

Mr. Musgrove passed his hand across his moustache. Beattie gave her advice with such absolute sincerity that it would have been cruel to let her see he was smiling at her.

"Do you know," he said, "I really feel inclined to follow your advice. In spite of my callous temperament it does at the present moment seem excellent."

"I hope you will," said Beattie.

If Aunt Ella could have overheard this beginning of their intercourse, she would certainly have congratulated herself. As it was, she watched them complacently when a few minutes afterwards Norah was taken away to sing. During the song Beattie looked at the singer, but Mr. Musgrove kept regarding her with as much persistency as was consistent with good manners.

"He certainly admires her," thought Aunt Ella, "and really she is looking lovely to-night. That white silk is worth all I gave for it, and I am very glad I had it cut round at the neck."

Mr. Musgrove, who did not feel the remotest interest in Norah, and thought the song indifferently rendered, was indeed giving his attention to Beattie. But he was not thinking of her looks; he was trying to find out if there was any affectation in Beattie's apparent absorption in the music, and decided there was not. It gave her genuine pleasure.

"I think Norah Gilman has such a sweet voice," she said, turning to him when the song was finished.

"It hasn't been trained much," he answered.

"I don't understand about that," said Beattie. "But it is fresh and pure like a bird's, and there is something in it that goes to your heart."

"Ah," he said, laughing, "it goes to yours. My hard one, you see, it didn't penetrate."

"I don't believe yours is so hard as you make out," said Beattie. "But I am sorry you didn't care for Norah's singing."

"Are we going to hear you presently?" he asked.

"Oh, no; I am only learning. I don't care to sing before people, only I have to sometimes because Aunt Ella insists."

"I hope she will insist to-night."

And she did. Aunt Ella did not think very much of Beattie's vocal powers, but she knew she showed to advantage when she was singing, and moreover she wished Mr. Musgrove to have the opportunity of looking at her without fearing a breach of good manners. The designing little lady saw that he availed himself of his chances. But Cecil was not thinking, as she expected, of Beattie's face or her figure or her dress, but of herself. "She hasn't much mind," he said to himself, "and she is quite undeveloped, but she is capable of a great deal. I wonder what it is in her appeals to me. I believe I could be really fond of her."

And on that probably Mrs. Swannington would have been justified in building hopes.

Mr. Musgrove left soon after Beattie's song, as he was due elsewhere, but he had accepted Mrs. Swannington's invitation to go and see her on her next at-home day. Mr. Gilman went out of the room with him, and as he was lighting his cigar, he praised Beattie to his host. Mr. Gilman subsequently repeated his words to his wife, and Mrs. Gilman, with a desire to please, repeated them to Mrs. Swannington. Mrs. Swannington availed herself of the opportunity to instil an idea into Mrs. Gilman's mind.

"They would make a charming couple," agreed the latter. "They are both so exceptionally good-looking. I have never known Cecil enthusiastic about anyone before. And Robin is so fond of Beattie; he would be delighted."

So the silly woman fell in very easily with Mrs. Swannington's wishes, and actuated partly by kindness, partly by vanity, and partly by that instinct of matchmaking which is in the nature of

some ladies, determined that the two who had met for the first time at her house should do so again. She had been contemplating getting up a performance for a charity in which her husband was interested. It was to take the form of some elaborate tableaux. She easily obtained the promise of Beattie's aid, and presently she asked Mr. Musgrove to help also, taking advantage of a call he was making upon herself, during which she mentioned that Beattie would be taking part. The readiness with which he accepted led her to think her suspicions were right, and that he was attracted by the girl. With this preconceived notion she was able to see in the least attention he paid her during the rehearsals a meaning beyond any he intended. Mrs. Swannington watched the two also with sanguine expectations. These were not lessened when one day, during the rehearsals, Mr. Musgrove, who lived in a fine house at Campden Hill, which had been left him by his father, asked her if she would give him the pleasure of dining with him with Mr. Swannington and Miss Margetson, to meet his sister, Mrs. Coverdale.

"What could be more pointed?" said Aunt Ella to her husband. "Mark my words, Arthur, before the season is over, he will have proposed to Beattie."

"It seems to me very hard, my dear Ella, that a man mayn't ask me out to dinner with my family without wanting to marry one of them."

"I shall have every reason to congratulate myself," said Aunt Ella, ignoring his remark entirely. Which perhaps accounted for Mr. Swannington remarking with what was, for him, unusual acidity—

"There is such a thing, my dear, as counting one's chickens before they are hatched."

Aunt Ella had the last word.

"And why not," she said, "if one is a little careful about the hatching?"

(To be continued.)

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

STUDY AND STUDIO.

ROSE IN POLAND.—We remember you well and are glad you have written to us again. You might certainly find a holiday engagement in an English family, and might apply, in the first instance, to the Association of German Governesses in England, 10, Wyndham Place, Bryanston Square, London, W. The Lady Principal would perhaps kindly advise you. From your well-written letters we should judge that you would be an acquisition in any family.

WILDFLOWER OF THE MOUNTAIN.—Dear child, we are glad you "do not have to write for a living," as your lot would be a terrible one indeed! Your verses are halting in metre and contain nothing original. You begin in lines of eight syllables each, e.g.—

"How gently fall the cooling showers,"

but soon we have lines much too long, e.g.—

"The air with its song the nightingale fills."

"Elfin" is not a noun but an adjective. If you like to go on writing verse in hours that are quite leisurely there is no actual harm in it.—2. Your second question about Puzzle Poems you can answer for yourself by consulting the back numbers of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER, which we are glad to hear you have taken for so long a time.

A HAPPY LASSIE.—1. We are glad you can adopt this title in spite of delicate health. You have our deep sympathy, and we can honestly say that we seldom receive a letter in a handwriting we admire so much as yours. It is neat, uniform, prettily and gracefully formed, and most pleasant to read. You also attend to the much-neglected art of punctuation.—2. Perhaps one of our subscribers can tell you of the poem you seek, based on the text, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," and illustrating the idea that sorrow pays a transient visit—joy comes to remain.

EVERETT GORDON.—There are many handbooks on composition. We think most highly of Dr. Abbott's little book *How to Write Clearly*, and advise you to get it. Mr. Walter Besant once formulated eleven rules for the writing of fiction, of which we transcribe the more important:—

1. Practise writing something original every day.
2. Cultivate the habit of observation.
3. Write regularly at certain hours.
4. Read no rubbish.
5. Aim at the formation of style.
6. A great element of dramatic skill is selection.
7. Never attempt to describe any kind of life except that with which you are familiar.

We need hardly say that these rules are intended for those who work in real earnest.

OUR OPEN LETTER BOX.

LILIAN asks us to give the author and the last verse of "The Mill will never Grind with the Water that has Passed," commencing—

"Work while yet the daylight shines."

C. PEGLER wishes to know where she can get a poem entitled "The Faithful Negro Boy," which appeared in the *Children's Friend* between 1870 and 1880.

SYRIL kindly writes to inform "M. Lilith E., Los Angeles, California," that the poem beginning "I have been here before," is by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and is entitled "Sudden Light."

Mrs. Rivers, Miss Williams, Mary L. Collins, and "Bertha" (whom we thank for her pleasant letter) answer Lilith's second query, and send the last verse of the charade she quotes, the answer to which is "Campbell":—

"Call ye my Whole, aye, call
The lord of lute and lay;
And let him greet the sable pall
With a noble song to-day:
Go, call him by his name,
No fitter hand may crave
To light the flame of a soldier's fame
On the turf of a soldier's grave."

1820.

W. Mackworth Praed.