

THE VICAR'S GOVERNESS.

With downcast eyes and bowed head he stands, thinking sadly how much too old he is for new cares and fresh faces. Reginald had been all the world to him: the new man is as nothing. Counting friendships as of little worth unless years have gone to prove their depth and sincerity, he feels no leaning toward the present possessor,—knows him too short a time to like or dislike, to praise or blame.

Now, as his eyes wander down the long table, to where he can see the empty chair of him who rests with such unearthly tranquillity in the silent chamber above, the thought of how soon a comparative stranger will fill it causes him a bitter pang. And, as he so muses, the door opens, and they all come in,—Sartoris first, with Clarissa, pale, and quiet; the brothers—so like, yet so unlike—following.

Old Simon, rousing himself, watches with jealous eye to see the place so long occupied by Reginald usurped by another. But he watches in vain. Sartoris, without so much as a glance in its direction, takes the chair at the lower end of the table; and the others, following his lead, seat themselves at the sides without comment of any kind; whereupon Gale draws a long breath, and vows fidelity to his new lord upon the spot.

It is a dismal meal, dull, and disappointing. The ghostly Egyptian mummy seems present in full force, if not in the letter at least in the spirit. Sartoris, having taken a glass of sherry, trifles with the meat upon his plate, but literally eats nothing. No one appears possessed with a desire to speak, and indeed there is little to be said. When luncheon is nearly over, a small dark object, hitherto unseen, creeps out from some forgotten corner, and stretches itself forlornly. It is poor Reginald's favorite dog, that ever since his death has lain crouching out of sight, but now, driven by the pain of hunger, comes creeping forward, whining piteously.

He goes up to the accustomed chair, but, finding it for the first time empty and deaf to his complainings, turns disconsolately away, and passes from seat to seat, without accepting food at any of their hands, until he comes to Clarissa. She, stooping, raises him to her knee (her lashes wet with tears), and feeds him tenderly with the dainty scraps upon her plate.

The whole scene, though simple, is suggestive of loss and loneliness. Sartoris, leaving the table with some haste, goes to the window to hide his emotion. Dorian follows him. Whereupon Horace, rising too, crosses to where Clarissa sits, and bending over her, says something in a low tone.

"The moments fly. A clock upon the mantelpiece chimes half-past four. Some bird, in the exuberance of its mad joy, scurries wildly past the windows. Sartoris, with a sigh, turns from the light, and, seeing Miss Peyton and Horace still deep in conversation, frowns slightly.

"Horace, will you tell Durkin I want to see him at once in the library," he says, very quietly, yet with some latent irritability.

"In one moment," replies Horace, unmoved, going back to the low-toned dialogue he has been carrying on with Clarissa.

"I am afraid I must lay myself open to the charge of rudeness," says Sartoris, still very quietly, but with a peculiar smile. "But it is important, and I must see Durkin at once. My dear Horace, oblige me in this matter."

"Shall I not see Clarissa to her carriage first?" says Horace, raising his dark eyes for one moment to his uncle's face.

"Dorian will see to that," says the old man, slowly, but so decisively that Horace, bidding the girl a silent but warm farewell, with a bad grace departs.

"How late it grows," says Miss Peyton, glancing at the clock; and, drawing from a side pocket her own watch, she examines it attentively, as though to assure herself the huge timepiece on the mantel-shelf has not told a deliberate lie. "I must go home! Papa will wonder where I have been all this long time. Good-by, Mr. Branscombe," she is still, naturally, forgetful of the new time.

"I hope," very sweetly, "you will come to see us as soon as you can."

"Thank you, yes. I shall come very soon," says Sartoris; and then she bids him good-by, and Dorian follows her from the room into the great dark hall outside.

"How changed he is!" she says, turning suddenly to him, and indicating by a little backward motion of her head toward the room she had just left, the person of whom she speaks.

"How altered—Arthur, I mean. Not now, not by this grief; it isn't that; his manner, to me especially, has been altogether different for a fortnight past. Ever since that last picnic at Anadale—you remember it—he has not been quite the same to me."

