THE TRUE WITNESS AND OATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

UNCLE MAX.

CHAPTER III.-Continued.

I was rather puzzled at the sight of a little breast-knot of white obrysaothemums that lay on the table, until 1 remembered Uncle lay on the table, until 1 remembered Uncle Max; no one had ever brought me flowers since Charlie's death; he had gathered the last that I ever wore, some white violets that grow in a little hollow in the ground of Rutherford Lodge. I had tated painfully before 1 pinned the modest little bouquet in my black dress, but I feared Uncle Max would be hurt if I failed to annear in it. I wore mother's nearly failed to appear in it. I'wore mother's pearl neoklace as usual, and the little locket with her hair ; somehow I took more pleasure in dressing myself this evening, when I knew Unole Max's kind eyes would be on me. I had not hurried myself, and the second

gong sounded before I reached the rawing room, so I came face to face with had given up all that when-when-Usbia, who was coming out on Uncle Srian's arm. She kissed me in her quiet way, and, "How do you do, Ursula ?" just . though we had met yesterday, and passed

I thought she looked prettier than ever that evening,-like a anow princess, in her weits gown, with a little fleeoy shawl drawn round her shoulders, for she took cold easily. She had a soft creamy complexion and fair hair that she wore piled up in smooth plaits • her head ; she had plaintive blue eyes that could be brilliant at times, and a lovely mouth, and she was tall and graceful like Sara. They made splendid foils to each other;

bat in my o inion Sara carried the palm ; she was more p quant and animated ; her coloring was brighter, and she had more expression ; bu; Charlie's Lily, as he called her, was quite as much admired, and indeed they were both atr king looking girls.

I saw that Uncle Max took a great deal of not es of Lesbis, who sat next to him. I could not hear their conversation, but a pretty pink color tinged Lesbia's face, and her eyes grew dark and bright as she lis. the same old way. tened, and I saw her glance at her left hand where the half-hoop of dia-monds glistened that Charlie had placed there; she had not quite forgotten the dear boy then, for 1 am sure she sighed, but the next moment she had turned from Uncle Max, and was engaged in an eager discussion with Sara about some private theatricals in which Sara was to take a part.

When we went back to the drawing-room dress, trying to repair the damage that Scoty had wrought in her half-knitted atocking. and Jill, looking very bored and uncomfortable, turning over the photograph album in a so good and kind in this world again ? her Indian muslin gown : the flimsy staff did beads she wore round her neck. Her black looked bigger than ever when she stood up to

speak to Lesbia. "How that child is growing !" observed Auut Phillippa behind her fan to Fraulein, whose round face was beaming with smiles at the entrance of the ladies. "That gown at the entrance of the ladies. was make only a few weeks ago, and she is growing out of it already. Jooelyn, my love, why do you hunch your shoulders so when you tak to Leabia? I am always telling you of this awkward habit.'

Poor Jill frowned and reddened a little under this maternal admonition ; her eyes lorked black and fierce as she sat down again with her photographs. This four was always a penance to her; she could not speak or move casily, for fear of some remark from Aunt Phillippa. When her mother and big spangled fan, the poor child always Uncle Max was right. thought they were tasking about her.

Her bigness, her awkwardness, troubled Jui . xoessively. Her clumsy hands and feet seemed always in her way. "I know I am the ugly duckling," she

could say with tears in

She always would have it that her mother was hard on her, but she never complained of want of kindness from her father.

"Oolonel Ferguson comes very often," re-marked Leubla, a little peeviably, as she walked to the fireplace to warm herself : she was a chilly being, and loveth warmth. "His name is Donald, is it not? some one told me so : Donald Ferguson. Well, he is not bed; he may do for Sars. She has plenty of quicksilver to balance his gravity.'

Lyon rather surprised at this beginning; but, without watming for any moswer, she went on.

"What is this Mr. Conliffe tells me !" she asked, fixing her blue eyes on my face with marked interest. "You are going to carry out your old scheme, Ursula, about nursing poor people and singing 'to them. He tells me yeu have chosen Heathfield for your future home, and that he is to find you lodgings. Sit down, dear, and tell me all about, it," she went on eagerly. "I thought you but here she stopped, and her lips trembled ; of course she meant when Charlie died, but she rarely spoke his name. I would not let her see my astonishment, -the had never seemed. so sisterly before, -but I took the seat close to her and talked, to her as openly as though she were Jill or Uncle Max; now and then I paused, and we could hear Colonel Ferguson's deep voice : he was evidently turning over the pages of Sara's music. "Go on, Ursula; I like to hear it,"

Lesbia would may when I hesitated ; she was not looking at me, but at the fire, with her cheek supported against her hand.

