

Family Department.

I NEVER KNEW.

BY N. N. S.

I never knew, before, the world
So beautiful could be
As I have found it since I learned
All care to cast on Thee ;
The scales have fallen from mine eyes,
And now the light I see.

I never knew how very dear
My fellow-men could be,
Until I learned to help them with
A ready sympathy ;
Their inner lives have made me know,
A broader charity.

I never knew how little things
As greater ones could be,
When sanctified by love for One
Who doth each effort see ;
But now, a daily round of care
May win a victory.

I never knew ; and still, dear Lord,
As though a glass I see,
And perfect light can only come
When I shall dwell with Thee :
When, in Thy likeness, I awake,
For all eternity.

—Living Church.

Molly and Nan.

CHAPTER IV. [CONTINUED.]

So Dan knocked the ashes out of his pipe into the fender, and mopping his forehead with the red handkerchief, rose up and led the way down the long flagged passage which ran from the kitchen to the front of the house, the little girls followed close behind him.

"Here's what we call the drawing-room," he said, coming abruptly to a halt, "though it's not been used as such for a sight o' years—leastways never in my recollection. Stay here a minut', till I let some light in."

And opening the door, through which a sweet musty smell was wafted, the old man went groping his way like a cat, until he reached a window, and flung the heavy shutters apart. Even then the light was dim, owing to the growth of trees outside and the thick silk curtains within ; but it showed the little girls the quaint, spindle-legged furniture—among which stood big china jars of mouldy *pot-pourri*—and gave an almost haggard look to the faces of the portraits round the walls.

"That's old Sir Knype Grabbet," said Dan, pointing with his stick to a big picture over the mantelpiece. "They du say as its a very good likeness—but I've never seen him. Nor don't want to, neither," he added with a chuckle.

"That's the ghost, you know," whispered Nan ; and she was almost glad to hold Molly's hand as they looked at the little lean old man, whose head was covered with a large thickly powdered wig, and in whose wicked twinkling eyes and thin lips there seemed to lurk an expression of malignant triumph. They felt his gaze to be following them, as they moved about the room, and when Dan told them of his two wives who had died of grief, and whose portraits with mild simpering faces hung on each side of his, and of the poor little step son who had disappeared mysteriously, and who was popularly believed to have been bricked up in the big chimney, they were sure the old fellow resented children prying into the secrets of his evil life. Neither of them was sorry therefore to exchange this haunting presence for other scenes less depressing, though they made a very wide circuit of the tall fireplace in the hall, as

they passed it in order to reach the broad oak staircase, lighted by a skylight in the roof above. The walls were hung with hunting pictures, old guns and outlandish weapons all the way up, and two dusty stuffed peacocks sat on each side of the balusters and guarded the entrance of the landing. Some of the bedroom doors stood open and the little girls peeped cautiously in, and gazed at the faded hangings and the stiff tables and chairs, which stood there so useless and idle year after year.

"It looks almost like the enchanted castle in *Grimm's Tales*," said Molly. "What a pity we can't find a sleeping Beauty in one of the big beds, and kiss her and wake her up—then we could open all the windows and clear up everything, and make it all look jolly again."

"I wish we could," replied Nan with fervor. "Oh, Molly," she added with a little cry, "do look at this picture. I never saw it before. It must be the little boy."

They were standing in an unfurnished room among a quantity of worthless old lumber, and the picture which caught Nan's eye was leaning up against the wall. It was an unframed oil-painting of a boy about eight years old, the canvas showing signs of neglect and ill-usage, though the graceful pose of the childish figure, and the rich coloring of his cropped brown hair and fine blue clothes showing it to be the work of no common artist. The little fellow was dangling a ribbon with a medal attached to it before a tiny toy spaniel, but his sad dark eyes were looking far away with a wistful expression which went straight to the children's hearts, and riveted them to the spot.

Nan was the first to break the silence. "I'll go and ask Dan if he knows," she said, and she hurried to the old man who was waiting for them in the passage, and overwhelmed him with questions ; but alas ! he knew nothing of the picture, except that he had moved it a few days before from an old cupboard to its present position. Nothing further could they get from him, but they decided to their own satisfaction, as they went down-stairs again, that there could be no doubt about it ; it was not possible that any ordinary little boy could look so sad and interesting.