"Let me see; that, I think, was the evening you and Horace drove home alone together, with that rather uncertain brown mare, was it not?" says Dorian, with no apparent meaning in his tone.

"My dear child, I dare say you are mistaken about Arthur. Your imagination is leading you astray."

to be baffled. Why don't you help him, Dorian?"

"It would take two to help him," says Mr. Branscombe, looking faintly amused.

"Could I be of any use?"—eagerly, "I would do anything I could for him," "No, would you?" says Branscombe, his amusement growing more perceptible. "I'm sure that's very good of you. I dare say, if Arthur could hear you say that, he would go out of a mind with joy. 'Anything' is such a comprehensive word. You're sure you won't go back on it?"

"Quite sure," with some surprise. "My dear Clarissa, is it possible you have not yet seen through Arthur's latest and greatest design?"

"If you intend to tell me anything, do so; beating about the bush always fatigues me to death," says Miss Peyton, in a tone of dignified rebuke.

"What does Arthur want?" "A little thing—a mere trifle. He simply wants you to marry me."

"Really, Dorian," says Clarissa, coloring slowly, but warmly, "I think you might find some other subject to jest on."

"I never made a joke in my life; I hope I never shall," returns Branscombe, reproachfully. "What have I done, that you should accuse me of such a crime? I have only spoken the plain, unvarnished truth. To see you my wife is the dream of Arthur's life, his sole ambition. And just now, you know, you said you were quite prepared to do anything for him. You can't, with any sense of honor, back out of your given word."

"I never heard anything so absurd, so foolish, so nonsensical!" says Miss Peyton, resentfully.

"Nonsensical! My dear Clarissa! pray consider my—"

"It is more it is right down stupid of him," says Clarissa, who plainly declines to consider any one's feelings.

"You needn't pile up my agony any higher," interposes Branscombe, meekly. "To my everlasting regret I acknowledge myself utterly unworthy of you. But why tell me in such round terms? I assure you I feel excessively hurt and offended. Am I to understand then, that you have refused me?"

"You shall understand something worse, if you say another word," says Clarissa, holding up before him a little clenched hand in a would-be threatening manner. And then they both laugh in a subdued fashion, and he leans toward the open hall-door, he following.

"Well, I forgive you," he says, as she steps into her low phaeton, and he arranges the rug carefully around her. "Though you don't deserve it. (What ridiculous hands to guide such refractory ponies!) Sure you are quite comfortable? Well, good-by; and look here,—teasingly,—I should think it over if I were you. You may not get so excellent a chance again; and Arthur will never forgive you."

"Your uncle, though charming, and a very dear, is also a goose," says Miss Peyton, somewhat irreverently. "Marry you, indeed? Why I should quite as soon dream of marrying my brother!"

"Well, as I can't be your husband, it would be rather nice to be your brother," says Mr. Branscombe, cheerfully. "Your words give me hope that you regard me in that light. I shall always think of you for the future as my sister, and so I am sure"—with an eloquent and rather mischievous pause—"will Horace!"

Miss Peyton blushes again,—much more vividly this time,—and, gathering up the reins hastily, says "good-by" for the second time, without turning her flushed face to his, and drives rapidly up the avenue.

Branscombe stands on the steps watching her until she is quite lost to sight behind the rhododendrons, and then strikes his mustache thoughtfully. "That has quite arranged itself. I should fancy," he says, slowly. "Well, I hope he will be very good to her, dear little thing!"

CHAPTER II.

"Her form was fresher than the morning rose. When the dew wets its leaves." —Thomson.

Pullingham-on-the-Moors is a small, unidly, picturesque village, situated on the side of a hill. It has a railway station, a police-barracks, a solitary hotel, and two or three well-sized shops. It is old-fashioned, stationary, and, as a rule, hopelessly harmless, though now and then dissentions, based principally upon religious grounds, will arise.

These can scarcely be avoided, as one half of the parish trips lightly after Mr. Redmond, the vicar (who has a subdued passion for wax candles, and a craving for floral decorations), and looks with scorn upon the other half, as, with solemn step and slow, it descends the high hill that leads, each Sabbath, to the "Methody" Chapel beneath.

