression on his handsome face, Mr. Crossham was standing.

"Madame!" said Mr. Lorme addressing Mrs. Barton, "the time has come for you to throw aside the mask which you have so long assumed and to denounce this—pointing to Mr. Crossham—villainous impostor. Who is he?"

"My husband," was Mrs. Barton's reply.

"Mr. Crossham laughed scornfully. "A likely story indeed! Woman! you know it is an infernal lie!" he passionately exclaimed. "I never saw your ugly face before I saw it in this house as that of one of my servants."

"Yes, you have, Robert Carson," and Mrs. Barton advanced and looked steadily at him. "Ah! you start at the sound of that name."

"Tis many years since you heard it, no doubt. I can hardly blame you," she continued in bitter accents, "for not recognizing me, for I am sadly changed since that night, twenty years ago, when you fled as a thief from your father's house. I was young then, and these white locks, since bleached by sorrow and the disgrace you brought upon your home; you then prided for their dark beauty; did I not then then marred my face. I can not blame you for not knowing me, but you are little changed. Thoughts of the father whose heart you broke, of the wife you so cruelly and disgracefully deserted, have not troubled you, Robert Carson? Did you never wonder what became of me?"

"To this address Mr. Crossham listened with well-affected surprise and indignation, although I thought at some of her words his countenance changed slightly. To her last words he replied in an insolent sneering tone.

"Your story, woman, is not well got up. It is rather singular that it is only now after being my servant for more than a year, that you find out I have the honour to be your husband."

"It is not only now that I find that out. With horror I recognized you, as this girl can prove," and she turned to me, "the first time I saw you after you came here, and for a while I was nearly crazed by the dreadful discovery and the perplexity I was in as to what I should do. At length, I determined to keep my secret. I knew my dear mistress loved you, and I thought that you perhaps had become a better, as well as an older, man, and maybe you believed me dead. It would be no sin, I hoped, to act so, and I kept my secret till I saw time had not changed you one whit, that you were breaking my beloved mistress' heart, squandering her property, and bringing ruin and wretchedness on this house."

"Lorme, this farce has lasted long enough. The plot, I confess, is not bad, but you must prove that this woman, not your cousin, is my wife," said Mr. Crossham in a cool scornful manner.

"You then deny the truth of her statement?"

"I do, most assuredly, every word of it, and defy you to prove that it is true," and Mr. Crossham drew himself up and looked boldly into Mr. Lorme's face.

"A slight smile of triumph gleamed for an instant in Mr. Lorme's eyes. Looking towards Mr. Woodford, he said, 'bring in our witness, Woodford!'"

"Mr. Woodford opened the door and ushered in the stranger who had come to the Hall the day before with Mr. Lorme.

"Mr. Crossham started back as if an unseen hand had suddenly struck him, and gazed in a sort of horror and amazement at the stranger who had drawn near and was intently regarding him.

"Do you know this man?" Mr. Lorme inquired of the new comer.

"I do; he is Robert Carson, and with deep shame I acknowledge it, my brother," was the reply.

"This woman," pointing to Mrs. Barton, 'claims to be his wife, but he denies it; can you tell whether what she says is true?'"

"Sir, it is true! She is his wife! Robert!" he continued, addressing Mr. Crossham in stern, bitter accents, 'tis useless for you to deny it. She is Susan Copely, whom years ago you lawfully married!'"

"Are you satisfied that I can prove it, infamous scoundrel that you are?" Mr. Lorme passionately exclaimed. "A felon's doom awaits you; soon the world will know that the dashing Mr. Crossham has turned out a swindling impostor, a consummate villain!"

"Nora, I shall never forget the expression of Mr. Crossham's, or rather Robert Carson's countenance. It was livid with rage. His eyes actually glared with hate and fury as he confronted Mr. Lorme. He made a rapid dive into one of his pockets, soon thing gleamed in his hands as he drew it forth, and God knows what would have followed had not his brother, who was a large powerful man, rushed quickly upon him and wrenched the pistol from his grasp.

