

THE VICAR'S GOVERNESS.

CHAPTER VII.

"Life has rising hills."—Dyer.

"Papa, papa," says Miss Peyton, impatiently, without eliciting any response.

It is half-past ten, and breakfast is on the table! So are two little white pigeons, who have flown in through the open window, and are sitting, one on Clarissa's shoulder, the other on the edge of the table, picking crumbs out of her plate. The sun is streaming hotly in, the breath of flowers floating faintly in his train. A bowl of roses, half opened and filled with the dew of early morning, lies near Clarissa's plate. Upon the window-sill, outside, another little pigeon, brown-tinted and timid, stands peeping shyly in, envying his bolder brothers, and longing for the pretty cooing voice of his mistress that shall make him brave to enter.

But to-day the welcome summons does not come. Miss Peyton has an open letter in her hand, the contents of which have plainly disturbed and interested her to an unusual degree; so that the little bird, whose pretty brown plumage is being transformed by the sun into richest bronze, grows each moment more dejected. Not for him the crumbs and the "flesh-pots of Egypt."

"One—two— If you don't answer me before I say three, papa, I shall do something desperate," she says, again, raising her voice a little.

But still papa takes no heed. At this moment, poor man, he is deep in Mr. Forster's Irish Distress Bill, is deaf to all surroundings.

Clarissa loses patience. Taking up a teaspoon, she makes a sharp "assault and battery" upon an offending teacup, thereby creating a din compared to which the noise of tomtoms would be sweetest music.

George Peyton is not proof against this tattoo. He looks up irritably, and for a moment withdraws his mind from Mr. Forster's Bill.

"My dear Clarissa," he says, very justly incensed, "what is it? What on earth is the matter with you? My dear, whatever it is, do stop that unpleasant noise: it plays the very mischief with one's nerves."

"It is only a teaspoon," begins Miss Peyton, delighted with her success.

"And a cup, I think," says Mr. Peyton. "Separately they are unoffending, together they can annoy. If you will put that spoon out of your hand, my dear, you will make me much happier."

"It was only when I was actually hoarse, from trying to attract your attention, that I resorted to violent measures," says Clarissa, severely.

"I beg your pardon," returns he, submissively.

"Now listen to my letter," says Clarissa. "I want your advice. It is such a dear letter, and such a sad one; and—something must be done at once."

"I quite agree with you," murmurs her father, dreamily. "Once again his mind is losing itself in the folds of the fragrant 'Times.'"

"Mannerton,

"Tuesday, September 24

"My Dear Clarissa,—
"So long a time has elapsed since last I saw or heard of you that I half fear as you read this, it will puzzle you to remember the writer. Am I quite forgotten? I hope not; as I want you to do me a great service. This reason for wishing myself still in your memory sounds selfish,—almost rude; but what can I do? Must I not speak the truth? And indeed I am in sore trouble. I am friendless, all but homeless, and utterly alone in the world. But, as I am quite determined to fight my own way, I have decided on going out as a governess, and I want you, dear, dear Cissy, to get somebody to try me, somebody who would not be too hard upon me, just at first, until I had accustomed myself to the life and to the children's ways. You may say I can paint very well, and, though not a brilliant pianist, I have a good voice. (Do you recollect how, at school, you used to say you liked to hear me sing when the day was dying?) I can speak French and German, but I know nothing of Italian or Latin, and I was never very much at arithmetic, or that. I think I could get on, after a little training; and at all events I know I must try, as life here is not endurable.

"Oh, Cissy, if time has changed you, if you have grown cold and careless, as all the rest of this cruel world, what shall I do? But I will not believe that even a hundred years could make you unkind or unfeeling. Do you think you will be very long answering this? Every hour I shall be listening for the post: write to me then, as soon as you can. I am very unhappy here with Aunt Elizabeth, who does not care for me.

"I am, dear Clarissa,

"Your affectionate friend,
"George Broughton.

"P.S.—If you could get me pretty children, I should be so glad; but of course it must not make any difference, and I dare say ugly ones are just as nice, when one gets used to them. I am dreadfully afraid of boys; but perhaps there may be a few found somewhere amenable to reason, and at least one or two who do not object to kneels in their knickerbockers. Do you remember the gardener's babies at Brussels, and how fond they were of me? Dear Cissy, write soon."