"What do you think of it ?" I asked presently, when I had finished and we had both been silent a few minutes listening to one of Mendelssohu's Senga without Words that Sara was playing very nicely.

"What do I think of it ?" she replied, and her voice startled me, it was so full of "Ob, Ursula, I think you are to be pain. envied ! If I could only come with you and work too i-but there is mother, she could not do without me, and so we must go on in

I was shocked at the hopelessness of her tone, so taken aback at her words, inst I could not answer her for a moment : it seemed inconceivable to me that she could be saying such things. Poor pretty Lesbia, whom Charley had loved and whom I considered a mere fragile butterfly. Sne was quite pale now, and her eyes filled suddenly with tears. You do not believe me, Ursula; no, I

was right,-you never understood me. I we found Fraulein in her favorite red silk often told dear Charlie so. You think, because I laugh and dance and do as other girls do, that I have forgotten,-that I do not suffer. Do you think I shall ever find any one Oh. orner. She looked awkward and sallow in you are hard on me, and I am so miserable, her Indian muslin gown : the flimsy stuff did not suit her any more than the pi k coral like you : I cannot work myself into forgetfulness; I must stop with mother and do as locks bobbed uneasily over the book. She she bids me, and she says it is my duty to be gay."

I was so ashamed of myself, of my mean injustice, that I was very nea ly crying my self as I asked her pardon.

"Why do you say that ?" she returned. most pettishly, only she looked more miser able. "I have nothing to forgive. I only want you to be good to me and not think the worst, for I'm really fond of you, Ursula, only you are so reserved and cold with me." "My poor dear," I returned, taking the

pretty face between my hands and kissing it, 'I will never be unkind to you, again. Forgive me if I have misunderstood you ; for Charlie's sake I want to leve you.' An then she put her head down on my shoulder and oried a little, and bemoaned herself for being so unhappy ; and all the time I com. Fraulein interobanged confidences behind the forted her my guilty conscience owned that

CHAPTER IV.

WNOLD MAX BREAKS THE ICS.

Uncle Max was one of those men who like her eyes; "but [to take their own way about things; be hal taken my part behind my back, and he never hurried himself, or allowed other people's impatience to get the better of him ; "there is a time for everything, as Solomon says," was his favorite speech when any one reproached him with proorastination; "de pend upon it, the best work is done slowly. What is the use of so much harry? When death comes we shall be sure to leave something unfinished.'

"You and I are different people, Sara; we shall never think the same about anything." "Well, I don't know," she returned, half

weil, 1 con & Know, and returned, naif affconted: "when people try to be extra good I always find they encoued in making themselves extra disagreeable. It is far more religious, in my opinion, to be pleasant so every one, and make them believe that there mething cheerful in life, instead of pulling a long face and doing such dreadfully bad things." And after this little flag, in 18 80 which; she tried to be very severe, only as usual her dimples betrayed her, she begged me quite earnestly to smooth my hair, as though I were breaking one of the commandments by kceping it rough ; and, having obliged her in this particular, and allowed her to peep at her own presty face over my shoulder, we went down to the drawingroom as though we were the best of friends.

It was impossible to quarrel with Sara; she was as gay and irresponsible as a child one might as well have been angry with a butterfly for brushing his gold-powdered wings scrow your face; the gentle flappings of Sara's speeches never raised a momentary vexation in my mind. I was often weary of her, but then we do weary ot children's compary cometimes; in certain moods her bright, sparkling effervescence seemed to jar upon me: but I never liked to see her sad. Sadness did not become Sara; when she cried, which was as seldom as possible, and only when some one died, or she lost a pet canary, all her beauty dimmed, and she looked limp and forlorn, like a crushed butterfly or a draggled flower.

I do not think I was quite as, coo! and unconcerned as I wished to appear when I marched into the drawing-room, and, after greeting Mrs. Fullerton and Lesbia, asked Aunt Philipps for a cap of tea.

Quite a hubbub of voices had struck on my car as I opened the door, and yet complete silence met me. Lesbia, indeed, whispered "Poor Ursula" as 1 kissed her, but Mrs. Fallerton looked at me with grave disapproval. Aunt Philippa was sitting bolt upright behind the tea-tray, and handed me my oup, rather as Lady Macheth did the dagger. I received it, however, as though it were my due, and glanced at Uncle Max ; but he was too wise to look at me, so I said, as coolly as possible, "Why are you so silent, and yet you were talking londly enough before Sara and I came into the room?" For there is nothing like taking the bull of a dilemma by the horns; and I had plenty of, let us say, native impudence, only, persocally, I should have given it another name; and then, of course, I brought the storm upon me.

