

native of this county. It will also be noticed that the tracery and mouldings of the windows have an elegance and beauty not to be found in the Middlesex towers; and when we enter the church the detail is very superior, the roof still retains its old painted decoration and is harmonious and beautiful. The plan is most singular and unaccountable; the chancel does not fit on at the end of the nave, but opens partly into it and partly into the north aisle! A curious feature in the tower is shown in our sketch, a little arched aperture just under the parapet; it does not appear to have been a window, and we venture to suggest that it was an opening for drawing up the wood to light the beacon fire. Aldenham church is a large one for so small a village, but it is probable that in former times the place was more important than it is at present.

A very pretty walk of three miles, either by shady lanes or across the fields leads to Watford, where there is a large church with a striking tower of the regular Hertfordshire type; it has, however, been so much restored that we preferred sketching Aldenham.

A pleasant county is this Hertfordshire with its shady lanes, well-wooded and richly-cultivated lands, its picturesque old villages, its cheerful farms and homesteads, its clear bright rivers full of fish and its murmuring and grinding old water-mills. Do our girls know Hamper Mill? If not, let them lose no time in walking to it from Pinner along the *old* Watford road; remember the *old* Watford road, not the new one or the Rickmansworth road, which are not specially interesting; when they get about half-way between Pinner Wood and Watford,

if they look to the west they will see an enchanting prospect of Rislip with its wood, reservoir, and church tower, backed by ranges of hills, and a little further on, looking to the north-east, they will see Watford with its church tower rising above the richly-wooded country. As they get to the foot of the hill a little path will take them down into the dell where is the millpool of Hamper Mill; let them stand on the bridge, watch the fish and listen to the whirr of the water-wheel and splash of the fall, all shaded by lofty trees except where the miller's pretty garden clothes the bank with its velvety lawn and gay flowerbeds. What a charming old English scene, peaceable sweet English country, not grand or sublime, but so respectful to the overworked brain or toilworn mind of the Londoner.

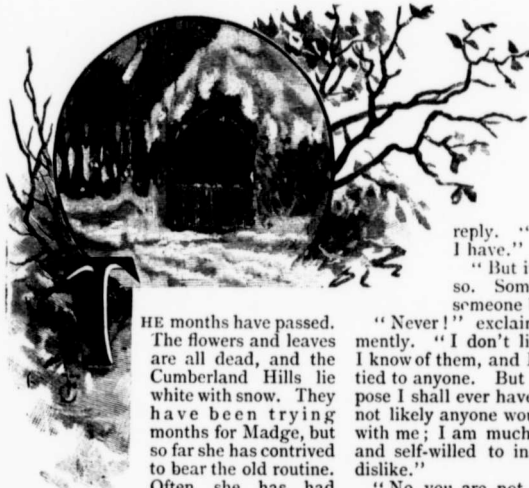
"IF LOVING HEARTS WERE NEVER LONELY—";

OR,

MADGE HARCOURT'S DESOLATION.

CHAPTER VII.

GATHERING CLOUDS.



THE months have passed.

The flowers and leaves are all dead, and the Cumberland Hills lie white with snow. They have been trying months for Madge, but so far she has contrived to bear the old routine. Often she has had serious thoughts of resolutely breaking loose from her step-mother's authority, but, on second considerations, she has controlled herself for Jack and her father's sake from causing any actual ill-feeling in the house. But every week the proud, independent temper grows stronger, and passages of bitter words more frequent.

"I think I have no soft feeling left in me," she said wearily to her little friend one afternoon as she sat beside her. "And I am so sick of everything!"

"Oh, you must not talk so!" said Helen. "Think how you love your brother, and then how good you are to me."

"Yes, I love Jack with all my heart, but it isn't with a soft happy feeling. I always want him so dreadfully, and I don't think he can love me very much or he would come and see me oftener. I

think there must be someone in London he loves a great deal better, and the thought makes me bitter."

"But surely you would be glad if it made him very happy," Helen said gently.

"I don't think I could be glad under any circumstances," was the slow

reply. "You see, he is all I have."

"But it will not always be so. Some day you will love someone better still."

"Never!" exclaimed Madge vehemently. "I don't like men, what little I know of them, and I should hate to feel tied to anyone. But there, I don't suppose I shall ever have the chance. It is not likely anyone would ever fall in love with me; I am much too bad-tempered and self-willed to inspire anything but dislike."

"No, you are not, you are beautiful and kind," replied Helen warmly. "If anyone knew you as I do, you would inspire something like worship."

Madge looked at her wistfully.

"You little know me, Helen," she said; "anyone would do what I have done for you; they couldn't help it. I would give anything I have in the world to make you strong and well."

"I don't think I want to be strong and well," the child said softly, "except for mother's sake. As I lie here, looking at the sky, I have grown to long so to pass beyond it. I don't think I shall have long to wait now; the doctor gave mother but little hope yesterday."

"Oh, but he doesn't know!" said Madge quickly. "It is only the cold weather that makes you so poorly; you will be better when the spring comes again."

"But it will not be here for some time, and—meanwhile—you will call and see mother sometimes?" she said, breaking off suddenly in the middle of her sentence.

"Oh yes, indeed, but don't let us talk about it. You really look better to-day."

Helen smiled softly.

"Just one word more," she said. "You will be with me at the last, if you can?"

"Indeed I will, I promise you. But it is a long time to look forward to; you are no worse than you are other winters. I think you are a little bit dull to-day; shall I read you something interesting?"

"No, thank you, I like to hear you talk best and I want to talk to you. Oh, Miss Margaret!" she continued eagerly, "I want so to tell you how good Jesus is and to help you to know Him better. He is yearning over you and longing to comfort you, if you would but go to Him with your troubles."

Great tears gathered in Madge's eyes, and she looked away out of the window.

"I will not forget what you say," she said presently, "but I can't feel it. If God really loves us and is all-powerful, why is the world so full of sorrow and suffering? If He is all-powerful and can prevent it, why doesn't He?"

"I can't answer you; I don't know; but somehow I am quite content. I wish I were clever and could help you, but He will tell you Himself some day, I know He will," and she held Madge's hand tightly. "It isn't always hard to suffer. I don't mind it much; sometimes I think it is beautiful to have something big to bear for His sake."

Madge bent down and kissed her.

"You are so good," she murmured fondly. "Perhaps some day I shall understand better, but now it is all dark. But you must not talk any more now," she added, "it makes you cough so. It is time I went too, for it is getting late