

The Little Grave.

"It's only a little grave," they said,
"Only just a child that's dead!"
And so they carefully turned away
From the mound the spade had made
That day.
Ah! they did not know how deep a shade
That little grave in one house had
Made.
True, the coffin was narrow and small,
One yard would have served for an
ample pall;
And one man, in his arms, could have
Borne away
The rosewood and its freight of clay.
But what darling hopes were hid
Cradled in that little coffin lid.
A weeping mother stood that day
With folded hands by that form of
Clay,
And painful, burning tears were hid
(Neath the dressing-lach and achings
And her lip, and cheek, and brow
Were almost as white as her baby's
Now.
And then some things were put away,
The crimson frock, and wrappings
Gone;
The little sock, and the half-worn shoe,
The cap with its plume and tassels
Blue;
And an empty crib stands with covers
spread,
As white as the face of the sinless
dead.
'Tis a little grave; but oh! what care!
What world-wide woe is buried
There!
And ye, perhaps, in coming years,
May see, like her, through blinding
Tears,
How much of light, how much of joy,
Is buried up with an only boy!

Selected Serial.

SHILOH:

WITHOUT AND WITHIN.

BY W. M. L. JAY.

CHAPTER VI.—Continued.

"Tell me, if you can," I said humbly, "why it was that I fell so completely and helplessly into Mala's hands just now, when I was so fully persuaded that I had escaped from her for a time, and was hopefully entering upon a new and better era of life?"

"The cause was complex," returned Bona. "In your temporary exaltation of mind you fancied yourself so secure that you forgot to watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. Mrs. Prescott's harsh, though not altogether unjust remark, jarred rudely upon your awakened sensibilities. You were physically exhausted and, as Mrs. Divine told you, body and mind act and react upon each other. Finally, if you want the whole truth, you are still thinking of, and striving for, present rather than eternal peace, earthly distraction more than heavenly consolation."

"Oh, Bona!" I murmured, reproachfully.

"It is true," she answered steadily. "I will not say anything about the curiosity, or the sad unrest which helped to induce you to go to the Warrens; perhaps human motives can never be quite pure. Your chief mistake was that you thought to earn present peace by doing Christ's work much as a man means to earn his daily bread by carting and or laying bricks; whereas, he who would do our Lord faithful service, must set himself thereto as a sculptor does to Art; thinking of daily bread, pleasure, fame, only as things which may come to him through his work, but are never to be confounded with its object. Art is dearer to him than they all; and his work in her service is less a labour than a love, less a means to an end than a self-forgetting worship."

"Was not my work at the Warrens well done, then?" I faltered.

"Very well, in the main. But that was because the Spirit of God worked with you. To him, therefore, be all the praise!"

Her words confounded me. I felt keenly their force and directness. Yet, as I considered them carefully, pacing absently to and fro, I discerned in them quite as much cause for hope as discouragement. For he who knows the exact nature of his disease, has only to set about seeking the remedy. And in this case, there was no mistaking it. "O Christ!" I murmured, "enter Thou into my secret thoughts, and lead them, as only Thou canst, up their Mount of Transfiguration!"

When I recovered consciousness of time and place, I found that I had been standing—nobody knows how long—staring vacantly into my

fireplace; which is filled, according to the quaint old fashion of the place with the feathery green of asparagus. Have I never described my room? I beg its pardon!—it deserved better things of me.

It is a large square, low-studded chamber, with a huge beam running athwart the ceiling—calculated to inspire implicit confidence in the building's strength. It has white-washed walls on three sides, and on the other, a dark wainscot of oak, in the midst of which is the queer high-mantel, and the fireplace. Its furniture is a study in chronology. A high post bedstead grates no aesthetic need, but with its snowy linen, homespun blankets, and gullies and stuffed counterpane (a miracle of patience and industry), answers every demand of weariness, and deserves respect, therefore, for fulfilling the chief end of its being—which is more than we humans do, as a rule! There is a stiff company of antique straight-backed, mahogany chairs, black, with age, and shabby glee with upholstery of threadbare hair-cloth, and rows of tarnished brass nails—picturesque objects to look at, and with a certain dignity of "immemorial descent" about them; but a plebeian Boston rocker, brand-new, furnishes more artistic curves for use. There is a quaint, dingy, wickered, stilted table, that irresistibly reminds me of a mummy. There is a very light-coloured, modern dressing-table that, not less unavoidably, suggests a mushroom. Over the latter, an ancient looking-glass is suspended from the wall, at an acute angle, having, for its upper panel, a curious composition in colour; in the Chinese School of Art, whose intent I have failed to discover. There is a cumbersome structure, mounted on slender, carved legs, which my hostess calls a "chest of drawers;" whereof the design must have been handed down from the days when "there were giants in the earth," the top drawer being quite out of my reach, even though I supplement my height with a chair. There is no carpet; but the unpainted floor is white with manifold scurrillings; and after some acquaintance with it, I am growing sceptical whether carpets are, in summer time, the luxuries we are wont to think. Mrs. Prescott, the grim embodiment of uncompromising neatness, avers that they are only hiding places for dirt, at any time.

