

proof cloak and thick boots were seen and heard in the little cottage at all hours. She walked the two miles and a half that separated Hazlehurst from Hammerham, four times a day, splashing through the November mud with as much indifference as if she were a troop of cavalry. She reduced the village servant to a state approaching petrification, by the rapidity of her investigations in kitchen, wash-house, and coal-shed. She charged at everybody and everything. As to Dooley, after a slow and conscientious examination of her waterproof cloak, and after the candid expression of his opinion that it had a very nasty smell, he took the habit of retreating into his mother's chamber whenever Miss Fluke's voice was heard, and lying there perdu until her departure. On one occasion he was found secreted under the bed, with the kitten in his arms, and was with difficulty induced by his sister to come out.

"Me and pussy," he confided to her, "doesn't want to peak to Miss Fook. Pussy 'ests her."

"Dooley!" said his sister. "Why does pussy detest Miss Fluko? I am sure she wouldn't hurt pussy."

"N—no," returned Dooley, reflectively, "not hurt her; but she—she trokes her so very hard."

Miss Fluke, in fact, was stroking the whole household very hard.

The Sunday was clear and cold, and mother and daughter walked together to the little old parish church, where, in presence of a scanty and humble congregation, the morning service was mildly performed, and a mild sermon was mildly preached by a mild old gentleman in silver-rimmed spectacles. Dooley was taken to church on this occasion for the first time in his life, so very successfully, that he came home in a high state of enjoyment, announcing his intention of always going to church with mamma when Mabel should be away.

As they approached the cottage, which was separated from the high road by a very narrow strip of garden enclosed within a wooden fence, they saw the little servant standing at the front door with her arms wrapped in her apron—for it was now late in November, and the day was cold—and looking out for their return.

"Missis, there's two young gents comed to see ye."

"Two what?" said Mrs. Saxelby.

"Two young gents. And I telled 'un you was at church, and they said as they'd bide till you could home, and they're a-smokin' in the paddock, and I asked 'un into the parlour, and they said how they oodn't like to make it smell of baccy. But I telled 'un they was welcome to, added Betty, with a commendable sense of hospitality.

Clement Charlewood and his brother Walter appeared at the back door leading from the paddock.

Mabel felt angry with herself as she became conscious of colouring violently. When it came to her turn to greet Clement Charlewood, she gave him the tips of her fingers and the coldest of salutations.

"I'm so glad to see you!" said Mrs. Saxelby. "You are very good to walk over in time to say a farewell word to Mabel." Mrs. Saxelby preceded the two young men into the parlour.

"I'll go up-stairs with Dooley, and take his things off, mamma," said Mabel.

Mrs. Saxelby was always popular with the younger men of her acquaintance, for she combined with a motherly manner which put them at their ease, a soft feminine helplessness which is usually gracious in the eyes of most men, young or old. In answer to her inquiries, Clement said that his mother and sisters were very well, and were very sorry not to see Miss Earnshaw before she went, and sent much love to her.

Clement had announced his intention of walking over to Hazlehurst, that morning at breakfast at Bramley Manor, and Walter—who always found his time rather more difficult to get rid of on Sunday than on any other day—had volunteered to accompany him. So the two young men had come together, enjoying by the way a brotherly chat, the most intimate and friendly they had had for a long time.

"And what are you doing, Walter?" said Mrs. Saxelby. "It is an age since I saw you, and, if I didn't fear to affront you, I should almost make bold to say you had grown."

Walter laughed and coloured.

"Oh, I shan't be a bit affronted at that, Mrs. Saxelby. But as to what I am doing, the fact is I am doing nothing. Just waiting for my commission. It's a deuce of a bore, hanging on like this."

"Then you have really made up your mind to go into the army, Walter?"

"Oh yes, fixed as fate. It's the only profession for a gentleman—I mean, it's about the only thing to suit me."

"Drill, dress, and dinner, Watty. That's what I tell him an officer's life consists of, Mrs. Saxelby," said Clement. "So I dare say he is right in his estimate of his fitness for it."

"All but the drill," returned Watty, good humouredly. "Confound that part of the business!"

Here Betty appeared at the parlour door, holding a clean tablecloth under her arm, and asked in a loud hoarse tone which possibly was meant for a whisper: "The mate's done. Be they a goun' to stop dinner?"

The young men rose.

"Nay, you must stay and eat something with us," said Mrs. Saxelby. "Call it lunch if you like. Lay two more plates, and knives, and forks, Betty. And call Miss Mabel and Master Dooley. Give me the cloth; I will spread it."

Clement and Walter were willing enough to remain, but feared they should be "in the way."

"In the way? Nonsense! I won't let you be in the way; never fear."

Mabel, though not able quite to banish the recollection of Penelope's words, was yet glad, on the whole, that they remained, for her mother brightened under the influence of their presence.

After the meal was over, Dooley urgently entreated his friend Walter to "tum and 'ook at do pig."

