

*DRIVING A SEED.*

The land was still; the skies were gray with weeping;

Into the soft brown earth the seed she cast;

Oh! soon, she cried, will come the time of reaping.

The golden time when clouds and tears are past!

There came a whisper through the autumn haze,

"Yea, thou shalt find it after many days."

Hour after hour she marks the fitful gleaming

Of sunlight gleaming through the cloudy lift;

Hour after hour she lingers, idly dreaming,  
To see the rain fall and the dead leaves drift:

Oh! for some small green signs of life, she prays,

Have I not watched and waited "many days?"

At early morning, chilled and sad, she hearkens

To stormy winds that through the poplars blow;

Far over hill and plain the heaven darkens,  
Her field is covered with a shroud of snow:

Ah, Lord! she sighs, are these thy loving ways?

He answers—"Spake I not of many days?"

The snowdrop blooms: the purple violet glistens

On banks of moss that take the sparkling showers;

Half-cheered, half-doubting yet, she strays and listens

To finches singing to the shy young flowers;

A little longer still his love delays

The promised blessing—"after many days."

Oh, happy world! she cries, the sun is shining!

Above the soil I see the springing green;

I could not trust his word without repining,  
I could not wait in peace for things unseen:

Forgive me, Lord, my soul is full of praise.

My doubting heart prolonged thy "many days."

*J. L. Cosham, in The Sunday Magazine.*

*A STORY OF THE ENGLISH DERBY DAY.*

'It's only once a year, Julia.'

'No,' said Julia, doubtingly, wishing to see, yet for the life of her not being quite able to see, why 'only once a year' should alter the nature of a thing. 'And you'll come back in good time, George?'

'Won't I?' was his reply, as he went on adjusting his collar by the looking-glass in the shop, and now and then giving a satisfied glance at his face and figure generally. 'Won't I' signified 'I will' in George's idiom, so Julia was satisfied with the promise it conveyed—satisfied, that is, as much as she could be under the circumstances, not very favorable ones for a little woman with a baby two months old, with a house to mind, and a shop to mind, and with no very strong belief in her husband's wise behaviour on his yearly holiday at Epsom. But, then, what was she to do? George would go, and she was not the woman to hinder him 'by no manner of means,' she would have said, as she looked up smilingly at what always seemed to her his handsome face. She was not the woman, certainly, in these days to stand in the way of any reasonable pleasure for him! And was not this a reasonable pleasure? Well, she could hardly say; most people seemed to consider it so. And Julia was apt to think with the crowd. Last year George had taken her;—they were just married, and it seemed reasonable then that they should take their pleasure by going to the races after the wedding, it was but a day's trip, but it was what George called, and what she considered too, a very jolly one. There was the ride thither, in what seemed a grand

vehicle on the Derby day, when it was a luxury to get a vehicle of any kind; and George had driven, while she sat by his side in her white wedding dress and bonnet, conscious of looking prettier and of feeling happier than she had ever done before in her life. There was the great, wonderful crowd of people, all excited and happy—at least so it seemed to her—the hundreds and hundreds of horses and carriages, the grand stands, the splendid picnic dinner—such a dinner! Julia wondered whether that was the way they were going to live every day; and then the exciting, bewildering gallop of the running horses, the pause of straining expectation, and the shout and buzz when Vixen reached the goal first. All this she remembered with pleasure; but more than all, George's company that day, his smiles, his kindness, his pride in his pretty little woman, as he delighted to call her, his care of her lest she should take cold on her return.

And now it was a year ago—and the Derby day was no longer for her. Did she regret it? Not much in her heart of hearts; she was a woman of importance in these days,—a housekeeper—a shopkeeper when George was absent—a wife, a mother! Plenty to fill her hands and her heart and her brains had she now, and there was little time, of course, to think of holidays or of Epsom downs. But her baby was more to her than all the running horses in Christendom, her husband was handsome, and smart when smartly dressed; her house was smart and pretty; her shop was a very small one, but it would some day, she hoped, be larger and better filled with goods; she had good health, good spirits generally—what was there more to wish for? Not much, she thought, and yet she sighed. It was a very little sigh, but George heard it, as he was giving the last twist to his moustache, and he turned round quickly, saying, 'Anything the matter, little woman?'

