

she put down her basket of dainties and went upstairs to her boy.

'Oh! the strain has been altogether too much for him, he has such an excitable temperament,' and in her anxiety for her boy she forgot her own disappointment and what his defeat meant for her slender purse.

'To think o' that—all them good things what his ma brought 'ome for his supper, and he don't feel up to touch a bit o' nothin'!

'Arf a pint of sparkling ale!—Well, what harm in that? Bertie could have told you the year's remorse he suffered in consequence! Mrs. West could have told you the year's pinching and scraping she had to undergo in consequence; and Bridget could have told you what privations her mistress went through in consequence; and if you cared to inquire further into the subject, the smiling waiter could have told you that when, after the lapse of a year, Bertie West (who had come up for another scholarship, and to judge by his joyous face had done very well) came into the same restaurant for a 'chop and potatoes,' all the answer he got to his interrogation, 'fine ale, sir! draught or bottled, sir! 'Arf pint bottles of nice sparkling ale,' was a decided slake of the bright head, while a rather inky finger pointed to a fragment of blue ribbon.—L. Ward, in 'Illustrated Temperance Messenger.'

Agnes Bryant's Work.

(By Edward Garrett.)

Agnes Bryant had always lived in town, the only daughter in her widowed mother's household. Agnes's father had been a prosperous doctor, practicing in one of those pleasant, old-fashioned squares on the edge of the city, now being fast drawn into the vortex of its commercial and manufacturing life. When he died Mrs. Bryant had not chosen to change her residence.

Everybody wondered and many blamed, but at any rate Mrs. Bryant's plan seemed to work well. Her children's health did not suffer; they were good walkers and talkers, with a vividness of interests and a wide range of ideas which made even their most critical friends acknowledge them to be fascinating companions. Uninterrupted and unworn by the trivial commonplaces of society, they read and thought more than do most of their years, and they all—Agnes and her three brothers—had that distinguished air which so often accompanies somewhat unconventional living.

The boys had done well at school and were on the threshold of manhood, when the happy little circle was suddenly made to realize that tritest of truisms, which nevertheless strikes each of us with a singular novelty, to wit, that in this world no state of things, however good and happy, is made to last. Mrs. Bryant died. That blow shattered the pleasant family life into fragments. The brothers and sisters were all too young to constitute a household without any head. Besides, the boys were choosing their paths in life, and now felt free to exercise individual tastes which they might have held in check for their mother's sake. Tom, the youngest, got a Civil Service appointment, which took him to Fiji, while Martin and Leonard clubbed forces and joined a distant relative who was a tea-planter in India. All looked forward to the day when Agnes would go to one of them; but certainly she could accompany none just now.

She was to go to her mother's two maiden sisters who lived with a widowed brother

in a cheery, roomy old mansion in the bowery heart of Surrey. Mrs. Bryant had been the eldest of her family, so that these two sisters of hers were comparatively young women, handsome, alert, and talented. As each had a private income as large as that on which Mrs. Bryant had upheld her household in London, and as their brother's fortune was considerably larger, it can be understood that they lived in a substantial, ungrudging style. Mr. Meredith himself was devoted to science, and would have led the life of a recluse if his two energetic sisters had not persistently kept him up to a certain standard of social duty. Miss Prudence Meredith 'went in' for public life, was a member of the School Board, chairwoman of a Sanitary Association, and a great promoter of village libraries and co-operative schemes. Miss Patience Meredith walked in more old-fashioned paths. She was the perfection of a housekeeper—having in girlhood put herself into practical training under the old servants who still remained to be proud of their pupil—a skillful sick nurse, the vicar's very stronghold in the matter of Sunday-school, choir, and village visitation.

'Agnes is certainly not going to any dreamy Castle of Indolence,' said her brother Martin; 'she will hear the last work and see the latest experiment in every subject, social or scientific!'

'And think of the lovely country life,' went on Leonard. 'She will waken in the morning to the song of birds instead of to the shriek of engines and the tramp of factory hands—or feet perhaps I ought to say. She will have her own flowers and her own dogs and ponies—a perfectly ideal life.'

