

A BAD START.

MARY OLDREY and Jane Hamer were both surprised and pleased when they went at the May term to their new places to find that they were in the same family. When they were children they had been neighbours, schoolfellows, playmates, and besides, special friends. For six years, however, they had not seen one another, Mary Oldrey's father and mother having left Leeds to live at Stanningly, a village about seven miles off. They were very sorry to part, but there was no help for it.

There is time in six years for people to alter a good deal, especially in the six years between fourteen and twenty; and at first, when the two girls met in the house of Mrs. Clayton, their new mistress, they hardly knew one another. They had parted as children, and now they were well-grown, good-looking young women. Very soon, however, each recognised the other, and exclaimed in wonder, "Why, it's Mary Oldrey!" "Surely, Jane, that cannot be you!" They both said how nice it would be for them to live together.

Mary, it may be stated, was nurse, whilst Jane was the second housemaid.

There is time in six years for great changes to take place in people's characters as well as in their looks; and certainly a great change had passed over Mary Oldrey since she and Jane had parted. She had been brought under good influences. Her mistress was a kind, Christian lady, who took a great interest in the religious welfare of her servants; and her example and that of her husband were such as to commend their religion to all about them. Then, too, the minister, whose church they attended, was an earnest, faithful man; and through God's blessing his word had gone home to Mary's heart, and she had become a true Christian.

Mrs. Grafton was sorry to part with Mary, but her children having grown up, she needed a nursemaid no longer. She had recommended her, however, so strongly to Mrs. Clayton, that that lady was delighted to secure her services.

We should have been glad if we could have given a similar account of Jane Hamer, but we cannot. She had some good points about her, and she was a clever servant; but she was thoughtless, and fond of dress and company. Whilst Mary Oldrey had been in only one place all the time she had been a servant, Jane had changed frequently.

Of course, her successive mistresses were always in fault; that is, if you took Jane's account of them. If a girl changes often, however, and reports badly of all her mistresses, there is too much reason to fear that she herself must, in some way or other, have been much in fault. There is an old proverb too, which applies to servants as well as other people—"Rolling stones gather no moss."

It was one of the conditions on which Mrs. Clayton hired her servants that they should attend the same place of worship she did, unless they were members of some other church. To that condition Jane offered no objection. In regard to Mary, it fell in with both

her wishes and her custom; for it was the very place she had attended whilst she was with Mrs. Grafton.

For a few Sundays Jane went to the hillside church as she had engaged to do; but one Sunday evening she went out directly after tea, saying she had promised to meet a friend, and she never appeared at church. She was half an hour behind her time too in reaching home.

The two girls occupied the same bedroom, and when they reached it Mary said, "Jane, were you sitting somewhere else in the church? You were not in our pew, and I did not see you anywhere."



"No," replied Jane, "I was not there; and I don't mean to be bound any longer in any such way. If a girl does her work, neither her mistress nor anybody else has any business to say what she shall do with herself when it is her Sunday out."

"Did you say that to Mrs. Clayton when you hired yourself?" asked Mary, quietly.

"Of course I did not," replied Jane; "but she never expected me to keep to it always."

"I rather think she did," said Mary. "Besides, a promise is a promise, and if you don't intend to do as you said you would, don't you think you ought to tell Mrs. Clayton so?"