'No,' said Julia, half ashamed of her sigh, 'nothing. But how time goes on, George!' She was thinking of the many changes and events of the past year that had come to her,—wifehood, motherhood, and some other hoods that, like their namesakes in dress, are as often a blind as a protection. George did not understand her thought, he was far too full of the races and himself. 'Time? Yes!' he said briskly. 'It's time I was off, I'm thinking. You've fixed the veil all right? That's the ticket!' and holding up his new hat before him admiringly, draped in its green gauze veil, before he put it on his head, he gave her a smiling kiss, said 'Ta-ta, little one,' to the baby, and was gone out of the shop and out of sight immediately.

'It's only once a year,' said Julia to herself, as she turned into the little parlor behind the shop to see that her young servant was putting away the remnants left from the hurried meal, half-breakfast half-lunch, that she and George had just partaken of. It seemed necessary that she should repeat this phrase, by way of comfort, and yet she was half angry with herself afterwards for needing to repeat it. It seemed as if she grudged George his holiday, and he so fond of a holiday, too. And yet, somehow, this Epsom holiday did not please her, as another kind of a holiday might. There were temptations: there was betting—she hoped George would not bet—and there was the drink. She hugged her baby afresh as she thought of the possibility of her husband coming home 'elevated,' and said, half to herself, half to her baby, 'We should not like that, my pet!' Such a misfortune had never yet befallen her; but these were early married days, and she had heard and seen something of the besetments of men in that way.

This busy whirligig world is to most

people a great mill, in which to grind stray nothings into money, into bread, into clothes, into house, fuel, and whatever else is needed or not needed; a mill that accepts everything as grist, if the right sort of grain is put with it. Julia's particular aspect of the world-mill was a haberdashery shop, and if bread and money must be hers, the mill must turn to-day, though the master should be absent. Customers came in, and she had to attend to them; several gentlemen asked for green veils, one or two for gloves; and Mr. Binns, the sweep, came too, at the last moment, for a knot of cheap ribbons, yellow and red and blue, to fix to his fancy steeple-crowned hat. He had made his face even blacker than its wont, and his teeth therefore shone all the whiter, as he laughingly fixed on his extraordinary head-gear, that was to be, as he expected, the envy and admiration of the race-going world. All these customers were in a hurry, and all more or less in high spirits, ready to laugh and talk, if they only had time. Some of them were neighbors, and amongst the rest was Mr. Roberts, who lived next door, in a large, grand house of his own. 'Husband gone, Mrs. Meadows?' he asked in his curt, insulting way. 'Yes, sir,' was Julia's reply, given deferentially, for Mr. Roberts was accounted wealthy, and not too good-tempered. He and his wife had been customers of late at her little shop, and though Julia inwardly disliked him, she tried hard to believe that she had no right to do so. He was a man that few people liked, indeed, or cared to talk about; there was not much good to be said of him, but as he was rich it was well not to speak of the evil. Late v, he had invited George to his house, and had even asked him to supper one evening, so that George, who had styled him 'a sourish sort of a customer,' and 'a man that looks as if he would like to snap your head off, Julia!' now declared him to be a 'regular brick.' Julia did not think him 'a regular brick;' there was but one 'regular brick' in her eyes, and that was George Meadows. But she never attempted to reason upon or to define her feelings and thoughts about her reserved-looking neighbor, and I am afraid could have said nothing more of her dislike than that she couldn't abide him; but then she would have assured you she had so many things else to think about.