Sara was right. Aunt Philipps certainly talked the faster; Mrs. Fullerton tried her hest to edge in a word now and then,-a very soathing word, too .- but there was no eilencing that flow of rapid talk. I quite envied her pure diction and the ingenious turn of her sentences ; she made so much of her own admirable foresight and care of me, and so little of my merits.

"I always said something like this would happen, Ursula. I have told your uncle often-Brian, why don't you speak !--yes, indeed, I have told him often that I never met any one so strong-minded and selfwilled. You need not laugh, Sara,-unless you do it to provoke me, --but I have been like a mother to Ursula. Thank heaven, my daughters are not of this pattern! they do not mistake eccentricity for geolness, or flaunt ridiculous notions in the faces of their elders."

This was too had of Aant Philippa; only she had lost her temper, and was feeling atterly aggrieved, and Mrs. Fullerton, who was a meddlesome, good-humored woman, and who had nothing of which to complain in life except a little over-plampness and too much money, was agreeing with her like a good neighbor and friend.

Uncle Max was smiling, and pulling his beard behind his paper ; but he made no attempt to check the flow of feminine eloquence. He had said his say like a man, and knew women were like new wine,-very ior my age. cound and sweet, but they must find their vent. Aunt Philippa would be kinder ever after if we let her soold us properly, and took

cheered up, and made overtures that I might will hold a store of good things ; - you can come and kiss her too, which I did most willingly, and with a full heart, remembering she was my father's sister and had been good

to me according to her lights. When Uncle Max asw that reconciliation was imminent, and that by Lesbia's help I was likely to have the best of it, my own way, and a good deal of petting to fellow .for they would all make more of me during the short time I would be with them, -he threw down his paper in high good humor and joined us. " That is what I call sensible, Mrs. Gar-

ston," he said, paying her a compliment at once, as she sat flushed and fanning herself, "and Ursula ought to feel hereelf very grate ful to you for your forbearance and acquiesconce in her plan."

I do not believe he knew any more than myself where the forbearance had been, but he took it all for granted.

"Nothing put heart into a person more than feeling sure of one's friends' sympathy. Now, we all of us, even Garston, in spite of bis disapproval, wish Ursula good success in her acheme; some of us think better of it than others; for my own part, I am so convinced that she will have so many difficulties and disappointments to hamper her that I cannot bear to say a discouraging word. And yet he had said dozens, only I was mag nanimous and forgave him.

That settled the matter, for Aunt Philippa grew so sorry for me that she was almost out of breath again pitying me. "I do not be-lieve she can help it," she said, in rather an audible aside to Mrs. Fullerton; "ber mother had a sort of craze about shese things, and seemed to think it part of her religion to make herself uncomfortable ; and poor Herbert was quite as bad, only he was a clergy man, and it did not matter so much with him : so I suppose the poor child inherits it. This sort of thing runs in families," went on Aunt Philippa, in an awe-struck voice, as though it were a species of insanity. "I am only thankful that my own girls have not got

these notions." Mrs. Fallerton found out now that it was time to go home and dress for dinner, so Leshis came round to me and whispered that I must come and see her soon, for she wanted to talk to me, and not to Sara, who was al ways running in and out.

"I am very fond of Sara, and like to see her, she amuses me so; but when I want advice or sympathy I feel I must come to you now, Ursula." And though she had never said so much to me befere, I knew she meant it; that there were some change in her, some want of nature or heaven knows what feminine need, when she missed me, and wanted me, and found some comfort in the thought of me.

There was no time for more discussion, and ndeed we were all a little weary of it; but after dinner Uncle Max, who seemed in exellent spirits, as though he had done some thing wonderful and was proud of his own achievements, beckoned me into the inner drawing room under pretence of showing me some engravings, and, when we found ovrselves alone, he said, pleasantly, though abruptly,---"Well, Ursula, I thought you would be

glad to have an opportunity of thanking me, or of course you feel very grateful to me for all the trouble I have taken.

"Oh, indeed !" I returned, scornfully, for it would never do to encourage this vainglorious spirit. "I should have felt more disposed to thank you if you had not kept me for two days in suspense !"

"That is the result of doing a woman a good turn," shaking his head mournfully. The moment she gets her own way, she turns upon you and rends you. Fie, fie on you, little she-bear !"