This is the letter, with all its pathetic little confidences, its "do you remember?" and "have you forgotten?" and its tone—half proud and half beseech—that has touched Miss Peyton so deeply. Her mouth trembles, there are tears in her voice and eyes, as she finishes the last word and turns her face to her father. Something she sees in that vague but kindly man checks her entrance for a moment; a thought but

"Listening, my dear? Of course I have. Yes, certainly, with all my might," returns he, with unusual and therefore doubtful alacrity. As a matter of fact, I don't think much would be said about his "distinguished answering" were he to be examined in the letter just read; but all the more for this reason does he assume an air of surprise at Clarissa's question, and covers himself with an expression of injured innocence. Unfortunately for him, however, Miss Peyton is a person not to be done.

"No, you have not," she says, severe but calm. "You have not heard a single syllable. Your mind was full of that miserable paper all the time, and I am positive you were putting together some silly speech that you imagine would electrify those absurd men in the House of Commons."

"I don't think it was a very silly speech, my dear Clarissa," remonstrates Mr. Peyton, feebly.

"Oh, then you do acknowledge you were miles away in thought," says Clarissa, triumphant, if disgusted.

"My dear girl, how you do misjudge me!" protests poor Mr. Peyton, at his wits' end. "I assure you, I was all attention to that very excellent letter from beginning to end."

"Were you?" returns she, sweetly.

"Then, of course, you can tell me what was the last word."

She has placed her elbows on the table, and has let her pretty face sink into the palms of her hands, and is now regarding her father with a smile, half mocking, half malicious.

"The last word! Oh, nonsense, my dear Cissy! who ever remembered the last word of anything, unless it happened to be 'The Burial of Sir John Moore,' or 'Beautiful Star,' or something that way? But I know your letter was all about a young woman who has got herself into a mess and wants to come to you now as maid or laundress. But there is always danger in that sort of thing, you know, and you mightn't like it afterward; and—"

"Oh, what an engrossing speech that imaginary one of yours must have been!" says Clarissa, with a little distracted shake of her head. "I knew you were in the room, didn't I? No, no, no, you are altogether wrong; this is no letter from maid or laundress, but from George Broughton. (You must remember her name, I have so often mentioned it to you.) She is the dearest little thing in the world, quite that, and more. And she writes to tell me she is miserably poor, and wants to go out as a governess."

"Poor girl! Of all unhappy resources, the last."

"Yes; isn't it wretched? But, you see, she is bound to do something, and wearing out one's heart in a dingy school-room seems to be the only course left open to a pretty girl like Georgie."

"Try Mrs. Redmond, then. She is looking out for a governess for the children; and your friend might drop in there without further trouble."

"Oh, papa, but all those children! and Mrs. Redmond herself, too, so fretful and so irritable,—so utterly impossible in every way. Her very 'How d'ye do?' would frighten Georgie to death."

"People don't die of chills of that description; and your poor little friend can scarcely expect to find everything couleur de rose. Besides, the only children you speak of just resolve themselves into two, as the boys are at school, and Cissy calls herself grown up. I should think Cissy would be, in fact, a great comfort to her, and would be amenable to her, and gentle—and that."

At this, Miss Peyton laughs a little, and bites her lip.

"Amenable," she says, slowly. "Do you know, I am afraid my Georgie is even younger than Cissy?"

"Younger!"

"Well, she will certainly look younger; she has such a little, fresh, babyish rosetud of a face. Do you think—"

"—anxiously—"that would matter much?"

"It doesn't sound promising; but, if she is a good girl, one might forgive the great crime of being young and fresh. Dear me, it is very awkward. If she had been a nice, sensible, ugly, middle-aged person, now, all would have gone well; but, after all, poor child, of course she can't help her appearance."

"No, she certainly cannot," says Clarissa, with a sigh, heartfelt pity in her tone. "And her eyes are the very color of forget-me-nots,—quite the prettiest I ever saw. It is really too bad."

"Redmond, himself, would make no difficulty about it. He prefers to have young people about him, and was always, you know, rather—rather melancholy when in Miss Proude's society. If she had been a nice, sensible, ugly, middle-aged person, now, all would have gone well; but, after all, poor child, of course she can't help her appearance."