It never grows older, this village, and never younger; is seldom cast down or elated, surprised or demonstrative about anything. In a quaint, sleepy fashion, it has its dissensions, and acknowledges its festive seasons,—such as Christmas-tide, when all the shops burst into a general bloom of colored cards, and February, when valentines adorn every pane. It has also its fair days, when fat cattle and lean sparrows seem to be everywhere.

A marriage is reckoned an event, and causes some gossip; a birth does not,—possibly because of the fact that it is a weekly occurrence. Indeed, the babies in Pullingham are a "joy forever." They have their season all the year round, and never by any chance "go out;" though I have heard people foolishly liken them to flowers. They grow and thrive and blossom all over the place, which no doubt is greatly to the credit of the inhabitants. Occasionally, too, some one is good enough to cause a little pleasurable excitement by dying, but very seldom, as the place is fatally healthy, and people live here until they become a social nuisance and almost wish themselves dead. There is, I believe, some legend belonging to the country, about an old woman who had to be shot, so aggressively old did she become; but this is obscure.

About two miles from the town one comes to Sartoris, the residence of Dorian Branscombe, which runs in a line with the lands of Scrope Royal, the property of Sir James Scrope. Sir James is a tall, rather old-young

man of thirty-two, with a calm, expressive face, kindly eyes, and a somewhat lanky figure. He has a heart of gold, a fine estate, and a step-sister, Miss Jimena Scrope is not as nice as she might be. She has a face as hard as her manners, and, though considerably over forty, is neither fat nor fair. She has a perfect talent for making herself obnoxious to all unhappy enough to come within her reach, a temper like "Kate the Curst," and a nose like the Duke of Wellington.

Somewhere to the left, on a hill, as high and pompous as itself, stands the castle, where three months out of the twelve the Duke and Duchess of Spendleton, and some of their family, put in a dreary time. They give two balls, one fancy bazaar, a private concert, and three gardenparties—neither more nor less—every year. Nobody likes them very much, for just the same reason.

The castle is beautifully situated, and is correct in every detail. There are Queen Anne rooms, and Gothic apartments, and Elizabethan ante-rooms, and staircases of the most vague, and sliding doors, and trap doors, and, in fact, every sort of door you could mention, and all other abominations. Artists revel in it, and grow frenzied with joy over its impossibilities, and almost every year some room is painted from it and sent to the Academy to hit out side the chief beauty, for there are the swilling woods, and the glimpse of the far-off ocean as it gleams, now green, now steel-blue, beneath the rays of the setting sun. And beyond it is Gowran, where Clarissa lives with her father, George Peyton.

Clarissa is all that is charming. She is tall, slight, svelty, indeed, earth has not anything to show more fair. She is tender, too, and true, and very earnest,—perhaps a degree too earnest, too intense, for every day life. Her eyes, "twin stars of beauty," are deep and gray; her hair is dark; her mouth, though somewhat large, is perfect; and her smile is indescribable, so sweet it is—so soft and lingering.

Her mother died when she was nine years old, and from that time until she was twelve she spent most of her life with the Branscombe boys,—riding, fishing, sometimes even shooting, with them. The effect of such training began to make itself felt. She was engaged into a tom-boy of the first water (indeed, one of the purest gems of its kind), when James Scrope, who was even then a serious young man, came to the rescue, and induced her father to send her from Gowran to a school at Brussels.

"Virtue is its own reward," they tell us, but Miss Scrope felt no reward. Whether he did or not, I know he felt considerably frightened when Clarissa (having discovered who had been the instigator of this "plot" to drive her from her beloved Gowran) came down to Scrope Hall, and, dashing into his presence like a small whirlwind, and, with well-meant interference in good round terms, and, having refused even to say good-by to him, had slammed the door in his face, and, starting from home next morning, had seen no more of him for six long years.

At seventeen, her aunt, Hon. Mrs. Greville, had brought her back from Brussels to her own house in town, and where she once more renewed acquaintance with her old friends Dorian and Horace Branscombe. Mrs. Greville took her to all the most desirable balls of her season, to concerts and "small and earlies," to high-art entertainments, and, in a word, she was, and having given her free scope to break the hearts of half the men in the town, had sent her at last to her father, hopelessly in love with a detrimental.

