

"DREW THE WRONG LEVER."

This was what the pointsman said,
With both hands at his throbbing head

"I drew the wrong lever standing here
And the danger signals stood at clear;

But before I could draw it back again
On came the fast express, and then—

Then came a roar and a crash that
shook
This cabin-floor, but I could not look

At the wreck, for I knew the dead would
peer
With strange dull eyes at their murderer
here."

"Drew the wrong lever?" "Yes, I say
Go, tell my wife, and—take me away!"

That was what the pointsman said,
With both hands at his throbbing head.

O ye of this nineteenth-century time,
Who hold low dividends as a crime.

Listen. So long as a twelve hours'
strain
Rests like a load of lead on his brain.

With its ringing of bells and rolling of
wheels.
Drawing of levers until one feels

The hands grow numb with a nerveless
touch,
And the handles shake and slip in the
clutch,

So long will ye have pointsmen to say—
"Drew the wrong lever" take me away!"

ALEXANDER ANDERSON,
in *Good Words*.

Our Story.

From the *Sunday at Home*.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME.

BY HESBA STRETTON.

CHAPTER II.—IN THE WOODS

The village school-mistress, Mrs. Clift, knew Ruth well, for she had employed her as her laundress from the time she had taken charge of the school; and no linen could be sweeter and whiter than that which Ruth washed, and dried in the sun on the gorse-bushes growing about the old lime-kiln. Ishmael had been one of the most constant and least troublesome of her scholars; and she was willing to mark her approbation of him by entrusting her little girl to his care for a long day in the Lime-kiln Woods.

The spring had come slowly on during May, and though it was already June the trees were not yet in full leaf. The delicate network of boughs overhead still kept many an open space for the sunshine to stream through; and the half-transparent leaves glistened with a green light. There was no thick tangle of burdock and thistle at present to catch their feet and hinder them as they strolled along under the hazel-bushes. Here and there patches of bluebells covered the dusky earth; and in a few rare spots, known to Ishmael, white lilies of the valley were growing amid their broad green leaves. No very tall or massive forest tree grew in the thin soil, but now and then an elm or an oak, somewhat stunted, spread out its crooked branches; and there were clumps of larches, tall and thin, growing in close companionship with their pointed tops piercing the sky. And what a sky it was! A deeper blue than the blue-bells under the hazels, with little clouds scattered over it whiter than the lilies, some of gleaming brightness, and others of a pearly grey, floating lazily along before the soft fresh westerly wind. Ishmael felt a pride in it all, as if the woods, and the flowers, and the sky belonged to himself.

"Sit down and listen, Elsie," he said, throwing himself under an elm-tree, and holding his breath for very pleasure, as he strained his ear to catch the different notes of the birds, singing in the early hours of the sunny day. There was the merry whistle of the starling—did Elsie hear that?—and the deep, soft cooing of the wood-pigeons from their great clumsy nests in the fir-trees; and the harsh cry of the jay, as he flitted across the open space between some trees, displaying his bright blue wing-feathers. Oftener than

any other note, except the chirp of the sparrows, came the deep, grave caw of the rooks, as they sailed by high in the air. Or was not the clear, merry song of the thrushes and blackbirds in the bushes all about them the most frequent sound of all? But Ishmael knew also the note of the king-fisher, and the wood-pecker, and the plaintive cry of the lapwing, and the call of the little moor-hen in the swampy ground, overgrown with water weeds, and tall bulrushes. Every sound, loud and low, of the busy woodlands was known to him; but they had never been so sweet to him as now, when, for the first time, he had a companion gazing admiringly into his face as he displayed his knowledge. Elsie was far before him in school; but here she sat with wide-open wondering eyes, drinking in every word he spoke.

"Oh, Ishmael!" she exclaimed, with a sigh of happiness and admiration, "I should think nobody in the world knows as much as you!"

Never before had Ishmael had such words spoken to him, and he felt almost dizzy. He began to think what other wonders he could show or tell to her. Yes, there were more wonderful things to disclose to her admiring eyes. The woods were beautiful; but he knew what was hidden underground as well as what lay open to the eye of day. For underneath their feet the earth was honeycombed with long, deserted galleries, and roadways, and tunnels, where ages ago the limestone had been dug, and brought to the surface by level shafts opening on the hill slopes. Far away from the light of the sun, these subterranean paths ran in many windings and twistings. Even on the surface there were indications of them in basin-like hollows of varying depths and sizes, where the treacherous ground had sunk in. Some of these hollows were filled with water, forming little pools, which glistened up to the sun, while others were dry basins green with turf and colts-foot, among which wild strawberries grew. Ishmael and Elsie had busily gathered the small red fruit, and strung it upon long beads of grass to keep it as a dessert to the dinner they were going to eat in the woods. Ishmael hastily formed a surprise for Elsie. When the right minute came, when she was tired and hungry, and the sun beat hotly upon them, he would take her to the cool shelter of a cave near at hand, where he could show to her the entrance into the old limestone quarry.

