

with affectionate tenderness, saying they were so harmless, so droll, and they made him so happy. They had, however, two great disadvantages—they wasted his money; and they rendered him, what otherwise his good feeling could never have allowed him to be, at times excessively tiresome.

On arriving at Somerville Hall on the day alluded to, we saw my sister's friend already on the steps. Regardless of those forms of polished life, which would have detained her in the drawing-room until we entered, she rushed out to meet us, and even clasped my sister's hand at the door of the carriage.

Had a painter wished for a personification of all the ideas we are accustomed to embody in a true English welcome—a welcome entire, and hearty, and undisguised, he would have chosen Kate Somerville at that moment; nay, at any moment of that day, for her looks, her manners, the energy with which she stirred up a closely packed fire, inquired after my cold, and drew the most comfortable chairs into the most comfortable places, made us feel at once, that we were making her happy, and ourselves at the same time. It is a nice art, that of making people feel glad they have been at the trouble of coming to see you. Kate Somerville understood it well.

"I have invited no one to meet you," she said, "except our good friend the clergyman, for I am a great economist of pleasure and I wanted to have you all to ourselves."

The clergyman, who was a friendly and intelligent man, at that moment arrived; and one of the party then inquired, what Mr. Somerville was so busy with in the garden.

"Pray do not ask me," said the daughter, with evident chagrin. "There is something rising higher and higher every day; but what it is to be, I am at a loss to imagine. Sometimes I have strong suspicions it is to be a volcano; for you must know chemistry is all the rage with us at present—Mr. Ferguson."

"Is Mr. Ferguson here?" asked the clergyman rather hastily.

"Oh no," replied Kate, "or I should not have invited you. For though yours is an order which ought especially to live in charity with all men, I strongly suspect you Mr. Forbes, of hating that man."

"I certainly should not choose Mr. Ferguson for my own private companion;" replied Mr. Forbes. "But as to hating him, I hope I hate no man."

"Who is Mr. Ferguson?" inquired my brother, "if it be fair to ask. I never heard of him before as being at all intimate here."

"He is a man of gas, and blow-pipes, and steam-pressure," replied Kate, "and my father has conceived a great liking for him, because he is about to take out a patent for some wonderful invention. But really I pay so little attention to these things, that I am unable to tell you what it is. But here comes my good father, so now you will have dinner; and I hope none of you will require a patent invention for creating an appetite."

Mr. Somerville welcomed his guests with much of the genuine cordiality of his daughter, though he was a man of few words, except when some of his favourite subjects were introduced. Then, indeed, the case became a very protracted one; and my sister proving by experience, the difficulty of treating the good man's constitutional weakness, used to warn us off the dangerous ground with great tact and skill.

"You must not speak of his pleasure grounds," she whispered, as we went into the dining-room; "for though you will have to walk round them before the day is over, the longer you can put off this subject, the shorter your penance will be."

At the head of her father's table Miss Somerville appeared to great advantage. She had lost her mother when a child, and the habit thus acquired of superintending the domestic arrangements of the family, had added, to the many good qualities with which her character was adorned, the peculiar excellence of a thorough knowledge of the practical part of domestic economy, combined with the delicacy and good taste which keeps all display of such knowledge to its proper time and place.

The table at Somerville Hall was covered with what some would call "vulgar plenty," in short, with the best of country fare, and many of the greatest delicacies were of Kate's own making; for she despised nothing, which, as she used to say in homely phrase, "helped to make people comfortable."

"And you never like to make them uncomfortable?" said I: for her manner was one to invite freedom.

"Don't you remember," she replied, "when you were a child and cried for nothing, your kind nurses used to give you a box on the ear, by way of something to cry for? Now, I confess, when I see people fastidious, and proud, and dissatisfied with those they

cannot understand, it does sometimes tempt me to give them some thing to dislike."

Had this remark been made with bitterness, it would probably have closed our acquaintance then and there, for I was perfectly aware of its application; but when I looked at the speaker, she was regarding me with such an animated and playful smile, that I could not choose but forgive her. Besides which, she was helping me to the wing of a chicken; so I was compelled to thank her, whether I felt grateful or not.

It seems a strange anomaly in human nature, that so many worthy people of respectable understanding, should, so far as their own practice is concerned, be unable to distinguish between being agreeable, and being tiresome. Poor Mr. Somerville had not the tact to perceive when the ladies had left the room, and the wine had been many times round the table, and he had fairly entered upon his then pet subject—the art of varying the surface of the earth, so as to produce gentle undulations in gardens and pleasure grounds, that his guests were all sitting uneasily on their chairs looking out of the window, or exchanging glances with each other: until at last, in order to change the scene, if not the subject, my brother proposed a stroll in the grounds, and we gladly rose from the table; for the dinner-hour at Somerville Hall was the same as in the olden time—so early as to admit of a walk before tea.

On reaching the garden, it was a matter of astonishment to us that the master of the house was not ashamed, but actually proud, to show us what eight workmen, two carts, and four horses were doing in his grounds, and in what was once the loveliest spot of all. He had imbibed the notion, however, that this particular part was too flat, and in proportion to the great mound we had seen in approaching, were deep hollows, where the water now stood in pools. The flower beds, too, on which Kate, and even her father, had once bestowed so much time and taste, were all scooped out and carried away, or else covered over with the mound of earth, which was to be crowned with a Grecian temple, as the finishing stroke of beauty.

But we were all glad to forget these little absurdities, in a man who could lead us back to his fire-side, with the kind and cordial feelings which seemed ever to be glowing at the heart of Mr. Somerville; though he left it to his daughter to express, in a more animated manner, what only could be read in the bland and quiet expression of his cheerful face. Nor was there much to be apprehended from his monopoly of the conversation, when his daughter was present; for she had the art of making the evening pass away so pleasantly, that, contrary to all my calculations, I was really sorry when the time arrived for us to leave the hospitable Hall; and I bade good night to Kate Somerville with a conviction that whatever one's previous impressions might be, it was impossible to dislike her in her own house.

It is true she seemed not always sufficiently gentle, that she was often abrupt, and sometimes pert; but then she was so kindly solicitous for every one's comfort; so forgetful of her own, so quick to perceive every little peculiarity of taste or feeling, and so watchful of every opportunity to afford pleasure to her guests, that the most polished gentlewoman could not have rivalled her in the art of making every one satisfied with the position he held at her father's fire-side.

"What happy evenings we always spend here!" exclaimed my sister, as soon as we were again seated in the carriage, where we had offered Mr. Forbes a place; "Miss Somerville leaves us nothing to wish for, either in her heart, or her home."

"A little more quiet would sometimes be an advantage," said Mr. Langton, settling himself to sleep.

"It is, indeed, a delightful place," observed the clergyman, very gravely; "and Miss Somerville is a delightful girl; yet I own, I never visit the Hall, without feeling that one thing is wanting."

"And pray what is that?" I inquired, not quite satisfied that any one besides myself should enjoy the pleasure of finding fault with Miss Somerville—"and pray what do you find wanting?"

"Religion"—was the startling reply.

"What?" I exclaimed. "Have they really no religion?"

"Do not mistake me," said the clergyman. "They are church-going people, and they have a high standard of moral feeling, which I am not aware that they ever violate."

"And what more would you have? Are we not told 'that the tree is known by its fruit?'"

"In prosperous seasons, my young friend, the tree which has but little root, may possibly produce good fruit. The question is,