The detrimental was Horace Branscombe. Mrs. Greville was intensely annoyed and disgusted. After all her care, all her trouble, to have this happen! She had married her own girls with the greatest éclat, had not made one false move with regard to any of them, and now to see Clarissa (who with her beauty and fortune, might have married any one) throw herself away upon a penniless bristler seemed to her to savor of positive crime.

Horace, certainly, so far, had not proposed in form. Mrs. Greville was not to be hoodwinked. He meant it. He was not always at her niece's side for nothing; and, sooner or later, Clarissa, with all her money, would go over to her father, and the thought of this shocking waste of money, she ground aloud; and then she washed her hands of the whole affair; and sent Clarissa back to Gowran, where her father received her with open arms, and made much of her.

CHAPTER III.

"O Helen, fair beyond compare! I'll hold up its garland of thy hair, Shall bind my heart for evermore, Until the day I die!"

Across the lawn the shadows move slowly, and with a vague grace that adds to their charm. The birds are drowsy from the heat, and sitting half hidden in the green branches, chant their songs in somewhat lazy fashion. All nature succumbed to the fierce power of Phoebus Apollo.

"The morn is merry June, I trow; The rose is budding fair."

Each flower in the sunlit garden is holding up its head, and breathing fragrant sighs as the hours slip by, unheeded, yet full of a vague delight.

Miss Peyton, in her white gown, and with some soft rich roses lying on her lap, is leaning back on a low chair in the deep embrasure of the window, making a poor attempt at working.

Her father, with a pencil in his hand, and some huge volumes spread out before him, is making a few desultory notes. Into the library—the coziest, if not the handsomest, room at Gowran—the hot sun is rushing, dancing lightly over statues and pictures, and lingering with pardonable delay upon Clarissa's bowing head.

"Who is this coming up the avenue?" she says, presently in slow, sleepy tones, that suit the day. "It is—no, it isn't—and yet it is—it must be James Scrope!"

"I dare say. He was to have returned yesterday. He would come here as soon as possible, of course." Rising, he joins her at the window, and watches the coming visitor as he walks his horse leisurely down the drive.

"What a dear little modest speech!" says Miss Peyton, maliciously. "Now, if I had been the author of it, I know some one who would have called me 'vain!' But I will generously let that pass. How brown Jim has grown! Has he not?"

"Has he? I can scarcely see so far. What clear eyes you must have, child, and what a faithful memory to recol-

lect him without hesitation, after all these years!"

"I never forget," said Clarissa, simply, which is quite the truth. "And he has altered hardly anything. He was always so old, you know, he really couldn't grow much older." "What is his age now, papa? Ninety?"

"Something over thirty, I fancy," says papa, uncertainly.

"Oh, nonsense!" says Miss Peyton. "Surely your romance, or else you are an invaluable friend. When I grow brown and withered I hope you will prove equally good to me. I shall expect you to say all sorts of impossible things, and not blush when saying them. Ah!—here is Sir James," as the door opens, and Scrope—healthy and bronzed from foreign travel—enters staid and calm as ever.

When he had shaken hands with, and been warmly welcomed by Mr. Peyton, he turns with some diffidence toward the girl in the clinging white gown, who is smiling at him from the window, with warm red lips, half parted, and some faint amusement in her friendly eyes.

"Why, you have forgotten me," she says, presently, in a low tone of would-be reproach. "While I—I knew you at once."

"I have not forgotten," says Scrope, taking her hand and holding it, as though unconsciously. "I was only surprised, puzzled. You are so changed. All seems so different. A little child when last I saw you, and now a lady grown."

"Oh, yes, I am quite grown up," says Miss Peyton, demurely. "I can't do any more of that sort of thing, to oblige anybody,—even though papa—who adores a Juno, and thinks all women should be divinely tall—has often asked me to try. But," maliciously, "are you not going to ask me how I have progressed (isn't that the right word) with my studies? You ought, you know, as it was you who sent me to school."

"I?" says Sir James, rather taken aback at this unexpected onslaught.

