

then have been called void places of the uninhabited earth."

"But more especially did this character of uncultured desolation pervade the extreme borders of the West of England, the country between the Tamar and the sea. * * * Long after other parts of England had settled into an improved agriculture and submitted to the discipline of more civilised life, the Cornish were wont to hew their resources out of the bowels of their mother earth, or to haul into their nets the native harvest of the sea. Thus the merchandise and fish, tin and copper became the 'vaunted staple of their land.' These, the rich productions of their native country were, even in remote periods of our history, in perpetual request, and formed, together with the wool of their moorland flocks, the great trade of the Cornish people. From all parts, and especially from that storied city whose merchants were then, as now, princes of the land, men were wont to encounter the perilous journey from the Thames to the Tamar to pursue their traffic with the 'underground folk' as they termed the inhabitants of Cornwall, that rocky land of strangers, as, when literally interpreted, is the exact meaning of its name."

"It was in the year 1463, when Edward IV. occupied the English throne, that a tall and portly merchant in the distinctive apparel of the times rode along the wilds of a Cornish moor. He sat high and firm upon his horse, a bony gelding with a demi-pique saddle. A broad beaver, or, as it was then called, a Flanders hat, shaded a grave and thoughtful countenance, wherein shrewdness and good humour struggled for the mastery, and the latter prevailed, and his full brown beard was forked—a happy omen, as it was always held, of prosperous life. His riding garb displayed that contrast of colours which was then so valued by native taste, inasmuch that the phrase 'motley' had in its origin a complimentary and not an invidious sound. Behind him and near rode his servant, a stout and active looking knave armed to the teeth."

It was a fair summer evening, and they had wandered on and on over those trailless moors till the question of safe shelter had become an anxious one. They surmounted a rising knoll, and the merchant halted, struck by the scene beneath him—a wayside cross was shining in the evening light, a gnarled and wind-swept tree gave shelter to a young girl, who leant on her shepherd staff, her little flock of sheep had settled quietly on the slope, and beside her stood a peasant youth, his little flock of goats feeding near him. It seemed an old trusting-place, and the merchant, arrested by the peace and beauty of the scene, stayed his horse and surveyed them a few moments before speaking. At last, raising his voice, for the wind was boisterous,

"Can you tell me," he said, "maiden, some way across this moor to shelter for the night? We need rest and food, and the horses are spent with a long journey."

The girl came forward. "Sir," she said, "this is a very lonely place, and there is no inn nor shelter for many miles."

This was embarrassing, but the merchant was not one accustomed to be thwarted, and stayed looking at the fair innocent face and the graceful form he saw before him, while the youth scowled and drew back, in apparent dislike of any communication with a stranger.

"Well," said the rider, "what are we to do? Our horses are spent; we are both hungry and shelterless in this wild place. Is there absolutely no roof in the neighbourhood which can take us in for a night?"

The girl, with some hesitation, answered, "My father's hut, sir, I can guide you to; but it is a very poor place—not fit for a gentleman like you. I know they will do all they can for you, and there is a shelter where the horses would be safe, but—"

"Say no more!" joyously said the merchant. "A cover for our heads, any food for the beasts and for ourselves! We will be glad and grateful for shelter and safety!"

"It is a very poor place, sir," still urged the girl; but all remonstrances were thrown to the winds. The unwilling youth had to gather the flocks together and go off with his own across the moor, while the little maid guided the strangers across the ford and over the moor till they came in sight of a very low-roofed hut sheltering beside a hillock, which they assuredly never would have observed, and where they were welcomed by the father and mother of their guide.

The merchant was a wealthy man, and in his own house in London knew comfort and luxury, and yet, when he looked round the interior of this poor home, felt a thrill of surprise as he marked the extreme cleanliness and order which was there, and still more when, having explained his situation, the true kindness and courtesy with which they made him welcome, and arranged a sleeping-place for himself and his servant, and prepared him a supper—poor and simple indeed, but clean and wholesome—which refreshed and rested the weary travellers.

Within those mud walls, evening came with a feeling of peace and rest. And in the night the merchant lay awake musing on the character of the people among whom he was thrown, and the native modesty and dignity of the girl. The parents were evidently such as might have been expected from what he had seen of their child.

His wife was ailing, and had begged him to find for her some little maid who could help in her housewifery, and also be a personal

attendant to her. Where could he find a better? He had talked with her along the way when she guided them home, and had been surprised at the intelligence and character he found in her; and he knew he could offer her a kind mistress, and a home of comfort and plenty, but would she come? And would her parents spare her? To say nothing of that young scowling lover, who seemed to grudge every word she said to another, and every minute away from him.

The next morning the merchant spoke on the matter. The parents were good judges of character, and they trusted and liked their guest. His man had not been silent as to his master's dignity, the wealth of his home, and the goodness of his mistress; and the letters to dwellers in the same county which were shown to them made them aware of his real position and honourable character—but the girl? Would she willingly give up home, parents, and, perhaps more than all, the dream by the wayside cross, for years, perhaps, ah! for more than years?

She was very young—not fourteen years old. She looked at her parents. They, true father and mother, were thinking only of her, her advancement, the honourable home she was offered, the kind friend they thought, and truly thought, her mistress would be to her, and her master whom they felt they could trust.

She looked at her parents—ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-sheltered from wind and weather, exposed to a thousand ills she bitterly knew. And she was offered means—help to get for them comforts, perhaps luxuries, certainly safety and security from many dangers. She thought of her lover—but she was very young, and life promises so much at thirteen—and then the coming winter, the food, the clothing, the warmth she might cause to glow in that poor wind-blown hut. And then she made up her mind.

There was no hesitation in the frank acceptance of the offer. Bright visions of what she might be able to do for those dear parents, for that dear home, were crowding on her as she packed her very small store of luggage and left the home.

They got a pillion for her, and belted it behind the saddle of the merchant's man; and so, bidding farewell to the wild moors of Cornwall, she travelled to London, "where she would see the place where the King lived, and where, she was told, the houses were stuck as close together as Wike St. Marie church and tower. Ah, truly she would store up every coin and come back with money enough to buy a flock of sheep of her own, which perhaps she and John would tend together as aforetime on the moors!"

Happy child in her love, and trust, and hopefulness of the future!

(To be continued.)

VILLAGE HOMES FOR LADIES.

By H. B. M. BUCHANAN.

PART II.

I POINTED out in my first article that the depopulation of the country is a problem that not only affects every one interested in agriculture, but affects likewise, though it may be indirectly, all workers in the towns. And I went on to say that I felt sure that the chief reason for the mad rush of the young village life into the towns was not on account of wage (because wage in the country, with all its accompanying advantage, is for the

average workers as good if not better than that in the towns), but because of the almost entire absence of life, change and amusement in the country villages.

You may say, why cannot the villagers be satisfied with their life as were their forefathers of old? But it should be remembered that, since those old days, conditions have changed—the school, the library, the press, the train, the cheapening of books, has developed the imagination, has all contributed to teach the villagers of a wider, deeper, more

restless life than they have had the experience of, and the young life of the villages very naturally desire to see and share it. And if this wider life is not brought to the villagers, the villagers will go to it at any sacrifice to themselves or others.

It would be just as foolish and as futile to try and bid the earth not march round the sun as to try and check this growing desire for a life more varied and full of interest.

To accept the inevitable and then to try

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