THE LITTLE OLD SECRETARY

(CONTINUED.)

Eleanor flew away, leaving Kathleen full of sympathy for her. She was delighted at being asked about her mother's ways and thoughts, and she felt safe in holding up that beautiful mother as an example, while she felt very unsafe in giving her own opinion about anything. Her comment to herself that morning was: "I thought Honor empty-headed and spoilt; and I fancied Eleanor thoughtless and selfish; and what good hearts they both have! How rashly I judged them!"

The painting went on prosperously now that she had the room to herself. The bright blue sea seemed as if it came rippling up to the window on purpose to be looked at; the clouds took more than usually picturesque forms.

Kathleen was so intent on her work she could hardly spare time to eat a mouthful of luncheon, and by five o'clock in the afternoon she had finished a very capital representation of the Red Sea after its watery walls had closed over Pharoah, and Miriam and her companions were chanting their song of triumph on its shore. By that time she was flushed and tired, for her great love of painting had made it an exciting employment to her, and the sweet scents and rural sounds that reached her through the open window attracted her irresistibly.

Taking Rose with her as a protection, she went out into the fresh breezy air, with the eagerness of one to whom the voice of spring was full of joy. Turning from the sea coast into the country, the two young girls explored lanes of such picturesque beauty that Kathleen stopped every few minutes to choose the place for a sketch. The banks were full of violets and starred with primroses and blue veronica; and at every opening, glades filled with apple-trees showed white with blossoms, while, whenever they reached a point of any height, glimpses of the blue sea between the tender green of the trees came to make the picture perfect.

"Oh! it is too beautiful," Kathleen kept exclaiming; "it is more than one can take in."

At last Rose said, she was sure it was time to go back, so they turned and retraced their steps. They had been walking steadily homeward for some time, when Kathleen suddenly stood quite still with a look of terror on her face, and then, without a word to Rose, made one bound down two or three rough steps that led to a cottage, the level of which was considerably lower than the road.

Rose darted after her and found her doing battle with an old sow, who was rooting fiercely with its snout into a cradle where a baby about seven months old was laying. Her quick ear had caught the baby's cry, and knew it to be a cry of mingled pain and terror.

"Oh! drive it away, Rose," she exclaimed, "drive it away! while I see if the poor little thing is much hurt." As she spoke, she snatched the child up in her arms, and lifted it quickly from the cradle, while Rose, who had been accustomed to pig-driving from her infancy, seizing a thick and pointed stick that lay near, soon succeeded in getting rid of their assailant.

The poor child was quite convulsed with fear, and for some minutes Kathleen found it impossible to pacify it. The girl's help had not been a moment too soon, for the savage animal had already bitten one little hand. The mother who had gone to a neighbor's well for water, and had been tempted to stay and gossip, came rushing back at the sound of distress proceeding from her cottage. Kathleen however, indignant at her carelessness, instead of meeting her with condolence, gave her a severe scolding, saying that though the poor baby had been saved from the brute's teeth, she feared it would die of fright, and she would only have herself to blame for it, if it did. But her heart softened and she felt sorry for her harsh words, when she saw the poor woman take the babe to her bosom, and rocking herself to and fro in an agony of grief, apostrophize her husband who was at sea, beseeching him never to return to reproach her, if their child died through her neglect. Then she began crooning a low soft Irish lullaby, which seemed to quiet the poor infant; and recognizing a countrywoman, Kathleen's anger turned into a tender compassion, and she said a few kind words in Irish which went straight to the poor mother's heart.

"Blessed be the day you crossed my threshold," she exclaimed; "may my darlint's good angel guard you through the shadows, and your bed be made in glory for this day's work."

Kathleen warmed to the old familiar sounds, and leaving her address, said she would come or send the next day, to hear how the baby was. Then she and Rose hurried home. She had a great dread of being late for dinner. She knew her father was afraid of her getting what he called a "wild Irish reputation," and dinner had become such a stately affair since the arrival of the visitors, that to have to walk in after it had begun seemed perfectly terrific. It was the fate that awaited her, however, on this occasion. Not all Rose's energetic exertions could get her dressed in time, and she had to make her way in alone, when all were seated, and be questioned by her uncle in the tone of restrained displeasure that tells of a great deal more to come at a more convenient season.

The sight of the huge creature routing in the cradle, amid the screams of the infant, had left such an impression of horror on her mind that she felt it difficult to tell the story amidst the commonplace surroundings of a dinner-table. Her voice would get beyond her control and shake. However, by dint of adroit questioning, made chiefly by her cousin Jack, the whole story was elicited, and Kathleen then found the tide of displeasure transferred from herself and her want of punctuality to the slatternly, negligent ways of the Stonecombe Irish, who were, it must be owned, anything but a favorably specimen of their country.

A great deal that was true was said, mixed up with more that was untrue; and Kathleen in despair took refuge in Rose's remark about the *English* sow: "If the ill-mannered brute had only been an Irish pig, brought up to the cabin, it could have been trusted with a hundred babies, and never would have touched one of them," she had said.

There was a general laugh at this sally; and then Kathleen had cause to feel grateful to Mr. Everard, who rather vigorously introduced a new topic of conversation.

CHAPTER VII.

Into all lives some rain must fall;
Some days must be dark and dreary.

Dora's arrival after dinner in the daintiest little white frock, with her slate in her hand, and her eyes full of question and conjecture, speaking in place of the mute tongue, was always the signal for a good deal of fun.