"Yes, you," repeats she, with a little nod. "Papa would never have had the cruelty even to think of such a thing. I am glad you have still sufficient grace left to blush for your evil conduct. Do you remember," with a gay laugh, "what a terrible scolding I gave you before leaving home?"

"I shall remember it to my dying day," says Sir James. "I was never so thoroughly frightened before or since. Then and there I registered a vow never again to interfere with any one's daughter."

"I hope you will keep that vow," says Miss Peyton, with innocent malice, and a smile only half suppressed, that torments him in memory for many a day. And then George Peyton asks some questions, and presently Sir James is telling him certain facts about the Holy Land, and Asia generally, that rather upset his preconceived ideas.

"Yet I still believe it must be the most interesting spot on earth," he says, still clinging to old thoughts and settled convictions.

"Well, it's novel, you know, and the fashion, and that," says Sir James, rather vaguely. "She looks absolutely nowhere nowadays if you are not the East; but it's fatiguing, there isn't a doubt. The people aren't as nice as they might be, and honesty is not considered the best policy out there, and dirt is the prevailing color, and there's a horrid lot of sand."

"What a dismal ending!" says Clarissa, in a tone suggestive of disappointment. "But how lovely it looks in pictures—I don't mean the sand, exactly, but the East."

"Most things do. There is an old grandaunt of mine, hung in the gallery at Scrope—"

"How shocking!" interrupted Miss Peyton, with an affected start. "And in the house, too! How unpleasant! Did she do it herself, or who hanged her?"

"Her picture, you know," says Scrope, with a laugh. "She heard that she had made away with herself would be too good to be true. She looks absolutely lovely in this picture I speak of, almost too fine for this work-a-day world; yet my father always told me she was ugly as a nightmare. Never believe in paint."

"Talking of Scrope," says Clarissa, "do you know, though I have been home now for some months, I have never been through it since I was a child? I have rather a passion for revisiting old haunts, and I want to see it again. That round room in the tower used to be my special joy. Will you show it to me?—some day?—any day?"

"What day will you come?" asks Scrope, thinking it unnecessary to express the gladness it will be to him to point out the beauties of his home to this new-old friend,—this friend so full of fresh and perfect beauty, yet so replete with all the old graces and witcheries of the child he so fondly loved.

"I am just the least little bit in the world afraid of Miss Scrope," says Clarissa, with an irrepressible smile. "So I shall prefer to come some time when you are in. On Thursday, if that will suit you. Or Friday; or, if not then, why, Saturday."

"Make it Thursday. That day comes first," said Scrope.

"Now, that is a very pretty speech," declares Miss Peyton, vast encouragement in her tone. "Eastern air, in spite of its drawbacks, has developed your intellect, Jim. Hasn't it?"

The old familiarity, and the sunny smile that has always in it something of tenderness, smites some half-forgotten chord of Scrope's heart. He makes no reply, but gazes with an earnestness that almost amounts to scrutiny at Clarissa, as she stands in the open window leaning against a background of ivy, through which pale roses are struggling into view.

Within her slender fingers the knitting-needles slowly, glinting and glistening in the sun's hot rays, until they seem to emit tiny flashes as they cross and recross each other. Her eyes are downcast, the smile still lingers on her lips, her whole attitude, and her pretty graceful figure, clad in its white gown, is

"Like a picture rich and rare."

"On Thursday, then, I shall see you," he says, not because he has tired of looking at her, but because she has raised her eyes and is evidently wondering at his silence. "Good-by."

"Good-by," says Clarissa, genially. Then she lays down the neglected knitting (that indeed is more a pretense than a reality), and comes out into the middle of the room. "For the sake of old days I shall see you to the hall door," she says, brightly. "No, papa, do not ring; I myself shall do the honors to Jim."

(To be Continued.)

A PROMPT MAN.

How Immediate Obedience Made a Governor His Friend.

The prompt man is always ready. The call may be sudden, but he is at hand and answers with vigor. He acts without delay, by virtue of an energetic will, whose rule is:

"If it were done when 'tis done, then 't were well it were done quickly."