"The dust," says she, "sinks into 'em, and sinks under 'em, to be raised and settled over again, at every sweeping, till both the carpet and floor are nothing but nastiness. No carpet shall ever again be nailed down, in any house of mine; I won't have anything that can't be shaken and aired, and the floor cleaned under it, every day, no matter what the fashion is."

By way of outlook, my room has two small windows in time-browned, worm-eaten frames. The panes of glass are so small and so imperfect, setting the objects seen through them at sizes and shapes, that it is plain they must have experienced the restraint, directly or by hereditary transmission, of the old, oppressive tax on glass; which made that commodity a subject of strict economy. All the windows of this ancient structure, by the way, except on the front, have a curious irregularity of position, seen from the outside; being subject to no external rule, but only obedient to the hidden law of interior fitness and convenience—an arrangement which has manifest advantages. How many rooms, in modern dwellings, would be unspeakably more enjoyable if a certain window could be shoved a yard to the right or left; but the inexorable necessity of putting it on a line with some other window, externally, was neither to be set aside nor overcome, in the builder's conventionally moulded mind, and so there is no spot in all their length and breadth pleasantly adapted to piano or sofa, or bedstead. This old manse is hampered by no such arbitrary rule; consequently, the windows are precisely where they should be for the highest internal beauty and comfort; and its exterior has, withal, an expansive, unconventional, hearty, and habitable expression, which is a better thing than regularity of form. When will our domestic architects learn that beauty is, far less likely to be found in uniformity than in its opposite—symmetry and balance, which are more essential being easily attainable without it! And why must the lives we live, as

well as the houses we build be chiefly directed to the attainment of certain external effects; to gain which, much interior beauty, fitness, and rightness, must be sacrificed or compromised? But my windows are giving us a deeper view into things social and spiritual than we had counted upon—let us go back to their material outlook.

One is thickly shaded by the overhanging pear-tree afore-mentioned, and looks to the south, taking in its way the riotous garden, the farther crest of Chestnut Hill, the white church, the grey school-house, a farm-house painted red, and a dark border line of forest. The other commands a wide view over a varied tract of country; the nearest feature being a vividly green meadow, dotted with great, gauged leafy apple trees, through which a brook goes singing and shining, and playing "peep-o!" with me from among tall grasses, pointed leaves of calamus and iris, and all the lawless and vagrant growths that huddle together on its border. This view would be one of still life, indeed, only that afar over the meadows, there is an opening where a brown band of road is seen, upon which, at irregular intervals, a primitive waggon attached to a sleepy horse, guided by a sleeper driver, or a slow-moving cart and oxen, or a stout countryman, with a stick driving a pig or a flock of sheep before him, appear suddenly from behind a screen of verdure, glide slowly across the intervening space, and vanish behind a similar screen, like figures in a dream. And these ever-recurring glimpses of human life—too remote to be intrusive, yet near enough to remind me of the innumerable and secret ties by which at every moment of our lives we are bound to a common humanity—save the scene from that sad loneliness of expression which is the inevitable peculiarity of views made up of natural objects only. Yet it seems mournfully enough typical, too, of the evanescence of human life, compared with the works of Nature—hills and dales, rocks and streams—things which change so slowly that they seem to us unalterable and everlasting, while man's appearance among them is scarcely more enduring or memorable than those gliding, panoramic figures in the distance!

CHAPTER VII.

EXPLORATIONS—REAL, MORAL, AND FANCYFUL.

Sitting by my western window, after I had written you my last letter, a fever of exploration seized me. That point in the north-western landscape, where the ground dipped into a dell or a ravine, caught my gaze and my imagination. What sort of a place was it likely to be? Cool, and shady, doubtless, for I could see great balls and cones of foliage, held aloft by sunken tree-trunks. Beautified with the ripple and gleam of water, surely, for the brook plainly knew the way thither, and took it in its own delightful, meandering fashion. I put on my hat and followed it. Leo, whom I encountered on the way, accepted an invitation to follow me, without the ceremony of putting on the hat!