'And despite the country solitude,' said Tom, 'the Meredith equipages and unlimited first-carriage fare will keep society nearer than it has been to us in the heart of London. The aunts know plenty of nice, bright people, and Aggie will soon be in no end of tennis clubs and archery parties. I think she is a very fortunate girl.' 'Yes, since, anyhow, the old life cannot go on,' decided Martin.

Poor dear lads! Did they really think that the great advantages they enumerated so glibly are the real blessings of life? Would these, without any addition of stringent duty or vague ambition, have long satisfied themselves?

Agnes Bryant, weary and sad from her mother's illness and death, and excited and exhausted by the winding up of the old home and the parting from her brothers, was aware, on first entering into residence at the Leasowes, of a great peace. The last six months of her life had had more wearing claims and interest than all the eighteen years which had gone before, and they had told upon the girl's nerves and strength.

They had been surrounded by a population so poor and so ignorant that the smallest economy and the mildest grain of knowledge could be utilized for somebody's benefit, and they had often denied themselves the more rigorously in many ways because they could see immediate results from such self-denial. So they had got into the habit of watching for the pleasures that cost least and yield most, and of making much of them for each other's benefit. It is wonderful what sweetness can be got out of life when its conditions need a little pressure to yield any sweetness at all.

Now all was changed. Agnes found herself in an atmosphere of brightness and luxury. Nothing was expected from her. She was responsible for nothing. On every

hand she found watchful care and efficient service. There was neither poverty nor suffering—in her London signification of poverty and suffering—within her ken. Life at the Leasowes went on as evenly as a well-regulated clock, wound up before its household is astir.

It was just what she wanted then, and it did her good so speedily that she soon found herself again, and then discovered that she wanted something besides—nay, that she wanted something without which all the blessings heaped upon her would soon become a weariness and an irritation.

'I took Agnes for a very sweet-tempered girl,' said Aunt Prudence to Aunt Patience, one morning, 'but I find she can speak just as fretfully as most girls do. I declare as she recovers her bloom she develops a discontented expression. I hope she is not to prove of the sort who can make nothing out of life unless they happen to marry.'

'She has certainly a little touchy way with her which I never noticed during her visits here from her home in Pindar's Square,' remarked Aunt Patience. 'She showed it only this morning. She asked me whether she could not take a class in the Sunday-school, and I said at once, "Well, yes, she might; I could spare her three or four children out of my class." Now, I cannot possibly do more than that, for though every child in the village comes to the school there are not more than the teachers could manage quite comfortably before the vicar's nieces came to live with him and we had to subdivide to find work for them. If I'd given Agnes three or four I should not have left myself with more than six or seven. And I could not promise her any from the other classes, for I knew what heart-burnings we had had over our last subdivision, and how each thought she had been deprived of her most promising scholar. I couldn't possibly do more, Prue.'

'Certainly not,' said Prue, in her decisive way. 'Three or four were quite enough to give her interest and occupation. Surely she did not expect more?'

Patience shook her head. 'Agnes wouldn't accept the offer,' she replied. 'She asked if I had more scholars than I wished to have, and I could not truthfully say I had, and I told her what had happened when the vicar's nieces came. And she said it didn't matter, she would give up the idea; and though I tried to persuade her and told her I'd be delighted to let her have the children, she still said no; she wanted some work for herself, but she would not take my work from me. And she was quite stubborn and there was a fretful sound in her voice.'

Poor Agnes! She had gone away to her own room and wept bitterly, thinking of the little class of white-faced city children whom she had taught in the dusty organ-loft of the old Church of St. Cecilia-in-the-Garden, and of how, when she had to leave, there had been nobody to take that class, but it had had to be distributed among the overcrowded classes, whose reluctant teachers were little likely to be very vigilant in any search after the little supernumerary lambs if they went astray.

That was only one of Agnes's many early efforts to find a place for herself in the new life where her lot had fallen. She had ventured into her uncle's laboratory, where the other ladies of the household seldom went. Both Miss Prudence and Miss Patience were fond of their brother, but they both stood somewhat aloof from his pursuits. Miss Patience had not much sympathy with his science. Miss Prudence