

An Allegory Worth Reading.

BY MRS. H. GRATTAN GUINNESS.

A WEALTHY farmer, who cultivated some thousands of acres, had by his benevolence endeared himself greatly to his large staff of laborers. He had occasion to leave the country, in which his property was situated, for some years, but before doing so, he gave his people clearly to understand that he wished the whole of the cultivated lands to be kept in hand, and all the unreclaimed moor and marsh lands enclosed and drained and brought into cultivation; that even the hills were to be terraced, and the poor mountain pastures manured, so that no single corner of the estate should remain neglected and barren. Ample resources were left for the execution of these works, and there were sufficient hands to have accomplished the whole within the first few years of the proprietor's absence.

He was detained in the country to which he had been called, very many years. Those whom he left children were men and women when he came back, and so the number of his tenantry and laborers was vastly multiplied. Was the task he had left them accomplished? Alas! no. Bog and moor and mountain waste were only wilder and more desolate than ever. Fine rich virgin soil by thousands of acres was bearing only briars and thistles.

Meadow after meadow was utterly barren for want of culture. Nay, by far the largest part of the farm seemed never to have been visited by his servants.

Had they been idle? Some had. But large numbers had been industrious enough. They had expended a vast amount of labor, and skilled labor too, but they had bestowed it all on the park immediately around the house. This had been cultivated to such a pitch of perfection that the workmen had scores of times quarrelled with each other because the operations of one interfered with those of his neighbor. And a vast amount of labor had been *lost* in sowing the very same patch, for instance, with corn fifty times over in one season, so that the seed never had time to germinate, and grow, and bear fruit; in caring for forest trees as if they were saplings; in manuring soils already too fat, and watering pastures already too wet.

The farmer was positively astonished at the misplaced ingenuity with which labor, seed, and manure, skill, time, and strength had been wasted for no result. The very same amount of toil and capital, expended according to his directions, would have brought the whole demense into culture, and yielded a noble revenue. But season after season had rolled away in sad succession, leaving those unbounded acres of various, but all reclaimable soil, barren and useless; and as to the park, it would have been far more productive and perfect had it been relieved of the extraordinary and unaccountable amount of energy expended on it.

Why did these laborers act so absurdly? Did they wish to labor in vain? On the contrary! They were forever craving for fruit,