

chose the best. Mr. Musgrove held a very different creed from Norah Gilman, and would have had scarcely any sympathy with her on any point, and yet somehow these two combined to produce one effect on Beattie. She began dimly to perceive that there was something in life beyond and above anything Aunt Ella had taught her. This perception became clearer as time went on, but it made no difference in her outward life. The sun was shining brilliantly and she was perfectly happy. It is only when the night is dark one is thankful to remember there is a star shining overhead, and looks for it in the blackness.

The tableaux were a complete success. They took place in the Chelsea town-hall, which was crowded, and the illustrated papers selected for reproduction in a notice of the performance a group in which Mr. Cecil Musgrove and Miss Beattie Margetson were the central figures.

It may well be imagined that two people so gifted with physical beauty were conspicuous on an occasion when looks are the main requisite, with all the accessories of stage lighting and make-up, and when the postures and costumes and surroundings were arranged by the foremost of the rising artists of the day.

One of the subjects selected for four groups was Longfellow's translation of Jasmin's touching poem, "The Blind Girl of Castel-Cuillé." In this, somewhat reluctantly, Norah had been induced to take part, and she represented the village girl Margaret, who had lost her sight. Baptiste, who was to have been her husband, but is about to marry Angela, was undertaken by Cecil Musgrove, while Beattie was the bride. In the first group, which had for a background—

"The mountain-height
Where is perched Castel-Cuillé,
A merry company
Of rosy village girls, clean as the
eye,
Each one with her attendant swain,
Came to the cliff, all singing the
same strain;
Resembling there, so near unto the
sky,
Rejoicing angels, that kind Heaven
has sent
For their delight and our encourage-
ment.

Together blending,
And soon descending,
The narrow sweep
Of the hill-side steep,
They wind aslant
Toward Saint Amant,
Through leafy alleys
Of verdurous valleys
With merry sallies
Singing their chant.
The roads should blossom, the roads
should bloom,
So fair a bride shall leave her home!
Should blossom and bloom with gar-
lands gay,
So fair a bride shall pass to-day.
It is Baptiste, and his affianced
maiden,
With garlands for the bridal laden."

In the second tableau poor Margaret is seen "in her cottage, lone and dreary," the quiet and pathos of the scene a great contrast to all the life and light and colour of the brilliant one which had preceded it. She has just learnt from her little brother Paul, that the bridal procession has passed by. In the distance the song is heard faintly. Then follows the scene in the church. Angela in her wedding clothes, decked with her crown and flowers, hears, as in the poem, all round her whisper—
"How beautiful! how beautiful she is."

Baptiste has just placed the ring on her finger and pronounced the word which betrays to the listening, tortured Margaret that it is indeed her lover who is marrying another. She has raised the knife with which, but for the fact that "anguish did its work so well," she had meant to take her life.

The last scene of course is the churchyard, where the hearse containing the body of the dead blind girl is being carried, "village girls in robes of snow Follow weeping as they go."

Of all the tableaux this series was the most successful. The contrasts were so effective, and all the peasant dresses were so bright and pretty, besides which the simple pathos of the poem thus shown to them went to the people's hearts. Norah really looked her part, and without possessing dramatic power yet somehow was naturally able to identify herself with the character of the pathetic peasant girl.

"A branch of ivy, dying on the ground."

But though she gained sympathy, it was Angela who was most noticed, Beattie, who always threw herself into everything she did, entered into the spirit of the poem. In the first scene, the brightness, the music, the presence of the other girls and the unusualness of her surroundings excited and pleased her. She looked so brilliant and young and lovely that it seemed hardly possible for Baptiste to continue sad for the thought of Margaret. Everyone was asking "Who is she?"

How it came about there was no knowing, but somehow an idea spread that she and Cecil Musgrove were lovers indeed. More than one of Mrs. Gilman's friends said to her after the performance, "Is it true that those two are really engaged?" Mrs. Swannington was one of those who heard the question; once she was asked it, and her negative was less decided than Mrs. Gilman's. She had a hope that this very evening the engagement would be an accomplished fact.

Indeed there seemed little doubt that Mr. Musgrove was falling under the spell of Beattie's fascination. He could not fail to share in the general admiration of one so fair as she looked that evening, and as they stood together and he held the hand on which he was supposed to have placed the ring, the thought came to him that the part they were playing now might one day be enacted in reality. Cold as he habitually was, he could not be quite unaffected by her presence. He kept close to her

even when they were off the stage. Some of the flowers she wore had been his present. And though he was not a man given to the paying of compliments and the making of pretty speeches, he did not attempt to disguise his delight in her appearance. Beattie received his attentions in a way that tended to increase his interest in her, though it might have made some men hesitate as to their acceptability. She did not show any of that confusion or timidity, with which some young girls meet the advances of men older than themselves; neither did she give evidence of special eagerness or satisfaction when he laid himself out to please her, as some of the ladies of his acquaintance might have done. She did not seek, perhaps she did not desire his love. To the spoiled man of the world her absence of any art was absolutely refreshing. Sometimes he was a little piqued at her indifference. Less frankness on her part would have pointed to a greater power over her. He was a man on whom possession was apt to pall, but he cared to obtain possession. He felt he would like to make Beattie fond of him. And yet he hesitated. Marriage was a great step and he was more ambitious of power than of love.

After the tableaux there was a *soirée* in the body of the hall. Music and refreshments were provided, and those who had taken part in the performance joined their friends. Most of them kept on the becoming fancy dress in which they had been appearing, and made the most of the inevitable congratulations and compliments. As usual the most beautiful were the least vain, and there was no self-consciousness in Beattie as she moved about with Cecil Musgrove, "If she were my wife," he thought, "I should certainly be proud of her," for he noticed more than she the glances which followed them.

Presently, having found her a seat he left her to fetch her an ice. Two old ladies were sitting behind her, gossiping, pointing out people to one another, and talking about them with the freedom which is as common as it is injudicious. Beattie, looking about her, did not at first notice what they said, but presently her own name caught her ear. In some mysterious way, a lowered voice seems to penetrate further than the one employed in common speech, when something is said that is not meant to be overheard.

"Oh, yes," said the speaker, "I was asking the same question. They say Mr. Musgrove is very much in love with her."

"Well, she is certainly very pretty, and I am told she is rich," said another voice.

"He might do worse."

Beattie had grown hot all over. She was blushing furiously when Cecil returned to her and could not meet his eyes. How dared people talk about her and him like that? She was indignant, ashamed, and felt a disposition to cry. Mr. Musgrove found her strangely quiet and constrained. He wondered what had happened to her, and could only suppose she was feeling a reaction