They came at length to a broad open glade, stretching far away between two rows of trees, which was the famous spot for shooting-bouts in the autumn, when the squire's visitors spent whole days in sport. Here in the long, untrodden grass lay the old cartridge-cases thrown hastily away last year. Ishmael told Elsie how the crackling of the guns rang all day long, and how, at night, when all was over, there seemed a sorrowful silence in the wood, as if its timorous inhabitants had been scared into utter terror.

"And the rabbits keep in their burrows," said Ishmael; "and don't come out to play after sunset, like they do other nights, aye, by hundreds and thousands, running after one another, and tumbling about like us on the green, when we've a holiday; and you can see their little white pads tossing about in the dusk. If you sit very still they'll come a most to your feet. And the bats fly about, and the cockchafers, and big white owls, that make no noise when they fly. I'll show you our big owl at home before you go home to-night."

They were sauntering along the glade slowly, when suddenly, from under their very feet, as it seemed to Elsie, there sprang up, with a loud whirr and a great fluttering of wings, a pheasant which had been sitting close to her nest among the long grass, till their feet nearly touched her. Elsie uttered a little scream of fright; but Ishmael was down on his knees in a moment, parting the tangled grass which hid the nest. There lay a cluster of brown eggs, ten of them, packed closely together, and warm with the brooding heat of the mother-hen.

"Oh!" cried Elsie, eagerly, "can't we have some of them for dinner? Only we can't cook them, you know, without a fire and a saucepan."

"Ay, but we can!" answered Ishmael, proud of doing what seemed impossible to his companion; "we can make a fire, and roast one in the ashes. We won't take more than four, two apiece; and I can tell which are the newest laid. See, I've got a match in my pocket, and we'll pick some sticks, and light a fire in a place I know of, where nobody can ever find us."

Gathering up the sticks as they went along he led Elsie to his cave. It was situated about halfway down a steep slope which was overgrown with hazel-bushes and brambles. The low archway of the entrance was little more than a yard high, and was quite concealed by the brush-wood. Within, the roof rose to a good height, and the floor of limestone was dry, forming altogether a pleasant retreat, large enough to hold from twenty to thirty persons. A green twilight reached them through the closely-interwoven network of underwood; and a delicious coolness made it the pleasantest place possible now the sun was so high in the blue sky.

"Look, Elsie," said Ishmael, leading her to the back of the cave, where a small hole, not unlike a rabbit-burrow, led darkly into some space beyond, "I've crawled through there many a time; and if it wasn't for your frock we'd go now—you and me. Oh, it goes for miles and miles under the wood; and sometimes there's a little bit of light coming through cracks in the ground; and there are pools all black and still, with just a tiny sparkle on them to show where they are; and there are glistening stones hanging down from the roof, and drops of water always falling, falling from them. Oh, I wish you were a boy, and could creep in along with me!"

"Oh, couldn't I?" cried Elsie.

"No, it 'ud never do," he said decisively. "Never mind; I'll light the fire now, and we'll have our dinner."

The fire was quickly kindled, and as it had died down a little, the four eggs were covered over with hot embers, and left to roast. Ishmael had brought a can of sparkling water from a little spring trickling down the rock, whilst Elsie had laid out their dinner. Now she was sitting beside it on a big stone, with her hands lying idly on her lap in simple enjoyment, and her blue eyes gazing out happily on the waving branches outside, whose shadows flickered up to her feet in a constant dance.

Suddenly she saw the branches before her slowly parted, and a man's head bent down, and looking into their cave. It was a brown, burnt, rugged face; she knew it well enough, but she had never liked it, and at this moment it filled her with vague terror. Ishmael was kneeling by the red and smouldering fire, and touching the eggs with the tips of his fingers. So absorbed was he that he did not notice the darkening of the green twilight as the gamekeeper came stooping under the archway; and he laughed a low, quiet laugh of delight as he took one of the eggs from its hot bed.

"That one's done, Elsie," he exclaimed gaily.

"What's done?" asked Nutkin's harsh voice close beside him. "I saw the smoke from your fire, you young rascal, and I came to see what mischief you're up to. What, pheasants' eggs, pheasants' eggs! Would nothing else serve you for your dinner?"