"He lives in a ty," said Dooley, eagerly, "an' he knows me. I durst div him apples. I ain't frightened, because Tibby says he's a dood pig. Tum an' see him." Dooley seized Walter's hand, and pulled him without more ado into the paddock, at one corner of which stood the pigsty.

"May I not see this interesting animal too?" asked Clement.

"Oh, certainly," returned Mrs. Saxelby. "Pray look at him, and give me your candid opinion of his beauties. As I am quite ignorant of the subject, you will be safe in pronouncing your judgment. Mabel, my darling, I won't go out. It is too cold for me. Take Mr. Charlewood over the extensive domain, and I will have a cup of coffee ready by the time you come back."

Mabel put on an old garden-hat of very determined ugliness, and tucked up her gown so as to show a pair of hideous goshes which effectually disfigured the pretty feet that Mrs. Hutchins had mentally compared to Rosalba's of Naples.

"The paddock is damp," she said, curtly, and without another word preceded Clement. They had not gone many paces, when Clement stopped. "Miss Earnshaw, I have a message for you which I must not forget to deliver."

Mabel stopped also, and, without turning completely round, looked over her shoulder at him. "A message for me?"

"Yes, I think you can guess from whom. Little Corda Trescott sends you—I must be exact for the words were confided to me with many solicitous injunctions to repeat them literally—sends you her dearest love and thanks, and is grieved to hear of your sorrow, and will never, never forget you, and hopes some day to see you again. That is my message."

Mabel's face softened into a girlish tender smile, that had a lurking sadness in it. "Ah, poor little Corda! Thank you, Mr. Charlewood. Then you have seen her again? That is very good of you."

"I saw her yesterday. She is getting quite strong, if one may apply the term to anything so fragile. She still has some books of yours, she tells me. I have promised to bring them to

Hazlehurst when she has read them, and after you—Miss Earnshaw, I am an older friend than Corda. Don't refuse me the privilege of saying, as she says, that I shall never, never forget you, and that I hope to see you again."

"You are very kind," said Mabel, in so low a tone as to be almost inaudible.

"Not kind in that hope; rather say, selfish. But it is more than a hope with me. It is a resolution."

"We are near the pig," said Mabel, ruthlessly. If she were cold, Clement was earnest. He would not suffer his words to be so put aside.

"I not only hope, but I intend to see you again. I shall say au revoir when we part."

"No, Mr. Charlewood. I fear you had best say adieu."

"Adieu? No! You will at least come to Hazlehurst for your holidays. And it is possible" (Clement blushed a little here), "nay, very probable, that I may be running over to Eastfield on business."

"I think it very likely that I shall not return to Hazlehurst for any length of time. I have a feeling that my career at Eastfield will be but a brief one. However, I have promised to try it. But here is the pig, and here is Dooley, over his ankles in mud. Dooley, you must come in with me directly, and change your wet shoes and stockings."

When the time came for the brothers to take their leave and walk back towards Hammerham, Mrs. Saxelby's spirits sank. It was a foretaste of the parting with Mabel.

"Come and see mamma, sometimes, when you can, Watty," said Mabel, taking his hand. She made no similar request to Clement; but her mother added: "Oh, do come, both of you! I am, and shall be, so thankful to see you."

"Will you please, Mr. Charlewood," Mabel added, softening at the last moment, "to give my kind love to little Corda? And will you tell her, from me, to keep those other books I lent her, and to take care of them for my sake? They were given to me by some one whom I loved very dearly. God bless you, Mr. Charlewood! Adieu!"

"Au revoir, Mabel," said the young man, holding both her hands, and looking gratefully into her eyes. "Au revoir!"

Thus Mabel Earnshaw and Clement Charlewood parted.

END OF BOOK I.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I. A BACKWARD GLANCE.

PHILIP EARNSHAW, Mabel's father, a scientific chemist of some standing, had worked his way to a good position in the scientific world, by dint of enormous industry and considerable talent. He had a younger brother, who was also a chemist, and for whom his influence procured an engagement as superintendent of some large chemical works in the north.

This brother John Earnshaw, was a lively well-looking young man, fonder of play than of work, but on the whole fairly steady, and generally considered by his intimates a "very good fellow." One day he was astonished and shocked his family, who were rigid Presbyterians, by bringing home as his wife a young lady who had been performing for a couple of seasons at the theatre of the little provincial town in which he lived. Marry an actress! No words can describe the horror of his relatives; curiously enough, it was the most distant of his kinsfolk who appeared to find the enormity of John's proceeding the most intolerable. It seemed as if the acuteness of their suffering on the occasion were in exact proportion to the probability of their ever being brought into personal contact with the young couple. One old lady, who had resided for five-and-thirty years in one of the Orkney Islands, and who had never manifested the slightest intention of quitting them, took the trouble to write a long letter to her third cousin, John Earnshaw, for the express purpose of informing him that, after the way in which he had disgraced the family, she felt reluctantly compelled to cast him off for ever.