Lord Melton always took her on his knee and amused himself by making her gesticulate. The little monkey knew perfectly well that he was a great man, and that he took a great deal of notice of her; and all her quickness and cleverness came out under the sunshine of praise. Unhappily it brought out also her unamiable side; for her mimicry of every one she saw was never so apt to be contemptuous as when she felt herself flattered by general notice.

On this occasion Lord Melton had provided himself with a touching story, illustrated by several pictures, of a child, who, in the absence of his father and mother, was attacked by some Indian robbers, and was delivered by an elephant. With Eleanor's assistance Lord Melton described the affection which subsisted between the little boy and the elephant. Then he showed, in one of the pictures, the father and mother going away, and leaving the child all alone with his nurse. The next picture represented the dark cruel men rushing in with their sabres to kill the nurse and steal the child. There was the nurse knocked down upon the ground and wounded, striving in vain to retain her hold upon the poor child, who was screaming and struggling in her arms, while the men had hold of his feet and were dragging him away from her.

Dora, breathless with excitement, was too intent to ask her usual question—"How?"

The third picture represented the saving of the child. There was a sound—heavy, heavy trampings were heard at the door. What could it be? In marched the elephant, flapping his great ears. He flung the wicked Indians, two to this side, two to that, and setting his foot on a fifth, crushed him to death, while the rest fled for their lives; then curling his long trunk gently round the little boy he loved, he lifted him on to his back, where he had so often sat, and marched off with him to his keeper's hut, where, kneeling down, he placed the child safely at his feet.

Lord Melton illustrated this last episode by laying Dora on the ground, curling his arm out like an elephant's trunk, then picking her up and putting her on his shoulder, while he walked up to the drawing-room with her, and there set her down at her father's feet.

Dora was in perfect ecstasy. She had never thoroughly taken in such an exciting story before. Putting her little arms around Lord Melton's neck, she spelt in the ardor of her gratitude: "Oh! M. with the big sword, Dora loves you much, much, very much."

Every one was immensely amused, and all gathered round the ex-Commander and his little devotee, asking the dangerous question, how much she loved them? All but Kathleen, who saw by the sparkle in her eyes that the mischievous spirit was up, and that the little monkey was much too elated to care what she said about anybody.

Dora had not forgiven nor forgotten Kathleen's disapproval of her reception of Mr. Everard, and seized with an idea of triumphing over her, from her high perch on Lord Melton's shoulder, she gesticulated with the greatest animation that, "Eleanor liked M. with the big sword best, and so did Honor, and Mary and Jack (Lavinia she would not deign to notice) but Kathleen liked little E. with the inky fingers best, and Dora could not abide him because he was dirty" and she shook her audacious little fingers with such a comical look of disgust that there was no help for it—every one laughed, Mr. Everard more than any one. It was too absurd for any one to withstand, and Kathleen saw that Dora was triumphing in having completely upset her gravity as well as that of every one else. But in the midst of the irresistible fit of laughter that seized her, Kathleen thought to herself, "Oh, Dora! Dora! you little know the mischief you have done."

There was an end of all hope of getting on anything like confidential terms with Lord Melton. Little as she knew of the world, her perceptions were quite quick enough to see that the great man was accustomed to be first, and liked and expected to be so, and that one of his subalterns being preferred, even by so insignificant a person as herself, was not likely to win his cordiality.

Dora, however, got an unexpected "settler," as Jack called it, from the great man himself. He put her on the table before him, and as soon as he could speak from laughing, he took up the cudgels for his secretary and used them well. He told Dora that "E" was very wise, much wiser than he was; that it was not like a lady to say that she did not like him; that Kathleen was a lady, and liked every one in the room; and, making Kathleen come and sit beside him, he dismissed Dora with a grave air.

Poor little child! it was the first cold blast of disfavor she had ever experienced. Making her way to Eleanor, the rebellious little fingers spelt quickly that "E *was* dirty." Then her features puckered up in a peculiar fashion, and Eleanor had only just time to pick her up and carry her off before her wounded feelings burst out in the discordant howl which was the only sound that proceeded from those mute lips.

Kathleen admired the courtesy of Lord Melton more than ever; it was certainly faultless. He treated her that evening with especial kindness and attention, as though to assure her that Dora's words had not produced the smallest effect upon his mind. But poor Kathleen could only brood over the fact that again, without any fault of her own, she had been the involuntary cause of another disturbance, of a kind that must be peculiarly disagreeable to her uncle. She could not feel sympathetic with Lord Melton, and she was conscious he was very glad when the piano brought Eleanor and Honor to him again, and released him from his polite attention to her.

To be continued.

CORRESPONDENCES.

From The Catholic Orphanage.

PRINCE ALBERT, Sask., Jan. 12, 1919

To all the friends and benfactors of the Orphanage:—

When about a month ago I offered you our Christmas-greetings, I was not yet in a position to place before you the actual figures showing better than words could tell the generous support we received during the last year from our many friends, especially in the two districts known as St. Peter's and St. Joseph's Colonies. What then I was unable to do I will do today and hereby put you in a position to see the real figures. I made out the report in an alphabetical order, however I could not make out how much each respective parish contributed as I do not know to what parish the various localities belong.

The amount as given herein does not include the few odd mass-offerings I received occasionally,—but only donations,—neither does it include a bequest of $500.00 left to the Orphanage by our dear friend, the late Mr. Wolf of Liberty, Sask. Very few in sending in their contributions have designated the same as "crop-insurance," so that I am unable at this moment to state how much our crop-insurance has brought us, as I did in 1917.

Indeed we have every reason to be thankful to God for the splendid support we have received during the past year. However, we also have had our trials whereby I mean the loss of quite a number of friends and benefactors. If it were al-