"Oh, Max, do be quiet a moment." "Max, indeed! Where are your manners, child ? What would Garaton say if he heard your flippancy ?" But by the way he stroked his beard and looked at me. I saw he was not displeased. No one would have taken him for my uncle who had seen us together, for he way a young-looking man, and I was old

mike it as pretty as possible." "And Mrs. Barton, Max, --- is she a pleasant person "

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"There could not be a pleasanter. You will find yourself in clover, Ursula, you will indeed; she is a nice little woman, and has all the cardinal virtues, I believe; she is a widow, and has a big son who works as Roberts's, the builder's. Nathaniel is very big, very big indeed, so much so that I feel it my duty to warn you of his size, for fear you should receive a shock. The cottage just holds him when he sits down, and his mother's one anxiety is that he sheuld not bring down the kitchen ceiling more than once a year, as it hurts his head and comes expensive ; he has a black collie they call Tinker, the cleverest dog in the place, so Nathaniel says; and these three constitute the household of the White Cottage,"

I was charmed with Uncle Max's account the cottage seamed coacy and homelike.] knew Is could trust his opinion ; he was a good judge of oparacter, and was seldom wrong in his estimate of a man, woman, or child, and he would be especially careful to intrust me to a thoroughly reliable person. I-begged him therefore to close with Mrs. Barton at once; she asked a very moderate price for her rooms, and I could have afforded higher terms. It would not take me long to pack my books and other treasuree : some of them I should be obliged to leave behind, but I must take all Charlie's books and my ewn, and my favorite pictures and bits of china, and a store of fine linen for my own use. was somewhat demoralized by the luxury at Hyde Perk Gate, and liked to make myself comfortable after my own way. Poor Charlie used to laugh at me and say I should be an old maid, and, as I considered this fact in-

evitable, 1 took his teasing in good part. I told Uncle Max that I thought I could be ready in another week, and that I saw no good in delay. He assented to this, and was kind enough to add that the sooner I came the better. I was a little dismayed to find that he had not considered himself bound to keep my counsel; he had talked about my plan to his curate, Mr. Tudor, and I gathered from his manner, for he refused to tell me any more, that he had discussed it with another person.

This was too had, but I would not let him see that this vexed me. I wanted to settle in and begin my work quietly before the naighborhood knew of my existence ; but if Uncle Max published my intended arrival in every house he visited, I felt I could not even worship in comfort, for fear the congregation should be eyeing me suspiciously.

I thought it better to change the subject: so I began to question him about Ms. Tudor and Mrs. Drabble, the latter being the ruling power at the vicarage; and he fell upon the bait and swallowed it eagerly, so my veration passed unnoticed.

Uncle Max did not live quite alone. His house was large, far too large for an unmarried man, and he was very sociable by nature, so he induced his curate to take up his abole with him; but the two men and Mrs. Drab ble, the housekeeper, and the maid under her, could not fill it. and several rooms were shut up. Lawrence Tudor had been a pupil of Uncle Max, and the two were very much attached to each other. Uncle Max had brought him up once or twice to Hyde Park Gate, and we had all been much pleased with him. He was not in the least good-looking, but I remember Sara said he was gentlemanly and pleasant and had a nice voice. I knew his frank manner and evident affection for U. o's Max prepossessed me in his favor : he had been very athletic in his coll-ge days, and was passionately fond of boating and cricket, and he was very musical and sang splendidly.

The little Unele Max had told me about him had strongly interested me. The Tudors had been wealthy people, and Uncle Max had spent more than one long vacation at their house, coaching Walter Tudor, who was going in for an army examination, and reading Greek with Lawrence (or Laurie, as they merally called him) and mother

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and, being of a bustling temperament, and not averas to changes unless they gave her much trouble, she took a great deal of interest is my arrangements, and bought a nice little travelling-clock that she said would be useful to me.

Seeing her so pleasant and reasonable, I made a humble petition that Jill might be set tres from some of her lessens to help me pack my books and ernaments. She made a little demur at this, and offered Draper's services instead ; but it was Jill I wanted, for the poor child was fretting sadly about my going way, and I thought it would comfort her to help me. So after a time Aunt Philippa re-iented, after extorting a promise from Jill that she would work all the harder after I bad gone ; and, as young people seldem think about the future except in the way of foolish dreams, Jill cheerfully gave her word. So for the last few days we were constantly to-gether, and Fraulein had an unexpected holiday Jill worked like a horse in my service, and only broke one Dresden group ; she came to me half orying with the fragment in her band,-the poor little shepherders had lost her head as well as her crook, and the pink coat of the shepherd had an unseemly rent in it, -but I only laughed at the disaster, and would not soold her for her awkwardness, China had a knack of slipping through Jill's fingers; she had a loose uncertain grasp of things that were brittle and delicate; sha had not learned to control her muscles or restrain her strength. She had a way of lifting me up when I teased her that turns me giddy to remember ; I was quite a child in her hands. She was always ashamed of herself when she had done it, and begged my pardon, and as long as she put me on my feet again I was ready to forgive anything. Jill felt a sort of forlorn consolation in using up her strength in my service: she would hardly let me do anything myself ; I might sit down and order her about from morning to night if chose.

