

STRAIGHTFORWARD.

CHAPTER III.

THE Holts were what is generally called "an attached family," and, considering this fact, it was wonderful how easily they slipped into the idea of one of their number leaving them to go "beyond seas."

True, 'Lisbeth was going to be "a lady," and even Farmer Holt allowed that, if she must take her own way, she had chosen a right down good husband.

To quiet Cornish people!—even London seemed at the other end of the world, so it was a thing not to be expected that they should feel much more distress in contemplating the unknown distance of Australia. The wedding, therefore, was followed by a very happy three weeks spent by the young couple at the farm—mother and sisters regarding with interested eyes the rapidly filling boxes of the young wife.

For Perran wished 'Lisbeth to have such a number of useful and pretty dresses as the mistress of a large and prosperous Australian sheep-run might be supposed to need. Mrs. Ames readily undertook to help in the choice of suitable materials, and when the Truro dressmaker had made the first dark-blue serge, and blushing 'Lisbeth came to show Perran how well it fitted, she gave every promise of looking the fair young house-mistress she was destined to be. Not every girl can hope to become "a lady" by a single stroke of fortune, but the industrious, the unselfish, and the amiable, all the world over, have that good stuff in them which will take the true polish required to fit them for any sphere.

'Lisbeth's was one of these bright sterling natures. Mrs. Holt groaned terribly that bad harvest year (the third bad year running, she would tell you) when Mrs. Ames asked her to spare a daughter to look after her little girls during the illness of their nurse. "The one that sings at her work, please, Mrs. Holt," were the exact words of the request. 'Lisbeth had to go, because the girls must learn to do something for themselves if times were to continue so bad; but it seemed a sad come-down to the family, and a grief all round.

Molly, the dairy girl, cried all one night after her young mistress's departure, though only four miles of moor lay between them, and Farmer Holt's temper, the laborers said, was "short" for a week. People have their different ways of showing sorrow, you see.

Now that good fortune had come to 'Lisbeth every one rejoiced, and 'Lisbeth's sisters would willingly have acted waiting-maids all day to the new Mrs. Proudfoot, if she would have permitted it. But 'Lisbeth was too active as well as too humble to allow that. She milked

with Janie, and got up in the dark on washing days to help Susie and mother—even when they would fain make of her a petted guest—and Perran loved his wife all the more for her sweet diligence.

"They are a pair of nature's gentlefolk, these two," said Lady Mostyn to Sir John; "a pity they should go out of the old country."

But Sir John was disposed to think they should not be grudged to the "new and happy land" in which their fortunes lay. Best look at the bright side of things, and at least they would well represent our English yeoman class, out there.

Very busy days were those with young Mr. and Mrs. Proudfoot. It was now quite settled that Captain Mostyn was to go out with them, and Molly at the Farm, an orphan and entirely devoted to 'Lisbeth, had begged so hard to be taken to Australia too, that it was impossible to gainsay her. "Though she's not half the servant you ought to have, 'Lisbeth," declared Mrs. Holt, with a doubtful shake of the head.

"Mother, I like the girl, she is good to the core," returned the young wife; "besides, she is so fond of animals—remember the dog show at Truro."

And then they all had a hearty laugh over this one expedition of the rough servant-girl and her account of it. "There was three hundred dogs, missis, in the show, and I shook a paw of every one, I did!"

You see, 'Lisbeth was already considering her responsibilities as mistress of Green Meadows.

"The carrier's cart, num, and more things for you." Molly herself rushed in to communicate the fact.

And then the sisters gathered round the precious package, and George, 'Lisbeth's favorite brother, must bring a chisel to open it, and all was excitement and laughter, when 'Lisbeth felt a hand on her shoulder, and her husband's voice said: "I want you, 'Lisbeth."

"Now, Perran?"

"Yes, now, upstairs."

"Nothing is the matter?"

"Only some more news from—from Australia. Don't look so frightened, child."

"But you look strange, Perran, very strange; there is something wrong—please tell me, quick!"

They were upstairs now in that best farm chamber, which, in all 'Lisbeth's young life, had only been occasionally occupied by visitors whom the Holts desired especially to honor, and now it was hers—hers and her husband's!

It was the first day of the new year, and snow lay all over the fields, and frost blinded these upper windows, but 'Lisbeth did not feel cold, and impatiently waited while Perran put a shawl round her before he took a letter from his pocket.