Ishmael knelt, unable to stir, and gazing up aghast into the gamekeeper's angry, yet triumphant face. What could he say? There were the eggs in the ashes between them; he could not even drop the one he was holding in his outstretched hand. He had no right to those eggs; they were stolen; but he had not thought of that when Elsie had uttered her childish wish.

"I suppose you know," said Nutkin very slowly, as if he meant every word to strike home, "that I shall take you to gaol for this."

"Oh no, no!" cried Elsie, in an agony of fright; "we didn't know it was any harm, did we, Ishmael? The eggs were on the ground, and we might have trodden on them. Don't send us to gaol."

"It's not you, only this young scoundrel," continued Nutkin; "you may have to go before the justices, but it's him as'll go to gaol for poaching and stealing. I've told the squire scores of times, and now he'll believe me. Get up, you rascal, and come along with me."

Suddenly Ishmael broke into a loud and bitter cry, which rang through the cave, and seemed to be muttered back again from the old quarry.

"Oh, what will mother say when she hears of it?" he cried.

"And what will father say?" jeered the gamekeeper, "and brother Humphrey? We'll take care you don't grow up a drunkard, and a disgrace to the parish like them, my fine fellow. Come along! Elsie, you run home to your mother, and tell her to be more careful who you keep company with another time. The squire 'll believe me now."

So saying, he dragged Ishmael out of the cave, and taking a strong rope from his

pocket, he knotted it into a sort of handcuff, by which he bound the lad fast to him. Elsie followed them, sobbing, to the white dusty road leading to Uptown, where there was a police-station; and then sadly watching them out of sight, she went home, almost heart-broken, to her mother.

(To be Continued.)

PALESTINE THE PEOPLE.

(Continued from February 18.)

The Copts are the remnant of the ancient Egyptian Christians, who have preserved their Christianity in the midst of their Mahomedan conquerors. The Abyssinians are another ancient African sect. Both of these sects have their patriarchs and ecclesiastical establishments in Jerusalem. Pilgrims belonging to the two churches come every year to Jerusalem to take part in the Easter ceremonies.

The Jacobites, or Syrian Christians, are another Oriental sect, living in Palestine and the neighboring parts. Many of the converts to Christianity in Palestine have come from this remnant of the ancient Christian stock. Some of them are natives who never became Mahomedans, and others Christians from the time of the Crusades.

I do not think that *cleanliness* can be among the virtues of the people of Palestine. They certainly compare very unfavorably with the Chinese in this respect. In their unkempt hair, their dirty clothes and their general slovenliness of manner, they are far below the Chinese. As to *morality* there is much room for improvement. The Koran forbids the use of wine and the strict Mahomedans never drink it, but I was told that a class of young men is growing up under the influence of European liberalism, who spend their nights in drinking brandy to excess. The Arabs are a genial, vivacious, warm-hearted race, fond of singing and story-telling, and it is easy to see that if the barriers against wine drinking be once broken down, they will be very easily led astray. As to *lying*, I was informed that the native Christians are more trustworthy than the Mahomedans.

A missionary told me that a Mahomedan, speaking to him on the subject, said, "Every Mahomedan is the son of a liar." In this respect, and in all kinds of official corruption, the rulers set the worst example to their subjects. So as to *licentiousness*, polygamy is allowed among the Mahomedans, and this opens the gate to all kinds of sexual looseness of manners. The Christians are said to compare favorably with the Mahomedans on this point.

I noticed several things in the people that brought ancient times quite vividly before one, and shed some light on minor points of Scripture. Most of Christ's miracles of healing were wrought upon the *blind*, the *paralyzed* and the *leprous*. These are just the three diseases which are most common among the beggars whom we meet on the roadside and in the streets to day. The glare of the sun and the reflection of its light from the rocky hillsides, together with the dust and uncleanly habits of the people, would tend to produce eye diseases. I was struck with the number of children who were wholly or partially blind. Paralysis seemed to be frequent, caused partly, perhaps, by exposure to the fierce rays of the sun. Lepers may be seen constantly, and annoy you very much by their loathsomeness and the pertinacity with which they exhibit it. Hospitals have been opened for them outside the walls, and a church near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was turned into a lazaret-house by the Mahomedans, and is now known as the *Muristan* or hospital.

Feminine *fondness for jewelry* is, perhaps, a characteristic of their sex rather than that of any particular country; but every one knows how often it is alluded to in the Scriptures—oftener, it may seem to some, than is justified by the