I made her very happy by leaving some of my possessions under her care, -some books that I knew she would like to read, and other treasures that I had locked up in my wardrobe. Jill had the key and could rummage if she liked, but she told me quite seriously that it would comfort her to come and look at them sometimes. "It will feel as though you were coming back some day, Ursie," she said, affectionately.

Late one afternoon I left her busy in my room, and went to the Albert Hall Manelons to bid good-by to Leabia. I had called once er twice, but had always missed her. So I slipped across in the twilight, as I thought at that hour they would have returned from their drive.

The Albert Hall Mansions were only a stone's throw from Uncle Brian's house, so 1 considered myself safe from any remonstrance on Aunt Philippa's part. I liked to go there in the soft, early dusk ; the smooth noiseless ascent of the lift, and the lighted floors that we passed, gave one an odd, dreamy feeling. Mrs. Fullerton had a handsome suite of apartments on the third floor, and there was a beautiful view from her drawing room window of the Park and the Albert Memorial, It was a nice, cheerful situation, and Mrs. Fallerton, who liked geyety, preferred it to Rutherford Lodge, though Leebis had been born there and she passed her happiest days in it.

I found Mrs. Fullerson alone, but she seemed very friendly, and was evidently glad to see me. I suppose I was better company than her own thoughts. I liked Mrs. Fullerton, after a temperate

fashion. She was a nice little woman, and would have been nicer still if she had talked less and thought more. But when one's words lis at the tip of one's tongue there is little time for reflection, and there is sure to be tares among the wheat.

She was looking serious this evening, but that did not interfere with her comeliness or her pleasant manners. I found her warmth gratifying, and prepared to unbend more than usual.

"Sit down, my dear. No, not on that are looking rather fagged, Ursula. It seems to be the fashion with young people now : they get middle-aged before their time. Oh, yes, Lesbia is out. It is the Engleharts' 'At Home,' and she promised to go with Mrs. Pierrepoint. But she will be back soon. Now we are alone, I want to ask pou a question. I am rather anxious about Lesbia. Dr. Spratt says there is a want of tone about her. She is too thin, and her appetite is not good. The child gets prettier every day, but she looks far too delicate.' I could not deny this. Lesbia certainly looked far from strong, and then she took cold so easily. I hinted that perhaps late hours and so much visiting (for the Fallertons had an immense circle of acquaintacnes, with possibly half a dozen friends among them) might be had for her.

shall never turn into a swan like Sara and Leabla,-not that I want to be like them !"-with a little scorn in her voice. " Leabla is too tame, too namby-pamby, for my taste; and S ra is stupid. She laughs and talks, but she never says anything that people have not said a hundred times before. Oh, I am so tired of it all | I grow more cross and disagreeable every day," finished Jill, who was very frank on the subject of her

shortcoming. I would have stopped and talked to Jill, only Lesbia tapped me on the arm rather

said, in a low volce. "I want to speak to you,-Jill, why do you not practice your new dust with Sara ! She will play nothing but values all the evening, unless you prevent it.'

But Jill shook her head sulkily ; she felt safer in her corner. Sara was strumming on the grand plano-torte as we passed her ; her alim fingers were running lazily over the keys in the "Verliebt und Verleren" valse. Olarence was lighting the candle ; William was bringing in the coffee ; and Colonel Ferguson was following rather unceremoniously. People were always dropping in at Hyde Park Gate ; perhaps Sara's bright eyes magnetized them. We had colonels and majors and captains at our will, for there way a martial craze in the house ; to-night it was grave, handsome Colonel Ferguson.

He was rather a favorite with Uncle Brian and Aunt Philippa, perhaps because his troubles interested them : he had buried his young wife and child in an Indian grave, and some people said he had come to England to look out for a second wife.

He was a very handsome man, and still young enough to find favor in a girl's sight, and his wealth made him a grand parts in the parents' oyes. At present he had bestowed equal attention on Sara and Leabia, though lose observers might have no load that he lingered longest by Sara's side.