Having reached the meadow's limit, my thinking guide dandered under a fence, which I was forced to climb. Then, dropping on a soft bank of moss, I found myself in one of the loveliest, dreamiest, shadow-haunted nooks conceivable. The brook flowed suddenly, with a low and liquid note, into a deep, dark, clear basin, bordered on one side by a moss-enamelled rock, and on the other by a steep, ferny bank, embossed with black tree roots, all overarched by thickly interlacing boughs of tall trees, through which the sunshine trickled scantily, in shining, golden drops. What a place for a troop of naiads to bathe! I half expected to see the lovely Ægle herself rise from the basin's clear depths, like Venus of old from the sea. Instead thereof, Leo plunged in, and paddled about with a face of serene enjoyment.

From this point the brook's banks continually gained in altitude, taking the form of a rough, rocky, wooded cliff on one side, and on the other of a steep, but smooth and green hillside, shaded here and there by huge, wide-spreading trees, among which I noticed an enormous tulip-tree, a very Anak of its race. Between these curiously diverse banks the brook ran, crept, sparkled and sung—tun-

bled too, once and again—but altogether as if it enjoyed it, for a shout of laughter accompanied its fall, and then it waded giggling and gurgling to itself, with occasional spurts of irresistible merriment, as if the joke were much too good to be quickly let go and forgotten. I crossed it many times in my progress down the glen, attracted by a gay breast-knot of flowers on the hill's green robe, a tiny fern-forest on the brook's border, a mossy, leaf-strewn ledge, all the more fascinating because well-nigh inaccessible, or a wild vine flinging an ideal grace over the gully, gray outline of some rugged rock, without impairing any really valuable quality, as a sunny and loving spirit may do over the hardest, homeliest duties of common life. By and by the hill began to slope off gradually, the cliff terminated in a sharp promontory of rock, and a shrouded rail fence marked the extreme limit of the glen. Under this fence the brook shrank into the dismal shadow of a dense forest—its song hushed, its gambols all over,—and flowed silently through a dead level of damp, black mould, scantily coated with a pale and fungus vegetation, and strewn with dead leaves and dry twigs, seeming at first half sulky, and altogether scared, by the sudden and complete change of its manner of life. Bona, Mala, and I leaned on the fence and looked after it.

"See! it is a type of your life," exclaimed Mala, less bitterly than her wont. "Just so, that went singing through flowers and sunshine, unassuming of change; just so, without volition or responsibility of its own, it was suddenly thrust out into an atmosphere of impenetrable gloom, and set to flow through earth dank with tears, fruitful only in disease and depressing imaginations, and strewn with the dry, rustling debris of dead hopes. Ay! look at the poor little stream and weep—you have cause! In its dumb, shadowed, monotonous flow all your future life is mirrored."

Boya (tenderly). Nay, shelter; there is shadow there is also shelter; the roof that shuts out the sun may shut out the storm as well. And notice how calm, and broad, and sweet-browed the brook becomes after a while; with here and there a speck of blue sky reflected in its depths, like a thought of peace. There are a few low, sweet flowers on its banks, too, needing its refreshment, and growing brighter and more fragrant for it; and beyond the wood, no doubt, it flows out into sunshine again.

I. If I were sure of that, Bona, the thought of that future sunshine would help me so powerfully through the shadow of this Present!

Bona. Have you forgotten the "glory that shall be revealed?" Mala. But it looks so far off when it is only the heavenly sunshine!

Bona. Only! After a brief weariness only long rest! After swiftly vanishing years of strife, only everlasting peace! After short pressure of sorrow, only eternal weight of joy! After hard faces of enemies and changeful ones of friends, only the tender, winning, satisfying face of Christ! After the rough usage of the world, only the everlasting arms! After a lifetime of desire, only an eternity of love! Can any—dare any—sinful mortal ask for more?

To be continued.

"I'm sair fashed wi' a singing in my head, John," said one man to another. "Do ye ken the reason of that?" asked the other. "No." "Weel, it's because it's empty," said John. "Aye, mon, that's queer," said the first one. "Are ye ne'er fashed wi' a ringing in your ain head, John?" "No, never," answered John. "And do ye no ken the reason of that? It's because it's crackit."

THE TRIAL OF MR. TONGUE.—Mr. Tongue was charged with being unruly, evil, full of deadly poison, and in proof of the charge the law-book was produced and a passage cited from James 3: 8. The defendant replied that it was not for Mr. Hart, who lived a little way below him, he should be as innocent as Mr. Nose or the Messrs. Eyes, and in support of his position he cited a passage from the same law-book, Matt. 15: 18. The court decided that the defence was a sound one, and that nothing really good could be expected from Mr. Tongue until a radical change should take place in his neighbor Hart.

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