"I screamed with horror, and rushing to the door fled from the room.

"Soon after, our late haughty master in shame and ignominy departed from the Hall never to return. He was allowed, as Mrs. Lorme desired it, to escape unpunished. He immediately left Montreal, and we heard no more of him until about two years afterwards when his brother wrote to tell Mr. Lorme he had been shot in a gambling-saloon in California.

"And now, Nora, I will tell you part of Mrs. Barton's story, which she afterwards told me. Robert Carson was the son of a respectable farmer in England. She was married to him when quite a girl. Not long after their marriage he had stolen a considerable amount of money and escaped to America. His father died heart-broken at his son's conduct, and the rest of the family, taking her with them, immigrated to Canada, and from there to one of the Eastern States; but Mrs. Barton, as she called herself, remained in Montreal with Mrs. Lorme's father's family and afterwards, as I have said, when her young mistress got married became her house-keeper. She had never met or heard of her guilty husband until, to her horror and amazement, he came to Lorme Hall as her mistress' husband. He did not recognize her, and her reasons for not making herself known have been already stated. I told you, if you recollect Nora that after our return from Montreal Mrs. Barton went there. It was to see Mr. Lorme, to whom she revealed everything, and asked his advice, for he was a lawyer. They wrote to her brother-in-law, with whom she had frequently corresponded, to come to Montreal to bear witness to the truth of her story. Mr. Carson had gone to the far West on urgent business, but on receiving their letters on his return home, he started as soon as possible for Montreal.

"Mrs. Lorme told Mrs. Barton that in Chicago where she had met Mr. Crossham, as I will still call him, he was considered a gentleman and moved in good society, and so Nora, he was very gentlemanly in appearance and fine-looking, too. It was some time before my poor mistress recovered from the shock she received, but at last in her children's love and the peaceful rest of her beautiful home, the remembrance of that dark page in her life's history grew fainter as time passed.

"Mrs. Barton never left her, as a loved and trusted friend she remained at Lorme Hall until her death.

THE END.

FARTHING AND MILLIONS.—"We recently called on an old friend," says the *Civilian*, "a principal clerk in an important West-End Government office. We found him, as always, busily engaged—for our friend is a model of indefatigable zeal; but we were somewhat startled at discovering that all his energetic ingenuity was being directed to the highly responsible task of unknotting and arranging pieces of string measuring about two inches in length. We asked for an explanation, and our friend said, pleasantly, 'You see this is an age of economy; we cannot get string enough from the Stationery Office, and so I have arranged with the principal of a department to which we are constantly sending papers to return the pieces of string with which the papers are tied. Here are the pieces, and if I can unknot them they may be used a second time.' We laughed, and suggested that, if such work must be done, it should be done by a messenger; but our friend replied that that functionary had refused to perform the task, alleging he did not know through what low fellow's hands the string might have passed! We will only ask, can the force of folly—which is another name for modern economy—further go?"

An official contradiction has been given to the announcement that the Emperor Napoleon intends to take up his residence in Ireland. The Emperor will leave England for Madeira in the spring, the Royal yacht "Victoria and Albert" having been placed at his disposal by Her Majesty.

Art and Literature.

M. Ernest Renan's next book will be on the Apocalypse of St. John.

Wachtel is coming to the United States again within a year, and will bring with him the great soprano, Madame Mallinger.

Prince Gortschakoff's official organ, the *Journal de St. Petersburg*, rejoices in a circulation of four hundred and fifty copies, all told.

The new King of Sweden is an accomplished amateur musician, and takes great interest in the welfare of the Stockholm Conservatoire.

Sir T. Erskine May is engaged upon a History of Democracy in Europe, from the earliest times to the present, and the work is rapidly advancing towards completion.

As a novelty in theatricals, the *Gauchos* tells us that Pekin itself has sent to Paris a singer, Mlle. Yen-Sue-Zol, with an admirable voice, a charming face, and—need we say it?—a small foot.