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fair than they follow him, to fling breadcrumbs for their morning meal. A little later, having dressed herself, she starts upon her errand, ready to take the vicarage by storm.

CHAPTER VIII.

"'Tis love, love, love, that makes the world go round."

The hot September sun beats fiercely on her as she walks along; the day is full of languor and sweet peace. The summer is almost done, and is dying, rich in beauty, and warm with the ripeness of strength perfected. From out the thickets, little birds that three months ago scarce knew the power of breath, now warble soft melodies that thrill the air with joy. Clarissa, blind and full of purpose, feels her heart at one with the tiny heaven-taught musicians, as she follows the path beneath the leafy trees that leads to the vicarage.

As she descends the tinted wood, and gains the road that runs by the old mill, she finds herself face to face with Horace Branscombe, coming toward her in somewhat laggard fashion. His brow is darkened by a frown; his whole expression is moody and oppressed with discontent.

As he sees Clarissa, his features—though compelled by a powerful will—undergo a complete change, and he smiles, and comes forward with outstretched hand to greet her.

"Horace! you here again, and so soon?" she says, quickly. "Surprise lends haste to her tongue. She has believed him in London; and now to see him thus unexpectedly, and without the usual friendly warning conveyed by letter, causes her not only pleasure, but a vague uneasiness.

"Does it seem 'so soon' to you?" replies he in a carefully inspired tone. "To me the last two months have appeared almost a year, so heavily have dragged the days spent away from Pullingham."

It is a very stereotyped little sentence, old and world-worn, and smacking faintly of insincerity; but when a woman loves a man she rarely measures his words.

"You speak as if you were with a soft smile. But you will understand me. And you know you told me you did not intend to return before Christmas."

"Yes, I know." He is silent for a little while, and then, rousing himself, as though by an effort, says, slowly,—"Did you miss me?"

"I always miss you," returns she, simply; you know that. She flushes warmly, and lets her long lashes fall leisurely, until at length they hide from view the sweet confession of her eyes. There is a pause that embraces a full minute, and then she speaks again.

"You have not yet told me the reason of your return," she says, gently.

"I wearied of town," replies he. "A stranger's acknowledgment for one like me, but true. For once, I honestly pined for the country—inspired as I have always deemed it—and craved unceasingly for something fresh, new, innocent, something unused to gas, and the glare and unholy glitter of a city."

He speaks bitterly—almost passionately—and as though for the moment he has altogether forgotten the existence of his companion. An instant later, however, he recovers himself.

"I felt I should be happier, more fitted to cope with my work, if I could get even one glimpse of you!"

"And you not happy, then?" asks she, glancing at her watch, as though her color growing and lessening rapidly.

"Happy? No. Can a man be happy while a perpetual doubt distracts him? Can he know even the meaning of the word Peace, whilst devoured with a fear that he shall never possess the one great blessing he desires?"

Again his thoughts appear to wander; and some passion, not born of the present moment, but borrowed from some other hour, fills his tone.

"Yes," says Clarissa, nervously, questioning, feeling poor in words, now that the great crisis of her life has come.

"So I am here," he goes on, softly, "to solve my doubt, to gain at least a rest from the gnawing suspense that for so long I have endured. Need I tell you that I love you—that (he pauses, and a faint contraction of the features, that dies almost as it is born, disfigures his face for a second)—"

"that you are the one woman in all the world upon whom I have set my heart?"

There is silence. For Clarissa, an intense joy holds her mute; the very intensity of her happiness checks the flow of speech. He too, seems lost in thought. Presently, however, he breaks the silence, and this time a faint anxiety may be discernible in his voice, though his face is calm and composed, as usual.

"You do not speak, Clarissa. I have told you of my love, and you are silent. I now ask if you can love me? At least give me an answer. Dearest,—glancing at her averted face, and seeing the shy blush that adds another charm to its beauty,—"tell me the truth."

"I can; I do love you!" says Clarissa, sweetly, and with perfect trust. She slips her hand into his. Raising his lips, he kisses them; and then, together—still hand in hand—they walk along, speechless, yet seemingly content.

The road is dusty; and a few drops of rain fall, like mild blessings, into its parched furrows. The roadside flowers, drooping and languid, fling their rich perfume, with lavish generosity, upon the motionless air. Some sheep, in a far-off meadow, bleat mournfully, and answer back the echo that mocks their lament.