"I can let you out by the front way if you like to have a look at the pleasure-grounds," said Dan when they had reached the hall again, as he fumbled with a bunch of keys which he brought out of his pocket.

"Good day to you," he continued, "and please give my duty to the Reverend," while they stepped out into the sunshine, and heard the key grind again in the lock, and the footsteps retreating down the passage until they died away.

The garden, if a name so redolent of summer scents and sounds could be given to the scene of desolation which lay before them, had evidently once been a place of some pretensions ; but now disorder reigned supreme. Statues of gods and goddesses, overturned from their pedestals, were lying along the ground, with ivy growing over their white faces, or else stood, green with moss and weather-stain, staring blankly at the tangle of shrubs around them ; a gloomy little summer-house, built to represent a Greek temple, occupied one corner, the hobby no doubt of some eccentric old squire long since dead and gone—now fast falling into ruin.

Molly wondered whether children had ever raced along the lawn, the very same little boy, perhaps, whose picture up-stairs had fascinated them so much, and at the thought she shuddered.

"Let's go back," she said. "I think it's rather horrid."

The weirdness of the place seemed to have affected them both, and they ran hurriedly hand in hand, as if Sir Knype Grabbet himself were after them, hardly pausing for breath until they were once more safely in the rectory

orchard, which looked delightfully comfortable and commonplace in comparison with the uncanny wilderness they had left behind.

CHAPTER V.

The days passed by, one very much like another, as soon as Molly had once settled down. At ten o'clock she went with Nan to the study armed with big paper books (for the rector could not bear the sound of a slate), in which they did sums at one end and wrote queer little Latin exercises at the other ; while Aunt Delia superintended her household and the small boys' lessons. These two duties disposed of she was free to hear the little girls read French and history for an hour or so ; and twice a week, Molly wrote a neat German letter to her mother, upon which Nan looked with awe and wonder, and often wished she knew as much as her modest little cousin.

Molly had not been long in the house before she imbibed a passion for painting, for her uncle, though entirely self-taught, had a keen eye for color, and every picturesque corner for miles round was known and loved by him. He set no store on his clever little sketches, which lay all over the house, and was quite humble about the talent which he possessed in no ordinary degree, and which a more ambitious man would have turned to some account ; but he was a most patient teacher, and the children felt no shame in showing him their very indifferent attempts, which he always criticized in the kindest manner. "Capital," he would say, holding up a very gaudy sketch of the house in its autumn dress of Virginia creeper. "You'll make an artist yet, my dear. Just a thought more cobalt in that distance, though, Molly. As long as you stick to chrome and cobalt you can't go very far wrong."

Many happy days they had with him, trotting by his side to some favorite spot, where they would mess with his best paints and try to draw one subject after another, until Aunt Delia said the weather was too cold for any of them to sit out, and that they must really finish their sketches properly indoors.

Then before the end of October there were grand blackberrying days, when they would all start gaily out in their oldest clothes with the donkey-cart, laden with baskets and brandishing big crook sticks—which they had taught Molly to call by the the Eastern countries' name of *cromes*—coming back in time for tea, with torn frocks and scratched hands and faces, tired out and rather cross.

"You should have been here last year," said Nan, when they were all out on one of these expeditions. "We *did* have such a splendid time. There were more blackberries, and of course the boys were at home to help them. We made heaps of jam ourselves too, and sold a lot to mother to pay for those new rabbit-hutches."

"We used to get wild raspberries at Schwarzburg in the summer," said Molly, "and just now they're all gathering the grapes. We had our own little vineyard—something like the cardboard one mother sent Paul at Christmas. You should have seen the frogs in it, quite fat and yellow. Some people we knew used to eat their hind legs, and say they were awfully good."

"La!" exclaimed Hannan, who was wrestling with a bramble which had entangled itself in her dress. "I never! It give me quite a turn to hear you talk! Come and stamp on this fellow Master Paul, there's a dear."

"Oh, they were cooked all right, you know, and there were always lots in the market," said Molly.

"Well, and they eat snails in Spain. Father told me so ; and I don't think it's any worse than eating *penny winckles*," said Nan, who was always anxious to stick up for Molly in every-