Major Skinner tells in his autobiography, "Fifty Years in Ceylon," how his prompt obedience to an order suddenly communicated made the governor of the island his friend. He was then Lieutenant Skinner, twenty-one years of age, a member of the governor's staff and of his military family. One day between noon and one o'clock the governor, Sir Edward Barnes, seeing Skinner in the billiard-room, said:

"What are you doing here, youngster? I thought you would have been at Negombo by this time."

"What to do there, sir?"

"What! Have you not received your orders from the quartermaster general?"

"No, sir; I have not seen him today."

"Go to him at once, and be quick in what you have to do."

It was near two o'clock before Skinner could find the officer. When he caught him he was ordered to proceed to Negombo—an old fort twenty-three miles north of the Government House—to make a plan of the barracks there, and to prepare an estimate of the cost of repairing them so as to fit them for immediate occupation.

The lieutenant was annoyed, for he was engaged to a dinner-party that evening, to which the Governor and Lady Barnes were going. But he mounted his gray Arab, who could do almost anything but fly, and as soon as he got clear of the fort started at a gallop. At every sixth mile he drew bridle for two or three minutes, to give the Arab a chance to breathe. He reached Negombo at four o'clock, having ridden twenty-three miles in two hours.

Field-book in hand and with tape-line he made the measurements, jotted them down, drew plans of the barracks and wrote down the facts necessary for the estimate. Within an hour he was in the saddle on his return to Colombo, which he reached about seven o'clock. He then dressed and arrived at the dinner-party nearly as soon as the governor.

The moment Sir Edward saw him he said, "Well, youngster, what are you doing here? I thought I told you this morning to go to the quartermaster-general for orders."

"So I did, sir."

"And what did he tell you to do?"

"He ordered me to go to Negombo, sir, to take plans of the barracks, to report the number of men they could accommodate and to submit an estimate for their repairs."

"Then what do you mean by neglecting those orders? You ought to have gone off instantly."

"I have not neglected them, sir; I have been to Negombo, and your excellency will have all the information you require laid before you to-morrow morning."

The governor showed his delight by the glow of satisfaction on his face. He repeated the exploit to the dinner-party, dwelling upon the prompt obedience. From that day the lieutenant's promotion advanced, and when difficult or quick work was to be executed, he was selected to do it.

MONT BLANC'S OBSERVATORY.

All the Delicate Astronomical Instruments Have Been Carried up and the Work Will Now Begin.

The highest permanent astronomical observatory in the world—on the summit of Mont Blanc—was at last completed and fully equipped with instruments a few days ago. There has been a temporary station there for some years, but the instruments have been small and of little power compared with those now in place.

The establishment of this observatory was a task which at the outset seemed impossible, and the obstacles which M. Janssen, who headed the quartet of French astronomers, had to overcome, was unparalleled. Mont Blanc is nearly 16,000 feet high, and its ascent, even under the most favorable conditions, during the summer months, is difficult as well as dangerous. The transportation of many heavy and delicate scientific instruments to the top of this loftiest mountain of the Alps was, therefore, a labor so great as to seem beyond the range of possibility, yet it was accomplished without the loss of a single life. The telescope and the other instruments had to be taken to pieces before being carried up the precipitous mountain sides; even then some of the packages weighed a hundred pounds, and most of them about fifty.

One of the guides who assisted in the work holds the record of having made the ascent more than five hundred times since the beginning of his professional career, and it was he who found recently the bodies of the Austrian professor and his two guides who lost their lives not long ago.

In place of being entirely moveable about a pivot, like ordinary telescopes, the telescope on Mont Blanc is fixed and directed towards the polar star. A movable mirror placed near the lower opening enables the observer to study whatever star he wishes, its image being thrown upon the glass. This makes necessary a protective cupola of comparatively small dimensions.

The particular advantage to astronomers in having an observatory at such a high altitude as this one lies in the transparency and purity of the atmosphere. The study of the stars, however, will not be the sole task of the observers, for some of them will devote themselves especially to meteorology, as on the summit of Mont Blanc, says Prof. Janssen, they will be in the very origin of atmospheric phenomena.

Family Eyes.

Friend—Why didn't you ever marry? Maiden Lady—Because, by the time my relations thought I was old enough to marry, the men thought I was too old.