How do you do, Colonel Ferguson ?" said Sara, nodding to him in her bright, unconcerned way, as she finished her valse. "Mother is over there talking to Fraulein ; you will find your coffee ready for you." And her glossy little head bent over the keys again, while the lasy music trickled through her fingers. Though Colonel Ferguson did as he was told, I fanoied he would keep a close watch over the young performer.

The inner drawing room had heavy velvet hangings that closed over the archway; on cold evenings the curtains would be drawn rather closely; there would be a bright fire, and a single lamp ghted. Very often Uncle Brian would retire with his book or paper when Sara's valses wearied him or the room filled with young officers. Since Ralph's deata he had certainly become rather faciturn and ansociable. Aunt Philippa, who loved gayety, never accompanied him, but now and then Jill would creep from her corner, when her mother was not looking, and slip behind the ruby curtains. I have caught her there sometimes sitting on the rug, with her rough head against her father's knee ; they would both of them look a little shamefaced, as if

they were guilty of some fault. "Go to bed, Jill ; it is time for kitle girls to be aslesp," he would say, patting her cheek. Jill would nestle it on his coat sleeve for a moment, as she obsysd him, Her father had the select place in her hours

. . . ,

So for two whole days he just chatted commonplaces with Aunt Philippa, rallied Sara, who loved a joke, and talked politics with Uncle Brian, and never mentioned one word about my scheme; if I looked anxiously at

coust my scheme; if I looked anxiously at "Come into the back drawing-room," she i him he pretended to misunderstand my meaning, and, in fact, behaved from morning to night in a most provoking way.

At last I could bear it no longer, and one wet afternoon, when I knew he was in the drawing-room, making believe to write his letters, but in reality getting a deal of amuse ment out of Sara's sprightly conversation, for she was never silent for two minutes if she could help it, I shat myself up in my own room, and would not go near him. I knew he would ask where Ursula was every halfhour, and would soon guess that I was out of humour about something ; and possibly in an hour or two his conscience would prick him, and he would feel that I deserved reparation. This little piece of ill-tempered artifice bore excellent truit, for before I had nearly finished the piece of plain sewing I had set myself as a sort of penance, there was a tap at the door. and Sara came in, looking very excited, with her bright eyes full of wonder.

"Oh, Ursula, there is such a fuss down stairs! Uncle Max has been telling us all about your absuid scheme. Mother is as cross as possible; she is so angry, and yet half crying at the same time.'

"And Uncle Brian," I exclaimed, eagerly, -" what does he say ?"

"Ob, you know father's way. He just smiled as though the whole thing were beneath his notice, and went on realing his paper, and when mother appealed to him he said, coolly, that it was none of his business or hers either if Ursula chose to make a fool of berself; she had the right to do so,-something like that, you know."

"How very pleasant |" I remarked, satirically, for I hated the way Uncle Brian put down his foot on things that displeased him. I preferred Aunt Philippa's voluble arguments to that.

"To make things worse," went on Sara, cheerfully, "Mrs. Fullerton and Leebia have come is, and mother and Mrs. Fullerton are trying which can talk the faster. Lesbia asked for you, and then did not speak another word. What shall you do, Ursula, dear ?"

"I shall just go down and ask Aunt Philipps for a cup of tes," I returned, coolly, folding up my work. Sara looked half frightened at my boldness, and then she began to laugh.

"It is so absord, you know," she returned, lisking her arm in mine affectionately. "What ever put such nonsense in your head ? you are so comfortable here with us_ and you have your own way, and I never took Aunt Phikippa by storm. She might anxiously if there were room for my piano tease you now about going to balls. It is so have been offended by Leebia saying that I and my books. silly of you trying, to make yourself miserable, and living in poky lodgings. You might as well be a fakir, or a dervish, or a Pretestant dicted ; but when Lesbia kissed her, and not mind it being a little low : it is only a nun, or anything else that is unpleasant." "My desr, you do not know anything oried a little because Charlie was not there couch, I spotted that at once, and a capital of it: so she refrained harself prudently "Only Jil," I said, half laughing. "If answered, mather, angrity, to see how pretty she could look, and than "easy-chair, and some corner cupboards that when I spoke of my approaching departure; you would take a little more notice of her

our soolding with a good grace. Once or twice Uncle Brian let his eyeglasses dangle, and spoke a pesvish word or

Wo. "Nonsense, my dear I have I not said over and over again that this is none of our business? Ursula is old enough to know her own mind ; if she chooses to be eccentric we cannot hinder her. All this talk goes for nothing.

"Ab, but, Mr. Gorston, young people want guidance," observed Mrs. Fullerton, impressively, for Aunt Philippa was beginning to sub, partly from the effects of wasted elo-quence, and perhaps with a little shortness of, breathing : anyway, her anger was working itself out. "If you were to advise Ursula as you would Sara, your influence might induce her to change her mind."