Mr. Roberts's face did not look any pleasanter when she had said 'Yes, sir,' so she went on to explain a little. 'George thought he wouldn't be in time, sir, and he ran down to the omnibus five minutes ago.' 'He might have waited a little longer, and gone in my trap,' was the reply, 'I told him so last night.' Julia wondered much to hear this and admired Mr. Roberts' kindness and condescension in thinking of taking her husband. 'At all events, he isn't proud,' she said to herself, as she smiled and curtsied while handing him the gloves he had just bought. 'Mr. Roberts is better than his face says,' she thought as she saw him go out, 'but I wonder why he wanted George's company, and why George did not go with him?' Presently Mr. Roberts went by in his trap with two other gentlemen, the trap being, not a dog-cart, but a pony carriage that she had so often admired, the pony decked out in streaming ribbons and white ear-caps, and with a large peony on either side of his head, looking quite as proud as the gentlemen and Mr. Roberts, who were in smart attire also, with yellow kid gloves, light waistcoat, and gauze veils. She thought, with a momentary feeling of regret, how well George would have looked in that gay carriage, and have been as handsome as any of them—far more handsome than the dark-looking man by Mr. Roberts' side with the heavy gold chain, the sharp

prominent nose, and the keen business-like glance of the eye. But why was not Mrs. Roberts in the carriage with her husband? She answered this question by the reflection that Derby day was not a day for ladies so much, and Mrs. Roberts would perhaps prefer to stay at home, or perhaps her husband would prefer that she should; that was more likely, for it was whispered that Mr. Roberts was master and mistress too. Remembering which whisper, Julia gave a slight toss of her head, and murmured, 'He shouldn't be mistress with me.' She forgot how different different households may be, because of the differing minds and bodies that govern and dwell in them. She was pretty and young, and had sufficient self-assertion to be what she called 'spirited.' Mrs. Roberts was not pretty—her age was forty, and her spirit was, if not broken, bent and cruelly twisted. Julia's George was young and kind-hearted. Mrs. Roberts' George was thirty-five, and a hard, scheming man, overbearing and selfish. There were other differences, too.

How busy she was that day! More than once she wished for George to do this or that. Her little servant's head was quite filled with the talk and thought of this wonderful Derby day, and she forgot both her duties to the house and to the baby. The fire was suffered to go out while Julia was waiting on a tedious customer; the baby's hat was tied on wrong side before when he was taken for his morning airing; and the saucepan boiled dry and was spoilt. These were minor troubles; but when two customers left the shop because she was too much engaged with another to attend to them, and she heard that they laid out a sovereign at the shop below, she regretted George's absence loudly.

Mrs. Roberts was in the shop at the time—a very fallow, withered-looking woman, on whose face was written the word 'discontent' in very large letters. Julia had offered her a chair, partly from customary politeness, partly from compassion at her care-worn appearance, and Mrs. Roberts had accepted the chair at once, and had sat down with a sigh that had a suppressed moan at its ending. Was she so very tired with her short walk, then, from one house to the next? Julia had thought that it was tire of mind and not of body, and half unconsciously she had compared herself with the rich neighbor, and had felt a thankful glow that she was the richer of the two in everything of the most importance. There was a selfishness, perhaps, in the thankfulness, but at least it rose from no wish to perpetuate the comparison. Health, prettiness, cheerfulness, a kind husband, a child, a pleasant home, occupation—all these she had; and yet, if George were to die to-morrow, much of her wealth would vanish at once, while Mrs. Roberts's one possession of money would be hers, even more than now, were she to be made a widow. She was rich when Mr. Roberts married her, indeed he had no property but what had been hers; and at his death, Julia naturally thought it would all revert to his wife. But what need to think of this? Here was Mrs. Roberts seated before her, looking so old and ill, that it was her death that seemed most probable, not his. She had asked for a skein or two of sewing silk, and when these were found she had wanted a little blue riband to put on a child's hat. Her little niece was with her, and the riband was for her, she had said. But she had not paid for it. 'I will send the money to-morrow, Mrs. Meadows. My husband forgot to leave me his purse when he went out, and I haven't a shilling in the house.' 'No matter, ma'am,' Julia had replied, cheerfully. She would not have feared