"You have made me happier than I ever hoped to be; but you have not yet said you will marry me." The words come from Horace, but sound curiously far away, the very stillness and sadness of the evening rendering them more distant. Clarissa, glancing at him, can see he is as white as Death.

"How pale he is!" she thinks, and then makes herself happy in the belief that he is terribly in earnest about this matter, and that his love for her is infinite.

"Yes, I shall marry you," she says, with tender seriousness. "To her, this promise is a solemn bond, that nothing but death or falsehood can cancel."

"When?"

"Oh, Horace, I cannot answer that question so readily. There are so many things. Papa must be told; and James Scrope; and you must tell Dorian and your uncle."

"All that would hardly take half an hour."

"Perhaps; but there are other reasons for delay, more than I can tell you just now. Besides, it is all so very strange." She smiles, as

though she would willingly have added the words "so sweet;" and a little happily, far-away look creeps into and illumines her eyes. "Why are you so impatient?"

"Impatient!" returns he, a touch of vehemence in his tone. "Of course I am impatient. The sooner it is all got over the better." He checks himself, draws his breath somewhat quickly, and goes on in a calmer fashion.

"What sort of a lover should I be, if I showed no anxiety to claim you as soon as possible? You should be the last to blame me for undue haste in this matter. When shall it be, then—in one month? two? three?" He speaks again, almost excitedly.

"Oh, no, no," gently, but shrinking from him a little. "That would be impossible. Why, think!—it is only this moment you have told me you love me, and now you would have me name our wedding-day!"

"Not exactly that. But tell me some definite time, near at hand, to which I can be looking forward. Everything rests with you now, remember that." His last words convey an unconscious warning, but Clarissa neither heeds nor understands it.

"Papa will miss me so terribly," she says, dreamily; it seems selfish, almost as though I were wilfully deserting him. I should, at least, like another Christmas at home with him. And see,—turning to him with gentle earnestness—"are we not quite happy as we now are, loving and trusting in each other? Why, then, should we not continue this present happiness for another year? You are silent, Horace! You do not answer! Are you angry with me?" She lays her hand lightly on his arm.

"No; not angry." His eyes are on the ground; and he takes no notice of the tender pressure on his arm. "But a year is a long time to wait! So many things may happen in twelve months; and needs once done, forever leave their mark."

"Do not speak like that, it is as though you would foretell evil," says Clarissa, a faint feeling of superstitious horror making her nervous.

Branscombe, raising his head, regards her. "Why should there be evil to foretell?" he says, slowly. "And yet, Clarissa, I would ask you always to remember this hour, and the fact that it was you, not I, who wished the postponement of our marriage. If it must be as you say, it will be better to keep our engagement as quiet as possible; perfectly secret will indeed be best."

"Yes; if you wish it. That will please me, too. Only papa need know of it, and—James Scrope."

"And why Sir James?" with a scrutinizing gaze.

"Why?"—with some surprise. "Well, I suppose because papa and I never do anything important without telling him of it. He is quite our oldest friend. We should hardly get on now without Jim."

"Not so old, either. I hope, by and by, you will be able to manage without Sir James as a father-confessor."

"By and by shall have you," says Clarissa, sweetly, with a smile and a soft blush.

"True! I wonder if you will find that sufficient? I doubt I'm half such a good fellow, Clarissa, as you believe me."

In which he comes nearer the truth than ever he came before.

"You are good enough for me," says Clarissa, with fond conviction. "Will you come with me as far as the vicarage? I must go there to-day, and the walk is such a pretty one, and,—with a little happy laugh,—"now you are quite your own property, I think I should like to make use of you. Look! there is Ruth Annersley standing at her gate. Good-morning, Ruth! What a charming day, is it not? after all yesterday's rain?"

Ruth—who, the moment before, had made a faint movement as though she would willingly have stepped behind the huge rose bush nearest to her and so have escaped observation—comes slowly forward. She is pale; but the intense heat of the day makes itself felt by all, and has deprived even Miss Peyton's cheeks of some of their usual warmth. She accepts Clarissa's proffered hand, and smiles a faint welcome.

But when Horace would, too, have shaken hands with her, she declines to see his meaning, and, bowing slightly, turns aside to listen to his companion's words.

