

## THE FIRST DISAPPOINTMENT.

BY MRS. H. J. BEVERIDGE.

I saw a youthful mother,  
Once on a summer's day,  
Sot down a smiling infant  
To watch its frolic play;  
It gambled on the flowers  
That decked the carpet o'er,  
And seemed, with childish wonder,  
Each object to explore.

A something on the instant  
Its glad career arrests,  
And earnestly it gazes where  
A golden sunbeam rests;  
While on the new-found glory  
It fixed its wondering eyes,  
And trustingly reached forth its hand  
To seize the glittering prize.

And now its tiny fingers clasp  
The treasure rich and rare,  
Which in its baby innocence  
It surely thought was there.  
But, ah! that hand uncloses,  
And to its earnest gaze  
Reveals no gem of beauty—  
No bright imprisoned rays!

And then the first of many tears  
Fell on the cherub face—  
The first sad disappointment  
In life's uncertain race!  
And thus it has been with us all,  
Who its dark game have played—  
We've sought to grasp the sunshine,  
And only found the shade.

## MY STORY.

My Story is about Alice Grey. When I first knew her she had numbered nearly forty years, but was still treading the quiet path of maidenhood. Why she was unmarried I never ascertained.—Some imagined that Death, perchance, had claimed the object of her early love; others praised the filial heart which had led her to devote her life to her widowed mother; while others, still less charitable, said they "guessed she never had an offer." All agreed, however, that Alice was a model old maid. Cheerful and content she trod her solitary way, and if, in earlier days, thoughts of husband and children had made pleasant maiden reveries, such dreams had long ago been dismissed from her heart.

But there was one who was beginning to plot against the "quiet tenor of her way." A year before, Esq. Moreford had buried the wife of his youth. In his desolate farm-house were four motherless children—dependent upon hirelings for the care a tender mother had always lovingly given—and feeling, at length, the necessity of having some one who should have more than a hireling's interest in his home, he began to look around in search of such an one, and his eye rested on Alice Grey. Death had been in Alice's home, too, and when the worthy suiter came to woo, he found she could be won;

so, as widowers' courtships are usually short, Alice was soon introduced into a new path in life. Alas! she found it a path of trial. Filial, and loving, it had been easy to discharge a daughter's duties, but those of wife and mother were new to her and all untried. It had been more than twenty years since she was "little Alice." No little ones had played about her hearthstone, and so she had become a stranger to children's ways and children's hearts. Carefully she abstained from everything unkind, but there was a want of sympathy between her own and her children's hearts. She entered into none of their childish plans; they did not tell her of their childish joys or griefs; and very soon they began to regard her with suspicion, and even with dislike. At length, Charles, the oldest child, who could not help contrasting this state of things with the sunny home his own dear mother made, felt that it was a home no more for him. So, one night, leaving tearful good-bye kisses with his sleeping brother and sisters, he stole softly down the stairs, and went out to be a wanderer. The earliest gleaming of the morning found him sobbing by his mother's grave, and the first tidings of him were that he had gone to sea.

Then Gracie, the youngest of the household, was taken sick, and in her delirium she cried—"Go away naughty woman! I want my own dear mama!—Come mama and kiss Gracie! Come sweet mama!" and in a little while the plaintive voice was hushed forever.

Alice Moreford was very, very sad, as she sat alone in her room the night after Gracie died. One of the children to whom she had come to fill a mother's place was away on the stormy sea.—Death had claimed another; and she felt that neither from the absent ones nor from those still left to her care had she won a mother's share of confidence and love. Long time she sat and thought; then long and fervently she prayed that God would teach her. When she arose from prayer, it was with a new light in her heart, and on her face.

Gracie's funeral was over, and Esq. Moreford's house had become as quiet as ever, and more cheerless than before.—George was the second son, a lad of thirteen years. One night after he had gone to rest he heard a rap at his door. "Who is it?" he inquired. "Mother! May I come in?" Half pettishly he consented, and his step-mother entered and sat down by his bed. She began talking about

Gracie, and then about his dear dead mother. She told him how anxious she was to fill that mother's place; she spoke of the difficulties in her way, she assured him of her love for him and her desire to see him happy. Then she knelt by his bedside and prayed God to bless them and to help them to love each other as they ought; and, kissing him, bade him a kind "good-night."

Georgie's proud little heart did not permit him to answer his mother a word, but as soon as she had gone he began to think over all she had said to him. He remembered how kindly she had talked of his own dear mother, and sobbed himself to sleep full of memories of that dead mother, and with kindlier feelings than he had ever had towards her who filled that mother's place.

Ellen, too, received a visit from her mother that night, and before they parted Ellen had told of all her longings after love, and how she had wanted to talk of her dead mother. They wept together and then the mother prayed. As she gave the child her first good-night kiss, Ellen threw her arms around her neck and said, "I love you, mother," and from that time they knew and loved each other. In angry moods, Ellen would sometimes say:—"I wish a step-mother had never come to darken our home," but in a very little time she would come, in tears to be forgiven.

Georgie was not so easily won; but Alice was not discouraged. She sought his confidence in every way; interested herself in his plans, and he would find some nice little offering of her handiwork on his table, with a card attached, saying it was "a little token of love from one who would be a mother to him." Finally, she found, one morning, a little gift for her, with these words attached, "To my kind mother"—"From Georgie."

Then sunshine began to dance all over the old farm-house, to the sweet music of loving words and tones. Clouds came sometimes, but Alice prayed, and wore the same gentle look and smile, and they passed without a storm.

Years went by. The sad news came that the bright-eyed Charlie rested in an ocean grave. George and Ellen grew to manhood and womanhood and went to preside over homes of their own. Mrs. Moreford sat alone one evening awaiting her husband's return from the village.—As he entered he handed her two letters,—"from the children," he said.

With a full heart she read George's