"I osnuot endorse your opinion, Mrs. Fallerton," returned Uncle Brian, dryly. "I am før too keen an observer of human nature to think we can talk sense to deaf ears with any benefit .-- Ursula, my child," turning to me with a smile that might have been kinder, but perhaps he meant it to be so, "there is not a grain of sense in your scheme : in spite of Cunliffe's eloquence, it will not hold water; in fact, in a little while you will be glad to come back to us again. When you do, I think I can promise that we will not laugh at you more than ence a day, and then moderately."

Now, this speech of Uncle Brian's made m very angry. No doubt he meant to be kind, and to show me that if my scheme failed I might come home to them again; but I was so much in earnest that his satire and his laughing at me hurt me more than all Aupt Philippa's hard speeches. So I flushed up. and for the first time tears came into my ever; for he had prophesied failure, and I words in my sudden irritation for which I carned his reward. should have been sorry afterwards, only Lesbis, who had sat behind me all this time, as silent and soft-breathed as a mouse, got up quickly and took my hand and stood by

me. "I think you have all said plenty of hard things to Ursula, and no one has been kind to her. I think she deserves praise and not all this blame; if she cannot lead the comfortable life we do, thinking how we are to get the most pleasure and enjoy ourselves, it is because she is better than we are, and thinks more about her duty. Mrs. Garaton, -1 do not mean to be rude, I am far too fond of you all, because you have all been so good to me,"-and here Lesbia's white threat swelled, - "but I cannot bear to hear Ursula so blamed. Mr. Cunliffe, I know you agree mer; and there is a nice little parlor with a with me, you said so many nice things when bedroom over it. That will de capitally, I Uraula way out of the room."

This little burst of eloquence surprised us all, Uncle Max said afterwards that he was Barton." quite touched by it. Lesbia was generally so quiet and undemonstrative, that her words was better than the rest of them, -- a fact that "Oh, yes, it is quite a good-sized room; my conscience most emphatically contra- that is why I wanted it for Tudor. You will was better than the rest of them, -a fact that

"I do want you to be serious a moment," I went on plaintively. "I am really very orliged to you for having broken the ice: after all, I have not been badly submerged. I soon rose to the surface when Lesbia held out a helping hand."

"Well, now, Ursula, do you not agree with me ?---was not Lesbia a darling ?' "She was very nice and sisterly," I confessed. "She has more in her than I ever thought. Poor little thing ! I am afraid she is very unhappy, only she hides it so.'

"Just so. That shows her good sense: the world is very intolerant of a protracted grief; its victims must learn to dry their eyes quickly." Uacle Max was becoming philosophical

this would never do.

"Never mind about Lesbia," I observed impatiently ! "we can talk at out her in the next room ; what I want to know ie, how scon I may come to Heathfield." For I knew now dilatory men can be about other people's business, and I fully expected that Uncle Max would put me off to the summer.

"You may come as soon as you like," he returned, rather too carelessly. "Shall we say next week, or will that be too early ?" I suppressed my astonishment cleverly,

but was down on him in a moment. "I should like to have some place found for me first," I remarked, sententiously;

"you must take lodgings for me first, and then I can settle my plans." "Ob, that is done already," he observed, cheerfully. "I have spoken to Mrs. Barton about you, and she has very nice rooms vacant. I wanted them for Tudor, until I mooted the vicarage plan. It is a tidy little place, Ursula, and I think you will be very comfortable there."

I felt that Uncle Max deserved praise, and gave it to him without stint or limit; he could not bear that, and I might have said took it nobly, like a man who feels he has "I fancy I have done a neat thing." he

said, modestly. "Directly I read your letter and saw that you were in earnest, I went down to Mrs. Barton and had a long talk with her. Do you remember the White Cottage, Ursula, that stands just where the road dips a little, after you have passed the vicarage? It is on the main road that leads to the common : there is a field, and one or two houses, and on the right the road branches off to Main street, where my poorer parishioners live. Oh, 1 see that you have forgotten. Well, there is a low white cot-tage, standing far back from the road, with rather a pretty garden, and a field at the back : people call it the White Oottage; though it is smothered in jasmine in the sum fancy. Only Mrs. Meredith lived there until

her death, and she left her furniture to Mrs. I expressed myself as being well pleased at this description, and then inquired a little

begged her to think better of things, she cottage, remember. There is a nice easy

Lawrence had meant to enter the army too Nelson, the eldest of all, was already in India, and had a captaincy. They were all fine, stalwart young men, fond of riding and hunting and any out-of-door pursuit. But there never would have been a parson among them but for the failure of the company in which Mr. Tudor's money was invested. He had been one of the directors, and from wealth

he was reduced to poverty. There was no money to buy Walter a com-mission, so he enlisted, bringing fresh trouble to his parents by doing so. Ben entered an but Lawrence was kept at Oxford by office, " an uncle's generosity, and under strong pressure consented to take orders.