Earl Russell is about to publish a volume of "Essays on the Rise and Progress of the Christian Religion in the West of Europe, from the Reign of Tiberius to the end of the Council of Trent."

A very interesting discovery has been made in the library of the National Museum at Naples, namely, "A Treatise on Miniature (Illuminated) Painting," which treats of the art generally, of the preparation of colours, the laying on of gold, and other technical matters. It is believed that this treatise, which dates from the fourth century, has never been printed, and is not to be found in any catalogue.

Some idea of the interest taken in the new University of Strasburg may be had from the fact that gifts have been made to it already from 15,000 donors, and from 100 different localities, and that new ones are daily arriving. Among those lately opened are 650 magnificent bound volumes presented by the University of Oxford, each volume containing the dedication: "Presented to the library of the University of Strasburg, by the University of Oxford, Jan., 1872." On the outside of each volume are the arms in gold of the University, with the inscription: "Academia Oxoniensis," and the motto: "Deus Illuminatio mea."

A disgraceful act of vandalism has just been committed in the Royal Gallery of Berlin. Five of the finest pictures in the museum, the "Andromeda" of Rubens, "Mary Magdalen" of Ger. Dow, two gems; a Cornelius de Haerlem, a Verkolje, and another not specified, were found pierced with cuts from a knife. The perpetrators of these attacks, as odious as insensate, carried out their criminal projects on several successive days, for every morning a fresh picture was found to be damaged. The guardians saw nothing, and the investigations have not yet produced any result. The mutilated canvases were submitted to a minute examination, and their restoration was immediately proceeded with.

The great Caxton authority in England—Mr. William Blades—has now turned his attention to Shakespeare, and applies his knowledge as a practical printer to the poet's works, in order to see what acquaintance they show with the compositor's art. The result is strikingly set forth in a volume just issued from the press of Trubner & Co., entitled "Shakespeare and Typography." Many instances of the use of technical terms by Shakespeare are cited by Mr. Blades, and among them the following:

1. "Come we to full points here? And are et ceteras nothing?"—2 *Henry IV.*, II. 4.
2. "If a book is folio, and two pages of type have been composed, they are placed in proper position upon the imposing stone, and enclosed within an iron or steel frame, called a 'chase,' small wedges of hard wood, termed 'coigns' or 'quoins,' being driven in at opposite sides to make all tight.

By the four opposing coigns
Which the world together joins.

Pericles, III. 1.

This is just the description of a form in folio, where two quoins on one side are always opposite to two quoins on the other, thus together joining and tightening all the separate stams."

NEEDS MUST.—M. de Mireland has just published an exceedingly curious letter, written by Rossini in reply to a young artist who consulted him as to the best manner of composing an overture:—"1st recipe. Wait till the evening before the first performance. Nothing excites inspiration like necessity; the presence of a copyist waiting for your work, and the view of a manager in despair, tearing out his hair by handfuls. In Italy in my time all the managers were bald at 30. 2nd. I composed the overture to 'Othello' in a small room in the Barbaja Palace, where the baldest and most ferocious of managers had shut me up by force with nothing but a dish of maccaroni, and the threat that I should not leave the place alive till I had written the last note. 3rd. I wrote the overture to 'Gazza Ladra' on the day of the first performance in the upper loft of the La Scala, where I had been confined by the manager under the guard of four scene-shifters, who had orders to throw my text out of the window bit by bit to copyists, who were waiting below to transcribe it. In default of music I was to be thrown out myself. 4th. For 'Barbiere' I did better. I composed no overture, but tacked on one intended for a very serious work called 'Elizabetta.' The public were delighted. 5th. I composed the overture to 'Count Ory' when angling, with my feet in the water, and when in the company of M. Aguado, who was talking Spanish finance all the time. 6th. That of 'Guillaume Tell' was written under somewhat similar conditions. 7th. I did not compose any overture for 'Moise,' &c.—*Pall Mall Gazette*.