(To be Continued.)

IT IS A PRINCESS.

The Royal Baby Born to the Russian Emperor is a Daughter and Her Name is Olga.

A despatch from Vienna says that a telegram received there from St. Petersburg announces that the Czarina was safely accouched of a daughter at 10 o'clock on Friday evening.

Other despatches from St. Petersburg confirm the report of the birth of a daughter from the Czarina.

A bulletin that has just been issued states that the condition of the Czarina and her daughter is entirely satisfactory. At the religious services held after the birth, the infant was named Olga.

FORTY-EIGHT DROWNED.

Deplorable Calamity to a British Steam Launch.

A despatch from London says:—The Admiralty have received information that a steam launch belonging to the British Cruiser Edgar was lost near Nagasaki on November 13, and it is believed that all of the 48 persons on board were drowned. Later despatches state that the missing steam launch has been found. No details accompany this statement, however, and it is not yet known whether the crew of the boat was saved or not.

Dire Distress in Newfoundland.

The St. John's, Nfld., Herald prints a series of letters from correspondents along the south and west coast to the effect that dire distress prevails among the poorest class of people residing there, especially those receiving pauper relief. The retrenchment policy of the Government necessitated the cutting off of half the pauper grants, and the fisheries being poor, many find themselves in wretched circumstances. The correspondents predict starvation in numerous instances unless prompt help is supplied by the authorities.

RUSSIAN PERSECUTIONS.

How Russia, the Champion of Armenia, Uses Her Own Subjects.

Russia has posed as one of the three powers anxious to bring about a better state of things in Armenia. The trouble in Turkey has mainly arisen through the irregular payment of functionaries and the police, and the consequent disorganization and semi-anarchy. Count Kellay, who, as an Austrian official governs Bosnia—now in a flourishing condition—officially reports that he administers the Turkish laws (which he states are really good) with some slight alterations. This proves that it is the bad administration of the law in Turkey which is the great trouble.

Although the Christians have been the greatest sufferers, yet the Moslems, who amount to two-thirds of the population, have also been victims.

But, in regard to persecution, Russia is as great a sinner as Turkey; especially considering that although the pay of her officials is inadequate, yet it is punctually forthcoming; and it has a vastly larger proportion of well-educated office-bearers. Its state religion is that of the Orthodox Greek Church, but the Dissenters number many millions, and they have had, and still have, a hard time. Besides this, the Catholics, who number nine millions, have much to complain of—especially attempts at

FORCIBLE CONVERSION.

The treatment of the Russian Jews, who number four millions, has been—though in different ways—as bad or worse than that of the Armenians; but European public opinion has brought about an amelioration.

Count Tolstoi, the well-known Russian writer, an author of world-wide fame, has, with rare moral courage, written to the London Times (October 29) with an account of the dreadful persecution of a small off-shoot from the Greek Church, known as the Dukhobors, who number only a few thousands. Their doctrines comprise something of the Quaker and Plymouth Brethren beliefs, combined with some of the tenets of the Unitarians. They are opposed to war—even to bearing arms; to taking oaths, and to litigation. Tolstoi describes them as industrious, honest, sober, and well-conducted—practically far above the level of the Russian peasantry. Ten of them refused to serve in the army, and were consequently sentenced to serve in a disciplinary battalion, a sort of earthly purgatory. A large number of the elderly were also imprisoned. The Governor of the Caucasus then ordered all of the sect to assemble at a given spot, but, apparently anticipating gross outrages, they did not come, whereupon the Cossacks were let loose upon them and quartered in their houses, being allowed to

DO AS THEY PLEASED.

Numbers were severely flogged and women were outraged, and all their effects were either stolen or destroyed. Ultimately 464 families were driven penniless from their homes to starve. Tolstoi's detailed account is harrowing, and it is safe to assert that there is no other Russian with sufficient moral courage to expose such tyranny, but he holds such a high literary position that angry officials must be careful what they do. Doubtless the Emperor is personally aware of these and numbers of other horrors, but now that it has been brought to his notice (for he sees the Times) there will be a change for the better. He who publicly exposes official tyranny in Russia is liable to be sent to Siberia without any ceremony, and probably any other person would be aware of these and numbers of other horrors, but now that it has been brought to his notice (for he sees the Times) there will be a change for the better. 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