The poor young fellow had no special vocetion, and he owned to Max afterwards that he feared that he had done the wrong thing. I am afraid Max thought so too, but he would not discourage kim by saying so; on the con-trary, he treated him in a bracing manner, telling him that he had put his band to the plough, and that there must be no looking backward, and bidding him pluck up heart and do his duty as well as he could; and then he smoothed his way by asking him to be his curate and live with him, so saving him from the loneliness and discomfort of some curates' existence, who are at the mercy of their landladies and laundresses.

So the two lived merrily together, and Lawrence Tudor was all the better man and person for Uncle Max's genial help and sym-pathy; and though Mrs. Drabble grambled and did not take kindly to him at first, she made him thoroughly comfortable, and mended his socks and sewed on his buttons in motherly fashion. Mrs. Drabble was quite a character in her way; she was a fair, fussy little woman, who looked meek enough to warrant the best of tempers ; she had a soft voice and manner that deceived you, and a vague rambling sort of talk that lauded you nowhere; but if ever woman could be a mild virago Mrs. Drabble was that woman. She worshipped her master, and never allowed any one to find fault with him; but with Mr. Iudor, or the maid, or any one who interfered with her, she could be a flaxen-haired termagant; she could scold in a low voice for half an hour together without minding a single stop or pausing to take breath. Mr. Tudor used to laugh at her, or get out of her way, when he had had enough of it; she only tried it on her master ence, but Max stood and stared at her with such surprise and such puzzled good humor that she grew ashamed and stopped in the very m ddle of a sentence. But, with all her temper, neither of them could have spared Mrs. Drabble, she made them so comfortable.

CHAPTER V.

"WHEN THE CAT IS AWAY."

Aunt Philippa had one very good point in her character : she way not of a nagging dis-position. When she solded she did it. horoughly, and was perhaps a long time doing it, but she never carried it into the next day.

Jill always said her mother was too indolent for a prolonged effort; but then poor Jiff often said naughty things. But we all of us knew that Aunt Philippa's wrath soon evaporated ; it made her hot and uncomfortable, of it: so she refrained harself nrudently . "If and, balf laughing. "If

Mrs. Fallerton looked rather mouraful at this.

"I hope you have not put that in her head," she returned, uneasily. "All yesterday she was begging me to give up the place and go back to Rutherford Lodge. Major Parkhurat is going to India in Fibruary, and so the house will be on our hands."

"I think the change will be good for Lesbia. It is such a pretty place, and she was always so fond of it."

"Oh, it is pretty enough," with a discon-tented sir; "but life in a village is a very tame affair. There are not more than tour families in the windle place whom we can visit, and when we want a little gayety we have to drive into Pinkerton."

"I think it would be good for Lesbia's health, Mrs. Fullerton."

"Well, well," a little peevishly, "we must balk to Dr. Pratt abont it. But how is Lesbia to settle well if I bury her in that poky little village? Perhaps I ought not to say so to you, Uraula; but poor dear Charlie has been dead these two years, so there can be no barm in speaking of such things now. But Sir Henry Sinclair is here a great deal, as 4 there is no mistaking his intentions, our Lesbia keeps him at such a distance.'

I thought it very bad taste of Mrs. Fulleron always to talk to me about Lesbia's suitors. Lesbia never mentioned each things herself. As far as I could judge, she was very shy with them all. I could not believe that the placid young baronet had any chance with her. She might possibly marry, but poor Charlie's successor would hardly be a thick-set, clumsy young man, with few original ideas of his own. Colonel Fergason would have been far better; but he evidently preferred Sara.

I was spared any Sep', for Lesbia entered the room at that pom at. Sh: looked more delicately fair than usual, perhaps because of the contrast with heavy surs. Her hair shone like gold under her little velvet bonnet, but, though she was so warmiy dressed, she shivered and crept as close as possible to the

fire. Mrs. Fullerton had some notes to write, so she went into the dining-room to write them, and very good-naturedly left us by ennelves

Leabla leoked at me rather wistfully. "I have missed you twice, Ursula: I am so sorry; and now you go the day after to-morrow. I wish I could do something for you. Is there nothing you could leave in my